Duck hunt protest

GIPPSLAND TIMES 15/3/10

Davyd Reid

UP to 150 protestors are expected to converge on the Gippsland Lakes this weekend for the opening of duck season on Saturday, with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Victoria Police set to conduct patrols around local wetlands.

Coalition Against Duck Shooting campaign director Laurie Levy said the organisation would be bringing a group from Melbourne to fight the issue of duck hunting.

"We see our role as similar to that of the Red Cross, entering war zones to help the innocent," he said.

"100 to 150 rescuers will be coming down along with Wildlife Victoria and a veterinary team."

Mr Levy said the decision to call a duck season had been politically motivated.

"Victoria Field and Game always push for it politically," he said.

"We see our role as similar to that of the Red Cross, entering war zones to help the innocent."

– Coalition Against Duck Shooting campaign director Laurie Levy

"The only reason it has been called is the election in November.

"The Brumby Government is just after the vote from redneck shooters."

Mr Levy said the Government was "cheating" shooters in a way.

"They are taking their money for their tests and licences when in fact there aren't that many birds around."

Board member of Field and Game Australia Rick Foster said hunters understood there was a right to protest, but hoped that any protesting was done in line with laws and safety regulations.

"They (protestors) have no right to enter the water until 10 o'clock," he said.

"Each year they flout this law and we are concerned that they are trying to provoke an incident with firearms."

Mr Foster said he expected the DSE and police to enforce the law equally among both shooters and protestors

"They can wave banners in the main street of Sale all they like — but it is just not safe to do so around firearms," he said.

"We hope that the police and DSE enforce the law equally among shooters in respect to bag limits and licences, and the protestors in the interests of safety."

DSE regional communications advisor Rachel Dawkins said DSE wildlife compliance officers would be patrolling some wetlands during duck opening in conjunction with Victoria Police.

"DSE wildlife compliance officers will be patrolling local wetlands with Parks Victoria and Victoria Police to monitor game regulations, firearms regulations and camping activities," she said.

Senior Sergeant Eric Duffy said Victoria Police were ready for any potential protestors.

"Police will be patrolling wetland areas to ensure that there is no breach of the peace and to protect life and property," he said.

"We will also be enforcing the provisions of the Wildlife Act which includes non-shooters keeping their distance from people with firearms."

Eastern Region MP Peter Hall said recent rain in Gippsland would improve duck hunting conditions and he expected Gippsland game reserves will prove popular for hunters.

"There will be a lot of activity within local hunting venues and I urge protestors and hunters alike to co-operate with DSE officers and Victoria Police in the conduct of the 2010 season."