
Tape claims bias towards shooters

by NICOLE BRADY
state politics reporter

An illegally taped telephone conversation between two hunting lobbyists suggests the Minister for Conservation, Mr Geoff Coleman, is biased towards shooters, the animal rights campaigner, Mr Laurie Levy said yesterday.

Mr Levy released a tape yesterday which allegedly records a mobile telephone conversation between Mr Graham Eames, the senior vice-president of the Victorian Field and Game Association, and a shooting lobbyist.

The conversation dealt with the threat the drought posed to next year's duck hunting season, and the likely duration of the season.

The Coalition Against Duck Shooting has called for a moratorium on duck shooting in Victoria in 1995, as it fears the drought has forced high numbers of native

water birds to migrate to Victoria. Mr Levy said a hunting season would seriously decrease the national flock.

The man, who Mr Levy claimed was Mr Eames, said he was confident the State Government would permit the season to go ahead.

"We know that our minister wants a season and we've been told via the right channels from the minister that regardless of what happens at this meeting we have to design a season which is acceptable scientifically and that he can sell," the man said.

Mr Eames said yesterday that legal advice prevented him from commenting on the contents of the tape, and refused to confirm or deny whether or not it was his voice. He said it was clearly an illegally taped conversation and he would be looking to press charges.

Mr Coleman yesterday denied having a special relationship with the duck shooters, and said he would not be making a decision about the hunting season until next year.

"I've not met with the field and game association for over six months and I have no idea who the person on the tape is suggesting he's got some special relationship with," Mr Coleman said.

"I've had no discussions with anyone about whether or not there should be a duck season next year."

Mr Levy — who said a "concerned member of the public" passed the tape on to him — said he was aware he risked legal action being taken against him for releasing it, but said he felt morally bound to do so.

"It highlights just how little responsibility the shooters feel for our native birds," Mr Levy said.

During the discussion about the possibility of a midweek opening, the man who Mr Levy alleged was Mr Eames said, "We'll shoot solid Wednesday, Thursday, Friday when the ducks are dumb and decoy like crazy ... then shoot the shit out of them Saturday and Sunday like we normally do".

Mr Eames said yesterday that he supported a midweek opening, but as it was unprecedented he could not speculate on the impact it would have on the overall take.

He commended the Government for its accessibility to the shooters.

"We have constant contact with this particular Government. This is the first minister in 10 years who is prepared to make decisions based on science and sound game management principles rather than on emotional rubbish," Mr Eames said.

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