



# Hunt season opens

BY TALLIS MILES

THE 2021 Victorian duck hunting season has opened with animal advocacy and hunting groups sharing polar opposite views about the future of the activity.

Lake Lonsdale and the surrounding wetlands, situated 20 kilometres west of Stawell has become the home for many duck hunters who come to the region to chase the game.

The Victorian duck hunting season opened on Wednesday May 26, before the season was moved into a partial hiatus due to the state's COVID-19 restrictions.

Under the lockdown restrictions people can go hunting as long as it is within five kilometres of their home address for a two-hour exercise period.

Field and Game Australia board member Mark Daley is a long time hunter who has travelled to Lake Lonsdale for many trips, and he says the majority of hunters do the right thing.

"I normally hunt every weekend and other week days as well, it is my culture and it is my tradition and I have always done it to put fresh organic meat on the table," he said.

"I have gone and shot at Lonsdale. It is usually a popular destination and carries good numbers of birds. The last few years it has been

closed due to protected species being in the area.

"The thing we have always stood by is to be ethical and be respectful.

"Be respectful for other hunters and other users.

"The majority of hunters do that. Like everything, not everybody keeps to the speed limit, and not everybody doesn't get behind the wheel when they have had

a drink.

"There are people who break the law and the rules whatever they do, but it is a minority."

Mr Daley said he was disappointed with the scheduling of the 2021 duck hunting season and was hoping it may be extended.

"It was very frustrating what went down this year with the duck opening and creating a mid-week opening," he said.

"The season opened Wednesday and Thursday before lockdown and there wasn't a great percentage of hunters who could get away from work.

"Out of good faith the GMA (Game Management Authority) should consider extending the season accordingly."

But animal advocacy and anti-hunting groups share a completely opposite point of view. More, P5

## Campaigners want activity to be banned

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The Coalition Against Duck Shooting Campaign Director Laurie Levy condemned the "violent" activity.

"Duck shooting is all about violence and cruelty to Australia's beautiful native waterbirds," he said. "Duck shooting is a dying activity that is all about animal abuse."

He also said the state government needs to step in and ban hunting game.

"The problem is that the GMA is the sole regulator that can prosecute duck shooters under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, but it has a serious conflict of interest as it is also the manager that advocates and promotes duck shooting in Victoria," he said. "In fact, the independent Pegasus Report in 2017 recommended that the GMA's role as a regulator should be handed over to a larger, more broadly-based body because of this conflict of interest. Meanwhile, the RSPCA, that once protected all animals great and small, is not allowed to prosecute duck shooters for cruelty offences. The Victorian Labor Government now recognises animals as sentient beings that feel happiness, pain, fear and suffering, yet it presently turns a blind-eye to the shocking violence that duck shooters inflict on Australia's native waterbirds."

- Tallis Miles