

The Coalition Against Duck Shooting has sought an urgent injunction to halt the season. Credit: AAP

## **Duck lovers fail to halt shooting season**

Karen Sweeney AAP March 18, 2022

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Duck shooters will be free to hunt game on the season's opening weekend after a bid to stall it was rejected by a judge.

The Coalition Against Duck Shooting went to the Federal Court on Friday afternoon, asking for an urgent injunction to halt the season.

Jo Soren, a coalition member, represented the group in a hearing before Justice Helen Rofe saying four or five threatened birds had been shot since the season opened on Wednesday morning.

She was less than pleased when Justice Rofe sided with Dr Ian Freckleton, representing the Game Management Authority and state government ministers Lily D'Ambrosio and Mary-Ann Thomas.

"He had three simple arguments and they were all crap and she accepted it," Ms Soren told coalition members on the online court hearing.

Ms Soren had told the court bird numbers were in serious decline and there were concerns not only for birds being shot but also those who are disturbed and become displaced from foraging, feeding and nesting habitats.

Ms Soren said a report last year found 80 per cent of duck shooters couldn't distinguish between game and non-game species, and described "indiscriminate slaughter" and a free-for-all against anything that flies.

She characterised comments by Premier Daniel Andrews, comparing duck shooting to golf, as "most offensive".

Ms Soren was also critical of the GMA, which oversees compliance with season regulations, claiming it was failing in its compliance role.

She argued the state government had failed to get approvals for the season under environmental and conservation legislation.

"The fact that they would declare a 90-day season when things are so disgustingly desperate for those birds is just the most appalling (thing), just totally irresponsible," she said.

Dr Freckleton said the GMA and ministers' actions authorising the duck shooting season were not subject to the legislation and there was no proper basis for a claim for review.

Justice Rofe also told Ms Soren that they did not make the decision to have a duck season - one was already authorised under legislation.

Legislation gives them power to declare that there won't be a shooting season, but this year they limited their decision to the length of the season and bag limits for shooters.

The duck shooting season runs until June 13.