

THE AGE

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Labor in a flap on duck hunting, internal pressure mounts to ban shooting season



By [Sumeyya Ilanbey](#)

One third of Andrews government MPs have taken the rare step of publicly voicing their support for a change in government policy to ban duck shooting.

In a move that highlights internal splits within the government, 22 Labor members, including current ministers, have declared their support for a change of policy via the via [the Animal Justice Party website](#).



A number of Labor MPs in Premier Daniel Andrews' Labor caucus would support a ban on duck hunting. *CREDIT: GRAPHIC IMAGE*

Labor has been under mounting pressure from environmental and animal rights' groups, as well as rank-and-file members, to end the sport, particularly after the 2019 summer bushfires that wreaked havoc on wildlife numbers.

Some within the party are worried the position of the government's leadership team could leave Labor vulnerable to the Greens, who support abolition, in the inner-city seats of Albert Park and Richmond where long-serving members Martin Foley and Richard Wynne are retiring at the upcoming November state election.

Others are worried about picking a fight on the issue and alienating voters in the suburbs and regions.

“Recreational hunting is a legitimate pastime enjoyed by tens of thousands of everyday and working Victorians,” said a senior Labor source who spoke on the condition of anonymity to freely discuss the party's stance and campaign position ahead of the state election.

“Duck hunting is already heavily regulated. Why should the government pick a fight and ban an outdoor activity that is enjoyed safely by Victorians and contributes to our regional economies?”

Ministers Lizzie Blandthorn and Ingrid Stitt, as well as former ministers Jill Hennessy, Robin Scott, Wynne and Foley have all indicated they support moves to ban duck shooting. Others to go public with their position include Steve McGhie, Darren Cheeseman, John Kennedy, Nina Taylor and Kat Theophanous. There are 22 Labor MPs supporting change, most of them from the party's Socialist Left faction.

“[Duck shooting] will always be an undoubtedly barbaric pastime with no commensurate benefits,” Hawthorn MP John Kennedy said. “The decline in waterbirds is a real concern, and I note the enlightened practices of some Labor states in this respect.”

MPs who support duck shooting ban

Labor	Liberal	Crossbench
Lizzie Blandthorn	James Newbury	Ali Cupper
Chris Brayne	Bruce Atkinson	Samantha Ratnam
Josh Bull		Sam Hibbins
Darren Cheeseman		Tim Read
Jordan Crugnale		Ellen Sandell
Will Fowles		Catherine Cumming
Matt Fregon		Fiona Patten
Katie Hall		Stuart Grimley
Dustin Halse		Tania Maxwell
Jill Hennessy		Clifford Hayes
Gary Maas		Rod Barton
Steve McGhie		Andy Meddick
Robin Scott		
Nick Staikos		
Jackson Taylor		
Kat Theophanous		
Ingrid Stitt		
Sonja Terpstra		
John Kennedy		
Richard Wynne		
Nina Taylor		
Martin Foley		

A Victorian government spokeswoman said duck hunting was managed sustainably by the imposition of bag limits and a restricted hunting season. She said authorities worked to stamp out unlawful and dangerous practices, and Victorians who wanted to take part should be able to do it in a safe and responsible manner.

“We know many Victorians have deeply held and diverse views about duck hunting,” the spokeswoman said. “The government has been clear that it takes the advice of the Game Management Authority in determining each season.”

The Labor MPs confirmed their opinions to the Animal Justice Party, which is making a list to show which parliamentarians [support a ban on duck hunting](#). Other MPs who support a ban include Brighton Liberal MP James Newbury, who used his 2018 maiden speech to call for duck hunting to end, and retiring upper house Liberal MP Bruce Atkinson. Independent Mildura MP Ali Cupper, Western Metropolitan Region MP Catherine Cumming and Transport Matters Party MP Rod Barton are among 11 crossbench MPs also endorsing a ban.

Animal Justice Party MP Andy Meddick urged the premier “to end this cruelty” and commit to a prohibition before the state election.



Animal Justice Party MP Andy Meddick, has started a list that shows where Victorian MPs stand in relation to a ban on duck hunting. *CREDIT: EDDIE JIM*

“The issue of duck shooting is not an inner-city issue,” he said. “Victorians everywhere are sick of seeing our native wildlife blasted from the sky in the name of sport.

“This government prides itself on being progressive, but it will never truly be until duck shooting is banned.”

Inside Labor ranks, members have repeatedly called for a rethink on duck hunting by passing a series of motions at the party's state conferences. The first motion was passed in the lead-up to the 2014 state election, urging the party to "prohibit the recreational destruction of native wildlife on public or private land".

Blandthorn and McGhie led a push at the 2019 state conference for the caucus to review wildlife hunting, but that is yet to occur.



CREDIT: MATT GOLDING

Earlier this year, Andrews said he understood recreational shooting "wasn't everyone's cup of tea", but urged those who take part to follow the rules.

"Some of us play golf. Some people go shooting. That's a choice they are free to make, but there are rules and I do see some reports the rules seem to have been broken," he said.

"It's not something that I do myself, but as the leader of the government, it's allowed, so the answer to the question [do you support duck hunting?] is, obviously, yes."