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Calls for Victoria to follow New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia in banning duck shooting

The Andrews government is facing mounting pressure to outlaw duck shooting amid concerns over “really significant animal welfare issues”.

Mitch Clarke



About 11,549 shooters took part in the 2022 season according to Game Management Authority figures. The boss of the RSPCA has warned the Andrews government that it is running out of time to outlaw [duck shooting](#), as new data reveals nine out of ten Victorians would never take part in the practice.

In an exclusive interview with the Herald Sun ahead of the 2023 [duck hunting season](#), CEO Dr Liz Walker said it was unclear why a state government that prides itself on being progressive hadn't banned the [annual slaughter](#).

Doing so would bring Victoria into line with Labor governments in Queensland and Western Australia. New South Wales has also banned duck shooting.

“It is hard to understand why they haven't acted given there are really significant animal welfare issues associated with duck hunting that you can't mitigate,” Dr Walker said.

“Now is definitely the time to stop duck hunting. It's overdue. The evidence is only mounting, both from an animal welfare and a sustainability point of view.”



Duck hunters at Lake Buloke, Donald.



RSPCA Victoria CEO Dr Liz Walker. Picture: David Caird

Final submissions have now been made to the Game Management Authority, who will soon commence discussions with government about the upcoming 2023 season.

Last year's shooting season ran for 90 days – 70 days longer than in 2021. A daily bag limit of four birds was enforced.

According to the GMA, the total harvest figure for last year's season was 262,567 ducks. The RSPCA believes the wounding rate could be anywhere from six to 40 per cent, meaning up to 105,000 ducks may have been shot at but not killed last year.

"Some birds will die from their injuries, some will survive but live in pain and become disabled, but because of their inability to forage, they'll suffer through starvation and thirst, or they'll be predated on," Dr Walker said.



A survey found nine out of ten Victorians would never take part in the duck hunting. Picture Yuri Kouzmin

Dr Walker said the annual shoot could contribute to the extinction of certain ducks, with six of eight game species showing a long-term decline in population numbers, despite increases in available habitat.

"Many species look like they're heading into a perilous position," she said.

"There's certainly evidence to show that hunting is changing duck's behaviours. It's apparent something is going on because populations are not bouncing back, so it's really incumbent on decision makers that they don't put any pressure on those animals when we don't know what's driving the changes."

An RSPCA survey conducted by market research firm Kantar revealed the majority of Victorians are extremely concerned about the animal welfare impacts of duck hunting and support a ban. Nine in ten Victorians said they wouldn't consider participating, while more than half said they strongly oppose the practice.

An estimated 11,549 shooters took part in the 2022 season according to the GMA, who said just over 23,000 hunters were licensed last year. The RSPCA said that equated to just 0.17 per cent of the Victorian population actively hunting ducks.

Sale, Bairnsdale, Shepparton, Kerang and Geelong were the towns most popular for shooting last year.

“It’s hard to imagine from an economic point how 11,500 hunters over 12 weeks can make an enormous difference to rural economies,” Dr Walker said.