

DUCK SHOOT 'BETRAYAL'

Mitch Clarke, Herald Sun, 25 Feb 23

ANIMAL advocates have declared war on the Andrews government, vowing to take to the wetlands in protest at the "spineless" decision to green light a duck shooting season.

The Game Management Authority on Friday afternoon confirmed a shortened season will begin at 8am, April 26 and end 30 minutes after sunset on May 30. A daily bag limit of four birds will be enforced, and hunters won't be able to shoot the threatened Blue-winged Shoveler and Hardhead species.

A ban would have put Victoria in line with Queensland, NSW and WA, which banned recreational duck shooting more than 30 years ago.

Activists on Friday said they were blindsided by the announcement, and confirmed preparations had begun to storm the wetlands on the first day of the season.

Outdoor Recreation Minister Sonya Kilkenny said given the "increasingly contested" views, a parliamentary upper house committee will be established to probe the practice.

The duck hunt debate has long divided the Labor party room, with many MPs and ministers feeling "betrayed".

Government Minister Lizzie Blandthorn told the Herald Sun: "I'm disappointed a duck hunting season is going ahead but I am pleased that a review will finally happen."

Cabinet secretary Steve McGhie slammed the decision.

"It's disappointing that we've got to cope with another season. I'm hopeful the review will bring us a step closer to putting an end to duck shooting," he said.

Animal Justice Party MP Georgie Purcell said she was "beyond furious" with the call, labelling it a "gutless decision".

"I'll be expressing my anger directly to the government and they may not find me to be as pragmatic and practical to work with as they have in the

past,” Ms Purcell said. “I’ll be out on the wetlands doing the job that a government agency is too incompetent and too unwilling to do themselves.”

Coalition Against Duck Shooting spokesman Laurie Levy called for the Army to be brought in to police the season instead of the Game Management Authority.

“It’s hard to believe a modern-day Labor government that wins by a mile each election can have the same policy that a 1950s Liberal government had,” he said.

RSPCA chief Liz Walker predicted nearly 90,000 birds would be killed during the 35-day season and up to 35,000 wounded and left to die.

Wildlife Victoria chief Lisa Palma said she was “incredibly disappointed”, while Victorian Greens leader Samantha Ratnam said allowing a season was “nothing short of inhumane”.

There was also criticism from the pro-shooting camp, which lashed the decision to cut the 2023 season by two months. Shooters, Fishers and Farmers MP Jeff Bourman said it was a “solid gold case of fence sitting”.

“They (Labor) could not go with their own science but they also didn’t have the guts to go against the science and face the music,” he said.

David Laird, of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, said it was a “timid” response from the government.

“There is a scientific justification for a four-bird bag limit but not for any other modifications,” he said.

The review will hold public hearings and table a final report by August 31.

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