

Feathers ruffled: Unions vow to shut out Labor if duck hunting banned



By [Kieran Rooney](#)

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Premier Daniel Andrews and his MPs could be banned from doing press conferences at their own Big Build sites as unions threaten to bar them from photo opportunities if the state moves to ban duck hunting.

An alliance of powerful trade unions has vowed to ban state Labor MPs from Big Build projects and walk off job sites if Victoria decides to end the practice. A parliamentary committee is examining whether duck hunting should be stopped.



A duck hunter at Connewarre Wetland, on the Bellarine Peninsula. *CREDIT: JUSTIN MCMANUS*

The coalition, known as the Building Industry Group of Unions (BIG), represents more than 85,000 Victorian workers and includes the CFMEU, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, the Electrical Trades Union and the plumbers' union.

All four play key roles on signature Andrews government projects such as the Metro Tunnel and level-crossing removal projects.

Victoria set up a special parliamentary committee to examine duck hunting, which is expected to hand down its findings and recommendations on August 31. There is speculation it will call for Victoria to follow other states and ban it outright.

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The issue has exposed divisions within Victorian Labor, with blue-collar unions and regional MPs expressing concerns the move would alienate their members and voters who enjoy the practice.

This year, hundreds of ETU workers walked off the Metro Tunnel not long after the government announced the inquiry and flagged concerns among members that the state was trying to limit their favourite outdoor activities.

In a statement, the unions said the Andrews government should not ignore "countless" submissions to the inquiry that supported improving duck and quail hunting rather than banning the "important working-class pursuit".

They said if a ban went ahead, they would “ban all state Labor politicians from attending BIG union projects, including the government’s Big Build projects”.

“Large builders and consortiums will have a clear choice – choose between thousands of workers working productively or choose one politician with a ribbon, scissors and a camera,” the group of unions said in a statement on Friday.



In happier times: Premier Daniel Andrews touring a Metro Tunnel site last year. *CREDIT: EDDIE JIM*

“The BIG will not accept the hypocrisy of Labor politicians standing with construction workers for a photo opportunity while at the same time attacking those very same construction workers’ rights to enjoy their hard-earned recreation in the great outdoors.”

A previous motion from the group backed a political campaign to campaign in favour of native bird hunting and a proposal union members walk off government jobs as a political protest.

“This government needs to support working people and protect all Victorians’ right to enjoy the great outdoors, including boating, camping, fishing, and hunting, particularly in this case, duck and quail hunting,” the group said.

In February, Andrews said he was considering what would happen with duck hunting,

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The Victorian government is considering banning duck hunting weeks before the season starts. "I'm very keen to get a report from last season, because we did see a number of incidents where the rules were not followed in terms of bag limits," the premier said. "It's a genuine decision every single year, so there's no guarantee one way or the other. That's not an announcement. That's just a statement of fact, there's not a guaranteed season in any year."

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Multiple Labor-affiliated unions made submissions to the inquiry calling for the practice to continue, with the committee receiving thousands of responses from people who were both in favour and against the sport.

Committee members include Animal Justice Party MP Georgie Purcell, who wants to see hunting banned, and Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party MP Jeff Bourman, who has called for it to remain.

A key topic explored by the inquiry has been whether endangered species are being illegally killed and bag limits, which control how many are hunted, are being broken.

Bourman has previously said shooters are open to improved practices but has disputed that the number of people breaching bag limits is excessive.

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