

Hon G Barnett  
Minister for Primary Industries  
Parliament House  
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Minister

Once again, Tasmania's world-renowned wetlands — usually peaceful havens and homes for our unique wildlife — have been transformed into killing fields by recreational duck shooters.

As you know, duck hunting is already banned in NSW, Queensland and Western Australia; and South Australia and Victoria have limited their seasons and allowable takes.

In making these decisions, the mainland states have taken into account the results of recent surveys of waterbird populations and wetland area across the eastern mainland States. These surveys commenced in 1983 to monitor changes in abundance and distribution of 50 waterbird species (including all hunted duck species) in eastern Australia from southern Victoria to north Queensland, but not including Tasmania.

The surveys have shown catastrophic decreases in waterfowl numbers in southeast Australia over four decades and Australia's waterfowl populations are at crisis point. While the current wetter conditions are a welcome change, they have not resulted in improvements in waterfowl population numbers. In fact, the most recent mainland count recorded the third lowest totals for waterbirds in 39 years of surveys.

We know Tasmania acts as a safety valve for mainland populations, and climate change will see Tasmania's critical role as refuge for southeast Australian waterfowl increase. This means recreational shooting of waterfowl in Tasmania is indefensible with the ecological knowledge we have for these species and their survival needs — and there is no justification for allowing shooters to kill species that are protected on the mainland, while they are taking refuge here in Tasmania.

A recent Victorian Game Management Authority survey of over 5,000 Victorian duck shooters showed four out of five shooters could not identify species they are permitted to kill; three out of five shooters don't know how to shoot to minimise wounding; 84 per cent don't know how to kill ducks they have shot and injured; and less than 4 per cent could correctly answer questions relating to animal welfare, waterbird identification and safety.

These are horrifying statistics indeed - and there is little doubt the results would equally apply to Tasmanian shooters.

However, despite legislated reporting requirements, there is very little information publicly available to show the total numbers killed, what species were killed, or to confirm that shooters complied with maximum takes.

Only 1115 licences were issued for the 2021 season — which represents only 0.2 per cent of all Tasmanians. No data at all is available for last year as to the number of ducks shot, which species were shot, or bag takes.

That is simply not good enough.

**PO Box 66 Mowbray Tas 7248**

**Centralised phone number for all RSPCA Centres: 03 6709 8100**

Devonport Animal Care Centre: 108 Tarleton Road, Spreyton, 7310

Launceston Adoption & Retail Centre: 3/207 Invermay Road, 7248

Hobart Adoption & Retail Centre: 55-57 Albert Road, Moonah, 7009

Animal Cruelty Hotline: 1300 139 947

Email: [rspca@rspcatas.org.au](mailto:rspca@rspcatas.org.au) Web: [www.rspcatas.org.au](http://www.rspcatas.org.au)



The RSPCA believes that there is no social licence for this state-sanctioned slaughter of native wildlife to continue in Tasmania and we have repeatedly called for an end to this barbaric practice.

At the very least, the government should announce a phaseout over the next three years.

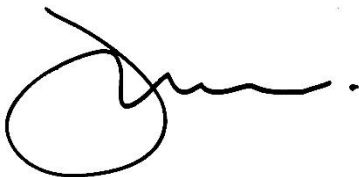
If recreational duck shooting to continue, it is imperative that urgent steps be taken to reduce the negative welfare impacts for ducks and off-target species.

The RSPCA therefore calls on the state government to:

- Commission a survey of community attitudes to duck hunting;
- In the interests of transparency, immediately release all data related to duck hunting so that independent experts can assess whether the species are being managed sustainably;
- Implement annual population surveys of target (and non-target) species to assess short term fluctuations in numbers (perhaps due to drought or other seasonal conditions) as well as monitor long term trends in population numbers;
- Introduce an annual waterfowl identification test for all licence applicants, with the successful identification rate of 80% required to be granted a licence increasing to 100% over 3 years;
- Implement mandatory participation in a shotgun education program as a licence requirement;
- Conduct an annual survey to determine the wounding rates of ducks and the impact of duck hunting on non-target species, with a maximum non-target fatality rate reducing to 10% over 3 years;
- Mandate interventions to reduce the wounding rate (eg regulate a maximum shooting distance);
- Improve hunter education on issues such as humanely dispatching wounded ducks;
- Implement an awareness campaign to bring our native waterbirds to the public's attention and highlight their uniqueness and beauty – the Victorian *Discover Ducks!* campaign is a good model.

We look forward to your urgent response to these issues.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'J' followed by a series of connected loops and a final dot.

**Jan Davis**

**CEO**

27<sup>th</sup> March 2022