

Hon J Palmer
Minister for Natural Resources and Environment
Parliament House
HOBART Tasmania 7000

Via email: jo.palmer@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Minister

It was great to catch up recently – and we really appreciate the interest you show in the work we do to address community concerns across many issues.

RSPCA Tasmania is deeply disappointed in the Government's decision to proceed with the 2023 duck shooting season, despite significant community concerns about the messages this sends about animal welfare and environmental outcomes.

There are four clear evidence-based reasons that support a ban on duck shooting:

- Inherent animal welfare issues that cannot be mitigated
- It is not sustainable based on climate outlook data
- There are significant issues with hunter knowledge and capability
- It is not in line with community expectations.

The data available for the 2020 season shows a decrease in reported takes, average bag takes, and completed returns. This would seem to indicate waning interest across the community. Only 1115 licences were issued for the 2021 season – which represents just 0.2 per cent of all Tasmanians. No data at all is yet available for the 2022 season - including the number of licences issued, the number and species of ducks shot, completed returns, or bag takes. Nor is any data available for the current year – not even the number of licences issued.

This lack of public accountability is simply not good enough – and we now know it does not meet with community expectations.

We have recently commissioned independent state-wide quarterly surveys of public opinion on a range of issues. In the last survey (Kantar Public, March 2023), unprompted, 32 per cent of respondents said they support a total ban on duck shooting in Tasmania. This had increased marginally over the past survey period.

This is a far harsher approach than the three-year phase-out period that we have proposed.

Experience in other states shows that opinions are hardening rapidly against the senseless massacre of native ducks and other water birds.

As you know, duck shooting is already banned in NSW, Queensland and Western Australia; and South Australia and Victoria have limited their seasons and allowable takes over the past two years. Calls for outright bans are hardening in both Victoria and South Australia.

Separate studies recently undertaken in Victoria by Kantar Public and RedBridge Group show the community there holds concerns for the welfare of native ducks, that regional and metropolitan views are similar, and a ban would have negligible impact on regional economies. The Kantar study, which mirrors that undertaken in Tasmania, indicates that two in three Victorians (66 per cent) now support a total ban on recreational duck shooting.

In response to growing community outrage, and as a precursor to considering bans, the governments in both Victoria and South Australia have recently announced inquiries into duck shooting.

The terms of reference for these inquiries can be found here:

- Victoria: <https://new.parliament.vic.gov.au/nativebirdhunting>
- South Australia: <https://www.parliament.sa.gov.au/en/News/2023/04/19/05/32/SUBMISSIONS-OPEN-Select-Committee-on-Hunting-Native-Birds>

We urge the Tasmanian government to undertake a similar inquiry.

The terms of reference for such an inquiry could include:

1. *An investigation into the validity and accuracy of data collected*
 - a. *Accountability for data collection*
 - b. *Potential for double counting*
 - c. *Aerial surveying as a means of assessing population sustainability*
 - d. *Comparisons to other states and territories and their survey methods.*
2. *An investigation into relevant animal welfare statistics (wounding, wastage, non-target species etc)*
3. *An investigation into compliance with present regulations (protected species, daily takes etc.).*
4. *An investigation into the environmental sustainability of duck shooting.*
 - a. *Potential violations of RAMSAR wetland obligations.*
 - b. *Impact of duck shooting compared to other recreational activities*
5. *An investigation into the net economic impact of duck shooting (tourism, local business etc)*
6. *A survey of contemporary community attitudes to shooting of ducks and other native water birds.*

In his address on the state of the address earlier this year, Premier Rockliff said that this government is committed to 'protecting and promoting what makes Tasmania special.'

Tasmania's world-renowned wetlands and our unique wildlife are without doubt things that make Tasmania special. Yet they are transformed each year into killing fields by recreational duck shooters.

That does not reflect either the Premier's stated commitment or the expectations of the vast majority of Tasmanians.

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

An inquiry such as that we propose would bring information about the practice of recreational duck shooting into the public arena and allow an objective discussion about the future of this practice here.

We look forward to your urgent response to this proposal.

Yours sincerely,



Jan Davis
Chief Executive Officer
9th May 2023

cc Hon Roger Jaensch, Minister for the Environment

