



Media Release – 6 December 2003 Contact: Russell Pearson

DUCK BAN SHOT DOWN

A motion to ban duck shooting at this weekend's State Labor Conference was soundly beaten earlier today.

Combined Firearms Council representative, Russell Pearson, said that Labor MP's were 'lining up' to make their contribution on the cultural and economic importance of duck shooting to Victoria.

"Votes didn't even need to be counted", Mr Pearson said.

"The vote was so overwhelming, it is obvious that the proposition had no merit."

Anti duck shooting proponents at the conference showed their disappointment.

For more information: Russell Pearson

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON DUCK SHOOTING PROVIDED BY FIELD AND GAME AUSTRALIA TO THE CFCV PRIOR TO TODAY'S VOTE

1. There are 22,279 licensed game bird hunters in Victoria (Source: NR&E 2001). Victoria's hunters represent a diverse range of cultures. Hunters consume what they harvest, although those opposed to hunting would have you believe that the target species are discarded. This is simply not true; hunters derive a great deal of satisfaction from gathering, preparing and cooking game to share with their families and friends. The consumption of game food is now very "fashionable" and has increased significantly in Australia, to the point where most restaurants now offer at least one type of game dish on their menu.

2. The "sustainable use" of Waterfowl in Victoria by hunters is totally consistent with directions from the International Conservation Community: UN World Commission on Environment and Development, the IUCN World Conservation Union, Convention on International Trade Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD 1994) and the "wise use" principles of the RAMSAR Convention (1971).
3. If a ban on duck hunting were introduced, this would be inconsistent with the positive game management initiatives being implemented by other Labor Governments in Australia e.g. The establishment of the statutory NSW Game Council, the TAS Governments Game Management Programs and the "Sustainable Use" of Wildlife Programs in operation in the Northern Territory.
4. Economic benefits - Hunting based on sustainable use has considerable potential to expand. In Victoria, expenditure associated with duck hunting was estimated by a department survey eight years ago at \$29.35 million per year (Source: NR&E 1995). It would be considerably more now.
5. Hunters, landowners and non-hunters alike, value game birds positively, creating incentives for all to conserve them. A ban will significantly enhance the negative "pest" status of game birds.
6. The following wetlands are just a few of the many that have benefited from major "on ground" conservation works initiated by Field and Game hunters. Cullens Lake (Kerang - RAMSAR listed), Jack Smiths Lake (Yarram), Reedy Swamp (Shepparton), Lake Mokoan (Benalla), Orchard Swamp, Cemetery Swamp, Rhyll Swamp, Fishers Wetland (Phillip Island), McLeods Morass, Jones Bay (Bairnsdale), Lake Connewarre State Game Reserve incl. Reedy Lake, Hospital Swamp, Lake Murtnaghurt (Geelong - RAMSAR listed), Dutson Downs, Heart Morass, Dowds Morass, Lake Coleman (Gippsland Lakes - RAMSAR listed) Morang Wetlands, Mill Park Lakes, Darebin Creek (Northern Suburbs Melbourne), Hirds Swamp (Kerang), Black and Purdeys Swamp (Wunghnu), Mansfield State Game Reserve (Stanhope), Brays Swamp (Tatura), Reedy Lake (Nagambie), Tower Hill State Game Reserve (Warrnambool) and Gemill Swamp (Mooroopna).
7. Since 1958, hunters have contributed thousands of dollars and voluntary hours to research and the maintenance of wetland habitats and their species. FGA has been compiling annual reports since 1991. During the period 1991 - 2000 Field and Game hunters voluntary commitment to wetlands totalled \$2,185,017 (Source: FGA Annual reports 1991 - 2000). This is in addition to the thousands of hours spent on pest eradication activities, \$1.3 million in 2003 alone. (Source: FGA Annual Report 2003). This voluntary commitment to "on-ground" projects continues relentlessly and is unmatched by other voluntary organisations.
8. Animal rights groups lobby to have their philosophies adopted with full knowledge that they will lead to discrimination against aboriginals, farmers and hunters. If hunting is banned, will indigenous Victorians be allowed to hunt?

Government should continue to encourage and foster close relations with hunters in order to pursue the pragmatic attainment of wetland conservation goals and the continued use of a sustainable renewable resource. Government should also encourage both sides of the argument to work together for conservation, even though this may require people agreeing to disagree on the merits of competing value systems.

The role of Victorian hunters in species and habitat conservation over the last fifty years, on and off government lands, has been very significant. The major wetland conservation efforts by hunters, including management sites of RAMSAR significance, are seriously threatened if duck hunting is banned in Victoria.