



## **STATE MINISTER, SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANT IN CONFLICT OF INTEREST PROBE**

A senior public servant has stood down from the board of the RSPCA after an investigation by the State Ombudsman into an alleged conflict of interest.

The Combined Firearms Council of Victoria said that Robert Begg, an Assistant Director with the Department of Sustainability and Environment, had a conflict of interest by providing advice to the Government on whether to hold a duck season while also being a director of the RSPCA, which opposes duck shooting.

CFCV President, Bill Paterson said previous complaints relating to Dr Begg's conflict of interest date back to 2001, but were dismissed by former Environment Minister, Sheryl Garbutt.

"In our view, Dr Begg had an intolerably unacceptable conflict of interest. We are happy that the Ombudsman has dealt with this matter but are disappointed that it took his intervention before any action on this was finally taken and Begg's continuing involvement in fauna policy" he said.

"Unfortunately the Ombudsman did not comment on the role of Minister Garbutt, however it is obvious that she should have acted on the conflict when the matter was first raised with her."

"Decisions on previous duck shooting seasons were far from transparent and went against the best advice available to Government," he said.

Mr Paterson said that he hoped that decisions relating to future duck shooting seasons will be more transparent.

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