

Peter **RYAN** MP

Leader of The Nationals

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DUCK SEASON WELCOME: RYAN

Leader of The Nationals and Member for Gippsland South, Peter Ryan, has welcomed the government's decision to have a three-month duck hunting season in Victoria in 2005.

Mr Ryan said duck hunting was a legitimate past time with significant economic and social benefits for regional Victoria.

"Duck shooters are unfairly portrayed by animal liberationists and some sections of the media," Mr Ryan said.

"The overwhelming majority of shooters are keen sportsmen and women who fulfil all the legal obligations and enjoy their hunting. Many are members of sporting shooters and field and game groups which are heavily involved in environmental programs to improve wetlands areas and enhance the development of their sport.

"City-based shooters who travel to regional areas to participate in the sport also make a contribution to the economies of country towns.

"At the same time, learning how to safely handle a gun is an important aspect of country life and the tradition of duck hunting brings many families closer together."

Mr Ryan said the Bracks Government should be developing a more scientific approach to the management of duck shooting in the state.

"Rather than get caught up in the emotion of the issue on an annual basis, we need a more scientifically-based management approach to the sport," Mr Ryan said.

"It would provide more certainty to hunters and the hundreds of businesses which support the industry.

"However, I congratulate the Minister this year for resisting the pressure from the more radical elements of his own party to do the right thing by regional Victorians."

Mr Ryan said protestors would be well advised to stay away from wetland areas during the duck hunting season.

"Their attempts to grab headlines with protest activities in wetlands only serves to endanger their own lives, along with those of hunters and emergency services personnel," Mr Ryan said.

"They should accept the umpire's decision and allow duck hunters to enjoy their legal past time without being unduly harassed."