

'NOISE A HUGE ISSUE' Shift workers, kids that need to sleep during day struggle Peace collateral damage of duck season

Gabriel Rule

SOME Bendigo region residents living near wetlands are waking to "anxiety, stress and dread" with the opening of the 2024 duck hunting season.

Kerrie Allen, a spokesperson for Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting, said the season, which opened on April 10, represented two months where many residents' "lives and livelihoods" were interrupted.

"There are a lot of people that are very concerned about threatened [bird] species," she said.

"Aside from that ... it is very intrusive."

A recent poll commissioned by RVOTDS found 40 per cent of respondents lived within 3km of bird shooting, or within audible distance from a gun shot. Others lived closer, Ms Allen said.

"The noise is a huge issue.

"We've got a lot of shift workers that need to sleep during the day or people working from home ... they're

impacted. And we've got young families, young kids that need to sleep during the day ... they're impacted."

Hunters trespassing onto private property was also a concern, Ms Allen said.

"There's unfortunately not always respect shown by hunters for property boundaries," she said.

"We quite often see no

camping signs that have been peppered with shotgun pellets.

"And people are fearful ... fearful for their stock, fearful for their pets, for their kids."

In August 2023, a parliamentary inquiry called for

recreational duck hunting to be banned across all Victorian public and private land from 2024.

The recommendation was rejected after Premier Jacinta Allan met ministers in late January.

"Duck hunting is a legitimate activity - but more than

that, it supports regional communities and economies," Minister for Outdoor Recreation Steve Dimopoulos said in January.

"Our position has not changed and we're supporting recreational duck and quail hunting to continue in a safe, sustainable and re-

sponsible way with minimal harm to our environment."

Premier Allan denied personal and union links influenced a decision to continue allowing duck hunting.

The state government would close 32 wetlands, including Greens Lake and Lake Stewart near Bendigo, to hunting for the 2024 season to prevent losses or disturbance to threatened species and breeding waterbirds.

Previously, Loddon Shire councillor Dan Straub said

he trusted the findings of the parliamentary inquiry, which heard the views of more than 10,000 Victorians and organisations, was based in "science and the data sets".

"[Advocates] would like you to think that the whole 10,000 were against the hunting practice, but that's not the case," Cr Straub said.

The 2024 duck season will open at 8am on Wednesday, April 10 and close 30 minutes after sunset on Wednesday, June 5.

- *with AAP*