

Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria)

A fair go for responsible people.



Game Management Authority
Level 16, 121 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE Vic 3000

DUCK SEASON 2017 SUBMISSION

The SSAA Victoria is grateful for the opportunity to make this submission. The organization has over thirty six thousand members, of which eighty percent considers themselves hunters. Many hunt duck and consequently are a significant contributor to the economic welfare of many Victorian rural communities.

In respect of this submission, it is important to note that, *“The Victorian duck season is prescribed under the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012 to occur every year between the third Saturday in March and the second Monday in June. Daily bag limits and hunting methods are also set.”* Further, it is the position of the SSAA Victoria that while relevant Ministers have powers under the Wildlife Act 1975 to modify bag limits, season dates and timings, they should not be used routinely; and as detailed below, certainly the current and predicted environmental conditions for 2016-17 militate against any use of such powers.

Further, the SSAA Victoria endorses the assertions in the GMA’s *Considerations for the 2017 duck season* paper that i) *‘Victoria’s game ducks are highly resilient to harvesting and have strong powers of recovery in response to harvesting and favourable environmental conditions’*; and ii) *‘Adaptively regulated duck hunting has been shown not to put at risk the conservation status of game ducks’*.

With respect to the 2017 season, long-term rainfall deficiencies have reduced across much of Australia with 2016 being a comparatively high rainfall year. Both anecdotal and *on-the-ground* feedback indicates that the prevailing environmental conditions can readily sustain a full bag limit and season. For example, while drier conditions in Queensland are likely to persist, historically, drier conditions in northern Australia result in greater bird populations in Victoria.

Perhaps paradoxically, while the Kingsford *et al* survey indicates that a reduction in birds has been detected, in actuality there is such an abundance of water that bird populations have migrated to areas not covered by the survey. That is to say, bird populations have not actually decreased but merely dispersed more widely, likely due to availability of habitat.



Overall, though the *index of waterbird abundance* continues to show a decrease in bird numbers while the *wetland area index* has recovered, the reality is likely to be that the aerial survey has simply failed to detect birds in abundance, in non-flight path areas.

Further, the relevant index shows a rebound in waterbird breeding, mainly concentrated in the Murray-Darling basin. It means that when the temperatures rise in summer, a significant proportion of the bird populations are likely to migrate south to Victoria. Consequently, it is the position of the SSAA Victoria that in relation to below average predicted rainfall, as indicated in the *Considerations* paper, it is not a significant consideration and certainly provides no basis for reducing any aspect of the 2017 duck season.

As indicated in previous submissions, the SSAA Victoria also supports more extensive research into wild duck populations and habitats being undertaken in future years. Without high quality data the annual decision regarding the parameters around duck season, e.g. bag limits and season length, will continue to be a major challenge for responsible authorities.

In conclusion, based on the GMA's own set of *Considerations* which indicate that there are no valid reasons **not** to have a full season and a full bag limit, the SSAA Victoria strongly supports the proclamation of a full duck season in 2017.

J Wegman
CEO

15 December 2016