



Select Committee on Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements

Hearing Date: 3 July 2023

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

Received Date: 27 July 2023

1. THE CHAIR Page no. 39-40

Question asked to Beth Jones:

The *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan* – I have a memory of our briefing. Someone mentioned there had been an evaluation done. Is it correct?

Beth JONES: The current plan is still underway, so it is chapter 2, if you like. There was a chapter 1. There was a review undertaken of the first chapter.

Mark SANDIFORD: The review sits in a brief to the minister, and we need permission to get that across just to check for executive privilege and so forth. But it was reviewed for the Minister for Agriculture at the time.

The CHAIR: Can we have a copy of it?

Response:

An internal review of the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan (SHAP) 2016-2020 was undertaken and presented as a briefing to the then Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Jaclyn Symes MP. The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions has requested advice on the release of the brief, and will communicate the outcome with the Committee Secretariat as soon as possible.

2. THE CHAIR Page no. 41

Question asked to Beth JONES:

Is there anything you have got that would help us understand what other sorts of economic activity occur in regional Victoria, specifically relating to recreation and/or tourism and its economic effects?

Beth JONES: Tourism is within our department, so I am very happy to take that on notice and find out to what extent they have information.

Response:

There is significant information available on the economic contribution of tourism to the Victorian economy at: <https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/tourism-industry-resources/tourism-industry-research/economic-significance> Additional data on the contribution of tourism can be obtained at: <https://djsir-data.github.io/tourism-content/>.

With respect to recreation, Victoria's strategic framework *Active Victoria 2022-2026* clearly identifies the economic and social benefits of sport and active recreation and is available at: <https://sport.vic.gov.au/publications-and-resources/strategies/active-victoria-strategic-framework-sport-and-recreation>

3. Jeff BOURMAN Page no. 42

Question asked to Mark SANDIFORD:

There is some research being conducted into a sustainability window that will include a minimum population below which there should be no harvesting of animals occurring. So the question is: where is that at, who is doing it and will it be publicly released to the best of your knowledge?

Response:

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) commissioned an independent expert to research and develop population models for Victorian game duck species.

The research was commissioned to inform the identification of sustainable rates of harvest of game ducks and guidelines for setting the annual recreational hunting arrangements, and to support the development of a game duck adaptive harvest management framework and strategy. This research contributes to action 3.2 of the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2021-2024.

The research was completed on 6 July 2023 and is under consideration by DJSIR.

4. THE CHAIR Page no. 44

Question asked to Beth JONES:

Maybe on notice, if you are able to have a dig around: are there any other sorts of recreational activities in Victoria that would have a similar regulatory framework that requires the exclusion of other persons from a location for the purposes of undertaking that activity? We have heard a lot about fishing; I am

not aware that there is an exclusion zone around fishers, for example. But maybe on notice if you could have a think about –

Beth JONES: Certainly, Chair.

The CHAIR: if there is anything else that sort of has a similar framework around it, that would be useful.

Response:

Under section 7 of the *Major Events Act 2009*, Major Sporting Event Orders can identify major sporting events which exclude non-participants and unauthorised persons from entering sporting competition spaces. Section 67 of the *Major Events Act 2009* makes it an offence for someone to enter a sporting competition space within an event venue unless the person is participating in an event, involved in controlling or managing an event, or has sufficient authorisation to enter a sporting competition space. Examples of major sporting events are the Melbourne Marathon and Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, whereby non-participants or unauthorised persons are prohibited from entering roads being used for the events.

Similarly, amendments made to the *Racing Act 1958* by the *Racing Amendment (Unauthorised Access) Act 2023* make it an offence for a person to enter or remain in a restricted racing area during a race-meeting or official trial unless they have the appropriate authorisation or permission to enter or are engaged with the management or conduct of the meeting. These amendments are due to commence on 31 December 2023, unless proclaimed earlier.

Notices of Activity Exclusion Zones made under section 208(2) of the *Marine Safety Act 2010* allow the manager of a waterway to prohibit waterway users from entering specified waters for a period of time in order to maintain safe marine operations, such as for the Victorian Sculling Association 2023 Winter Sculling Series events held on the Yarra River.

Also, clause 16 of the Vessel Operating and Zoning Rules made under section 15(2) of the *Marine Act 1988* excludes people from bathing within 50 metres of a boat launching ramp that is being used or is about to be used.

5. Michael GALEA Page no. 45

Question asked to Rachaele MAY/Beth JONES:

And I understand that there are education modules, online training modules, as part of this. Do you have any data as to how many times they have been used?

Response:

The Game Management Authority has advised the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions that it launched 8 online education modules on 23 June 2023, under action 1.3 of the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2021 – 2024, which states:

1.3 Enhance hunter education – by developing online video learning modules for game hunters wanting to increase their knowledge of hunting laws, responsible hunting methods and firearm safety

As of 18 July 2023, these modules had been viewed 1,178 times. A communications strategy promoting these modules commenced on 25 July 2023.

6. Michael GALEA Page no. 46

Question asked to Beth JONES/Mark SANDIFORD:

In that document you refer to their preliminary discussions with, as it was, the DJPR in terms of a ballot or permit system being introduced. Can you report on the status of those discussions, and have they led anywhere?

Response:

The Game Management Authority (GMA) has advised the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) that it held preliminary discussions with Parks Victoria on the establishment of a ballot or permit system.

The GMA advises that it considers that the most useful application of balloting is at specific sites where high hunter densities could be problematic.

The opening weekend of the duck season is the main concern with respect to high hunter densities. Hunter densities are generally lower throughout the remainder of the season and are not considered problematic. Instead of a ballot or permit system, reducing hunter densities over the opening weekend was addressed by temporarily introducing a mid-week opening (Wednesday) of the duck season and later start times for that first week of the duck season (Wednesday – Sunday).

These measures reduced some hunters' ability to attend a mid-week opening due to work and other commitments and later start times disincentivise participation as ducks are generally harvested in the period around sunrise and prior to the 8am start. These measures are considered to have been successful in lowering hunter density at the start of the season.

Recently, section 86 of the *Wildlife Act 1975* has been used at the start of each duck season to set the mid-week game duck hunting season opening and later start times to address hunter density. DJSIR will continue to consult with the GMA as to alternatives to this current practice when considering the remake of the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012.

7. Michael GALEA Page no. 46

Question asked to Beth JONES:

Recommendation 1.2 of that Pegasus report talks about game-hunting licences and the need for regulatory changes to enable this. Has there been any progress towards the implementation of them?

Response:

Minimum mandatory game licence requirements, such as knowledge and proficiency testing, have been recommended by the Game Management Authority and are under consideration by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions as part of the remaking of the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012.

8. Michael GALEA Page no. 46

Question asked to Beth JONES:

Recommendation 3.1 discusses the development of an accountability framework in relation to duck hunting. Does this include the prioritisation of cultural heritage?

Response:

There is an agreement between government departments and agencies which recognises the role of all relevant government agencies in game hunting and game management. This enables a common understanding of priorities, responsibilities, resource sharing and dispute resolution in relation to the implementation of duck hunting as it is currently regulated.

The agreement is not intended to regulate the behaviour of hunters or the prioritisation of cultural heritage but to enhance coordination between government departments and agencies.

Aboriginal heritage is referenced on the GMA website noting the presence of Aboriginal places and objects at some hunting locations and reminds readers that they are protected by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).

9. Bev McARTHUR Page no. 47

Question asked to Beth JONES:

The sustainable hunting action plan includes a lot of funding for the *Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy*. We heard from Mr Carter from the Dja Dja Wurrung about how important this is, and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations wrote at length about this strategy in their submission. How much are we spending on this?

Beth JONES: Again, Mrs McArthur, it is difficult to quarantine exactly how much is spent on that just given that some of it goes across different activities. What I can say in terms of some specific costs is that as a part of the SHAP, the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan*, there have been some grants provided to traditional owner corporations for a range of pilot projects. There has been in the order of about \$1 million allocated to the implementation of those projects so far.

Bev McARTHUR: Can you give us on notice the details of all of that? And also the outcomes?

Response:

In 2022, \$965,000 of Sustainable Hunting Action Plan funding was provided to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to enter into grant agreements with four Traditional Owner Corporations to deliver Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy pilot projects.

In 2022/23, DEECA entered into grant agreements with:

- Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) to pilot the development of governance and management structures to move towards a cultural landscape management approach to the Corop Wetlands Complex. Since the commencement of its pilot project, TLaWC has worked with partners to undertake a co-design process to better understand each other's contributions, assumptions, and ways of working.
- DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) to generate employment for Traditional Owners as environmental monitors on their own Country and develop collaborative management strategies that incorporate Traditional Owner knowledge, practice, and involvement.

Since the commencement of its pilot project, DJAARA has noxious weed mapping and restoration planning in Clunes Common State Forest. DJAARA has recently advertised a position for an Officer to support the program.

- First People Of The Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (FPMMAC) to employ a Wildlife Officer to support greater understanding of game and wildlife populations and management on Country and investigate potential commercial opportunities. Since the commencement of its pilot project, FPMMAC has focused its work on the biocultural significant Country of Neds Corner. FPMMAC is currently advertising for a Wildlife Officer to support the project, establish monitoring, plans, and investigate commercial opportunities.
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) to develop management actions to improve habitat and conserve game species and upgrade facilities in line with cultural heritage protection principles. Since the commencement of its pilot project, GLaWAC has focused on cultural heritage assessments and investigated how infrastructure may be limiting activities or resulting in damage to cultural heritage at Dowd Morass State Game Reserve. GLaWAC will commence assessments at Jack Smith Lake State Game Reserve to better understand the story of the area, and how it can be protected and managed.

10. Sheena WATT Page no. 52

Question asked to Beth JONES:

You have said that there is this \$1 million investment. Is there anything else that you would want us to know about with respect to your traditional owner investment?

Response:

In 2022 the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions provided Sustainable Hunting Action Plan funding to the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations to coordinate a Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy Co-Governance Group. The first meeting of the Co-Governance Group will be held in late 2023 and will support communication and shared learnings between Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy pilot project leads.

11. Georgie PURCELL Page no. 50**Question asked to Beth JONES:**

You might need to take this one on notice, but are you able to supply us all details on funding from the department for projects related to native bird shooting? For example, there has been partial funding of the Arthur Rylah Institute report from 1 July 2014, when the Game Management Authority was formed, to date.

Response:

Under the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2021-2024, approximately \$1.64m has been allocated to actions related to recreational native bird hunting.

SHAP 2021-2024 Action	Funding
Waterfowl and quail wounding reduction action plans	\$30,000
Waterfowl wounding monitoring	\$240,000
Quail abundance monitoring	\$400,000
Game duck abundance monitoring program	\$765,000
Develop game duck adaptive harvest management framework and strategy	\$38,288.67 spent to date
Sustainable hunting grant program – projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hen houses construction and installation - \$48,134 • Research investigating diversity and abundance of waterfowl in restored wetlands in western Victoria compared to drained wetlands - \$74,500 • Education programs for school students about local biodiversity at Heart Morass and Connewarre Wetlands - \$40,000 	\$162,634
Total	\$1,635,922.67

In addition, \$500,000 was provided to the Game Management Authority in 2020-21 to conduct game duck abundance monitoring to inform adaptive harvest management.

12. Bev McARTHUR Page no. 53**Question asked to Beth JONES:**

Whether goose hunting is occurring in Sweden and Denmark, and how does that work? There are no bag limits or limits on hunting.

Response:

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions cannot answer definitively in relation to Swedish or Danish regulatory hunting requirements. However, our understanding is that in both Sweden and Denmark goose hunting is permitted under regulation.

In Sweden, requirements appear to vary across regions and certain goose species can be hunted in designated regions with a hunting license during specified hours of the day between August and January each year. The season period varies by species. There is no daily bag limit for certain species, but there are restrictions on hunting methods in place. Licensed hunters appear to be required to undertake mandatory theory and proficiency testing.

In Denmark, it appears that certain goose species may be hunted with a hunting license during specified daily hours between September and January each year. The season dates can vary across regions and according to species. There is no daily bag limit for many goose species, but there are restrictions on hunting methods. Also, licensed hunters appear to be required to undertake mandatory theory and proficiency testing.

Additional Question on notice from Committee members:

13. Question asked:

More details of the ‘sustainability window’ research – background, progress, draft and expected completion date.

Response:

See the response to question 3.