

A GUIDE TO PREPARING INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS FOR INQUIRIES INTO THE HUNTING OF NATIVE BIRDS

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Individuals who hunt, or support those who do, should consider making a submission to the inquiries in both South Australia (Select Committee on the Hunting of Native Birds) and Victoria (Inquiry into Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements). We as a community need to ensure that people retain the right to participate in and enjoy the benefits of harvesting wild duck and quail - sustainable, free-range, organic, and healthy wild food. A potential ban on duck and quail hunting will empower animal rights and anti-hunting groups to then target all types of hunting (including fishing) and even further restrict access to certain firearms for pest control.

The terms of reference for the South Australian inquiry are:

That a Select Committee of the Legislative Council be appointed to inquire into and report on the Hunting of Native Birds, with particular reference to:

1. *Community values and perspectives;*
2. *Cultural, social, and recreational aspects;*
3. *Sustainability, environmental and animal welfare aspects of native bird hunting;*
4. *Economic considerations;*
5. *Perspectives of First Nations;*
6. *How native bird hunting is managed in other jurisdictions; and*
7. *Any other relevant matters.*

Written submissions are due by Friday, 19 May 2023. They should be addressed to the Secretary to the Committee, C/- Parliament House, GPO 572, Adelaide 5001, or by e-mail at scnativebirds@parliament.sa.gov.au .

The terms of reference for the Victorian inquiry are:

A select committee of nine members be established to inquire into, consider and report by 31 August 2023 on Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements, including but not limited to:

- (a) the operation of annual native bird hunting seasons;*
- (b) arrangements in other Australian jurisdictions;*

(c) their environmental sustainability and impact on amenity;

(d) their social and economic impact.

Written submissions are due by Monday, 8 May 2023. You can make a submission by completing the [online form](#) or email nativebirdhunting@parliament.vic.gov.au or in written form addressed to: Parliament of Victoria, Select Committee on Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements, Parliament House, Spring Street, East Melbourne Vic 3002 3002

To create a good submission, you should consider the following:

- Clearly address some or all the terms of reference.
- Make sure your points raised are relevant to the terms of reference and highlight your own perspective.
- Be concise with what you write. Your submission can be as short as one page if addressing one or two of the terms of reference but make sure your submission is no longer than four to five pages if you address all the terms of reference.
- You should begin with a short introduction about yourself and why hunting (or your support of hunting) is important to you.
- Emphasise your key points so that they are clear.
- Don't be afraid to outline what you see could be issues surrounding native bird hunting but then state how problems can be addressed. The committee will hopefully look to submissions for ideas to then make recommendations. For example, to minimise the chance of wounding, suggest this can be addressed with the creation of a waterfowl wounding reduction action plan. This would ensure the potential for wounding is at levels of other wild harvest activities (like fishing) which are acceptable to the community.
- If you want to attach documents to your submission, only include documents that directly relate to your key points
- And lastly, only include information you would be happy to see published online.

Talking points

To help you come up with ideas for your submission, some of the following points may help. You do not need to use all the points. Just remember to add your own perspective where you can to the points you choose to use. For example, how much you spend on average per season, what conservation work you do, and explain in detail your own social and health benefits.

Economic benefits:

- Employment opportunities at hunting equipment suppliers and other local businesses.
- A boost to the rural economies through tourism - money spent by hunters in rural areas.
- Revenue generation through the sale of licenses, equipment, and ammunition.
- A 2018 federal government report into the economic and social impacts of recreational hunting and sports shooting estimated a gross expenditure of \$169 million in South Australia and \$512 million in Victoria, with a total estimated contribution to the state's Gross Domestic Product of \$177 million in South Australia and \$638 million in Victoria. Regarding employment, the total gross contribution to FTE employment was determined to be 1,665 full-time jobs in South Australia and 5,679 full-time jobs in Victoria.
- A 2020 report into the economic contribution of recreational hunting in Victoria, reported duck (\$65m) and quail hunting (\$22m) had an \$87 million gross contribution to the state product during 2019. Both Duck and Quail hunting provided 789 full-time jobs. This was during a period when the duck seasons were heavily restricted in both season length and bag size which limited hunting opportunities and spending.

Cultural benefits:

- Preservation of traditional practices and knowledge.
- Strengthening social bonds within communities.
- How hunting connects people to their heritage and identity.
- The role hunting plays in preserving knowledge and practices.

Environmental and conservation benefits:

- Hunters help conserve wetlands and waterfowl habitats.
- Responsible hunting practices contribute to conservation efforts.
- Regulation and monitoring systems are put into place by authorities to ensure sustainability.
- Hunters feel empowered by conservation efforts, and by playing a role in protecting endangered species.

Social benefits and community building:

- Hunting brings people together, creating a sense of community.
- There are increased opportunities for social interactions during hunting trips.
- The establishment of mentorship relationships between experienced hunters and newcomers.

- Hunting promotes bonding between family members and friends and provides a sense of community.
- Hunting fosters respect for nature.
- Creates additional pathways to expand social networks.

Health benefits:

- Improved physical fitness - physical activity releases endorphins.
- Improved mental health - connecting with nature and the release of endorphins have positive effects on mental health.
- Increased exposure to sunlight and fresh air. Less screen time.
- A 2018 federal government report into the economic and social impacts of recreational hunting and sports shooting determined that hunters/shooters had higher physical activity levels and higher levels of well-being than the general population.

Management of gamebird hunting:

- Duck hunting occurs in most states/territories under different regimes (SA, TAS, Vic, NT – open seasons, NSW, WA, and Qld - pest mitigation).
- Some states treat ducks as pests and others, including SA, as a valuable wild food resource. As a resource people will want to conserve them and their habitats whereas treating them as pests reduce their value.
- Open seasons are set at sustainable levels based on environmental conditions and population data.
- A move towards Adaptive Harvest Management will ensure the sustainability of hunting seasons and ensure decision-making is free of political interference.
- Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) is the maximum possible harvest that will not exceed annual recruitment into a population. In simple terms, hunting is sustainable when the harvest of the species does not exceed the production of the species. For abundant species such as duck and quail, the total continental harvest is only a fraction of a percentage of the total continental production.
- We currently focus on regulating harvest by placing controls on hunting efforts (season length and bag limits). In the context of gamebirds, spatial control (another way to reduce hunting effort) exists naturally. We have large areas of non-hunting zones with only small areas available for hunting.

Other key points and statements

- Hunting is not a sport; it is a hobby just like fishing where people seek to gather food for family and friends.
- Gamebird hunting is highly regulated and departmental staff check on compliance.

- Compliance with the regulations has always been high due to the generally high standard of hunter behaviour.
- Animal welfare is a constant consideration and hunters always seek a clean kill. Hunters undertake clay target shooting to practice and improve their skills. Hunters use techniques to bring ducks closer (decoys, calls) to minimise the potential for wounding. Hunters try to dispatch any wounded birds as fast as they can.
- (I am, We are) proud to be part of a responsible community that has a history of adapting to the issues of the day, such as:
 - preventing wetlands from being drained in the 1960s,
 - ensuring gamebird hunting does not occur in the breeding season,
 - supporting scientific research to better understand gamebird distribution and abundance,
 - supporting change to non-toxic shot to prevent lead poisoning in waterfowl,
 - supporting the introduction of the waterfowl identification test to protect vulnerable species,
 - participating in pre-season gamebird surveys and bag surveys that assist in setting sustainable harvests,
 - participating in (or raising funds) for wetland conservation projects, and
 - adhering to a responsible and ethical code of conduct that respects animal welfare.

What else can you do?

Visit your local MPs (especially the Labor)

The two most important things that hunters and supporters who care about a future for gamebird hunting in South Australia can do are to make a submission to the inquiry and visit their local MP.

Engagement works. Our biggest problem is that when it comes to the issues that affect us, emails and visits from our opponents outnumber those from shooters and hunters by a significant margin. It is not necessarily that more people oppose our interests than support them, but that is the impression that our elected MPs are left with. Opponents are organised and work hard to try and take our outdoor pursuits away.

For every person who writes to, calls, or meets with their MP about an issue, there is an assumption that many more feel the same way. Your MP cares about what the people who can vote for (or against) them think.

For the most part, MPs are accessible and interested in engaging with their local constituents.

Long-term shooting and hunting interests need as many supporters as possible across political parties and interests.

Organise a meeting with your MP

In South Australia, you can find your local MPs by entering your postcode, electorate or address on a Find my MP tool on the Conservation and Hunting Alliance of South Australia (CHASA) website [CLICK HERE TO SEARCH](#)

In Victoria, you can find your local MPs by entering your address on the Parliament of Victoria website. [CLICK HERE TO SEARCH](#)

Your email to the MPs office should request a meeting stating the following:

- Who you are.
- What you do in your community (e.g., active in clubs, schools, church, etc.).
- Purpose of your meeting.
- Your availability.
- Who will be in the meeting, e.g., are you bringing a like-minded friend? (It is recommended that you bring someone with you for several reasons. It shows the MP that you are not a 'lone voice' and gives another perspective to draw on.).
- If you do not hear back within a couple of weeks, it is appropriate to send a gentle reminder.

The MP might come back saying they are unavailable for a meeting. This is not unusual. If this occurs, do not take it personally; MPs are busy people. Alternatively, you should ask to meet with a member of their staff.

Preparing for a meeting

It is essential to plan for your meeting to ensure that you get your main points across – you may only have 15-30 minutes or so and you want that time to count.

What three points do you want the MP (or their staff) to remember from the meeting?

With the Select Committee on the Hunting of Native Birds Inquiry, you might want to think about points such as:

- What does the ability to go hunting mean to you and your family?
- Concern that the Select Committee has been set up to provide an excuse for the government to ban duck hunting.
- You understand that hunting is not everyone's cup of tea, but other people not liking it is not a good reason to stop you from doing it if you are responsible and the practice is well-regulated.
- What do you do with the game meat? What is your favourite recipe? Who do you share it with? Let them know that hunting is for the table just like fishing.

Hunting organisations are putting together factual and political arguments to support gamebird hunting. Individual hunters and supporters need to put the human arguments together so we can make MPs understand that this is personal for you and your friends and family.

Try to listen as much as you speak. Using the opportunity just to make sure you are heard can be tempting, but while you have your MP in front of you, be sure to ask them questions. Ask what they think about the issue and what they will do about it.

You do not have to be an expert on every topic. If they ask you technical or very specific questions, it is okay to say you do not know and that you would be happy to follow up with the appropriate answer/resources later.

Follow up

After your meeting, email the MP (or staff) again, thank them for their time and re-iterate the main points made in the meeting.