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## Hunters slam "biased" committee report

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Victoria's leading recreational shooting body has slammed a report tabled today in the Victorian Parliament. "We were reluctantly expecting this to be a bit of a stitch-up, " SSAA Victoria's David Laird said. "We didn't expect just how blatantly biased and farcical the recommendations would be".

The report from the Select Committee into the Recreational Hunting of Native Birds in Victoria has recommended that the Victorian Government ban duck and quail hunting; the primary rationale for this recommendation is on environmental grounds. "That simply doesn't reconcile with the evidence that the Committee heard," Mr Laird said. "The eminent, independent experts unequivocally told the Select Committee that regulated game hunting in Victoria does not threaten the sustainability of native game birds".

The other reason given by the report for its recommendation is animal welfare. SSAA Victoria acknowledged that this is an issue that has been addressed through a comprehensive plan. "The Waterfowl Wounding Reduction Action Plan was developed using the world's best practice by a working group chaired by a leading animal welfare academic, and that included broad representation from animal welfare, environmental and hunting groups," Mr Laird said. "It is a credible plan that will ensure that the animal welfare standards in duck hunting exceed community expectations".

SSAA Victoria also accused the Government of exhibiting a clear bias regarding the conduct of the Select Committee. "The Government's contribution introducing the select committee to parliament was a disgraceful grab bag of misinformation," Mr Laird said. "On top of that, the select committee gave anti-hunting activists twenty per cent more hearings than pro-hunting voices and, on hearing days, it allowed the anti-hunting activists to be the last speakers for the day seventy-five per cent of the time".

Government departments also withheld critical information from the inquiry, "DJSIR was asked, twice, on notice for critical research about sustainability and refused to release it," Mr Laird said. "DEECA likewise has clear evidence that the Hardhead should be removed from the threatened species list; its scientific advisory committee finalised a report on this in early August, and that was not provided to the select committee".

SSAA Victoria has called on the Government to work with the hunting community to reform duck hunting. "The framework for meaningful change is contained in the Waterfowl Wounding Reduction Action Plan and has been sitting with the Government for a year now," Mr Laird said. "The Government talks the talk on basing decisions on clear evidence and being committed to working respectfully with stakeholders in outdoor recreation: here is their chance to walk the walk".

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*SSAA Victoria is the leading body representing the interests of Victoria's recreational shooting and hunting community. The Association was established in 1948 and has 44,000 members in Victoria.*

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