

Mr N Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Legislative Assembly of Queensland
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE Q 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 2 April 2003 forwarding a copy of an E-Petition tabled in the Parliament on 1 April 2003 regarding a ban on duck and quail shooting season.

Concerns have been raised about the ecological sustainability of recreational hunting, impacts of hunting on non-target species, contamination of the environment by lead shot and the appropriateness of hunting as a sport in our society. Animal welfare also continues to be a major consideration in certain areas of the community.

Alternative views, supporting the recreational harvest as sustainable, humane and necessary for the protection of agricultural crops, have also been expressed.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) determines whether or not a harvest period should occur based primarily on ecological sustainability, although animal welfare concerns are also considered. At present, the ecological impacts of recreational harvesting are not considered significant, especially when compared with the impact of land clearing and wetland reclamation on waterfowl populations.

The QPWS has funded two independent studies into the accumulation of lead shot on waterfowl and wetland areas. Although these studies suggest that the impacts of lead shot on waterfowl and wetland species is minimal, the QPWS has, as a precautionary measure, imposed a prohibition on the use of lead shot in three areas and will phase-out the use of lead shot completely within in two years.

The Duck and Quail Ministerial Advisory Committee consists of representatives with diverse views including conservation and welfare groups and hunting and shooting organisations. The QPWS licenses hunters involved in recreational duck and quail hunting in Queensland, sets strict guidelines in terms of how and when hunting occurs and closely monitors hunting activities each season. The Government administers this program but provides no subsidy to fund any activities associated with this harvest.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) following advice from the Duck and Quail Ministerial Advisory Committee has decided an open season on ducks and quails will not be declared this year because of the potential impact on the birds' sustainability. The Duck and Quail Conservation Plan allowed for an annual duck and quail season as long as rigorous scientific process indicated conservation of the birds would not be unduly compromised. All the evidence this year points to a significant decline in the populations of ducks and quails, and the climatic conditions also indicate that they may take a year to recover.

Despite recent rain, Queensland still has 89 shires that are drought-declared, and still in the grip of the worst drought this State has suffered in 100 years. The science that we have been using for the last twelve years says that there should not be a season this year. The science used to make decisions about the season included comprehensive population surveys, surface water in lakes, dams and wetlands, statistics on the numbers taken in previous seasons and climatic conditions, especially rainfall.

At present, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the Northern Territory continue to have a duck and quail hunting season. New South Wales and Western Australia allow the shooting of ducks under damage mitigation permits and the New South Wales Government is currently considering the findings of a scientific panel review which discusses the re-opening of a season for waterfowl.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

DEAN WELLS
Minister for Environment