

1st October 2014



Ms Jane Tovey
Legislation Unit
Land Management Policy Division
Department of Environment and Primary Industries
PO Box 500
East Melbourne 8002

Dear Ms Tovey,

Regulatory Impact Statement of the Wildlife (State Game Reserve) Regulations 2014

The Association's submission regarding the Regulatory Impact Statement for the Wildlife (State Game Reserve) Regulations 2014 is attached for your consideration.

There are several issues, of a major consequence to our members. We would welcome the opportunity to speak to the submission.

Yours faithfully,

Jack Wegman
Chief Executive Officer
SSAA (Vic)



Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Victoria Ltd

Regulatory Impact Statement Wildlife (State Game Reserves) Regulations 2014

September 2014

Contacting the Submitter

This submission was prepared by Jack Wegman (Chief Executive Officer) on behalf of the Sporting Shooters Association Australia (Victoria)

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Summary and Recommendations

The Sporting Shooters Association Australia (Victoria) makes the following recommendations:-

1. State Game Reserves:- The effective and sound management of reserves is essential and therefore these regulations are required and necessary.
2. Regulation 8, Traditional Owners:- The Association believes that no-one should be exempt from these regulations when using modern arms. All hunters in State Game Reserves should be treated equally under the Regulations.
3. Regulation 9, Access to Reserves:- A consultation process should be developed for any proposed closures of reserves that are deemed necessary.
4. Regulation 13, Interfering with animals:- All reserves should be open to the hunting of game species with some limitations.
5. Regulation 15, Fishing:- There should be no restriction to fishing within reserves.
6. Regulation 17, Dogs, prohibited except in specific circumstances:- There should be access to all reserves of gundogs during the game seasons.
7. Regulation 21, Collection and removal of dog faeces:- It is unenforceable and impractical.
8. Regulation 47, Lighting, kindling or maintaining fires restricted:- There should be an amendment to this regulation to revert to the longstanding camp fire restrictions in remote areas.
9. Regulation 50 and 51, Road and track closures and parking:- There should be prior consultation regarding access and road and track closures if they are deemed necessary.
10. Regulation 58, Blinds, Hides or Tree stands:- A phasing in of the restriction on the use of local flora for construction should be over three years, to 2017.
11. Schedules 1, 2 and 3:- Hunting of duck, deer and quail in all reserves during game seasons by game licensees should be permitted.
12. Pest species control:- Serious consideration should be given to allowing the taking of pest and feral species by game hunters during the relevant seasons.

About Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria)

The Sporting Shooters Association Australia (Victoria) Ltd is a public company with 33,000 members.

Aims and objectives of Sporting Shooters Association Australia (Victoria) are:

- to promote and encourage competitive target shooting and practice shooting with a view to developing proficient and safe use of firearms
- to promote and encourage ethical hunting and field shooting and related ancillary activities
- to promote and advocate game fauna conservation and to promote a better understanding between members, land-holders, regulatory bodies, other interested groups and general public
- to promote and facilitate the development of knowledge of the history of firearms and ammunition development and design
- to promote and advocate the rights of firearms owners to legislative and regulatory bodies and to the general public

Key Points and Discussion

1. State Game Reserve management.

The Association is of the view that these regulations are required to aid in ensuring that management of the State Game Reserves is sound and that persons who don't comply with the Regulations can be held accountable.

2. Regulation 8, Traditional Owners.

While general exemptions have been negotiated with different Governments over many years, no-one should be exempt from these regulations when using modern arms. All hunters in State Game Reserves should be treated equally under the Regulations.

The aim of these regulations is to protect and enhance game species and to facilitate hunting for legal hunters during the legislated game seasons. No group or individual should be enabled by these regulations, to harvest at any time without limit, potentially to the detriment of game and other wildlife species.

3. Regulation 9, Access to Reserves

Access to an area may on occasion need to be prohibited by the Secretary. However prior consultation should be undertaken on any significant restrictions to access, and agreement on such a closure should be reached. Where feasible, a 'closures' panel should be considered. If not, then the Game Management Authority (or a committee thereof) should support any significant closure areas

(prior to closure, with 'significant' areas including all areas of say, greater than one hectare).

4. Regulation 13, Interfering with Animals.

The Association is of the view that all State Game Reserves should be open to all licensed hunters for duck, deer and quail during the appropriate legal game hunting seasons. These species are all game and the SGR's are primarily for the hunting and preservation of game species.

Therefore while there are only limited deer and quail numbers in some SGR's, it is unnecessary to limit a small number of reserves for deer and quail hunting.

5. Regulation 15, Fishing.

There is likely to be little adverse impact by fisherman on the environment and the financial benefit to the Victorian State is on a par with hunting. If coupled with the social benefits to the State, it means there is no need for such a regulation.

6. Regulation 17, Dogs, Prohibited except in specific circumstances.

Retrieving, Pointing and Flushing dogs are an essential part of hunting quail, ducks and deer. They should be permitted in all SGR's during the relevant hunting seasons only. This regulation should be written such that "Gun" dogs are permitted during open game seasons and such dogs must always remain under effective control of the owner such that they do not cause a danger or unreasonable disturbance to other persons or wildlife.

7. Regulation 21, Owner or carer to collect and remove dog faeces.

This regulation is likely to prove impractical, unenforceable and should be removed. In the course of hunting with a dog, it is often not possible to be aware when a dog has deposited faeces, nor is it practical to stop the hunt so that faeces can be collected. Such a proposal might however reasonably apply to dogs brought into a reserve under regulation 17, clauses 1 to 3.

Notably, there is no mention of the removal of horse faeces from reserves though horse faeces have a propensity to carry undesirable weed seed. There is likely to be stronger environmental reasons for the removal of horse faeces than dog faeces.

8. Regulation 47, Lighting, kindling or maintaining fires restricted.

Notably in Regulation 2, mention is made of the ability to light a "camp" fire either (a) in a public fireplace or (b) in an area set aside by the Secretary. However, there are very few SGR's with a public fireplace and the Association is unaware of any with a fire area set aside by the Secretary for the purpose.

In effect, it means that one of the central activities of the hunting experience, (social interaction around the camp fire) would not be possible in the majority of State Game Reserves. The regulation needs to be amended such that a fire may be lit in any flat area, within a pit with a three metre hemispherical area around it cleared of fuel. Existing requirements regarding tending and extinguishing should remain.

9. Regulation 50 and 51, Road and track closures and parking.

While it may be appropriate to restrict vehicle access on some tracks at some times, hunting organisations should be consulted prior to any permanent closure.

10. Regulation 58, Blinds, Hides and Tree Stands.

The intent appears to not allow hides, blinds and tree stands to be built from native (local) vegetation.

The Association supports a phasing out of permission to allow hides, blinds and tree stands to be built from native (local) vegetation from 2017 and alternatively supports the use of artificial material for blinds, hides or tree stands.

Regulation 30 (Protection of Flora) would need to be amended to allow for the cutting of material for hides, blinds and tree stands until 2017.

11. Schedules 1, 2 and 3.

These schedules deal with the SGR's where Hog deer, Stubble Quail and Sambar deer may be hunted. As stated earlier in this submission, it would be preferable to allow hunting for Stubble Quail and all deer species in all SGR's subject to the respective seasons.

For this purpose, an open season for deer species in game reserves would be required. Except for Hog deer (April only), 1st June to 30th November for all other deer species is recommended.

12. Pest species control.

There is no formal procedure for controlling pest animals and bird species in SGR's. Pest species especially pigs, cats, foxes, rabbits and Indian Mynahs are very detrimental to conservation values and native wildlife on all State land, including SGR's. It would be practical and desirable to allow the destruction of pest animals within SGR's during the duck, quail and deer seasons, but only by persons with a game licence for duck, quail or deer. Such provisions should be made within these Regulations.