

In turning to the structure and key elements of the bill, clause 4 renames the principal act as the Elimination of Vilification Act to reflect its broadened purpose.

Clause 6 extends the purposes of the principal act to include protection from vilification based on the new protected attributes.

Clause 7 inserts further definitions into the principal act.

Clause 8 inserts new section 3A into the principal act, which extends the attributes protected by the act to race, religious belief or activity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

Clause 10 extends unlawful vilification under the act to the new protected attributes and amends the threshold test for vilification so that it does not exceed the threshold for serious vilification.

Clauses 16 and 17 insert new powers to require information, principally to allow the commissioner to identify a respondent to a complaint. This is an important aspect of the bill in enabling a response to trolling, which is often anonymous.

Clause 18 extends the serious vilification offences under the act to include the new protected attributes. For consistency with other Australian jurisdictions, it amends the fault element to 'intentionally or recklessly' and replaces the subjective test of 'offender knows' with an objective (reasonable person) test.

Clause 22 inserts the relevant transitional provisions, including a renaming savings provision.

In a cohesive society that embraces diversity and supports human rights, it is not okay to vilify someone because of who they are. It is not okay to incite violence and hatred against a group of people. It is not okay to shame, bully and brutalise online. It is not okay to passively condone this culture by doing nothing.

The Racial and Religious Tolerance Amendment Bill 2019 gives Victorians a reason to take personal responsibility for their words and actions. It draws a clear line as to the racist, homophobic and gendered hate speech that we will not tolerate in Victoria.

I conclude with this comment sent to writer and disability advocate Carly Findlay in response to her article on disability slurs in the AFL. It said: 'Seriously? We call them retards because you should never have been born. The sad fact is you were, so why should the able bodied tread on eggshells around you? It is us you should be thanking for the roof over your head the meals that you eat and all the free medical and welfare you get ... the day of the rope draws nearer with every (effing) online whinge post you make'.

The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. I will not be walking past Carly on this.

I commend the bill to the house.

**Mr MELHEM** (Western Metropolitan) (10:11): I move:

That debate on this bill be adjourned for one week.

**Motion agreed to and debate adjourned for one week.**

### Motions

### DUCK HUNTING SEASON

**Mr MEDDICK** (Western Victoria) (10:11): I move:

That this house notes that:

- (1) Australia's native waterbirds are at perilously low numbers;

## MOTIONS

- (2) the current climate emergency is not considered in the environmental assessment of a duck shooting season;
- (3) 1 million species around the world are facing extinction because of human activity;
- (4) the 2019 duck shooting season opening saw the lowest shooter participation rate on record;
- (5) a majority of Victorians do not support duck shooting;
- (6) the alleged economic benefits from duck shooting have been roundly criticised by numerous independent experts;
- (7) Victoria is home to some of the best wetlands in the world that are perfect for recreational activities such as birdwatching, kayaking, picnicking and hiking;
- (8) legislation omits those without a shooting licence to go near the water before a certain time, limiting wetland use for non-shooters;
- (9) nature-based tourism makes a positive contribution to the state's economy and there is appetite for its expansion in regional Victoria;

and calls on the government to stop the 2020 duck shooting season from going ahead.

I rise to move a motion I feel extremely passionate about. For many years now I have joined with a great number of Victorians, people from all walks of life, to bear witness to and to rescue where possible native Australian waterbirds that fall victim to the annual sanctioned slaughter that is duck shooting season in Victoria, a gazetted period that brings together in protest the outrage of the majority of all communities all to satisfy the bloodlust of a minuscule number of people that cling to vacuous arguments that have long lost any currency in a caring community.

Waterbirds in Victoria have suffered tremendously at the hands of shooters but also due to drought across eastern Australia and the scandalous management of water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin resulting in habitat destruction. The most recent annual waterbird survey in eastern Australia makes it clear that the long-term trend is in decline for six of the eight game species of native waterbird and finds no indication of any breeding of game birds whatsoever in 2018. Native waterbirds remain at population levels only a few per cent of their historic numbers, leaving some species perilously close to extinction.

In the criteria that the Game Management Authority use for assessing whether a duck shooting season should proceed the global climate emergency is not considered. Established under a dysfunctional coalition government in 2015, the news that the climate is changing has yet to reach the GMA. In May the UN handed down a comprehensive global report noting that over a million species around the world are at risk of extinction, overwhelmingly due to human activity.

Locally our record on extinctions is terrible, and every year duck shooters continue to shoot and kill threatened species, such as the freckled duck and blue-winged shoveler.

Australia is the only place the freckled duck calls home and it is one of the rarest waterbirds in the world, yet it is routinely shot through carelessness or mistaken identity. In fact at the opening of the 2017 season 68 rare and endangered freckled ducks were slaughtered by shooters. This is the body count at just one wetland. Now consider this: there are an estimated 20 000 places to shoot in Victoria. Who knows how many of these magnificent birds are killed each year?

The diminishing number of shooters last season brought the lowest shooter participation rate on record. A reported 1300 shooters were active across the opening. This was attributed by the Game Management Authority to dry conditions and wetland closures.

As far as we can tell, throughout Victoria's history, as soon as anyone started asking people whether they supported duck shooting, Victorians said no. In 2007 a Roy Morgan poll of randomly selected city and country Victorians showed 75 per cent wanted a permanent ban on recreational duck shooting. A survey conducted just this year gave similar results. Overwhelmingly, old or young, male or female, city or country, strong majorities of all Victorians support an end to duck shooting.

Of particular interest is the experience of those who call these shooting sites home. A recent survey found that local residents are dealing with stray pellets landing on their roofs and in their yards as well as with terrified children and pets. What is more, complaints of this nature are not responded to by police or government. The Game Management Authority went so far as to suggest people move away if they do not like the shooting.

Indigenous communities and environmentalists also oppose shooting and have long documented damage to the lands surrounding wetlands: evidence of sacred trees cut down for firewood, artefacts disturbed and trails of litter left behind. The high cultural value of these important sites calls for educational tourism above anything else. I was recently taken on a tour of some of the main shooting wetlands around Boort and shown evidence of the disrespect shooters have for our First Nations culture. Scar trees had been chopped down and either sliced up by chainsaws or dragged to another spot to build camp fires, and burial and cooking mounds had been used as camp spots, and worse, as makeshift toilets.

In 2013 the Department of Environment and Primary Industries commissioned a ridiculous report that attributed every expense of duck shooters, like their cars and food purchased for home, to duck hunting. It contained no cost-benefit analysis, used a biased sample and methodology and ignored the benefits of nature conservation entirely. In 2016 Dr Kristy Jones published a comprehensive rebuttal. If it were true, the streets of Boort and Donald would today be paved with gold. Let me assure you—this is far from being the case.

An economic analysis by the Australia Institute in 2012 showed that claims duck shooting contributes significantly to the economy in Victoria are false. In monetary terms revenue from non-hunting tourism is far more important and is negatively impacted by hunting. In non-monetary terms they estimate the benefit of banning duck hunting at around \$60 million per year.

Having spoken to the mayors, CEOs and councillors of many of the affected regions, there is no desire to continue with duck shooting in their municipalities. They want safe communities, healthy waterways, recreational activities for young people and families and an increase in visitor numbers to grow their tourism businesses. Some, like Mount Alexander shire, have actually passed motions to end shooting in their region.

Victoria's wetlands are recognised internationally through the Ramsar convention on wetlands. Having ratified this treaty, we now need to live up to our commitments and to protect Victoria's wetlands and the flora and fauna that they contain. These sites could be the heart of a thriving nature-based tourism industry in rural Victoria, with birdwatchers, kayakers, hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts keen to visit. But currently laws prevent non-shooters from going near the water in the early mornings, and the sound of gunfire discourages them, infringing on their freedom to quietly and peacefully enjoy the use of public land.

Nature-based tourism can bring real economic benefits to rural Victoria. The Great Ocean Road delivers over \$1 billion in tourism revenue every year. Phillip Island does similarly. But country towns throughout Victoria are denied the opportunity to benefit because their wetlands are out of bounds for ordinary people.

This motion is for birds like Piper, a small native teal who fell victim to this year's duck shooting season. She, like countless other birds, was shot, but not fatally. The indiscriminate nature of duck shooting means that at least one in four birds shot will not die instantly, leaving them to languish with their injuries for days or even weeks on end. Eventually they will succumb to drowning, predator attacks or infection. Piper was shot through the bill, impacting her ability to feed. If she had not been found by rescuers, she would have slowly starved to death long after the shooter responsible for her suffering left her in the wetlands.

Many caring individuals rallied to save Piper's life—the rescuers who found her, the vet who treated her and the wildlife carer who rehabilitated her. Finally she was ready to be released onto the tranquil water of Lake Bolac in my own electorate, and I was honoured to be asked to do it. Opening the carrier and seeing Piper back in the wild was a truly special moment. I just hope she will never be put at risk of shooters' guns again.

It is clear there is no moral, economic, legal or political case for a duck shooting season to go ahead in 2020. I call on the government to listen to the people of Victoria and ensure no season goes ahead. In this age where technology allows the eyes of the world to turn their gaze to acts of violence and cruelty, the whole world is watching. It is casting judgement on this state. We no longer want to be seen as a cruel and uncaring society holding out for so-called tradition instead of compassion. The other states and the world have moved on. It is time Victoria did too.

**Mr ELASMAR** (Northern Metropolitan) (10:22): I rise to speak on Mr Meddick's motion. The government recognises and respects the diverse views on duck hunting and hunting in general held by the Victorian community. The Victorian government will continue to take a measured and responsible approach to hunting in general, including duck and other game bird hunting in Victoria. The government recognises that duck hunting is a legitimate recreational activity provided the rules are followed. We are committed to ensuring that game hunting in Victoria is conducted in a safe, responsible and sustainable manner.

The *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan* is a \$5.3 million investment to support and guide the game hunting industry's long-term growth. We are delivering on all our actions in the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan*. Some of our key achievements include the release of new hunting maps showing where hunting of game and pest species is permitted on public land; the replacement and upgrading of 360 new signs and information totems at the state game reserves and parks that permit deer hunting; improved access to seven state game reserves that have undefined or locked access points; the removal of barriers so farmers can now dispose of problem deer and wild deer can be processed commercially for human and pet consumption; the release of the draft deer management strategy for public consultation; expanding the deer hunting areas within the Alpine National Park by approximately 90 000 hectares and allowing all species of deer to be hunted; publication of *Game Hunting in Victoria—A Manual for Responsible and Sustainable Hunting*; a new Game Management Authority (GMA) website and Facebook page; working with stakeholders to deliver the 'Respect: Hunt Responsibly' program; and providing funding to the Australian Deer Association for deer control programs, to the Firearm Safety Foundation (Victoria) to develop five safety information, to the Wetlands Environmental Taskforce to support the Australian National Hunting Archive and to the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations to lead development of the traditional owner game management strategy.

Ongoing updates on each of the actions in the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan* are provided on the department's website: [agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/game-hunting/sustainable-hunting-action-plan](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/game-hunting/sustainable-hunting-action-plan).

Among several significant election commitments to hunting, we have committed to develop and deliver another sustainable hunting action plan to follow the completion of the current plan by 2020. Our approach has been comprehensive and extends across education, testing, training, communication and enforcement. We have provided a \$6 million boost to the independent statutory authority responsible for the regulation of game hunting in Victoria.

This funding boost will deliver a 30 per cent increase in GMA staff to improve local enforcement, to prevent illegal hunting and for stakeholder engagement; new equipment for new and existing compliance officers; increased research capacity; education campaigns; and a new game licensing system.

As long as duck hunting is conducted safely and responsibly it can be done in a sustainable way. Published studies using monitoring data collected over long periods of time have failed to detect any significant effect of the hunting of game on game ducks. It is generally agreed amongst scientists that the loss of suitable waterbird habitat, changed waterway and wetland management regimes and climate impacts are the primary factors impacting waterbird populations in Australia.

When the evidence indicates that changes to a season are required, the government will modify the duck season accordingly, as we did this year. Duck season modifications are common and can include changing bag limits, season length and the species that can be taken. Since 2000, successive governments have modified 16 duck seasons, including the cancelling of three seasons. Our system of administering duck and other hunting can deliver conservation outcomes.

Victoria's state game reserve system began in 1959 by using game licence fees to purchase private land for the development of breeding grounds for waterfowl. Today we have over 200 state game reserves that provide not only benefits to duck hunters during a short duck season but also long-term conservation benefits for wildlife and the general community. Victoria has 50 000 licensed game hunters, 26 000 of which are licensed to hunt ducks. Hunters come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and participate in hunting for many reasons that are often not associated with taking game.

We recognise and acknowledge the wideranging views held by the Victorian community on this issue and the passion of Mr Meddick. I will go through his motion point by point. I will not repeat all of the headlines, but I will go through them. Number (1): out of the many waterbird species only eight are declared game and can be hunted. They are selected as game species because they have biological and behavioural characteristics and are able to adapt to extreme and unpredictable environmental conditions. Their resilience and adaptability is demonstrated in population abundance surveys that show game birds achieving long-term record high numbers when conditions improve, like they did in 2011 and in 2012. Published studies have failed to detect any significant effect of hunting on game ducks.

Number (2) is the climate emergency—an environmental assessment of a duck shooting season. This is not correct. Climatic conditions are a key part of the scientific data that is reviewed in assessing the sustainability of duck hunting. It is generally agreed amongst key scientists that the loss of suitable waterbird habitat, changed waterway and wetland management regimes and climate change are the primary factors impacting waterbird populations in Australia. In light of this environmental variability the government seeks to ensure duck hunting remains sustainable. When the scientific data indicates that changes to a season are required, the government takes action to modify the duck season accordingly. Duck season modifications are common and can include bag limits, season length and the game species that can be taken. The government is finalising the development of a waterfowl conservation harvest model that will further strengthen the scientific rigour around setting and modifying duck seasons to ensure harvesting remains sustainable.

Number (3): population impacts are a key consideration in setting the parameters for duck hunting. Published studies have failed to detect any significant effect of hunting on game ducks. Furthermore, the government is finalising the development of a waterfowl conservation harvest model that will further strengthen the scientific rigour around setting and modifying duck seasons in order to ensure harvesting remains sustainable.

Number (4) is the 2019 duck season. The duck hunter numbers stated by the Game Management Authority immediately after the opening weekend related only to the wetlands at which they were present over the opening weekend. The 2019 harvest report is still being finalised and will be available on the GMA website later this year.

Number (5): a majority of Victorians do not support duck shooting. The government recognises and respects the diverse views on duck hunting, and hunting in general, held by the Victorian community.

However, we will continue to take a measured and responsible approach to managing all game hunting in Victoria.

Number (6): the alleged economic benefits from duck shooting. Hunting is a significant contributor to the Victorian economy. A new economic study of hunting in Victoria will be commissioned in 2019.

Number (7): Victoria is home to some of the best wetlands in the world that are perfect for recreational activities such as birdwatching. We agree, and this situation remains the same with the existence of a short, regulated duck season.

Number (8): legislation prevents those without shooting licences going near the water before a certain time. This public safety measure only applies to around 240 wetlands out of the tens of thousands in Victoria. It was put in place because some people have unnecessarily and purposefully chosen to put themselves and others in dangerous situations in popular hunting wetlands. The exclusion period is also limited to the early morning and late evening, with people allowed on these 240 wetlands for most of the day.

Number (9): nature-based tourism makes a positive contribution to the state's economy. Hunting in general also makes a positive contribution to the state's economy. The 2013 government economic study estimated that all types of hunting contributed \$439 million to gross state product. Duck hunting, ecotourism and other public land activities currently coexist in Victoria. Duck hunting is only permitted for a relatively short period of the year, with half of all hunting occurring on private property. Victoria's state wildlife reserve system has been designed to provide a balance of wetlands that are open and closed to hunting. This provides the opportunity for a mix of wetland activities to coexist across the state and for game species to seek refuge from hunting, which assists with ensuring duck hunting remains sustainable.

Finally, the motion calls on the government to stop the 2020 duck shooting season from going ahead. In conclusion, I would say the government welcomes the conversation. We recognise that duck hunting provides significant social and economic benefits to Victoria, and we also acknowledge that there is a lot of opposition to the practice. We have no current plans to cease duck hunting.

**Ms BATH** (Eastern Victoria) (10:39): I rise to speak on behalf of the Liberals and The Nationals this morning in relation to motion 148 standing in Mr Meddick's name. It will be no surprise to the house that the Liberals and The Nationals will not be supporting this motion. Mr Meddick has also flagged his intention to put forward a bill in relation to duck hunting. At the time that occurred a number of weeks ago I am not sure if other Liberals in this house received but I know many Nationals, including me, received some emails in relation to support for that particular bill and naturally we also received some in opposition to the bill.

Why I am raising this this morning is some of the conversations that came in through the email system were quite disappointing and in fact were quite offensive. Some of the comments that came in in relation to the type of people who take their families duck hunting were really unacceptable. It felt to me that these were blanket-coverage statements—ideological statements—about people that they had no great knowledge about. They were very repulsive statements, and I will read one. One of the emails called hunters 'primitive and challenged psychopaths' and said if they could get away with it, they would move on to human targets. Now I find that offensive, and I am sure that most members in this chamber, if not all, would find that offensive as well. We are allowed to have different opinions and that is what this place is for—debate. But to go down those paths, I believe, is quite unacceptable.

When I speak with people who enjoy the family pastime, and I know some who are quite close to me who do this and have done so over multiple generations, duck hunting is very much a family occasion and a community occasion. Certainly there are groups of people who have gone out into the wilds to enjoy the beautiful countryside, the wetlands, the environment and the whole ambience of our rural

and regional areas and in doing so also take part not in a sport but in an occasion that has happened for decades and decades.

Indeed it is a cultural pursuit that families and individuals partake in. They do not shoot for sport, as I have said, they prize the meat and they prize the game. It has a particular flavour. I know from time to time I really enjoy going to the Lost Angel up the road and having the confit duck—it is absolutely to die for. But these people enjoy going out into nature and obtaining their own individual game and cooking it, preparing it or freezing it down for later months.

Indeed I thank Mr Dean O'Hara, who I know happens to be in the audience today, for sending me some information about Field & Game Australia. Mr O'Hara happens to be the CEO of Field & Game, and he went on to say in his letter:

As hunters, we take a little during the season, but we are not a threat to Australia's wild duck populations. The accepted science, here and internationally, is that regulated hunting has no impact on the sustainability of waterfowl populations.

The key factors in the sustainability of our waterfowl populations are water and habitat.

And I want to speak to habitat and water in a moment. He went on to speak about how Field & Game has worked hard over 60 years to preserve and rejuvenate many wetlands. Indeed Field & Game also looked at introducing a licence fee. This is an involuntary tax where hunters pay for the establishment of Victoria's network of state game reserves, securing critical habitat for waterfowl and other species.

He went on to talk about a wetlands environment task force, where the trust and the task force look at purchasing and rehabilitating wetlands. In my electorate the Heart Morass is particularly dear to many Gippslanders and to many Victorians who tread their way there—and indeed national and international tourists—for this pursuit. There are many, many volunteers who put countless hours into that, and again I will develop that area in my debate shortly.

I also want to point out that Field & Game have purchased wetlands and an educational centre near Geelong, which is showing a diverse range and interest in this area. They also run various programs like Bug Blitz and a whole range of programs setting up establishments for wetland bird species to breed and flourish. I think this is key: hunters in this pursuit are mindful to encourage and encompass all the benefits and the requirements that keep bird species alive and thriving.

As to Mr Meddick's points, I will just go through a few of them that I think are very pertinent in order to counter his arguments. In relation to Australia's native waterbirds being perilously low in numbers, indeed the International Union for Conservation of Nature is a global authority and speaks to the status of the natural world and the measures needed in terms of safeguards. Victoria's game bird species do not feature on the red list of birds under threat in terms of population decline; indeed they are listed as species or a general collaboration of 'least concern' for this institution.

Australian species are certainly nomadic. Game species are nomadic—that is their very nature—they are highly adaptable and they travel vast distances in response to rainfall. They follow where they can feed and breed, which is most sensible. This is nature. This is how species adapt and survive.

A lack of water and habitat will also see a lack of ducks. So there are not necessarily fewer ducks; it just means that they have sought refuge elsewhere. We know even within our own state at the moment, even within Victoria, that rainfall varies quite dramatically. In South Gippsland, just for example, we have had a great winter season at the moment, but you go 2 hours down the road and in Bairnsdale and all through East Gippsland they still lack water in great severity. Ducks read the play and indeed travel where they need to.

The second argument in relation to the low numbers is that the Kingsford method currently used by the GMA—Game Management Authority—does not count ducks. Field & Game have been advocating for—and also I am pleased to hear that the government has agreed to implement—an adaptive harvest model based on evidence and fact, rather than the current method which just measures

one point in time. So in order to get the science right and the numbers accurately dictated and evaluated you have to do the proper science and evaluation.

Mr Meddick's motion says the 2019 duck shooting season saw the lowest shooter participation rate on record. Well, that does not mean that interest is declining at all; it means that shooters also are adaptive and hunters are adaptive to what is going on in their system and what is going on with the birds and nature. In 2019 there were 26 000 duck game licences issued. This number has been consistent over the past few years. The Game Management Authority has stated that duck game licences are stable and not in decline. This is the regulatory body set up by and still currently running with the current government.

If we assume there was a low number of hunters when the season was opening, then it would be directly related to duck numbers. What we really understand is that they were respecting the law. Also, they may not wish to engage with protesters who on regular occasions have actually demonstrated a lack of respect in terms of the law. Approximately 1300 hunters took part in the opening weekend in Victoria, and whilst this was lower we certainly understand that there were fewer wetlands.

So there is a flux and there is a respect that the hunters appreciate.

In terms of a majority of Victorians not supporting duck hunting, if you go to a poll, it can be very much biased depending on how it is asked. I will give one particular example that I raised only last week. We have seen with the regional forest agreements the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning put out a survey. Indeed they also looked at a youth symposium. If you look at the details around that youth symposium of 49 young people, it was incredibly weighted in one area; it was incredibly biased. I will not drill down into the details, but I have mentioned this before. The department put eight pages out in relation to what the youth were thinking. If you want an outcome, sometimes you just have to go to a particular pocket of the room to find that outcome. Mr Elasmr spoke about the government looking at having an inquiry in relation to duck numbers and also the community interest and the economic benefits. I think that at least needs to be on the table in 2019.

In relation to the economic drivers for this activity in this region, even Minister Pulford in 2014 spoke about the economic driver of \$430 million into the Victorian economy through duck hunting. What we know in the country is that duck hunting is a great pastime. Many people actually direct their funds and choose to spend their money entertaining their families and bringing their families together. They buy fuel. They buy coffee. They go to the hunting shops and buy hunting equipment or coats and the like. They go to the pub. Indeed we know that there are many overseas visitors who come here with hunting pursuits in mind and for duck season. This is very much an important driver for the rural and regional economy, particularly when it is so under pressure for a range of reasons. I was up in Mildura in May and I spoke to some fantastic people up there who really care about the environment and who care about their country town and who want to be able to still be a family and go out and direct their money into the economy in this fashion.

I want to spend some time on Heart Morass, which is a wonderful, wonderful environment and wildlife reserve down near Sale in my electorate. I want to speak to what Field and Game Australia are doing in that area. It covers 1800 hectares and it is a wildlife reserve. It can encompass a whole range of activities, and it does. I know Mr Meddick's motion talks about kayaking, birdwatching, picnicking and hiking. All of those things are currently being conducted on a regular basis and are enjoyed by families at Heart Morass. Indeed only recently there was a tree-planting exercise—I think it was in early July—where many people went out and planted thousands of trees in addition to those already planted by volunteers in Heart Morass. It is a significant wetlands and is part of the Ramsar-listed Gippsland Lakes. It provides for a wonderful range of flora and fauna—frogs, reptiles, fish and the like.

I want to put the message to this house that families who partake in duck hunting respect the environment. They respect the animals that they hunt. They respect the fact that they are part of the

solution to provide ongoing measures to sustain duck populations. It is important that we support these industries because they have a flow-on effect to rural and regional Victoria. The Nationals and the Liberals will certainly not be supporting this motion before the house today.

**Mr BOURMAN** (Eastern Victoria) (10:54): It is actually a delight to have a chance to talk about duck hunting, what with everything else going on at the moment. Before I start I just want to thank the government and Mr Elasmarr for their continued support of duck hunting.

I am assuming this motion is designed as a warning shot, because it has clearly missed the mark. I intend to educate Mr Meddick on the facts, and my lesson should not take too long. I am going to quickly go through the motion, 'I move: ... yada, yada, yada ... Australia's native waterbirds are at perilously low numbers'. None of the game birds included in Victoria's regulated game seasons are in any way threatened; it is drought that is the problem. Waterfowl tend to breed less during drought. Where there is water, there are ducks; where there is no water, there are no ducks. Correlation and cause are not always the same thing. Yes, there may be fewer waterfowl, but it could be just because the place is in drought. It is fairly simple.

Then we get to number (2). This is one I enjoy:

the current climate emergency is not considered in the environmental assessment of a duck shooting season;

There are a whole lot of different factors taken into account in setting up the season. There are a whole lot of things, such as the overflights by our good professor who goes and counts ducks in places. There is an analysis of it, and it does take into account the climatic and environmental conditions for the simple reason that, again, if there is no water, there are no ducks. If there are no ducks to count, the recommendation will no doubt be to reduce the season. It is fairly simple. The climate emergency is a catchall for a whole lot of things going on. If there is a drought, which is part of this climate emergency—we will not get into that—then that will no doubt show in the lack of numbers.

Number (3) says, and I am not sure where this one came from:

one million species around the world are facing extinction because of human activity;

As someone put to me, the odds of getting a royal flush in poker are one in 649 740. That fact is about as relevant as this point is to duck hunting in Victoria.

Number (4):

the 2019 duck shooting season opening—

I will actually correct the member. It is not 'duck shooting'; it is 'duck hunting'. If you are going to criticise something, at least get it correct—

saw the lowest shooter participation rate on record;

Again, for those of you who have been paying attention, it is dry. Ducks tend to be where the water is, and hunters do not tend to hunt ducks that are not there.

There are a lot of people who have been going out there for decades and generations who might go out there and camp and I would still suggest that if there are actually no ducks whatsoever to shoot, they will probably go and find somewhere else to camp. Again, correlation and causation are two different things. You cannot just say that one is the cause of the other when you are just completely ignoring the real facts. Here is a cracker:

... a majority of Victorians do not support duck shooting ...

In fact less than 3 per cent do. There is an interesting point here. Mr Meddick, I believe, was elected on a 2.7 per cent primary. I did not get that much more myself. But that means 97.3 per cent of the people do not want him here. So I caution anyone about using this sort of thing to deal with this issue.

The crossbench—anyone that has not got a full quota in their own right: the majority of Victorians do not want you here. Think about it.

*Members interjecting.*

**Mr BOURMAN:** Yes. I am sure you guys will get over it. But let us get onto the poll, this much-vaunted poll. I wonder who did it. Could it be the Coalition against Duck Shooting? Possibly. The poll results state:

Respondents were first asked: *“In your opinion, should the shooting—*

and I say shooting, not hunting—

*of native water birds for recreational purposes be banned in Victoria?”*

Those who initially thought the shooting of native water birds should not be banned in Victoria, or who were undecided—

about 25 per cent—

*were told: “You may or may not be aware that due to drought and climate change, the numbers of native water birds across eastern Australia have dropped by over 80 per cent, that at least one in four native water birds shot at, are wounded, and that duck shooting has been banned in WA, NSW and Queensland.”*

Well, duck shooting is not banned in New South Wales; you shoot them off the rice as a pest-mitigation strategy. Anyway, there is a whole lot more we can go into, but talk about push polling—worthless.

Mr Meddick’s point number (6) is:

... the alleged economic benefits from duck shooting have been roundly criticised by numerous independent experts ...

Independent? I think not. It was one of the big four consulting firms that did the original study. It was not GetUp! or anyone like that. I think it is fair to say that that number, which is now outdated, is fairly accurate. Just saying it is not credible with no real reason is pretty ordinary.

Next is number (7), which will help me with fixing up number (6):

Victoria is home to some of the best wetlands in the world that are perfect for recreational activities such as birdwatching, kayaking, picnicking and hiking.

Absolutely—duck hunting as well. In fact there are 200 or thereabouts of these reserves which exist today solely because of the foresight of duck hunters, who introduced game licences and willingly purchased game stamps to fund our superb network of game reserves. So let us think about that: when was the last time you saw an activist running around making breeding boxes for the ducks? When was the last time you saw them out clearing carp out of something? I do not think you are going to have to think too long to come up with ‘Not at all’.

Number (8) states—and I am conscious that there are a few more people to go:

... legislation omits those without a shooting licence to go near the water before a certain time, limiting wetland use for non-shooters ...

This is for the activists’ own safety, and in fact with the opening now changing from a 7.00 am start to a 9.00 am start the shooters—the hunters—have less time on their own without having to worry about activists getting in front of them. So I actually agree with one thing—the activists should be pushed back. They can come in at lunchtime. If the hunters’ time comes back, then I believe the activists’ time should too.

We should not be encouraging people to break laws. It is silly. I wonder how many tourists ever visit a state game reserve in the off-season, when there is no duck shooting—hunting; I will correct myself on that one. How many? I would say probably somewhere between zero and words I cannot say, but let us say not a lot.

My favourite one is Lake Mokoan, which is now the Winton wasteland—oh, wetlands. That used to attract hunters from everywhere and generally contribute greatly to the local economy. Once active use was banned millions of dollars were used to turn it into a tourist centre. I have had it described to me as a white elephant with tumbleweeds in the car park. I do not think that the taxpayer's value for money was really high on that one.

The next point is number (9):

... nature-based tourism makes a positive contribution to the state's economy and there is appetite for its expansion in regional Victoria ...

Absolutely—game hunting contributes more than \$439 million a year, and that is from five years ago. It contributes more than the grand prix and is second only to the Spring Racing Carnival, so expanding hunting opportunities is an excellent idea. I think we really should do that. Again, as someone put it to me, camo is the new green.

Almost lastly, the motion:

... calls on the government to stop the 2020 duck shooting season from going ahead ...

Well, it is a duck hunting season. There is no justifiable or factual reason to do this. In fact whilst we are in drought in part of this state, we are actually flooding in other parts. I saw it with my own eyes in the Latrobe Valley. There are going to be a lot of ducks down there. Even though the duck hunters from Gippsland will tell you there are no ducks out there, there will be a lot of ducks down there.

I am just going to do a couple of things. Ethical hunting—the Game Management Authority are very big on ethics and, as such, so are hunters. This involves knowing and respecting the game; obeying the law, which is something the activists could work on; and behaving in the right manner. No-one is perfect, but I have noticed that hunters are now calling out their own when there is substandard behaviour. We need to be doing this—we need to be taking this on board—but we are the responsible ones. We are the ones trying to mind our own business. We are doing something in a way that has been done for generations. We are the ones that are under attack in this instance.

I will say a couple of small things about hunting as a conservation method. Whether they like it or not, the world wildlife fund begrudgingly recognises that in certain instances hunting is a conservation method. Over-hunting in the US in the early 1900s nearly brought extinction to a number of species, but the hunters got their act together. The hunters actually started funding conservation efforts and now white-tailed deer, mule deer, turkey, bison and all these things which were a problem are now abundant, but we can never drop our guard. If you are going to hunt something, it needs to be hunted in a sustainable and managed way.

Just before I go, there is an e-petition running. We talk about there being no support for duck hunting, but 6600-and-something signatures—that is the biggest e-petition to date. So there if there is no support for the hunting of ducks, why on earth is that the biggest e-petition?

Lastly, for the people that are not going to support this—I understand Mr Meddick is not going to change his mind—and for those that profess to support data-driven and factual motions, here is your chance to vote no.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) (11:04): I am pleased to rise this morning to speak in opposition to this motion moved by Mr Meddick, and I do so on the back of the comments made by my colleague Ms Bath in her earlier contribution.

It is often the case that those who preach tolerance, those who preach respect for minorities, those who preach respect for other cultures are in fact the most intolerant themselves. We saw the demonstration of that this morning with Mr Meddick's comments on this motion where he sought to demonise a group of Victorians who participate and have participated for generations in a legitimate recreational and cultural activity, just because he does not like it. The man who preaches tolerance on everything

else came into this place and made some frankly disgusting comments about the fraternity of Victorians who engage in recreational hunting on our wetlands. He made claims about illegal activity, he made claims about rubbish being left, he made claims about damage to trees and the like, all without basis, all without evidence, because he does not like a legitimate cultural activity that has been pursued by Victorians over generations.

I would like to place on the record—I acknowledge I have limited time because there are other speakers—that the Victorian Liberal Party is very proud to support our Victorian duck hunting heritage. Of course it is largely as a result of the work of a former Victorian Liberal Premier, Henry Bolte, that we do have such wonderful hunting infrastructure in this state. My other colleagues Ms Bath and Mr Bourman spoke in their contributions about some of the history that led to the development of infrastructure that we now enjoy, that led to the development of the wetlands that we have across Victoria that we would not have if it was not for the work of recreational hunters in the 1950s and the Bolte government in the 1950s and 60s. Mr Meddick and his activist friends were nowhere to be seen when the hunting fraternity in Victoria was recognising the value of wetlands, was recognising the need to protect and develop wetlands which we now enjoy across the state, both for hunting and for other recreational purposes.

Ms Bath in her contribution spoke about the work of Field & Game Australia, which has been an exemplar in protecting and developing and regenerating wetlands in this state. She spoke about the Heart Morass and she touched on the Connewarre Wetland Centre, which I was pleased to attend the opening of I think two or maybe three years ago. Both are projects which have been undertaken by Field & Game, both are projects which benefit all Victorians as a result of the work they have contributed to the rehabilitation and development of those wetlands, and both are projects which would not have occurred had it been left for the ecoterrorists who are opposed to hunting in this state. It is purely as a consequence of the vision of the Victorian hunting community over decades and generations that we have the resources that have gone into the wetlands, that we have projects like the Heart Morass and the Connewarre wetlands, which cover thousands of hectares of land which has been remediated as wetlands and is available to all Victorians to enjoy.

Mr Meddick has listed in his motion a number of elements—nine elements—which other members of the house have gone through individually, and I do not intend to touch on all of those particular aspects. One thing he does raise in his motion is the economic impact of hunting in this state. That was something which was assessed independently in 2013 through an independent engagement undertaken by the previous government, and that independent assessment demonstrated that the contribution across the state from hunting is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Mr Meddick sought to contradict that in his contribution. In fact he referred to an analysis undertaken by one Dr Christy Jones. Now, what Mr Meddick did not say in his contribution was that Dr Jones is in fact associated with Animals Australia. So, far from being an independent analysis like he claimed it was, it was a vested interest, a vested voice, seeking simply to undermine the value of recreational hunting, and duck hunting in particular, in this state.

Mr Meddick went on to make the often-stated claim that if we do not have duck hunting in Victoria we can all enjoy ecotourism, which will be a wonderful economic boon to the state. Of course the people who actually live in our regional communities which are the beneficiaries of recreational hunting know all too well that the belief in ecotourism as the saviour of our regional communities in the absence of hunting is a fallacy. Just this year we saw with the truncated duck season that was announced by the government a number of rural communities expressing concern that they would miss out on the benefits of duck hunting because of the government's decision to truncate the season.

In northern Victoria we had the mayor of the Loddon shire, Cr Cheryl McKinnon, reflect on the impact that the truncated duck season would have on her community. She made a particular reference to the fact that duck season was going to end before the Queen's Birthday long weekend, which has been a peak hunting weekend in her community, a time when recreational hunters would visit the Loddon

municipality and would—as Ms Bath indicated—purchase food, in some cases accommodation, fuel and hunting supplies in local communities. Many hunters make a point of purchasing food, fuel et cetera in the local communities where they are hunting rather than in their base in Melbourne in a deliberate effort to support the communities in those regional areas they are visiting. It is very clear from the comments of the mayor of Loddon shire at the time that she recognised, her council recognised and her local community recognised that the truncation of that season this year was going to have a negative economic impact on that community.

Ms Bath and Mr Bourman spoke about the Winton Wetlands, the former Lake Mokoan, which had been a long-time destination for recreational hunters in this state.

Following the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan around 2009–2010 and the creation of the wetlands centre, and with the banning of hunting at that site, we have seen what was developed become a white elephant—the cafe and wetlands centre out there at Lake Mokoan have minimal visitation and minimal economic impact. It is a white elephant in comparison with the economic benefit that was being achieved for that community when Lake Mokoan was still available for hunting and the support that led from that to the greater Benalla community as well.

The Liberal Party and the Liberal-Nationals coalition very much recognise the value of recreational hunting and duck hunting in particular to this state. We recognise the cultural value it has for many Victorian families going back over generations and the legitimacy of that cultural pursuit for many families back over generations.

We reject the demonising that Mr Meddick seeks to paint on those Victorian families who have hunted for generations. We reject his claims that there is no economic benefit from hunting; there clearly is. It is a well-established Victorian pastime. It is a good, safe outdoor recreational activity that gets Victorian citizens out into the fresh air, out in our regional communities. It is a win-win for families and it is a win-win for regional communities and the Victorian economy more generally. It should be supported by members of this place. It certainly is supported by the Liberal and National parties. I call on all members of this house to reject Mr Meddick's demonising of an important part of the Victorian community, to reject his scaremongering and to reject this motion this morning.

**Mr QUILTY** (Northern Victoria) (11:14): Today I am going to speak about the great tradition of hunting in Victoria. I am not sure if any of you noticed from your air-conditioned offices, but just yesterday hundreds of people from all over regional Victoria showed up on the steps of Parliament. They are outraged by the fact that the public are increasingly not allowed to use public land. Today I speak on their behalf about duck hunting, just one of the activities people have enjoyed for generations that the urban elites now look down on.

There is no older or more culturally significant activity in Australia than hunting. Hunting of ducks and other wildlife has been carried out in Australia for 60 000 years. Of course the vast majority of Australia's hunters have been the First Nations peoples living all across the continent. To them hunting did not just provide food; it helped provide a profound appreciation of and connection to country. Imagine if it were possible to communicate with someone who lived in Australia thousands of years ago. What would we have in common? Today's hunters would have lots to talk about with those from long ago because the behaviour of animals and how they interact with the environment is a universal language. We would share a bond, an appreciation and an understanding across time. Hunters of all kinds share a connection to the environment and a kinship with each other that the keyboard warriors do not understand and probably never will. Today's hunters, including those Indigenous hunters amongst us, are proud to continue our shared culture and pass it onto our children.

In terms of history, animal activism is insignificant; it measures its history in mere decades. If the history of hunting in this country was equivalent to a 1-metre ruler, the history of animal activism would barely reach 1 millimetre. However, sad to say, this is a genuine threat to our way of life. The saddest part of this is when Labor governments turn their backs on regional and working-class people

and align themselves with city-based extremists. And make no mistake: the animal activist agenda is an extremist agenda. They know it is a short step from banning people from killing their own food to stopping anyone from killing animals for food, and then one more short step from not killing animals for food to stop using animals for anything at all under all circumstances. If they had their way, zoos would be closed, they would end all sports involving animals and eventually ban the keeping of pets.

Animal activism is performed by urban elites and others who have lost their connection to the natural world, lost their links to country. It is the new kind of cultural imperialism. It is class warfare. I think they believe they are good people, but to those of us continuing a great tradition they are just a different kind of bully.

It is bad enough that they want to stop the public from using public land, but they also want to impose this upon hunters on private reserves. There are several reserves of this type that are funded by duck hunters that meet the recreational needs of hunters while creating new nature reserves. Duck hunters are conservationists. I go further: hunting is really the only workable conservation model.

But this is not just an issue of personal freedom. Licensed game hunters spend more than \$400 million on their activities in Victoria alone, with 60 per cent of that expenditure occurring in regional areas. Tourism in regional Victoria is already reeling from bans on rock climbing and the other lockouts—stopping horseriding at Warrnambool and stopping car rallies in the north-west of the state. A ban on duck hunting would not just be a kick in the guts for tourism and regional Victoria; it could be a knockout blow for hundreds of people who depend on the duck hunting season for their livelihoods.

In my first speech I spoke about how people in regional Victoria was so disappointed with being governed from Melbourne that maybe they should consider a ‘Rexit’—or regional exit—and form their own state. I was kind of joking. However, every time I see city people proposing these things and making rules for the regions—and we see it almost every sitting week—the idea of a Rexit becomes less funny and more of an idea that’s time may have come.

The Liberal Democrats oppose this motion.

**Dr RATNAM** (Northern Metropolitan) (11:19): The Greens have always been vehemently opposed to the legal slaughter of ducks for sport in this state. What the government continues to describe as a recreational pursuit is in fact a cruel and barbaric practice—the routine slaughter of hundreds of waterbirds in the name of sport.

Every year native ducks that would otherwise be protected species are declared fair game and are allowed to be shot by hunters. These ducks are the Pacific black duck, the mountain duck, the chestnut teal, the grey teal, the pink-eared duck, the wood duck, the hardhead and the blue-wing shoveler, some of our precious native birds, birds that are protected species for most of the year and then declared fair game for two months.

Many of these ducks are already vulnerable and their numbers are continuing to fall as persistent drought conditions have threatened their habitat. The 2018 *Aerial Survey of Wetland Birds in Eastern Australia* found that most game species abundances were well below long-term averages, in some cases significantly lower. During the 2019 season the blue-winged shoveler, normally eligible to be a game bird, was excluded from the season due to continually low numbers.

As the effects of climate change worsen, we are likely to see more of our wetlands dry out and duck numbers continue to drastically drop. Dry conditions have been persistent throughout the last few decades, and since 1995, 15 out of 25 seasons have been restricted and four were cancelled, yet the most recent seasons have been allowed to go ahead.

We are facing a climate crisis and an extinction crisis which are putting our native animals at risk, and yet in Victoria we still allow recreational shooters to kill our native ducks for sport and for fun. It is hard to stand here and call it a sport because it is far from it. Instead of being a controlled competition

between relatively equal participants, duck shooting requires the massacre of one creature for the enjoyment of another. Most ducks do not die as soon as they are shot. Those that are not retrieved or rescued in time are left to die slow and painful deaths. Ducklings are left defenceless and orphaned after their mothers are killed.

My former colleague Sue Pennicuik is a passionate activist in this area and spent her 12 years in this place fighting for a ban on duck hunting. She asked countless questions and made many statements in this Parliament holding the government to account on their continued complicity in the routine slaughter of ducks in this state. When introducing a similar motion to the one before us now to ban duck shooting back in 2011, eight years ago, Ms Pennicuik described her visit to the wetlands during the shooting season, saying:

It is a beautiful place, but at dawn the peace and serenity were assaulted by the sound of tens or hundreds of shotguns, which went off in a crescendo for the next two hours. The atmosphere was quite tense and really frightening.

I was very upset by what I witnessed. Birds were killed and wounded, including a large number of ducklings ... I found that everyone present at the lake that weekend was distressed and upset by the absolute onslaught of shooting, by the cheers as birds fell from the sky, by the large number of wounded birds and by the tiny ducklings killed in the first breeding season in more than a decade. Nobody could fail to be upset by what was witnessed there.

This is the reality of duck shooting in Victoria. And each year the season is rife with breaches of the rules and with cruel and illegal behaviour. Ducks are not retrieved from the water immediately as required, non-game species birds are shot and killed, and hunting dogs and boats are used to stir up flocks of ducks. Despite claims that the Game Management Authority has the means and resources to oversee the duck shooting season, breaches of the laws continue to happen each season.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the many activists who have fought against duck shooting for years and years. These people volunteer their time and energy to travel to the wetlands season after season to witness the slaughter of native ducks by a small number of recreational hunters. They put their own personal safety at risk to rescue wounded birds and to document breaches. Without their work the evidence of illegal hunting activity and animal cruelty would never have come to light and the government would continue to be complicit in this cruel practice.

It is beyond time that we acknowledged that duck shooting has no place in a progressive Victoria in 2019. Duck shooting is banned in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia, and has never been permitted in the Australian Capital Territory. The popularity of duck shooting in Victoria has dropped significantly over the last 30 years, down from around 100 000 hunters in 1986 to about 14 000 today, and the vast majority of Victorians oppose duck shooting. It is time to not only call off the 2020 duck shooting season but to ban the practice altogether.

**Mr HAYES** (Southern Metropolitan) (11:24): The Andrews Labor government refers to itself often enough as the most progressive government in the most progressive state. Whatever the other merits of this claim, it is very hard to reconcile with the fact that the supposedly less progressive states—New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia—have all implemented bans on duck shooting but we have not. Indeed it was in each case a Labor Premier who initiated the ban.

From my point of view, a key consideration is the fact that native bird species are declining in record numbers due to the expansion of human numbers, and hence human activities, leading to habitat destruction. In the face of swelling human numbers, which we could control if we had the political will to do so, we have an even greater obligation to protect our wildlife.

In the case of ducks and other native waterbirds, drought and climate change and increased demands on water have had a serious adverse effect on their numbers. The most highly regarded evidence concerning duck numbers in Victoria and beyond is the 2018 *Aerial Survey of Wetland Birds in Eastern Australia*, and that survey was unambiguous. It found a significant decline in breeding pairs

of ducks in 2018 throughout eastern Australia. In most game species abundances were well below long-term averages. All major indices—total abundance, breeding index, number of species breeding and wetland area index—show significant declines over this time. It is a grim picture.

With the Menindee Lakes and other parts of the Murray-Darling Basin drying out as much as they have been, it is imperative that native ducks that seeking refuge in Victoria are able to fly north once conditions improve. The conservation message is clear: duck shooting adds to the pressure on declining species and is a threat to their long-term capacity to survive. It is not sustainable.

Now the vast majority of my constituents do not support duck shooting and want to see an end to it as soon as possible, but I know that the government persists with it because it thinks this is what country Victorians want, but I suspect it is wrong about that because I am reinforced in that conviction because of representations I have had from Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting. They say that horses run around paddocks terrified, dogs bark, cats hide. The wildlife are very disturbed and it drives people crazy.

As well as the negative effects on country amenity, Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting say it has a negative effect on the economy of local towns as tourists tend to stay away from towns near wetlands during the duck season. They believe an end to duck shooting could be part of an economic boom in regional Victoria driven by nature-based tourism.

They point out that nature-based tourism is the fastest growing component of tourism generally, already bringing in \$40 billion to other parts of Australia. Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting say that rural Victoria, with its stunning, largely undiscovered wetlands, diversity of wildlife and goldmining, is well positioned to be a leader in the growing and lucrative trend of nature tourism.

The motion also fits in with the strategy of water managers such as Goulburn-Murray Water, Victoria's largest water manager, who seek tourism ventures that are sustainable and do not adversely impact on storage operation, water quality, environmental values or public safety and can adapt to fluctuating water levels. So let us put an end to duck shooting and flick the switch to nature-based industry and tourism. Now, that really sounds like a progressive government in a progressive state. I support the motion.

**Mrs McARTHUR** (Western Victoria) (11:28): I rise to speak on Mr Meddick's motion, and I just want to go through a few points following on from Mr Bourman's comment about how representative Mr Meddick is of Western Victoria Region. For the record Ms Pulford got 37.61 per cent of the vote, I got 29.32 per cent, Mr Grimley got 4.4 per cent and Mr Meddick got 2.71 per cent, so if Mr Meddick wants to quote statistics it is absolutely correct, as Mr Bourman said, that he is not representative of Victoria and especially not of Western Victoria Region, and that is where we like to think that all things rural emanate from.

Not only would Mr Meddick have us end duck hunting, he would have us end virtually all country pursuits. He would have us not eat meat. What is he actually going to do with all the animals we have to destroy because we no longer farm animals? In fact what is he doing about all the animals that get destroyed in the wheat and horticultural industry? They all have to be destroyed to produce his wheat, almonds, tomatoes—whatever—at a rapid rate. There is hypocrisy everywhere here.

Mr Elasmarr, my colleague from the government, gave a very erudite description of exactly what the government thinks of this and exactly what they are doing in terms of providing regulation for country Victoria. My colleagues Ms Bath and Mr Rich-Phillips eruditely went through the benefits of duck hunting for Victoria and the work that they do. I want to quote from the Field & Game organisation and Mr O'Hara, who said:

Duck hunting is sustainable, and we support the Victorian Government commitment to introduce an adaptive harvest model that relies solely on science and takes the politics out of setting duck seasons.

## MOTIONS

Wednesday, 28 August 2019

Legislative Council- PROOF

25

Our members are committed to ethical, responsible and sustainable hunting and we encourage you to support their cultural tradition.

Victoria's increasingly urban population has over recent generations become disconnected from the bush ...

As my colleague Mr Quilty said, we saw yesterday the number of rural people who had to come to the steps of Parliament House to tell us that urban people should not be telling country people how to live their lives. There are public spaces and pursuits that country people have enjoyed for generations, and we care about the bush, we care about the country, we care about the native species and most importantly we do what is best to look after them—not our friends in Fitzroy.

Like many Victorians—

Mr O'Hara went on—

you may have no inclination to participate, you may even dislike the practice, but we encourage you to consider that for our members this is a way of life.

I am familiar with hunting in Scotland, and I must say that if it was not for the hunting estates in Scotland many of the native species would no longer exist. They drive a very valid and viable economic activity and they actually look after the native species that exist.

As for this business about climate emergency, we have just heard today about the NAPLAN results. I am sure the children all know about climate emergency but they seem to be unable to read and write. As my colleagues in the Liberal-National parties and other colleagues on the crossbench have said, and the government has said, we do not support this ridiculous motion and we will be voting against it.

**Ms STITT** (Western Metropolitan) (11:32): I move:

That debate on this motion be adjourned until later this day.

**Mr RICH-PHILLIPS** (South Eastern Metropolitan) (11:32): We oppose adjourning this motion now. Under sessional orders there is a 90-minute window allocated for debate on each item of general business. According to the clock there is just over 8 minutes remaining. Ms Lovell would like to make a contribution, and there is time for Ms Lovell to make a contribution and then for the question to be put. We believe that given this debate has proceeded as it has this morning we should have a vote on this motion. People should put on the record what their position is. The coalition very clearly will oppose this motion and we believe that other members in the chamber should also take a position on this. So we do not support the motion to adjourn now. We believe that given there is literally only 8 minutes left on this debate we should allow Ms Lovell to make her contribution and then put the question so everyone's position on this issue can be seen publicly.

**Mr BOURMAN** (Eastern Victoria) (11:33): I do not support adjourning this motion. Along with the reasons Mr Rich-Phillips gave, I am also going to say that if Mr Meddick believes enough in his issues to get himself elected to Parliament, bring it to a vote and let us see who has got the support.

### House divided on motion:

*Ayes, 25*

Barton, Mr  
Cumming, Dr  
Elasmar, Mr  
Erdogan, Mr  
Gepp, Mr  
Grimley, Mr  
Hayes, Mr  
Jennings, Mr  
Kieu, Dr

Leane, Mr  
Maxwell, Ms  
Meddick, Mr  
Melhem, Mr  
Mikakos, Ms  
Patten, Ms  
Pulford, Ms  
Ratnam, Dr

Shing, Ms  
Somyurek, Mr  
Stitt, Ms  
Symes, Ms  
Taylor, Ms  
Terpstra, Ms  
Tierney, Ms  
Vaghela, Ms

*Noes, 14*

Atkinson, Mr  
Bath, Ms  
Bourman, Mr  
Crozier, Ms  
Davis, Mr

Finn, Mr  
Limbrick, Mr  
Lovell, Ms  
McArthur, Mrs  
O'Donohue, Mr

Ondarchie, Mr  
Quilty, Mr  
Rich-Phillips, Mr  
Wooldridge, Ms

**Motion agreed to.**

**Debate adjourned until later this day.**

**Committees****LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE***Reference*

**Mr GRIMLEY** (Western Victoria) (11:41): I move:

That this house:

- (1) notes the:
  - (a) protection of children should be the highest priority for any government;
  - (b) valuable work undertaken by Victoria Police in investigating serious sex offences and apprehending and prosecuting offenders;
  - (c) government should endeavour to work alongside law enforcement agencies at every opportunity in order to prevent opportunities for sexual offending and ensure community safety;
- (2) requires the Legal and Social Issues Committee to inquire into, consider and report, by no later than 30 June 2020, into the best means to:
  - (a) store data and information regarding convicted child sex offenders;
  - (b) prevent sexual offences from occurring through improved public awareness;
  - (c) investigate the circumstances in which the details of convicted child sex offences can be made public;

and any other matters the committee determines to be relevant.

I rise to speak on this motion. Sexual abuse of our children occurs every single day in our community. Victims, survivors, family and friends know all too well the pain, the despair and the ongoing mental health struggles faced by innocent people. Sexual abuse is brought upon by the offender. Sexual abuse of children takes control from innocent lives and gives it to the offender. Often this control is never returned. This motion is about giving back control to the victims of these horrendous crimes. It is about giving knowledge and information to the community in order to ensure their safety. Knowledge is power. This is about giving power back to the victims.

Open justice is a fundamental common-law principle, and this motion continues the open justice principle beyond the court and into the community. Justice does not end at the revolving door of the courthouse; it must continue in the broader community to ensure the continuing safety of everyone.

The intention behind this motion is for people in the community, in particular our children, to be protected from registered sex offenders (RSOs) who have been released from prison. The protection of our children should be the highest priority of any government. In fact Minister Mikakos, in a ministers statement last sitting week, stated:

There is nothing more important than all of us doing what we can to protect children.

This motion is about promoting a safer environment by informing the community of potential dangers lurking nearby.

According to statistics from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in 2018 the number of sexual assault victims continued to rise. Since 2010 sexual assaults have increased by 40 per cent. Of these,