****

**Statement from Field & Game Australia on Duck Season**

We are disappointed by Minister Symes & Minister D’Ambrosio’s announcement of a heavily modified 2019 Duck Season.

Through the submission process Field & Game Australia advocated for a full bag of 10 birds per day and a full length season and provided ample scientific and empirical data to support our position.

We have seen no compelling data from the government for us to modify our position. Our members are reporting widespread concentrations of birds across the state, particularly after the significant rainfall in early December.

More than 26000 duck hunters, the regulated participants and primary customers of the Game Management Authority, who pay the Government for the privilege, deserve a comprehensive explanation of the rationale behind this decision. We call for the Andrews Government to refund all duck hunting license holders 62.5% of their current license fees in line with the announced season modifications. It is only fair that the government reduce the fee in line with the reduced season.

The season setting process is flawed, secretive, relies on data not fit for the purpose and lacks any transparency. The complete absence of quality science backing this decision is a major concern and we call on the government to immediately overhaul the process to address these deficiencies and implement an adaptive harvest model as soon as possible to take the politics out of season setting.

We question what is trying to be achieved by the reduced bag limit and season length when the expert scientific view is that hunting has no adverse impact on the sustainability of waterbird populations.

All the Andrews government has achieved with this announcement is to further increase the economic hardship on regional Victoria by reducing the time and incentive for hunters to spend money in struggling regional centres.

Richard Light

CEO, Field & Game Australia

Further enquires; Darren Linton, 0437 770 144