



Select Committee on Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements

Hearing Date: 26 May 2023

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: The Australia Institute, Rod Campbell and Liz Morison

Received Date: 7/6/2023

1. Melinda Bath p. 30

Question asked.

You do not in your question say what the duck hunting areas are, you do not give a parameter and you make gross generalisations in that discussion. How can we believe you when the rigour is not there in this level of survey?

Response:

The Australia Institute conducted an online survey in September 2012. Respondents were sourced from a reputable independent online poll provider. Respondents earned reward points to participate. The sample was representative by age and gender based on the profile of the Victorian population.

Demographics

Results tables

Gender	16-17 years	18-24 years	25-34 years	35-44 years	45-54 years	55-64 years	65 years and older years	All
Male	5	14	45	34	47	37	58	240
Female	11	20	41	63	55	41	32	263
Total	16	34	86	97	102	78	90	503

	Metropolitan	Rural	Remote	All
Do you live in a metropolitan, rural or remote area?	350	151	2	503

2. Michael Galea p. 32

Question asked.

In terms of the respondents to your surveys, to the 503 respondents, can you provide any sort of indication on the geographic spread of those responses?

Response:

As above, The Australia Institute conducted an online survey in September 2012. Respondents were sourced from a reputable independent online poll provider. Respondents earned reward points to participate. The sample was representative by age and gender based on the profile of the Victorian population.

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3. Sheena Watt pp. 34–35

Question asked.

I note that there was some polling done in 2022 by the RSPCA in your submission, which goes to community attitudes to duck hunting. I wonder, then, are there any further studies around community attitudes that are longitudinal or that you can highlight for the committee around community attitudes to duck hunting?

Response:

We have been unable to locate any longitudinal studies on attitudes to duck hunting.

4. Evan Mulholland p. 36

Question asked.

Was the survey you did back in 2012 an online panel survey?

Response:

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Demographics

Results tables

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5. Jeff Bourman p. 38

Question asked.

Rod CAMPBELL: There are a bunch of costs initially. I mean, it costs a lot of money to run the regulator.

There is –

Jeff BOURMAN: How much?

Response:

According to the latest Game Management Authority annual report, it received just over \$9 million in grants from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions in 2022.

Mr Bourman also asked whether “all [our] arguments could be applied to fishing”? (proof transcript page 39). He noted “There is no economic return to Victorians when someone pulls a 4-kilo snapper out of the bay.”

Mr Bourman is probably correct in regards to two of our arguments, but incorrect in another.

First, the finances and functions of the Victorian Fisheries Authority are more complex than that of the Game Management Authority due to its oversight of boating activities. Based on its annual report, it does seem likely that the regulation of recreational fishing is subsidised by government and/or (non-fishing) boating activities.¹

Second, as far as we are aware, Mr Bourman is correct that no royalty is paid on snapper or other recreationally caught fish.

The key difference between bird hunting and fishing from an economic perspective, is that Victorians seem far less willing to pay for fish welfare than they are for bird welfare. As discussed in the hearing, free range eggs and free range, hormone-free poultry are sold in all Australian supermarkets. Bird welfare standards are used explicitly in the marketing of these products suggesting this is of particular interest to consumers.

As far as we are aware, there are few equivalents for fish products. While some products emphasise the sustainability of a particular fishery, this is usually related to environmental sustainability rather than the welfare of the fish. “Dolphin safe” tuna is common, but simply demonstrates the willingness to pay for mammal welfare and consumers’ indifference to fish welfare.

There are campaigns to raise awareness of fish welfare, for example People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) urges followers not to eat fish highlighting their intelligence and perception of pain.² We are aware of other campaigns to reduce consumption of products with particularly appalling fish welfare practices like shark fin soup, primarily in China. Even here, however, the emphasis is rarely on fish welfare:

¹ VFA (2022) *VFA Annual Report 2021-22*, <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/about/planning-and-reporting>

² PETA (n.d.) *Fish and Other Sea Animals Used for Food*, <https://www.peta.org/issues/animals-used-for-food/factory-farming/fish/>

And restaurateurs pointed to several other factors that, in their view, were more significant in explaining the decline in shark fin consumption in Beijing restaurants.

The most-emphasised was the abundance of fake shark fins on the market.

...

More broadly, our analysis suggested that the sustainability of shark populations was not a major concern among luxury seafood buyers. Instead, their own personal health and the freshness of the food were seen as far more important.³

Consumer willingness to pay for bird welfare and lack of willingness to pay for fish welfare does not reflect the ecological or ethical impacts of these decisions. It may be that it is more ecologically sustainable or ethically desirable to consume some birds as opposed to some fish or other alternatives. These preferences may also change over time as consumer preferences change and animal welfare campaigns may succeed in spreading awareness of fish welfare issues.

But these are questions for ecologists, ethicists and the broader community. From our perspective as economists, Victorians are currently willing to pay for bird welfare and that this gives an economic dimension to the debate over native bird hunting. This willingness to pay does not appear to exist for fish welfare, meaning the same arguments do not apply to recreational fishing.

³ Fabinyi (2013) *Shark fin drops off the menu, conservationists claim victory*, <https://theconversation.com/shark-fin-drops-off-the-menu-conservationists-claim-victory-19482>