Parks and Wildlife Minister Dr Chris Burns today announced an extended four-month waterfowl hunting season.

“All that extra rain in the Wet season means there's plenty of food for the magpie geese,” Dr Burns said.

“Breeding prospects are very good, and the estimated goose population of 1.6 million to 1.8 million is expected to increase substantially.

“Based on this information, I can declare that the waterfowl hunting season will last four months, from 18 August 2004 to 14 December 2004.”

The taking of magpie geese in the Territory is controlled according to provisions contained within the “Management Program for the Magpie Goose (Anseranas semipalmata) in the Northern Territory of Australia”.

The management program in this plan identifies a usual hunting season of three months duration, from 1 September to 30 November.

Parks and Wildlife officers reported excellent nesting during the 2003/04 Wet season, and anticipate good population growth in 2004, primarily as a consequence of the early November and December rains.

Parks and Wildlife Service research suggests recreational hunting has a minor impact on bird numbers compared with other sources of mortality.

Dr Burns said research and monitoring of waterfowl populations will continue, and controls will be implemented if deemed necessary.

Hunters are advised that a ban on the use of lead shot applies to all Parks and Wildlife Hunting Reserves, in order to prevent the build up of lead in these wetland environments. The ban applies to Shoal Bay Coastal Reserve, Howard Springs Hunting Reserve, Lambells Lagoon and Harrison Dam Hunting Reserve.

Hunters are required to obtain a permit for hunting magpie geese, whether hunting on the Hunting Reserves, Crown Land or private property. Hunting permits will be available well before the commencement of the season at locations to be advertised.