

**Submission
No 1587**

INQUIRY INTO VICTORIA'S RECREATIONAL NATIVE BIRD HUNTING ARRANGEMENTS

Organisation: Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting

Date Received: 8 May 2023

Submission to The Parliamentary Inquiry into Native Bird Hunting 2023

By Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc.



Introduction

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc (RVOTDS) is calling for an immediate ban on native bird hunting in Victoria based on damning evidence across all four Terms of Reference:

1. **The Operation of the Bird Hunting Season**
2. **Arrangements in Other Australian Jurisdictions**
3. **Environmental Sustainability / Impact on Amenity**
4. **Social and Economic Impact**

RVOTDS is a not-for-profit association, incorporated in 2018, with over 5900 direct supporters, representing those negatively impacted by bird shooting, particularly those who live or work near it. Our last letter to relevant Ministers requesting an immediate ban on native bird hunting, was co-signed by 90 business, environment and First Nations organisations representing hundreds of thousands of supporters around the state.

The contents of this submission are derived from our own lived experience, evidence we have collected through our dealings with relevant agencies and Freedom of Information, as well as feedback from regional residents, business owners and other recreational users who are seriously disadvantaged by bird shooting for up to a quarter of each year.

Our organisation has run three different surveys since 2018. We will draw from these in this submission. This is of critical importance as no other impact studies have ever been done on anyone other than shooters who represent less than half of one percent of the population. Our most recent survey, which attracted over 800 responses, was run specifically to collate feedback from community, for this submission. **Attached at the end of this document is the most critical part of our submission- a summary of the voices of regional Victorians (Page 55-63).**

We are aware that at least a third of this committee are pro-bird hunting. Two of them have disclosed personal memberships of hunting clubs which benefit from sales of memberships (and government grants) and whose leaders' gun stores benefit from native bird hunting. A third has made no disclosures but featured on hunting clubs "Respect Gun Owners" promotions. One is a member of the National Rifle Association. None have met with us or our members despite our requests. It appears clear they only care to listen to and represent hunters – of which no Victorian electorate has more than 2.48%. (Most electorates have between zero and half of one percent – GMA data¹).

We respectfully request these committee members focus on the best interests of all Victorians, not just their hunting clubs, in this Inquiry process.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

The Board,
Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc.

¹ [Duck shooters per electorate](#)

Summary

In our submission we cover the following in detail.

Native bird hunting in Victoria is grossly unmonitored. Authorities have been unable to provide an estimate of how many public sites are open to bird shooters, let alone sign post them as shooting areas or monitor them for threatened species or hunters' compliance to hunting laws. This poses serious risk to our wildlife and public safety.

Hunting maps are inaccurate, causing confusion and conflict between shooters and residents.

Every bird shooting season, there are reports of lawlessness around the state. These are just the tip of the iceberg as most hunting areas are not observed. Bird hunting is uncontrollable. Lawlessness occurs even in the presence of authorities.

The system for the public to make reports of illegal hunter behavior is useless. The vast majority of complaints go uninvestigated and unreported to Ministers. Many people do not bother making reports, resigned to the fact they are "on their own".

The negative impact to residents living near bird shooting sites is significant. RVOTDS has now run three surveys to capture the feedback of those who live or work near it. The majority of survey respondents said they felt anxiety due to bird shooting occurring nearby. Most said they felt unsafe. Many complained of adverse impacts to mental health and income.

A key part of our submission is the feedback from the public, particularly regional Victorians, about how bird shooting affects them. It is critical that the committee views responses to our 2018 survey, our 2021 petition and our 2023 survey – a summary of which is at the end of this document.

Bird hunting renders Victorian public amenity unsafe and unattractive to tourists.

91% of respondents in our recent survey which attracted 821 responses (including duck shooters), did not believe bird shooting was a benefit to their communities and 92.4% said there was a better way to spend taxpayers' money than support bird hunting. Documents obtained through Freedom of Information have confirmed that taxpayers – most of whom do not hunt birds and disagree with hunting birds – have unwittingly supported hunting to the tune of millions of dollars.

People feel bullied and intimidated by shooters. This seems exacerbated if not encouraged by heads of hunt clubs which are granted eye-watering sums of public money, some police, and even MPs who seem to view bird shooting opponents as a "nuisance" to be dismissed if not ridiculed.

Bird shooters have tried hard to make it look like their minority choice of recreation is greatly supported. They've inflated online polls by sharing them with gun enthusiasts' groups, shared our surveys on hunter facebook pages attempting to derail the outcome, and even attempted to rally support from irrelevant recreational groups such as fishing enthusiasts. We have no doubt they will have done the same for this Inquiry process.

Despite shooters' "call to arms" the fact is native bird hunting is a male-dominated minority choice of recreation (less than half of one percent of the population do it – a declining percentage and almost all male according to GMA data). Importantly, it is highly destructive to others.

Bird shooting hampers more popular family-friendly and financially beneficial recreations. It is environmental vandalism, pumping tonnes of toxic lead and millions of plastic shotgun components into our environments – including food producing fields – each year. This, together with the issue of [hunter trespass](#) and the potential spread of Foot and Mouth Disease, poses significant risk to our agricultural industry. Notwithstanding the obvious impact to our native bird populations, including threatened species, many unique to our country and in alarming long-term decline. Our birds are an integral part of healthy ecosystems not to mention a major source of tourism revenue.

Recreational bird hunting is banned in NSW, WA and QLD. It was never allowed in the ACT. In Victoria, ongoing professional polls show most Victorians support a ban on the activity.

One of the most lucrative components of tourism, domestic overnight nature-based tourism, is bestowing billions of dollars more on QLD and NSW than in Victoria. Victoria's zest for outdoor sporting events does not come close to closing the gap.

In 2023, it is long past time for our state to follow the lead of others and ban the unpopular, cruel and destructive pastime of bird hunting.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting shared WIN News Bendigo's post. 2 hrs · 🌐

Time to vote again. Thanks all.

WIN News Bendigo created a poll. 4 hrs · 🌐

POLL: Do you think Duck hunting season should be stopped?

A number of residents living around lakes in Victoria are fed up with duck hunters and believe the season should be scrapped.

The full report on WIN News at 6pm.
Ch8 & Ch80| WIN News| #WINNews6pm

73% Yes 🗳️

27% No

This poll ends in 6 days 419 Votes

Above: A poll asking the public about duck shooting.

shared a post to the group: Australian National Firearms Lobby. 2 hrs · 🌐

This was shared early but this poll is from the Bendigo win Network not ballarat, im assuming that the Win is running separate polls across all it's networks.

shared Andrew McClelland's post. 2 hrs · 🌐

Looks like WIN Bendigo are getting on the anti hunting bandwagon too. You know what to do.

Above: Shooters' asking gun enthusiasts to vote for bird shooting.

2 m · 🌐

Duck hunting survey by the Antis.
Have some fun with this one!!! Careful how you answer!!!!

Online survey - can you spare a few minutes for our precious native birds and regional environments? The Victorian Government is listening!

The Victorian government is currently running a Parliamentary Inquiry into Native Bird Hunting in Victoria. Now is our chance to make sure they know about the negative social and

FB post on hunters FB page

Left: Duck shooters attempt to de-rail our recent survey of those negatively impacted by bird shooting.

Contents

Introduction	1
Summary.....	2
1. The Operation of the Annual Native Bird Shooting Seasons	6
1-A Blindly Irresponsible – an Unnecessary Risk to People & Wildlife	6
1-A1 Incorrect & Incomplete Hunting Maps	6
1-A2 The Government Can't Show Where Hunting is Permitted – How Are The Public to Know Where Is Safe?.....	8
1-A3 Impossible to Monitor – Danger to People and Wildlife	9
1-B Uncontrollable Lawlessness.....	9
1-C Grossly Inefficient Complaints Handling System.....	18
1-C1 GMA – Unavailable When and Where it Matters, and Ineffectual Otherwise	18
1-C2 Police.....	21
1-D Bias & Bullying.....	22
1-D1 GMA	22
1-D2 Shooters' Intimidatory Behavior	25
1-D3 Who's Firing the Shots?.....	26
1-E Cruelty	26
2. Arrangements in other Australian Jurisdictions	27
3. Environmental Sustainability / Impact on Amenity	28
3-A Environmental Sustainability	28
3-A1 The Science is Damning: East Australian Aerial Waterbird Survey (EAWS).....	28
3-A2 Climate Change & Birds' Susceptibility	30
3-A3 Impact to Migratory Birds	31
3-A4 Impact to Monogamous Species	31
3-A5 Toxic Lead	31
3-A6 Millions of Plastic Cartridges and Wads	32
3-A7 Insufficient Data Regarding Birds Including Protected Species Present on Wetlands Prior to Shooting.....	33
3-A8 Insufficient and Unreliable Data of Birds Shot Including Threatened Species.....	33
3-A9 Data Regarding Impact on Protected Species, Compiled by Previous Regulators	33
3-A10 Quail Shooting – Unsustainable, Unacceptable Risk to Environment & Threatened Species	35
3-B Impact on Amenity	36

3-B1 What Residents and the Public Say	36
3-B2 Safety Risks.....	37
4. Social / Economic Impact	40
4-A Social Impacts	42
4-B Economic.....	44
4-B2 Taxpayer Funds Supporting Unpopular Activity:.....	46
4-B3 Our Financial Opportunity	47
In closing;.....	48

Attachments (Enclosed at end of this submission)

- A. Recent FB comments: regional Victorians’ feelings on the bird shooting season (page 49)
- B. Recent Letters to Editors from regional Victorians (page 50)
- C. Summary of 2023 Survey Responses (page 55-63)
- D. FOI Police regarding hunting complaints – records not kept. (Page 64)

Attachment (separate)

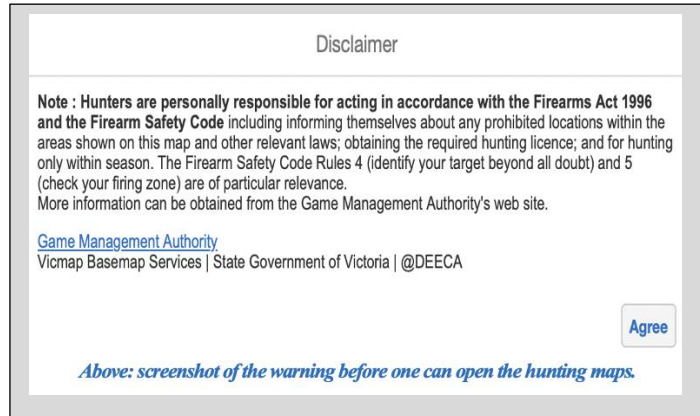
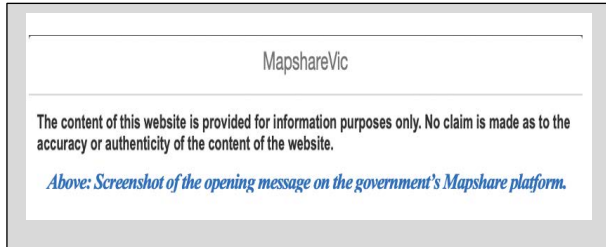
- E. Full 2023 Survey – personal details redacted.
- F. Summary of 2021 Mount Alexander Petition Responses
- G. Summary of 2018 Survey Responses

1. The Operation of the Annual Native Bird Shooting Seasons

1-A Blindly Irresponsible – an Unnecessary Risk to People & Wildlife

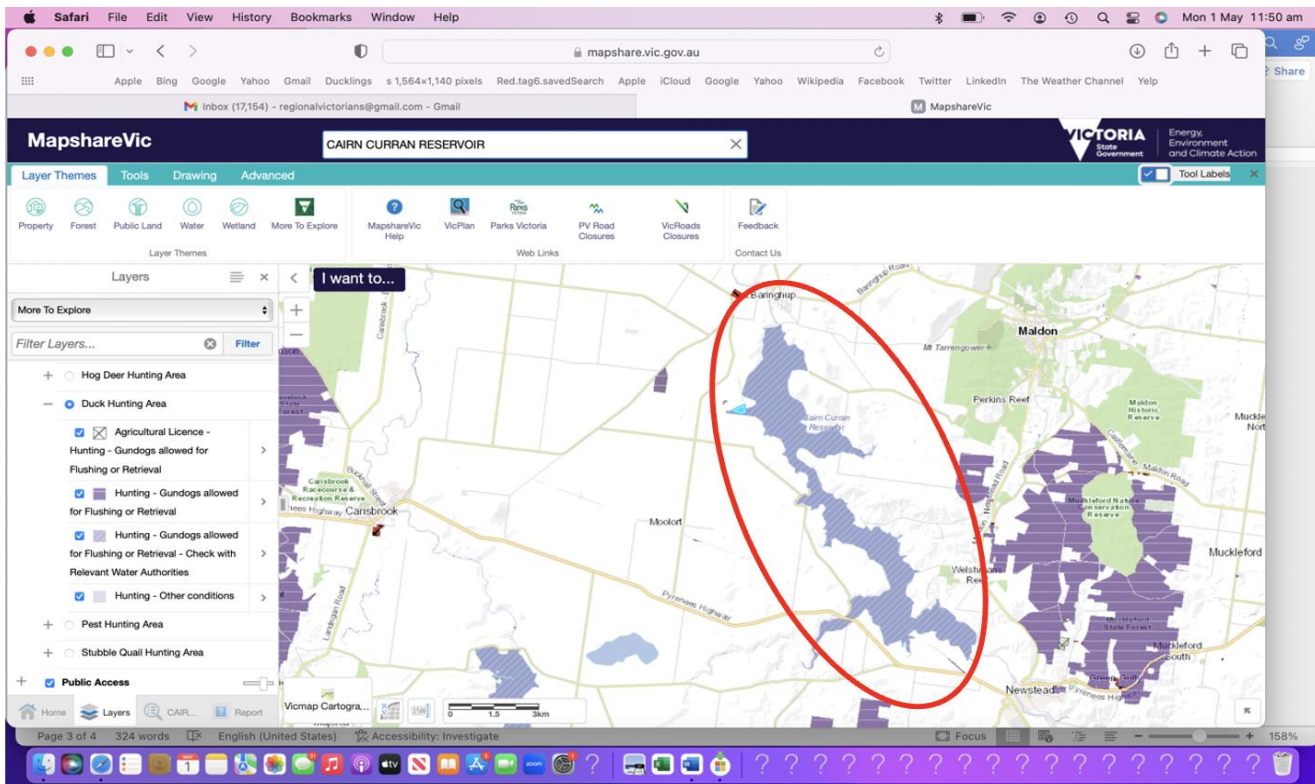
1-A1 Incorrect & Incomplete Hunting Maps

After years of our complaining about the hunting maps' inaccuracy, disclaimers finally appeared:



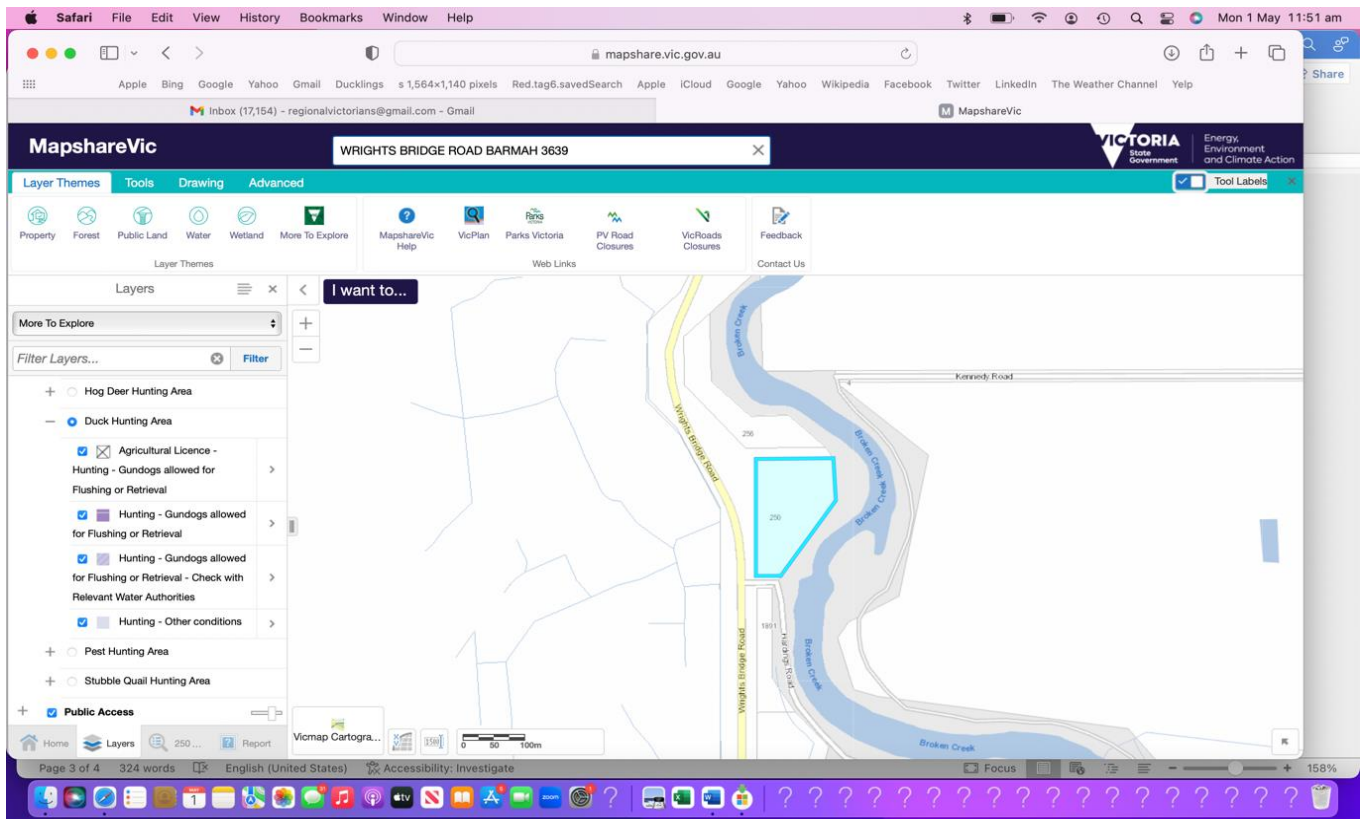
These disclaimers may help minimise the government's liability to a degree, but the fact the maps remain inaccurate despite ongoing advice about corrections required, may not.

Example 1: Only parts of the Cairn Curran reservoir are meant to be open to duck shooters, but hunting maps show the entire reservoir is open to them, as has been brought to GMA's attention many times over the years.



Mapshare screenshot May 1, 2023, showing all of Cairn Curran reservoir open to duck shooters.

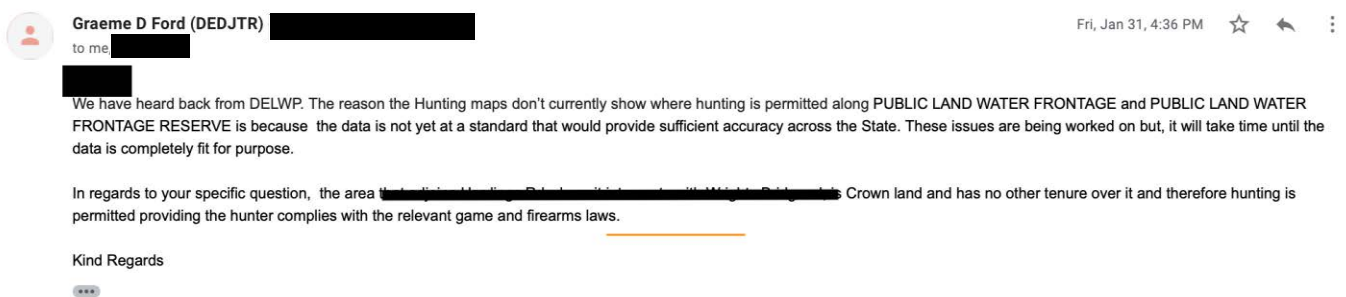
Example 2: Wrights-Bridge Rd, Broken Creek, Barmah: According to the maps, there should be no duck shooting at this location, but it occurs here ever year. When residents complain (the shooting is occurring very close to houses and hunters fire towards them from the other side of the creek), GMA advises that shooting is allowed.



Mapshare screenshot May 1, 2023, does not show the area along the creek as a hunting area, yet duck shooters are shooting here every year, close to and firing towards homes.

In an alarming email to RVOTDS, the CEO of GMA, confirmed many hunting areas are not showing on the hunting maps because they're "not yet at a standard of accuracy".

How are the public to know where hunting is permitted?



Graeme Ford | CEO
Level 16, 121 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000
www.gma.vic.gov.au

1-A2 The Government Can't Show Where Hunting is Permitted – How Are The Public to Know Where Is Safe?

For years, RVOTDS has asked relevant government departments, including via Freedom of Information, for documents which show or discuss all areas open to duck shooting, or even an estimation of the number of them. Apparently, none exist. On this subject, GMA referred us to DELWP but DELWP referred us to GMA.

No department or agency has been able to provide an estimate of whether the number of public shooting waterways is closer to 8,000 or 15,000. We are advised that Zac Powell of GMA told Laurie Levy one year there were around 8000 (during drier times). The Victorian government has a [Wetlands Inventory](#) of around 38,000. Few are sanctuaries which preclude hunting. (Note that only around 200 wetlands are monitored by authorities and for only a small period of time during the bird shooting season).

GMA have told us that: *"In Victoria, hunting is permitted on all public land unless prohibited. The land classification of a Crown parcel can prohibit or regulate activities that can occur. Where hunting (in any form) can occur depends on the status of the land and whether activities are specifically permitted or disallowed. In other instances, the law may be silent on hunting as a use, meaning that it is permitted."*

We challenge committee members to work that out. In the absence of complete or accurate maps, or any other clear public notification of where hunting is or isn't permitted, how are the public to know where to take their children to birdwatch or kayak in peace, where they won't be startled by men in army gear with firearms? How are property purchasers supposed to know they're purchasing in a firing range, likely to have toxic lead in their environments?

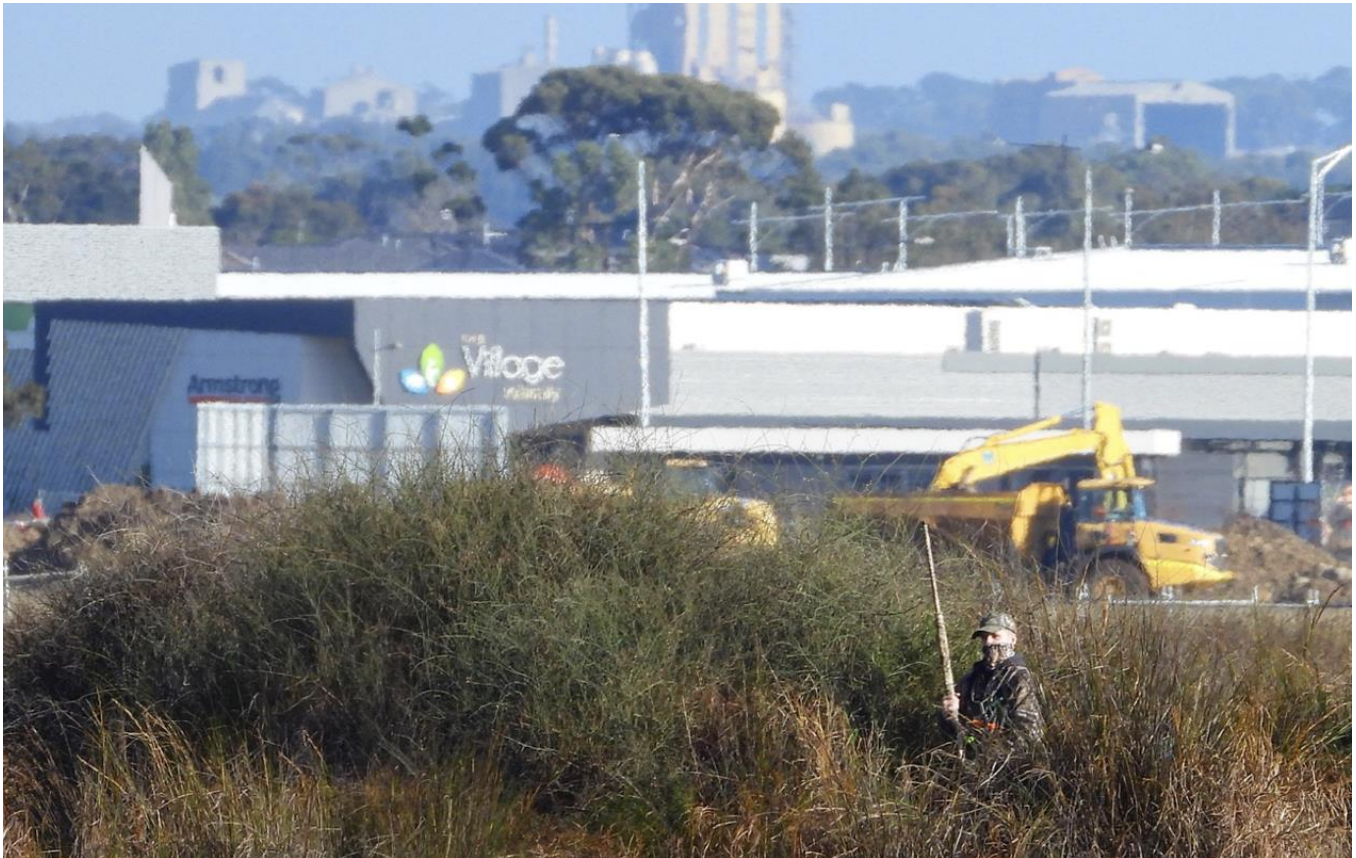
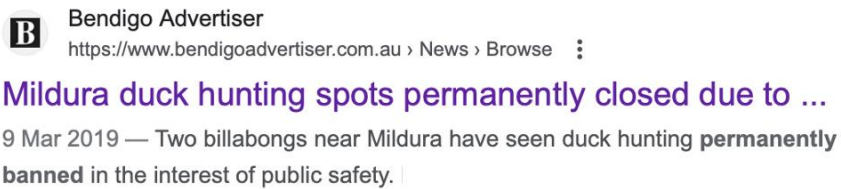


Photo: Hospital Swamp, looking towards Barwon Heads Road. Across Victoria, shooters are close to homes, businesses and other recreational users.

We have also asked for the legal instrument which states bird shooting is allowed at all these public areas. So far, no government department has been able to provide this either. In addition, the 200 odd Victorian State Game Reserves seem to have been created with no consultation to nearby communities or landowners.

There are very few sites of refuge for our birdlife in our environmentally “[stressed state](#)” or for Victorians to enjoy public waterways in peace.

Despite the vast number and expanse of areas where native bird shooting is permitted, and the growing numbers of Victorians living in and visiting the regions, we know via Freedom of Information requests, no safety risk assessments have been performed other than at two wetlands at Mildura in 2019 which were subsequently closed to shooting for safety reasons. Via Freedom of Information requests, we also know that not even desk-top studies have been performed by government to show the proximity of homes to shooting areas.



It’s a similar story for quail shooting. GMA intimate that there are few areas available to quail shooters. On their website it states “predominantly on private property in stubble paddocks and grasslands, however, 16 State Game Reserves are open to Stubble Quail hunting”. This is misleading.

When one looks more closely at the “where to hunt” table of quail shooting areas, one sees that it is permitted at State Forests, Forest Parks and other unoccupied crown land, leased and licensed crown land. Quail shooters do not have to sit any bird identification tests and are allowed to use toxic lead ammunition. The dangers to people and wildlife are self-explanatory.

1-A3 Impossible to Monitor – Danger to People and Wildlife

The fact that bird shooting is allowed across such a large number of vast areas, with no government agency able to even estimate the number of them, obviously means it is **unable to be monitored**. This is an unacceptable risk to our wildlife including threatened species as well as human safety. We discuss safety on page 37-39.

What threatened species are present at the wetlands before shooters descend? How many ducks are in fact “bagged” by shooters during shooting? What species are bagged? How many birds are left wounded and un-retrieved including protected and threatened species? What is the impact to nearby residents or other recreational users?

The regulator has little idea of any of the above, unless members of the public bring complaints to their attention. And then we have another issue – most complaints are not followed up as we discuss on page 18-22.

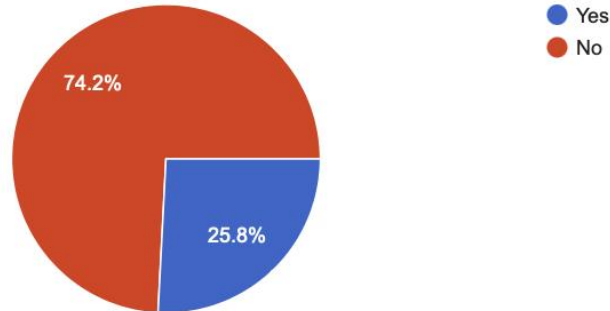
1-B Uncontrollable Lawlessness

Every bird shooting season there is a plethora of shameful shooters’ antics reported in the media. Threatened species are shot, swans who mate for life are [frightened off their nests](#) abandoning their young, or [sent terrified into powerlines](#) to break their necks. Birds are left wounded and [buried in pits](#) and [tree-trunks](#). Shooters use [toxic lead shot](#), [snort cocaine](#), shoot without licenses and steal habitat. Litter is left strewn around waterways including plastic shotgun components. Illegal camping is rife as is firing out of legal times. Signage is defaced. Fences are broken. Orchards are vandalized. These are the people our government allows in public areas, unmonitored, with firearms.

Twenty-six percent of 821 respondents in our recent survey said they had witnessed what they believed to be illegal hunting activity by duck or quail shooters.

Have you witnessed illegal activity you believe was due to duck or quail shooters, such as trespass, littering, shooting in the dark, leaving wounded birds, shooting protected species, removing habitat, leaving campfires unattended etc?

821 responses



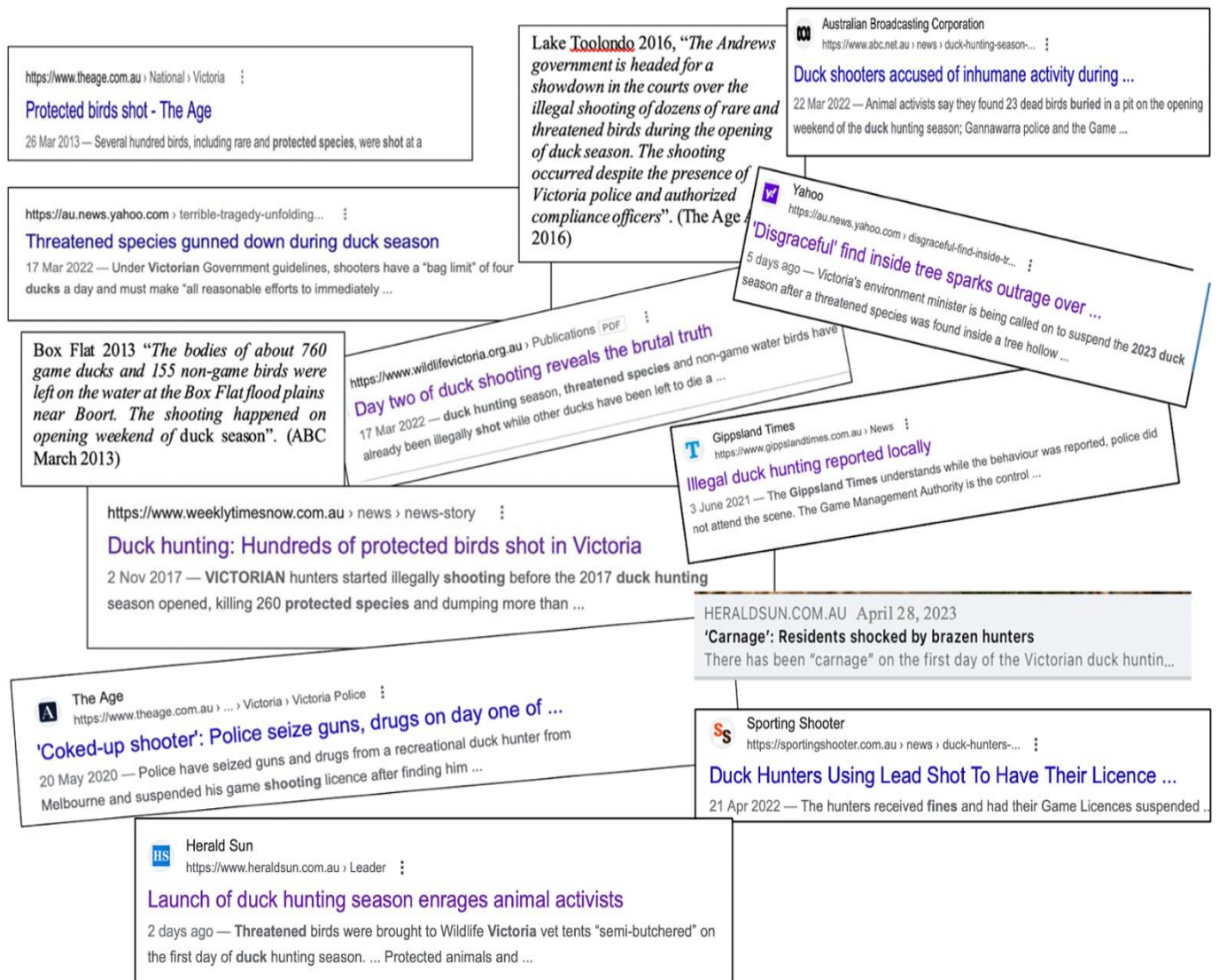
It's important to note, even if shooting was restricted to areas which could be monitored, it would make no difference. Authorities were powerless to stop the massacre at [Koorangie](#) in 2017 which occurred right in front of them.

A disregard for laws let alone others, could be said to stem from the top. Mr. Gary Howard – a senior Field and Game member - pleaded guilty to stealing water in 2009² during the drought when farmers were having to walk off their land, just so the Heart Morass could be artificially filled to attract ducks to shoot.



Left: Video of duck shooters trespassing and breaking, spitting in trees on a citrus orchard - private property. This was given to authorities who said the offenders could not be identified. The complainant later found the offenders on a shooting social media page.

² [Win TV](#)



Above: some of the headlines which made media. Most don't.

So, is it a matter of skill or will?

The GMA's damning hunter knowledge test results reported in December 2020, showed:

- Only 42% of all animal hunters got a general knowledge question on personal safety correct.
- Only 37% of duck shooters were able to correctly answer a two-part question on wounding.
- Only 20% of duck and quail shooters were able to correctly answer a three-part question on identifying game species; and
- Only 13% correctly answered the question on humane dispatch of downed birds.

Unfortunately, the written Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT) is widely known to be utterly basic and in many cases, answers are even provided to test participants. Hunters are only required to sit the test once and many of today's hunters would have sat it decades ago. Further tests such as the Shotgunning Education Program (SHEP) are voluntary and after the fact and have had an extremely poor uptake by Victorian hunters.

How safe would members of this parliamentary committee feel with drivers on our roads who had only sat a basic written test?



Above: Australian Pelican found shot at Lake Murphy near Kerang during duck shooting.

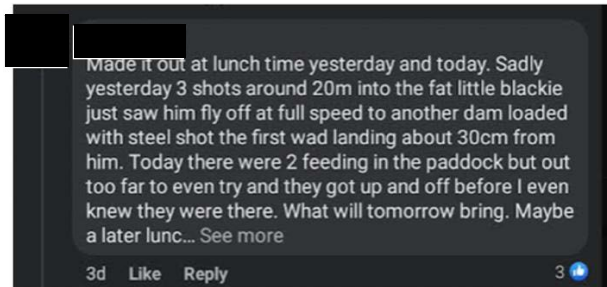


Above: Australia's rarest native duck, the Freckled duck, found illegally shot during duck shooting.

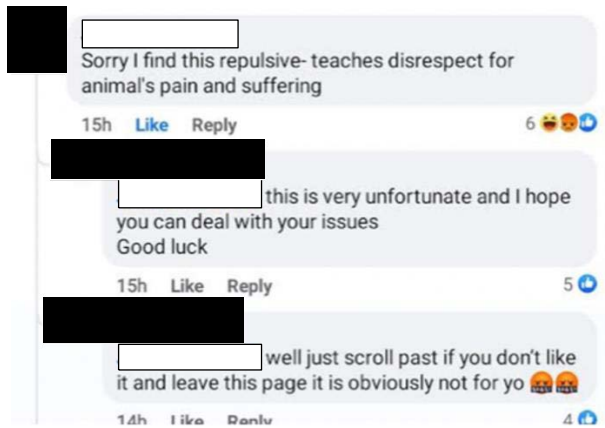
Many shooters demonstrate a disregard for laws, our environment, our wildlife and for others, as is seen in their comments on social media (a few screenshots below). These are the men with firearms at our public waterways.



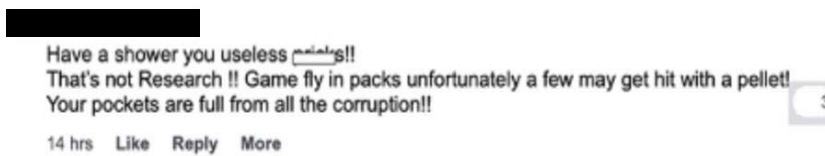
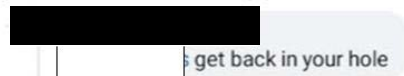
GMA FB post on closed wetlands



Victorian Duck Hunters Assoc. FB



Jeff Bourman FB – an MP meant to represent all constituents,



GMA FB post re wounding

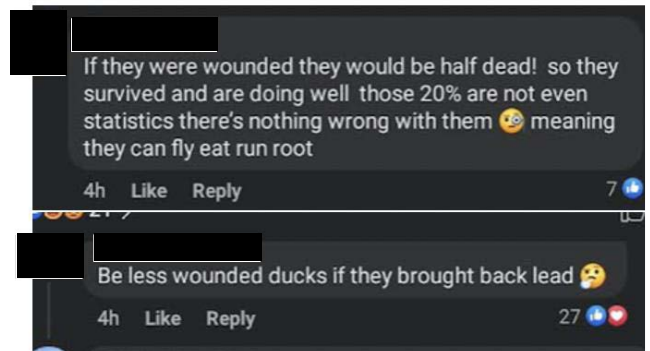


GMA FB post on closure of Lake Buloke

Mein Fuhrer just submitted your form: Contact on [Regional Victorians](#)

Message Details:
Name: Mein Fuhrer
Message: -
Email: [fkyou@fkyou.com.au](mailto:you@fkyou.com.au)
Subject: Your an inferior raced organisation
Address: I suggest you go all fck yourselves

Above: A message in our RVOTDS inbox.



GMA FB post re wounding

Below: A swan frightened by shotgun blasts flew into powerlines breaking its neck within two hours of the 2023 duck season opening.



Below: A “game” duck shot and abandoned at Avon Plains Lake, Wimmera, found by passers-by on Day 1 of the 2023 duck season.





A collection of shotgun cartridges and dead birds including protected species, shot. The penguin is believed to have been attacked by a duck shooters' dog.



Australian Shelduck, monogamous, found shot and abandoned at Kerang during the 2023 duck shooting.



Above: Whistling Kite, protected species, found illegally shot during duck shooting.



Above and above right: vandalized signage at shooting sites.



Above: Duck shooters illegally camped by Cairn Curran Reservoir.

Below: An abandoned Australian wood-duck, shot gun cartridges and UDL can found at Lake Colac during duck shooting.



1-C Grossly Inefficient Complaints Handling System

Given the vast majority of hunting sites are not monitored, it is up to the public to report illegal hunting. They can do this via GMA or via police. Both options are grossly inefficient, resulting in residents and members of the public feeling “on their own” and most illegal hunting incidents neither investigated nor reported to Ministers.

1-C1 GMA – Unavailable When and Where it Matters, and Ineffectual Otherwise

GMA are only available to take complaints by phone during business hours. Most shooting occurs outside this time.

The public can make reports via the GMA online reporting tool, which is almost always met with a response as follows:

- 1/ the complaint will be “accessed by a panel” at a later date, to determine whether it is worthy of investigation (by which time the illegal activity has ceased)
- 2/ evidence such as the offender’s ID, registration plates or photos and videos would be helpful – (evidence which complainants would have to be close to the offenders to obtain, which is a safety risk).

Most reports to GMA are therefore not investigated and many members of the public don’t bother making them for this reason. Three examples follow:

OFFICIAL



29 April 2023

By email:

Your complaint | G [redacted] | Notification of receipt of complaint

Dear [redacted]

I write to formally acknowledge receipt of your complaint provided to the Game Management Authority (“GMA”) dated 29 April 2023.

GMA's Intake and Assessment Panel will assess the matter when it meets on Friday, 5 May 2023.

If you have any further information pertaining to this matter, which includes and is not limited to the description of any person(s) involved, any vehicle registration numbers, make, model, colour and type of vehicle, photographs, video, names of persons involved, etc. please do not hesitate to provide these to me.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature box]

Director, Compliance and Intelligence



5 May 2023

By email: [redacted]

Your complaint | GMA [redacted] Outcome of assessment

Dear [redacted]

I write to provide a formal response to you in relation to the complaint provided to the Game Management Authority ("GMA") dated 29 April 2023.

GMA's Intake and Assessment Panel convened earlier today to assess this matter and concluded that upon review of all of the available evidence, which includes there being no identifiable person or persons having been involved in the matter, the GMA is not able to progress this matter any further at this time.

The information provided will be used for intelligence purposes by the GMA.

I want to thank you for your assistance in bringing this matter to our attention.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature box]

Director, Compliance and Intelligence



5 May 2023

By email: [redacted]

Your complaint | GMA Referen [redacted] Outcome of assessment

Dear [redacted]

I write to provide a formal response to you in relation to the complaint provided to the Game Management Authority ("GMA") dated 30 April 2023.

GMA's Intake and Assessment Panel convened earlier today to assess this matter and concluded that upon review of all of the available evidence, which includes there being no identifiable person or persons having been involved in the matter, the GMA is not able to progress this matter any further at this time.

As mentioned in my previous correspondence, duck hunting is permitted at various points along Broken Creek, between Nathalia and Barmah, except where the creek abuts National Parks.

The information provided will be used for intelligence purposes by the GMA.

I want to thank you for your assistance in bringing this matter to our attention.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature box]

Director, Compliance and Intelligence

There is also a general view that GMA are biased to shooters and if they do “investigate” a complaint, the outcome is that they may as well have not bothered. For example, this season Andersons Inlet was closed to duck shooters due to the presence of the critically endangered Orange Bellied Parrot. Shooters descended on Andersons Inlet anyway. Residents complained to GMA during the course of two days. Allegedly, GMA “investigated” this but found – stating no evidence for their verdict – illegal hunting did not occur. The residents challenged this in detail, with evidence (see following letter) yet GMA refused to amend their original verdict or provide evidence involved for their conclusion.

Similarly, when residents complain of shooting outside legal hours which occurs regularly, GMA dismiss it unless offender’s IDs and proof is provided by the complainant. On the rare occasion a compliance officer happens to be in the vicinity who says they didn’t hear it; the complaint is dismissed also.

Your complaint | GMA Reference 2223_133 & 2223_137

Dear [REDACTED] we write in response to the above assessment.

To say this is a disappointing outcome is an understatement. GMA appears to have made a decision based on no evidence, with no hunting violation offence recorded in response to multiple complaints submitted by residents who heard shooting on Anderson Inlet on Wed 26th and Thursday 27th April in defiance of the closure of Anderson Inlet to duck hunting. On Wed 26th the shooting continued all day; illegal duck hunters would have exceeded the bag limit of 4 ducks per person per day. That this blatant violation of regulations has been dismissed by GMA is unacceptable, we request that this decision be re-evaluated and have provided additional information below for your consideration.

What evidence was used to determine that the shooting was on the opposite side of Anderson Inlet? We find this highly improbable due to the following:

1. There is very little wildlife habitat on the north boundary of Anderson Inlet, it is mostly cleared farmland with a few small farm dams scattered across the landscape that would not support shooters hunting for a full day. The shots reported on Anderson Inlet were rapid shot gun fire typical of duck hunting, not single rifle shots used in the hunting of rabbits or foxes, and the shooting continued for a full day.
2. On Sunday 30th April my neighbour [REDACTED] and I visited the properties located on the north or opposite side of Anderson Inlet and spoke directly with residents and property owners. We then followed up on Monday 1st May with phone calls to those who we were not able to speak with on Sunday, including the S [REDACTED] b. The properties we visited spanned from the [REDACTED] off to [REDACTED]. A list of the properties where we spoke with landowners or residents is on the next page.
3. None of the residents or property owners had shooters on their land during the day over the past week, and none that we spoke with ever allow duck hunters to access their land. None of the residents or property owners had received a phone call or visit from police or GMA to confirm whether or not shooting was happening north of the inlet on 26th or 27th April.
4. S [REDACTED] returned our call and confirmed that they only have events on weekends and there was no activity at their club site over the past week.

If the early information provided to police and GMA such as location of the shooting, duration of the shooting, type of gun shots heard and the registration details for vehicles with boat trailers parked at launching sites on both sides of Anderson Inlet had been followed up by police and GMA it may have been possible to catch these illegal duck hunters.

As it now stands, no one has been held accountable for a blatant disregard of hunting regulations taking place on wetlands closed to protect a Critically Endangered species.

In light of the additional information provided in this letter, we hope you will re-evaluate this complaint.

Yours sincerely,

Above: letter sent to GMA requesting review of their dismissal of a complaint made about illegal hunting.

1-C2 Police

The public can call their local police station, or the general police line 131 444 or 000 to report illegal hunting. There is reluctance to do this because of the common feeling our police force is already stretched. Other reasons include the fact many police are not familiar with hunting laws and some seem to be protective of hunters, even to the point of complainants feeling bullied. Some examples below.

- Cairn Curran – A local police officer said, “*if they’re firing at night from a moving boat they’re allowed to*” (They’re not) and “*you’re the only one in the area who doesn’t like duck shooting. Maybe you should move*”. (A Cairn Curran community petition attracted 500 signature – mostly local, wanting a ban on bird hunting. A counter petition by shooters obtained just 21, only 11 local.)
- Gippsland – Local police were not aware of the later start times of duck shooting, or the fact Covid rules applied to duck shooters.
- Echuca – Conflict between residents and shooters on the local creek led to residents making a complaint to local police in the first week of the 2023 duck shooting season. Local police said the shooters could shoot there, were unable to provide maps of where shooting was allowed and told residents to contact GMA. GMA provided maps which showed shooters could not shoot on the creek.
- Barmah – Local police advised school safety managers, not to take children for excursions to the local creek during duck shooting season.

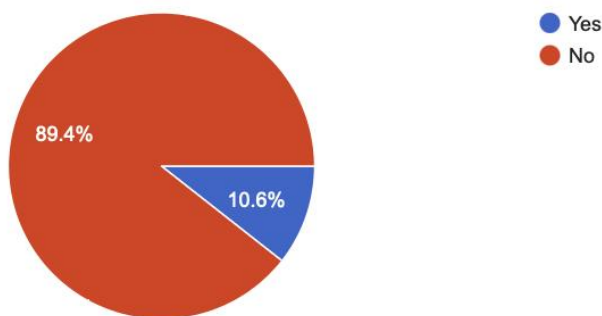
Importantly, reports made to police about illegal hunting are not recorded (see attachment 1: FOI result).

Ultimately – most illegal hunting reports are not investigated by police or GMA, and “compliance reports” provided to Ministers are grossly inaccurate.

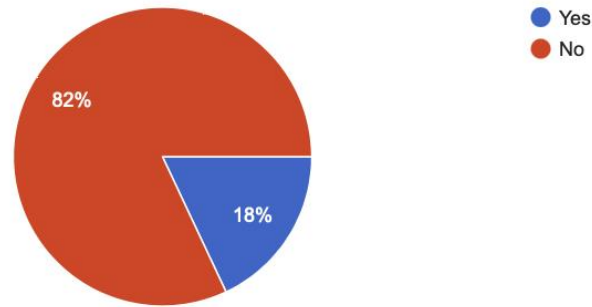
Responses to the following two questions on our survey were pointed. Despite over a quarter of respondents saying they had witnessed what they believed to be illegal hunter activity (refer page 9-10) only 10 percent said they had reported it. This highlights complainants’ reluctance to make reports. Only 18 percent of those who did make reports said they were satisfied with how their complaint was handled.

Have you reported suspected illegal hunting activity - such as the above - to authorities?

821 responses



If you answered yes to the above, do you feel your report was dealt with satisfactorily?



Some comments on the subject via our surveys³:

"I've been making complaints for 20 years. Overwhelmingly authorities don't respond/aren't interested."

"..we had someone shooting not 100m from a major road. We rang police and nothing was done."

"Not one [compliance officer seen] in 20 years I've been here."

"..saw a man driving away with a ute full of black swans.. nothing was done because I couldn't get the license plate."

"I am a farmer ..I keep a pretty open mind about this. However, there is no policing acts of cruelty or stupidity during the season."

1-D Bias & Bullying

1-D1 GMA

GMA appears to continually fail to perform its functions as stated under the GMA Act. Relevant sections being:

6(g) to promote sustainability and responsibility in game hunting; and

8(h) to monitor, conduct research and analyse the environmental, social and economic impacts of game hunting and game management.

With the guiding principle:

8A(b) the principle of triple bottom-line assessment, which means an assessment of all the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits, taking into account externalities.

³ Responses from our surveys of 2018, 2021 and 2023 are attached.

Further, 6(i) to make recommendations to relevant Ministers in relation to—

(iii) declaring public land open or closed to game hunting, open and closed seasons and bag limits.

8. Exercise of powers

(1) The Authority must exercise its powers and perform its functions under this Act or any other Act subject to any written directions given by the Minister.

GMA has not once closed a duck or quail shooting season despite presiding over the worst environmental conditions ever recorded and continued alarming declines in bird indices. Previous governments cancelled duck shooting seasons in 2003, 2007 and 2008 for less dire circumstances.

GMA has refused to close wetlands for reasons of community safety and amenity concerns, despite overwhelming community petitions and council requests and the fact there are so many thousands of public waterways open to shooters they can't possibly be monitored. Nowhere that we can see in the GMA Act, nor any other relevant legislation, does it state that GMA cannot make recommendations to close wetlands to shooting due to impacts on the community. GMA has failed to answer our repeated questions regarding this.

Sadly, it appears the GMA is more concerned with finding ways (at taxpayers' expense) of showing shooting is sustainable, despite science showing it isn't, than performing its functions under the Act. We note key staff at GMA have been long-time holders of recreational bird shooting licences themselves, with strong links to hunt clubs who make money from memberships and whose leaders are, in turn, owners of gun stores who benefit from shooting.

Documents obtained via Freedom of Information show that the recently departed Chair was a long-time holder of a duck shooting license, as is the current Director of Strategy and Research. Note, the GMA fought against the release of this information for about a year. It is these two gentlemen who have signed shooting season recommendations to Ministers.

RVOTDS' submissions to the regulator each year are all but ignored. Our detailed information about the impact of toxic lead, of hunting on threatened species, on migratory species, let alone socially/economically on regional communities, never rates a mention in GMA's "Season Considerations".

Instead, recommendations are made for extra-long shooting seasons without regard to impacts on regional residents whatsoever.

The regulator has ignored our information pertaining to quail for many years, refusing to even run a consultation on quail shooting, preferring to let full quail shoots quietly continue each year under the Ministers' radar.

We note GMA's choice of language in its reports to Ministers. For example, GMA says hunting is "popular" when less than one percent of the population participate, and ongoing professional polls continue to show most people want it banned. GMA says it's "popular" in Denmark too where only 3% participate in all forms of hunting combined. GMA talks about "economic benefit" of bird hunting, knowing that no cost benefit analysis has ever been done and the activity is an extremely costly one to community and taxpayers.

We also note GMA's apparent preference to spend more taxpayer dollars on new and arguably superfluous bird counts. Is this because the long-standing science is painting a very bleak picture for our birds? Data is often quoted by GMA for "all" waterbirds, as opposed to just "game" ducks, which makes the picture of breeding and abundance look better than it is.

Concerningly, GMA Failed to recommend removing the Pink-eared duck from the 2023 shoot list. Evidence shows its numbers are alarmingly low:

- GMA surveys of shooters show the “pinkie” comprised only 1% of their bags in 2022 and 2021, and 0% in the year before. This is key evidence that the little bird's numbers are dangerously low in our state.
- The NSW Riverina helicopter surveys show (Refer https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1430672/2022-23-quota-report.pdf) Pinkies accounted for less than two in a thousand of the waterbirds counted (p10). The report advised (p11) that the species should not be shot unless there was clear evidence of extenuating circumstances re crop damage - (even though this species eats insects - not crops).
- Professor Kingsford's data - the most robust, expansive, and long-term science available (East Australian Annual Waterbird Survey) - shows the pinkie population has collapsed in the last decade and not recovered.
- In 2023 the pinkie has been taken off the shoot list in South Australia, despite the extended La Nina rainfall.

Despite GMA proclaiming to be “transparent”, usually our questions about basic matters are not answered and we have to go through FOI. Since 2020 we have submitted over 30 FOI requests to various government agencies regarding hunting, having to escalate over a third of them to the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner due to the agency failing to respond. A few examples and outcomes:

- FOI # 20-9926 requesting documents pertaining to prosecutions for duck shooting cruelty offences. Eighteen documents were identified but access was refused to all of them.
- FOI# 213672 requesting documents showing when all current licensed duck shooters passed their WITs. We were advised this was too difficult to provide.
- FOI # 6647 requesting conflict of interest documents for DJPR staff involved in hunting policy or management. These were denied in full.
- FOI # 2019115 requesting documents pertaining to the number of waterways open to duck shooting. The regulator failed to answer.
- FOI #6065 requesting key documents regarding the shock decision in 2021 to more than double the kill rate from 2 to 5 birds per shooter per day. At the time of writing this submission, GMA has still not released the GMA Board Meeting Minutes from when this was discussed, nor the bird count which was apparently the basis for their decision. Despite the office of Victorian Information Commissioner ruling these documents should be released as they are in the public interest, the “independent” regulator is instead spending taxpayers’ money to fight the documents release through VCAT.

Via documents obtained through Freedom of Information, we are aware that:

- A GMA officer – after discussion with the pro-bird hunting local policeman - advised the Mount Alexander Shire Council CEO, “it’s the same few complainants”, in other words, these residents’ concerns are not worthy of concern. (Mount Alexander Shire was admirably taking a stand against bird shooting due to community fears for safety and amenity and a preference for nature-based tourism).
- The CEO of GMA wrote to the Mount Alexander Council challenging them for specifics of who had what sort of safety concerns – quite an audacious move given two wetlands had just been closed to shooting in Mildura due to safety concerns and the public are advised to keep their distance from shooters for safety reasons.

Perhaps it’s co-incidence, but our members have also had GMA vans parked outside their gates for lengths of time (outside duck shooting season), leaving a scrunched up “report illegal hunting” in the gate with no calling card. When this was queried with the CEO of GMA, he said, “They need to have lunch somewhere.” No other residents in the area were awarded this attention.

1-D2 Shooters' Intimidatory Behavior

More comments from our surveys:

"Duck shooters came onto our property without permission, my husband when confronting them had a shotgun poked in his chest."

"Gun lobbyists are intimidating."

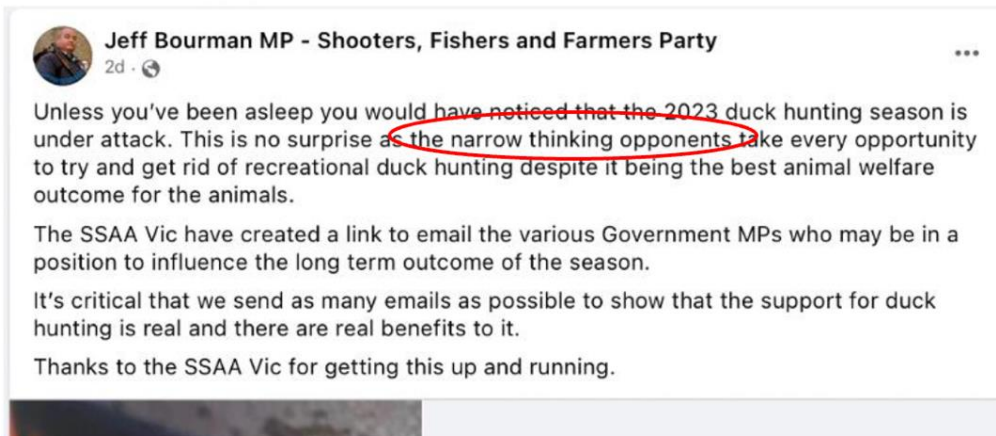
"There is an over-riding aggressive feeling of "it's our right" from shooters and they hold the gun." "They get close to my house with kids in it and I don't want issues with them."

"We have had death threats."

"..seems to be a lot of yuppies from the city dressed in cammo gear ready for combat."

"I am intimidated by boat loads of blow-ins dressed in camouflage, shooting over my land."

And it seems at times, the shooters' stance – often described as aggressive and disrespectful as well as intimidatory, is fostered by heads of hunt clubs (who are provided millions in government funds), and even MPs who are supposed to represent the best interests of their constituents and respect differing views.



Jeff Bourman MP - Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party
2d · 🌐

Unless you've been asleep you would have noticed that the 2023 duck hunting season is under attack. This is no surprise as the narrow thinking opponents take every opportunity to try and get rid of recreational duck hunting despite it being the best animal welfare outcome for the animals.

The SSAA Vic have created a link to email the various Government MPs who may be in a position to influence the long term outcome of the season.

It's critical that we send as many emails as possible to show that the support for duck hunting is real and there are real benefits to it.

Thanks to the SSAA Vic for getting this up and running.

*Jeff Bourman MP –
Facebook Feb 1, 2023*

1-D3 Who's Firing the Shots?

Peter Walsh MP, who has been a long-time bird shooter and member of Field and Game Australia (FGA) which he only recently disclosed, presided over the implementation of GMA in 2014 as the Minister for Agriculture.

Was it all that surprising then, that Pegasus Consulting found the regulator “too close to shooters”?

Mr. Walsh was also Minister when a deal was struck which saw FGA awarded over \$500,000 via a Vic Roads offset scheme, and a Trust for Nature (TFN) Covenant. The public would be horrified to know that an organization such as Trust for Nature which accepts public donations to “protect native flora and fauna” has made exceptions for FGA, at their Heart Morass property, to shoot native ducks and quail including with toxic lead.

FGA have been awarded millions of dollars of taxpayers' money so far that we are aware of, including for the purchase of another property in the state's north, and other things like document storage. It appears little oversight has been given by the government as to how this money is spent, with “insiders” advising us for example, that the document library is still not in place.

Directors of the “independent” GMA have included Directors of SIFA (Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia) which was behind the pre 2018 “NRA inspired” TV election campaign “Not Happy Dan”⁴ and Field and Game members closely connected to owners of gun stores.

To this day it may alarm the public to know there are shared Directors between GMA, TFN and Catchment Management Authorities (which have influence over where water flows are directed).

The hunting lobby has grown tentacles in parliament and in local government⁵, unashamedly pushing its own minority agenda.

1-E Cruelty

RVOTDS will not delve deeply into this aspect given that other groups will. Suffice to say, we are the ones who live with it on our doorsteps, see it and hear it and can say without doubt, that this barbaric pastime is extremely cruel, and cruel to more than just the birds.

The committee will know by now that there is an unacceptably high wound rate in bird shooting, given the nature of shotgun pellet dispersal and moving birds. The Wounding Reduction Action Plan recently released under FOI, suggests the wound rate (non-kill) is 80%. This would be unacceptable in an abattoir. There's a reason why RSPCA and the Australian Veterinary Association condemn bird hunting and the fact the government, which says it cares for animal welfare, has not respected their advice is appalling.

Worse, it appears the Victorian government has spent significant taxpayer dollars to try and “change the perception” of wounding in promoting duck shooting.

The wound rate is not possible to resolve. It took the Danish government a quarter of a century to reduce their 1:1 wound rate down to 10%⁶. If Victoria were to implement the strict testing which the Danes did (and frankly given the apathy demonstrated by Victorian shooters to accuracy testing, it is likely to fail), it would be the year 2047 before we got to 10% which incidentally still means at least 37,000 wounded birds each year (GMA harvest data).

The wound rate is compounded by other factors:

⁴ [SBS](#)

⁵ [Bendigo Advertiser – Loddon Mayor Under Fire](#)

⁶ GMA Board Paper recently released under FOI.

- Stress. The Wildlife Act says it is unlawful to harass wildlife, yet shooters can shoot, wound it and traumatize it? We see wounded birds flap across our paddocks seeking refuge. We see shell-shocked groups of birds on our dams totally motionless for hours after the gunfire has started at nearby waterways, likely claiming their family members.
- Many bird species form life-long pairs. When one is shot, any offspring is unlikely to survive, and the remaining partner may never recover. [Refer this article](#) by Prof Gisella Kaplan.
- Other bird species (and other wildlife) are cruelly poisoned by the lead pellets left in the environment. Lead poisoning can lead to a 'horribly slow death' for birds. Lethal amounts of lead have been found in protected species in Victoria, according to Jordan Hampton from the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences.

"Concerningly, the birds of prey with by far the highest levels of lead exposure detected in Australia, have been wedge-tailed eagles from Victoria," he said⁷.

This is an inhumane practice to the birds, and to the people who see them suffer. It has no place in a modern society.

On the topic of cruelty, it should be mentioned that Victoria allows year-round “hunting” of non-indigenous quail, partridge and pheasants on “game farms”. Licenses are free. This takes cruelty off the charts, as birds are bred in captivity for the sole purpose of being released in front of a firing squad! If any survive being shot, they have no idea how to survive in the wild, and will die alone in terror, of starvation or predation. Many would view this as a disgusting sick practice and another blot on Victoria’s dismal animal welfare report card. A government who cares for animal welfare would ban it.

2. Arrangements in other Australian Jurisdictions

QLD, WA and NSW all banned recreational native bird hunting many years ago (it was never allowed in ACT) and their economies have been fine. In fact, the most lucrative component of nature-based tourism – domestic overnight – is bestowing more riches on QLD and NSW than Victoria with \$7.3 billion and \$8.8 billion compared to just \$4.4 billion respectively⁸.

In WA the Premier was widely respected for being publicly appalled at the appointment of a big game trophy hunter to a government “conservation” role – see below screenshots. Conversely in Victoria it seems our government seeks these individuals out for government roles and gives hunt clubs millions of dollars in taxpayer funded grants! (See page 46-47)

 The West Australian
https://thewest.com.au › News › WA News

Premier Mark McGowan makes strong push for new review ...

3 July 2020 — Premier Mark McGowan has ordered a fresh review into how animal hunter Jewell Crossberg was recruited by WA's conservation department as a ...

https://www.abc.net.au › news › wa-conservation-man... ⋮

Esperance wildlife officer demoted over African hunting .

9 July 2020 — Premier Mark McGowan has called for a wildlife officer who pose photographs with dead **big-game** animals in Africa to be sacked, ...

In NSW “recreational” bird hunting is banned. But there is a very poorly managed “pest mitigation” system in place for the rice fields where bird shooters are allowed to shoot in the dark, including with toxic lead ammunition, species that don’t even eat rice.

In NSW, the landholder (rice-grower) self-estimates the number of game birds on his property. DPI allocates him a

⁷ [ABC 2021](#)

⁸ Tourism Research Australia data year ending December 2021.

kill-quota (usually 10% of them; but five of our game species are only to be shot in extenuating circumstances because DPI's helicopter surveys show their populations are not resilient). Shooters are supposed to keep a diary of what they shoot (number and species). There does not seem to be any requirement to collect the stricken birds – dead or injured. There does not seem to be any government supervision of what shooters do or how they behave, other than submission of these hunter diaries.

RVOTDS believes the impact of this on NSW farmers' livelihoods is yet to play out.

In Victoria, there is already a pest mitigation scheme in place via Authorities to Control Wildlife (ATCWs). The Victorian government, if anything, should tighten this system up. Most regional people will tell you, it's not our native wildlife that are the pests.

We note the same lettuce-growing farmer down on the Mornington Peninsula claims the ducks have eaten his lettuces each year in the media. You'd think he would give up by now and try another approach. Perhaps he's connected to a hunting club?

- Here he is in 2016: <https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/news/politics/lettuce-at-em-says-grower-devastated-by-devouring-ducks/news-story/33fc92c272b15ca2d4d7adaece07e645> Note that 270,000 ducks were "harvested" that year.
- Here he is in 2018: <https://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/agribusiness/horticulture/ducks-destroy-mornington-peninsula-lettuce-crops/news-story/1500fbd4a780a698bb3d4df6f21a9860> Note that about 400,000 ducks were "harvested" that year.
- In 2021 he is still complaining: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2021-05-26/calls-for-duck-season-extension-after-crop-damage/100147400> Only 52,000 ducks shot that year, due to lockdowns. But this story contains useful quotes from Kingsford regarding this alleged problem.
- Also in 2021 a smarter farmer in the same region installed lasers and saved his crops: <https://www.stockandland.com.au/story/7086917/lasers-stop-ducks-from-eating-crop-saving-farmer-500-a-night/>

Most farmers – particularly organic- are concerned with hunters' trespass, lead and plastic, not native birds.

"Ducks are not a pest – that's a furfie. They might eat a little bit but nothing to cause an economic problem. They eat the liver-fluke saving the need for expensive drenches in sheep".

– [REDACTED] – Primary Producer Northern Victoria

3. Environmental Sustainability / Impact on Amenity

3-A Environmental Sustainability

3-A1 The Science is Damning: East Australian Aerial Waterbird Survey (EAWS)

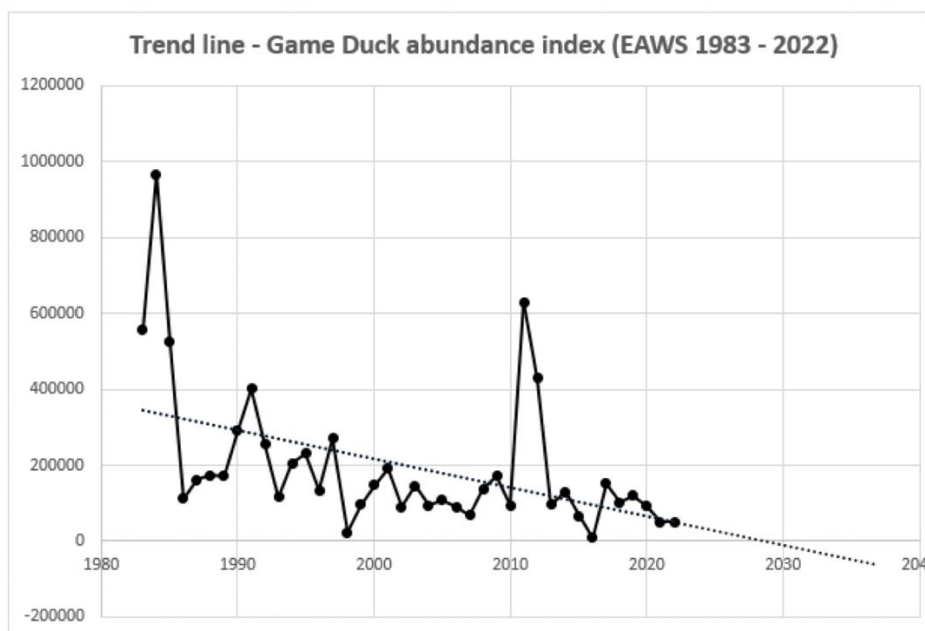
The most robust, long-term scientific data available pertaining to duck indices is the [East Australian Aerial Waterbird Survey](#), managed by the Centre for Ecosystem Science, University NSW, funded by GMA and four Australian state governments.

For this survey, an area of 2,697,000 km² is systematically sampled with ten survey bands 30 km in width, spaced every 2° of latitude from 38°30'S to 20°30'S. Waterbirds are counted on all waterbodies (rivers and wetlands)

larger than 1 ha within survey bands; additional counts are made on an ad-hoc basis of wetlands smaller than 1 ha. This ensures information is collected across a representative sample of waterbodies (wetlands, dams, lakes, estuaries and rivers). Three counting techniques are used: total counts, proportion counts and transect counts.

Alarming the data shows the downwards trend in “game” duck abundance has been ongoing for years and they are now just 25% of their long-term average despite rain. In particular, the latest summary report ⁹states:

- #6: Despite two successive La Niña years, three major indices for waterbirds (total abundance, number of species breeding and wetland area index) continued to show significant declines over time.
- #13: Five species comprised 96% of the total breeding recorded, primarily numbers of nests (straw-necked ibis, 48,505; Australian Pelican 5,000; Royal Spoonbill 1,794; Whiskered tern 1,619, and egrets 1,167). (These are not game ducks).
- #14: Most game species of ducks had abundances well below long term averages, in some cases by an order of magnitude; six out of eight species continued to show significant long-term declines (OLS regression at $p=0.05$; variables 4th root or log transformed where appropriate Table 3). Grey Teal declined from the previous year. Australian Wood Duck was the only species above (slightly) the long-term average (Fig. 19). Some duck species declined in abundance compared to 2021 – Grey Teal, Pink-eared Duck and Hardhead.



On current trajectories, game ducks will be extinct by 2030.

“Bearing in mind that at the best of times, only 25 per cent of any avian species ever breed in a given year, it is predictable that the number of breeding events will decline this year. It can thus be expected that breeding success of the surviving birds will diminish, even if conditions should remain reasonably good.”

- Gisela Kaplan, Prof. of Animal Behaviour, PhD (Vet Sc.), The Weekly Times, Feb 2021.

⁹ [EAWS Summary Report 2022](#)

In the case of game ducks, obviously it can no longer be said that abundance or breeding is directly related to rainfall because ongoing declines the last few years have proven they aren't.

Whether due to impacts of climate change not yet fully understood, reduction in insects, build-up of toxic lead which inhibits breeding, mismanagement of waterflows, or failure to protect breeding pairs in previous year's shoots, it is clear that something is adversely impacting game duck populations.

We note that advocates of duck shooting claim that shooting has no impact on bird populations. However, they then claim ducks are a pest and numbers must be kept under control by shooting, a complete contradiction.

We also note that shooters (and GMA) have tried for years to diminish the findings of EAAWS – presumably because they don't like what it is saying. Instead, they push the results of a relatively recent report (taxpayer funded) the Interim Harvest Model or IHM.

GMA – whose key staff have been long-time holders of recreational bird shooting licenses themselves - represents the IHM / Kingsford/Klaassen (KK) model as the basis for its recommendations. But the KK model specifically states it is *not* able to make predictions at species level and *should* only be used as a tool - not to set hunting arrangements without due diligence (“*Final Caveats*” p. 15).

Disturbingly, the model seems to be basing its predictors on the past 30 years of hunting seasons – 30 years which have resulted in our game ducks now being at just 25% of their long-term average. (Incidentally, in 1958, shooting seasons were 60 days with five “game” birds. How they came to be 90 days with 8 gamebirds is perplexing.)

The below important environmental factors are not given due consideration in GMA's Season Considerations:

2. Long-term effects of climate change which are predicted to worsen and birds' unique susceptibility to climate change.
3. Threat to migratory birds already experiencing significant decline.
4. Detrimental impact to bird populations of shooting monogamous bird species.
5. Adverse impacts of lead shot which continues to be used both legally and illegally.
6. Adverse impacts of plastic shells and wads.
7. Lack of data regarding bird species present on wetlands prior to shooting.
8. Lack of data of birds shot during duck season.
9. Impact of shooting on protected and threatened species.

The above points are detailed as follows:

3-A2 Climate Change & Birds' Susceptibility

The long-term trend of climate change and its impact on our waterbirds is rarely if ever mentioned by GMA, even though science shows it has a role to play in declining bird numbers. James Cooks University College of Science suggests rising temperatures have reduced the birth rate of most birds across the planet¹⁰. The Bureau of Meteorology has warned that our country is heating more rapidly than the global average. Worsening storms and floods, longer droughts, hotter, drier summers are some of the repercussions we are already seeing as a result of a 1°C rise in average temperatures. The bureau says we are headed for an unliveable 4°C rise in the next 80 years. The consequences for our wildlife will be catastrophic. Birds are **twice as vulnerable to climate change as mammals**. ([Global Change Biology, Zoological Society of London – report by international scientists group based on 481 species in 987 populations around the world](#)). With climate change set to only worsen, it is obvious our already struggling bird populations require protection from recreational shooters.

¹⁰ [James Cook University Media Release](#).

3-A3 Impact to Migratory Birds

Shooting disturbance at Victorian waterways adversely impacts migratory birds' ability to obtain critical feed and rest prior to their long journeys along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Of the species who use the flyway, 50 are in "catastrophic" decline and Australia is under numerous international [obligations to protect them](#).

Hunters also force ducks to decrease their foraging behaviours, which can lead to compromised animal welfare including poor body condition. This has been shown to cause a **decrease in survival rates** for migratory birds. 6 Jan 2022

<https://www.gma.vic.gov.au> > assets > pdf_file > RS... PDF

[Duck hunting season 2022 - Game Management Authority](#)

3-A4 Impact to Monogamous Species

No consideration is ever given to the ripple effect through bird species of hunting, most of which form life-long pairs - in fact, 90% conduct joint parenting. (As a comparison, only 5% of mammals, including humans, pair up and raise young together.) When one of a pair is shot, it is likely any offspring won't survive, and the remaining partner may never recover. The real impact to bird populations of shooting, therefore, is far larger than just the "harvest" numbers reported. Refer [this article](#) by Professor Kaplan.

3-A5 Toxic Lead

Lead ammunition continues to be used legally in quail shooting and illegally in duck shooting (as reported most years). Lead is extremely toxic to ecosystems, animals and people even in tiny traces (emedicine.medscape.com/article/1174752).

Lead is an insidious poison causing extreme suffering to animals who ingest it, such as dabbling ducks, swans and secondary predators like protected eagles. Given the decline in breeding noted the last several years, it's surprising GMA has not seriously considered that lead also inhibits waterbirds' breeding. Refer this [short webinar](#) by Dr. Ruth Cromie – Head of Ecosystem Health, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT).

According to a Department of Sustainability & Environment report (Flora and Fauna Guarantee Action Statement # 32), each ammunition cartridge holds 30-45g of lead. Multiply 30g by the average number of 175,000 shot quail each year in Victoria (GMA harvest estimates) and one gets a staggering **5 tonnes** of lead potentially pumped into Victorian (including food-producing) environments each season - without even adding in the lead deposited by missed shots or used illegally in duck shooting.

The environmental watchdog found twenty percent of the wetlands it tested between 2017 and 2020 had ducks with lead levels unsafe for human consumption¹¹.

There is evidence that lead "mobilises" in moisture and enters the food chain. Also, that it inhibits milk production in cows. (Guitart and Thomas 2005, Dickerson et al 2007).

A [2018 CSIRO study](#) was scathing of Australia's failure to take seriously the risks to humans, animals and the environment from lead ammunition. GMA's own, Simon Toop, is well aware of the lead toxicity impacts of hunting, having been involved in the recent [study](#). In particular the finding:

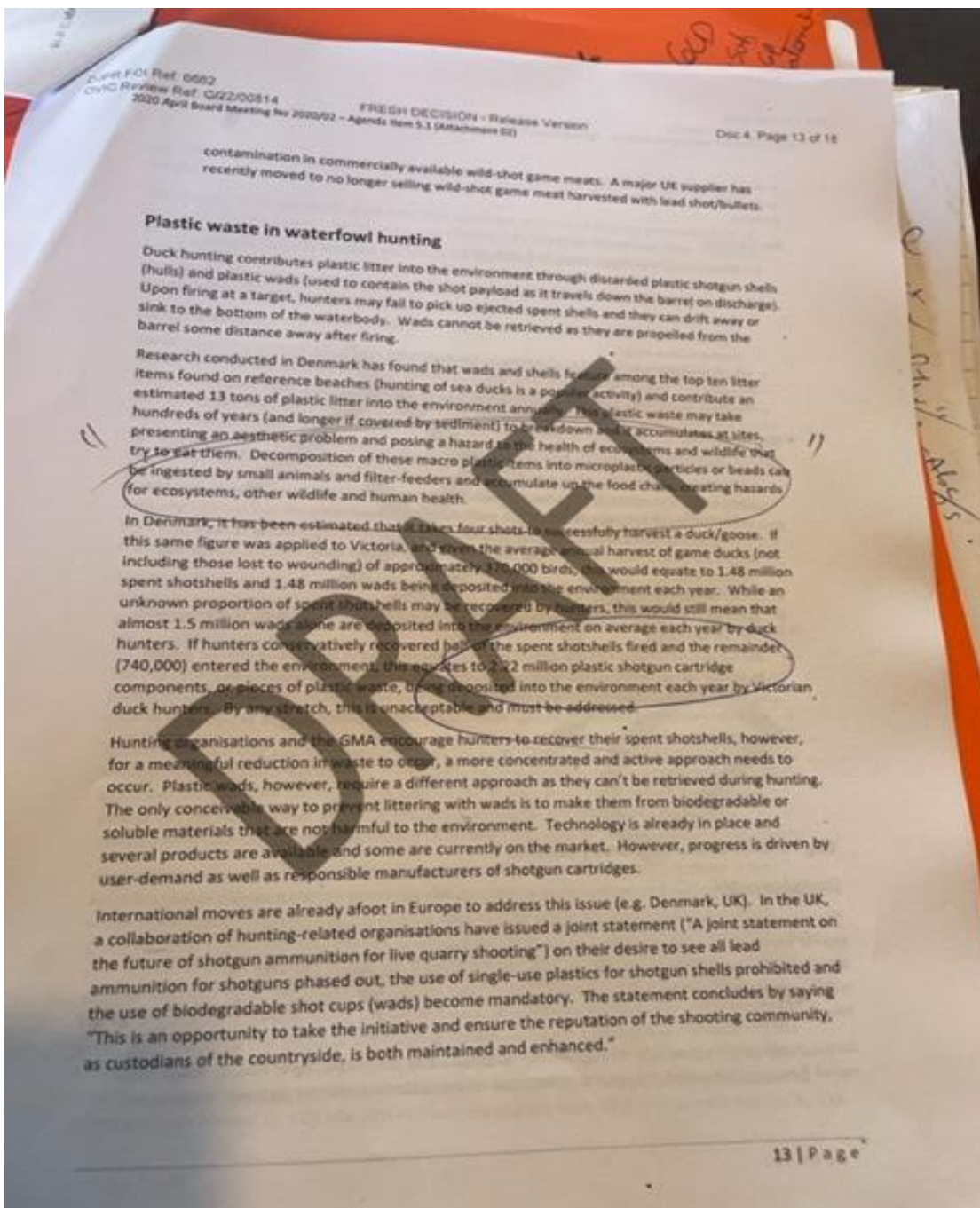
"The elevated lead levels found in gamebirds shot with lead ammunition are of concern for the health of human consumers, especially those who consume such meat frequently, or are especially vulnerable to the effects of lead, such as children and pregnant women."

¹¹ [ABC August 2021](#)

The negative impacts to our wildlife, to human health and our agricultural industry are real and serious. We believe it is only a matter of time before big litigation cases flood the media.

3-A6 Millions of Plastic Cartridges and Wads

A GMA Board Paper recently released under Freedom of Information states 2.2 million shells and wads are pumped into our environment each year just from duck shooters (excludes what would be pumped into it by quail shooters). Like lead, plastics can take hundreds of years to break down, posing a serious risk to people and animals as it enters the food chain as microplastics.



Above: screenshot of relevant page of GMA Board Paper recently released under FOI, discussing plastic pollution from duck shooters.

3-A7 Insufficient Data Regarding Birds Including Protected Species Present on Wetlands Prior to Shooting

In previous years (before GMA existed) over 500 wetlands were typically surveyed for the presence of bird species. However, neither GMA nor DELWP have been able to list, map or even estimate the number of, the thousands of waterways where unmonitored shooting is allowed, let alone monitor what may be present on them. Pre-shooting wetland checks are now far, far fewer than they used to be. The “priority bird count” is only concerned with around 37 wetlands. **It’s fair to say the regulator has no real idea of what birds are present at the vast majority of lakes, streams, creeks, reservoirs, wetlands open to shooters, placing threatened species at unacceptable risk.**

3-A8 Insufficient and Unreliable Data of Birds Shot Including Threatened Species

GMA’s own “Season Considerations” documents usually state “*To effectively manage game species, it is important to accurately quantify the number of animals harvested.*” Yet this is not possible.

Despite GMA receiving millions more in taxpayer funds, there is a gross lack of monitoring. It is not possible to observe the vast number of waterways where duck shooting is allowed. Even the army would be incapable of such a massive undertaking.

While earlier regulators commonly checked shooters bags at around 60 wetlands – still far too low a number to be able to accurately estimate the impact of shooting at thousands of waterways – GMA have struggled to check a tenth of that number. We are reliably informed that no hunters’ bags were checked in 2020 or 2021 due to COVID. If checks were not possible, neither should the shooting season have been.

Estimates of numbers of birds bagged by shooters are not only based on a survey of a small number of shooters then extrapolated out assuming the entire duck shooter base would be the same, but reliant on shooters’ memories and honesty. Estimates do not include birds shot and left behind and do not include the ripple effect through a species of losing one of a monogamous pair. Also, of course, they do not capture the impact on protected species.

3-A9 Data Regarding Impact on Protected Species, Compiled by Previous Regulators

The shooting of protected / threatened species has been occurring for decades. RVOTDS obtained via Freedom of Information (FOI), documentation by previous regulators which shows a sample of the protected species killed in duck shooting seasons in Victoria (sample six years to 1993).

Year	Collected by animal welfare	Collected by CNR	Total
1988	152	152	304
1989	273	392	665
1990	374	80	454
1991	435	119	554
1992	250	94	344
1993	813	159	972

Numbers of protected species found dead at just some of the Victorian duck shooting wetlands 1988 – 1993. Note the introduction of the Waterfowl Identification Test (WIT) in 1991 made little difference.

Table 29 Number of specimens of non-game wildlife found dead around waters used for hunting during the 1993 duck open season. The data for birds collected by members of animal welfare organisations are counts made by CNR officers of birds delivered to CNR Heidelberg during the season.

Species	Collected animal welfare	Collected by CNR	Total
Freckled Duck <i>Stictonetta naevosa</i>	229	57	286
Eurasian Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	242	35	277
Blue-billed Duck <i>Oxyura australis</i>	84	7	91
cormorant species	44	4	48
Black-tailed Native-hen <i>Gallinula ventralis</i>	0	43	43
Black Swan <i>Cygnus atratus</i>	29	14	43
Galah <i>Cacatua roseicapilla</i>	21	11	32
small grebes	19	5	24
Musk Duck <i>Biziura lobata</i>	19	1	20
Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	14	1	15
Australian Magpie Lark <i>Gralina cyanoleuca</i>	0	13	13
corella species	7	5	12
ibis species	8	3	11
White-faced Heron <i>Ardea novaehollandiae</i>	3	6	9
Red-necked Avocet <i>Recurvirostra novaehollandiae</i>	6	1	7
Yellow-billed Spoonbill <i>Platalea flavipes</i>	0	6	6
migratory waders	1	4	5
Australian Magpie <i>Gymnorhina tibicen</i>	0	4	4
Silver Gull <i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	4	0	4
tern species	0	3	3
Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	0	3	3
raven species	3	0	3
Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	2	1	3
Dusky Moorhen <i>Gallinula tenebrosa</i>	2	0	2
raptor species	1	1	2
kingfisher species	0	1	1
Noisy Miner <i>Manorina melanocephala</i>	0	1	1
Australian Pelican <i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	0	1	1
Fairy Martin <i>Cecropis ariel</i>	0	1	1
Little Friarbird <i>Philemon citreogularis</i>	0	1	1
Brush-tailed Possum	0	1	1
Total	813	159	972

972 protected species found dead at several Victorian wetlands in duck shooting season 1993, including Australia's rarest native duck – the Freckled Duck, thought to be one of the world's rarest, as well as galahs, magpies and ibis.

***Note these tables show only a fraction of the true toll on our protected species which is likely much larger because the vast majority of waterways where duck shooting is allowed are not monitored.**

3-A10 Quail Shooting – Unsustainable, Unacceptable Risk to Environment & Threatened Species

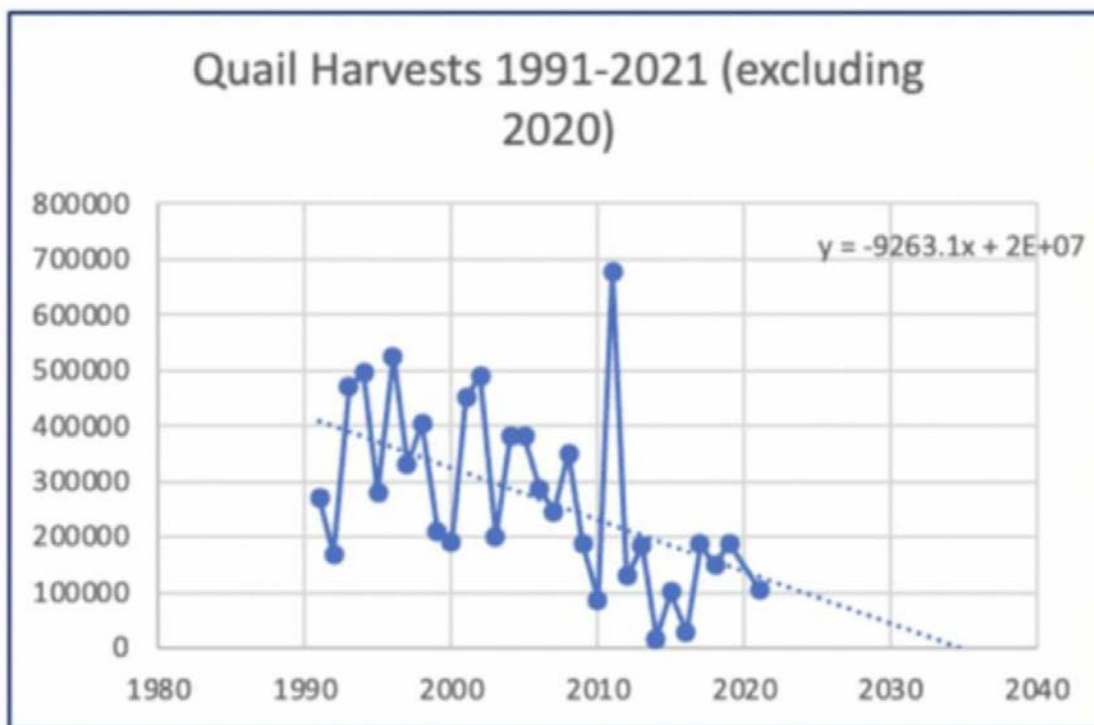
There is well founded concern for the abundance of Victorian native Stubble Quail. Government harvest records show a significant and alarming decline. GMA/Arthur Rylah Institute advised in September 2022, that “long-term harvest records can be used as a proxy to monitor abundance”.

It is highly concerning the regulator has not seen fit to even hold a consultation regarding quail hunting. As with our “game” ducks, Stubble Quail are native to our country and ought be protected. And as with game ducks, there is clear evidence of significant population decline and significant adverse impact to threatened species and regional communities which the regulator should be concerned with.

A first-ever trial “count” of Stubble Quail Victoria took place in early 2022. Only 101 were counted. Concerningly, this tiny number was extrapolated up to an unbelievable 3 million, with a very high “uncertainty” coefficient of variation (0.29). Dr Ramsay - the report’s author - has previously stated that if this coefficient exceeds 0.15, the exercise becomes unreliable (*Abundance estimates of game ducks in Victoria, Ramsey and Fanson 2022, p 14-15*). Therefore, the estimate of 3 million quail is not able to be relied upon.

Another count – really the first given the trial status of the previous – took place in early 2023 on more areas. Once again, a tiny count of 400 birds was extrapolated up to an incredible 7 million. There is no baseline to compare this to, given the previous count’s faults, yet the regulator was going to allow a full shoot of 20 birds a day per shooter irrespective.

There are other species aside from the Stubble Quail, which are not supposed to be shot but which look like Stubble Quail, and there are significant risks to threatened species such as the Plains Wanderer which resembles quail, due to quail shooters not being required to pass a species identification test. Quail shooters are also allowed to use lead, including in food producing fields.



Above: graph based on government harvest records.

3-B Impact on Amenity



The aftermath: bird body parts left strewn around a public lake in central Victoria for children to find.

It's perplexing when around 1.6 million Victorians now live in the regions, and more Victorians are interested in visiting our natural assets for peaceful recreations, the Victorian government has continued to allow the unpopular practice of bird shooting at countless public sites. Aside from leaving the waterways laden with plastic and lead, shooting renders public areas unsafe and unattractive for tourists or other forms of recreation.

3-B1 What Residents and the Public Say

"It's outrageous, rate-paying residents are forced to endure this barbarism each year for the fun of a small number of blokes who like to fire shotguns at little birds."

– Cairn Curran Resident, Tarrangower Times April 28, 2023

"Many of us are still living in caravans because the floods destroyed our homes — before that we had Covid — and now this. This is what we have to put up with every year. I've been here 26 years and it's just carnage. It's like being at war ... they're shooting towards you, around your house."

- Torrumbarry Resident, Herald Sun April 27, 2023

More quotes from our surveys:

"We live across the road .. every year, shooters litter the wetland with beer, UDL cans (sometimes left in bird boxes), and human faeces."

"I have tried to appeal to the Shire of Strathbogie on the grounds that the river is too populous to no avail."

"The sound of shooting makes me feel nervous and anxious. I live in a bush area and I don't want to use the bush (cycling/walking) when I hear shooting."

"We live next to Loch Garry in Bunbartha Victoria. Every duck season we have shooters near or property. Disrupting our animals and even have shotgun pellets landing on our roof of our home."

"I live near Lake Eildon and wildlife is a very important part of our region. Shooting birds is not only awfully cruel and often leads to injured birds/animals left to die in agony, it detracts from human enjoyment of the lake. The sound of gunfire is very distressing and disturbs an otherwise peaceful environment."

"Suffer anxiety & stress that prevents me from going on nature walks because of fear that shooters may be in the area - as I have no clue as to where they may be."

"I enjoy walking around Lake Connewarre and I get very distressed when i see and hear shooting there and I cannot do my walk. I believe is grossly unfair that the public is denied access."

"I operate a business from home. Occasionally my clients will need to visit my premises in order for them to access my services. During duck shooting season I advise clients not to visit for their safety."

3-B2 Safety Risks

The fact that bird shooting is not permitted at Albert Park Lake or Lake Wendouree, shows that it is neither safe nor popular nor conducive to other forms of recreation or tourism.

Consider the impacts of "coked up shooters" and campers' terrifying nights, of over 30 instances of hunting and firearms offences in a single weekend. Accidental shootings do occur Just a couple of examples:

<https://newsroomodisha.com/pregnant-woman-shot-at-by-blue-duck-hunters-in-up/> &

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/441631/two-women-shot-and-injured-by-duck-hunters-in-central-otag>

An extract from our submission to GMA pertaining to the 2023 bird shooting season below:

"The shooting season in its current format is completely at odds with the growth of adventure tourism. How can we possibly manage a safe tourism activity, when a shooter can come and set up on any waterway. The shooters need to be regulated to only be able to shoot in certain areas and keep very separate from other tour ventures. My question to the regulators, is "Who has the right of way" (same as any waterway) Do our paddlers need to leave the water when a shooter is present or does the shooter need to leave. You currently have no guidelines and you have no safety signage to provide a rule for right of way.

There is a liability that must be owned by the regulators when on water activities come close to shooters, firing out into the waters.

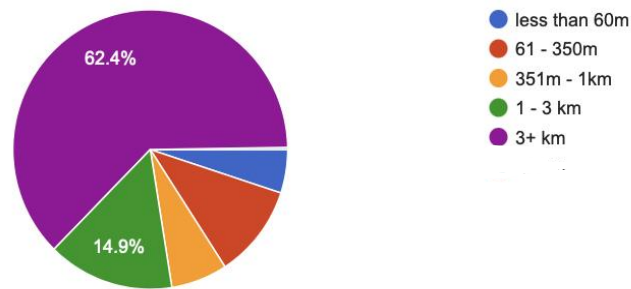
I draw your attention to places like the Cohuna Town Lagoon (where we regularly operate), this is within 2km of a town centre, and is used extensively by boaters, paddlers, fishers and even swimmers. How can you possibly add shooters into this mix for several weeks of the year. You have NO warning signs, you have no guidance and you clearly have not stipulated a right of way."

Shannon O'Brien
Managing Director
Sydney Harbour Kayaks
Murray River Adventures
Member of the NSW Transport Minister's Maritime Advisory Council Member

The **Firearms Safety Code**, a booklet approved by the Firearms Consultative Committee and Victoria Police, states on page 11, that the range for a shotgun is **250 metres to 750 metres**. The range of shot fall may be doubled with tail winds in excess of 50 km per hour. (Western Australian Police, Firearms Ranges, Standards for Approval vs 3/2008, page 3-4). Strong winds are a common occurrence on regional wetlands/waterways. In our recent survey, 22.5% of respondents said they lived within one kilometer of duck shooting, placing them directly in range of shotfall. **15.9% respondents lived within 350 meters of public duck shooting areas.**

Please tell us approximately how close to duck or quail shooting is your home?

814 responses



Locals and tourists frequent areas where unmonitored shooting is allowed – usually not sign-posted as shooting areas. Shooting risks injuring landowners or visitors through dispersion or ricochet of shot.

If a property owner or member of the public is within 50 metres of a hunter, then that person is at risk of significant injury or death from an accidental or misdirected discharge. An accidental discharge, striking a person from the mid-thigh up, would most likely be fatal.

Penetrating eye injuries have been reported at 90 metres. (British Journal of Ophthalmology, 1987, 71, 449-453 A Five-Year Survey of Ocular Shotgun Injuries in Ireland.) The patient injured at 90 metres had a double perforation and bilateral retinal detachments. **Ophthalmologists say one could still suffer a concussive injury to the eye at 250 metres.** This sort of injury could result in bleeding into what is known as the anterior chamber of the eye. Many of our survey respondents live within this range of shooters.

The Firearms Safety Code also sets out a number of safety guidelines which, sadly, we too often see flouted, particularly the following:

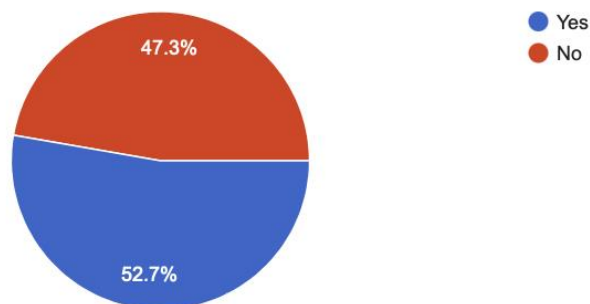
- Never shoot when stock, human activity, or buildings are in the area,
- It is unsafe to shoot at targets on a skyline. Remember that many hunting areas have rural and urban developments close by,
- A charge of shot is very wide, particularly at longer ranges,
- Your firing zone changes rapidly when you are following a moving target. This applies particularly when shooting with shotguns,
- Never fire at hard surfaces or water.

We know that shooters will fire directly into the water, to kill a downed bird or clear their barrels or even from what appears to be plain boredom.

All the above is notwithstanding the added dangers of shooters being under the influence of alcohol or drugs which we saw [evidence of recently](#) – likely an incident far more widespread given most shooting areas are not monitored.

Is safety a concern for you with (largely unmonitored) duck or quail shooting occurring nearby?

821 responses



Some more comments from our surveys pertaining to safety:

"Living on the Murray River trying to ski or fish during this time is dangerous."

"The effect of having shooters dressed in camouflage hiding in bushes is disturbing and that's putting it mildly."

"Lake Wooroonook ... I don't feel safe for my children or myself to visit this beautiful lake full of many native bird and animal species."

"..less outside time, feeling less safe, feeling people we know nothing about are near us with guns."

"..shooting too close to a retirement village. Dangerous and distressing."

"Shooting native waterbirds only a few meters from my house turns my home into a warzone."

"It's deeply disturbing, sends a shock through the body every time a gun goes off. The sound echoes through the area from a great distance. Makes me feel very unsafe."

"We feel we aren't safe in our own back yard when the shooters are in the wetlands behind our house."

"We often have shot pellets fall onto our roofs and if we are outside, it falls on our heads."

"..firing across my boundary with shot gun pellets striking the house. One occasion saw a member of the family struck."

"Leaves us feeling defeated and stressed. Always on high alert."

"It is unsafe. They shoot not far from our home."

"..we've had gunshot fall onto our roofs and if we are outside it falls on our heads."

"There is a public safety issue as shooting occurs next to households and the road."

4. Social / Economic Impact

Adverse impacts of bird hunting to community include:

- Inability to work from home.
- Inability for shift workers to sleep.
- Noise pollution (EPA issued a safety warning about the use of gas guns which are not as loud and not used as frequently or for as long a duration as shotguns are during duck shooting.)
- Loss of amenity.
- Lost tourism.
- Distress to children, stock and pets.
- Pellets on roofs which collect water supplies.
- Safety risks of firearms in public places.
- Mental Health, prolonged stress and anxiety.

While less than half of one percent of the population shoot ducks and quail (GMA data), the angst it causes to others is significant. Residents are woken to the sound of gunfire, children and animals are distressed, horses are sent spooked through fences, shotgun pellets land on rooves which collect the water supply, people can't work from home, shift-workers can't sleep, residents are frightened, and visitors won't visit.

The impact of shooting on residents negatively impacts mental health, with many regional folks complaining of anxiety and stress and "feeling sick". The noise from gunfire is intrusive and disturbs sleep.

"My name is [REDACTED]. I am a Gunditjamarra man living on Wollithica Country at Richardson's Lagoon in Torrumbarry. The lagoon is a small but culturally significant wetland with over 160 scar trees along its banks and surrounds. Duck shooting has severely impacted the country I love. Constant gunfire during the day has cost me dearly and I have had to give up my night shift because I could not sleep during the day due to gunfire. I have often received verbal abuse from shooters when I would ask them not to shoot over my house. When the shooting stops, I see hundreds of native bird species, wounded or dead. Pelicans, swans, and endangered species. This is not how people are supposed to live for 3 months of the year. Ban duck shooting. Nature based tourism is far better than the blood sport of shooting our native water birds."
[REDACTED], Torrumbarry

"I was prescribed anti-anxiety medication."

"..sick to the stomach."

"The noise alone is interruptive to my sleeping children, which ruins their entire day schedule." "It's very frightening. It certainly frightens the kids."

"..I was pregnant at the time and my baby jumped inside me each time a shot went off."

"..unsettling stock."

"I have racehorses and it stresses them out."

"My husband is a war veteran. After a few days I hear him saying "I just want some peace."

"Duck shooting is the reason I sold and moved."

"I would like to buy a property with water views at Cairn Curran.. but do not want the risk of duck shooters injuring and frightening dogs and horses."

"As a regional Victorian, conservationist and a small business owner (eco-tourism), I am strongly opposed to native bird hunting.

Over the years I have observed several situations that I believed to be illegal in regard to hunter behavior. I have seen people shooting native ducks on farm dams from car windows. I have been approached by hunters holding weapons, asking where they can go to shoot quail. I have arrived at local wetlands with my family and friends to find groups of armed men wearing camouflage. Their dogs, their attitude and their imposition on public land is unnerving. These groups leave rubbish and evidence of trees removed.

I have found freshly buried, dead ducks at these places and an absence of typical wildlife.

I have been in social situations where 'loose tongues' have boasted about how many "birds they bagged" which were well and truly beyond the limits.

I find it unreasonable that many of our favourite, local wetland reserves are 'out-of-bounds' during the most climate accessible time of year - rendering these public places, exclusive and unrecognisable.

I don't enjoy the sound of gun-fire in the distance and I don't believe that hunters contribute greatly to our country economy. They seem to BYO everything rather than shopping in our businesses.

I would like to see a progressive move to ban native bird hunting in Victoria and more government resources provided for habitat restoration, protection of threatened species and enhancement of our reserve system to further encourage a broader range of the community to explore our natural places.

Our regions are missing out on a real Autumn tourist industry that stays in our guesthouses, books eco-experiences, eats at our restaurants and shops in our towns. Takes home memories of close encounters with nature and returns the following year or recommends the stay.

Instead we have the utes, the dogs, the boats, the decoys and the guns inhabiting our picnic places for weeks on end.

Ultimately, we must ask; not what does the hunting community contribute to our economy but what does it cost?"

██████████ – Northern Victoria

4-A Social Impacts

Hello,

My name is [REDACTED]

I would like to talk briefly about mental health.
Mine in particular.

I lost my brother to cancer during the pandemic. Due to Covid restrictions I was not permitted to attend his funeral.
I am still processing this.

I lost my job.
I am still processing this.

My partner is receiving treatment for cancer. The same cancer that killed my brother. Recovery rates are slim to zero.
I am still processing this.

I am exhausted. My partner is terrified.

I live next to [REDACTED], a residential area... where families live. Each year for three months it's a living hell. Incessant gun fire... volley after volley of senseless gun shot from duck hunters. echoing through... amplified by the natural amphitheatre setting that is the lake.

It has to stop.

I invite you to spend a night at my place and be violently woken up to the sound of this bullshit.
I am telling you, you won't like it. You wouldn't put up with it. You would act for your loved ones.
You are happy to approve more dwellings in this area and take our rates money but seem impotent to act on behalf of rate payers whose mental health, safety and the right to a peaceful existence is threatened.

Shame on you.

I am not affiliated with any group. I am ex-army...familiar with firearms... a bloody good marksman... not like the cross eyed cowboys down at the lake indiscriminately shooting anything that moves, generally miss, but enough pellet dispersed to disable a bird...not a clean kill... wounded... left to suffer.
I have seen this.

They blatantly ignore start times. 7:30 am ... boorish entitled behaviour is the norm.
People want it stopped. Often too afraid to say anything because of the fear ... push back from a very small number of vocal hunters.... who delight in reinforcing an outdated 'cultural right' to hunt. to kill. Don't give a shit about anyone or anything except to satisfy their blood lust.

It's inevitable that duck hunting will be banned. It is in other states.

The sky didn't fall.

The economy didn't collapse.

Hordes of ducks didn't decimate rice crops. If anything yields increased.
Nature has a way of self-correcting when pale stale white heterosexual men with guns get out of the way.

Be on the right side of history and lead from the front.
Make a stand. Ban duck hunting.

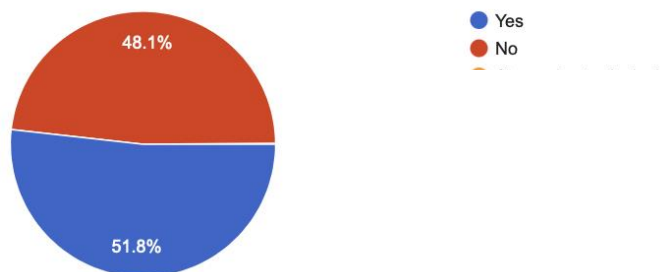
[REDACTED], Central Victoria

“Stress, anxiety levels rise. Feel unsafe in kayak on waterways. Confronted with aftermath of duck shooters dumping heads, feathers in waterways. Have come across duck hunters illegally camping and often intoxicated.”

“Higher stress, anxiety. Gun shots close to home. Can't kayak during this time. Impacts all wildlife. Sight of duck heads and feathers dumped in waterways distressing. Intoxicated hunters illegally camping. Hate this time of year!!!”

Have you or your family felt stress or anxiety due to duck or quail shooting nearby (either because you live near it or were in the area)?

821 responses



Impacts on children:

Over 25% of respondents in our 2018 survey reported children were upset/frightened.

"It's very frightening. It certainly frightens the kids."

"Every child I've spoken to is upset and confused as to why adults allow such a thing to happen."

"Children are horrified, particularly when they come across several unclaimed bodies."

"..they cry and scream. Best way is to keep them away from the experience."

" Children love nature and love animals. Then to have animals dropping from the sky through an act of man creates fear of the world."

Another concern is that twelve-year-old children, too young to watch an “M” rated movie, are encouraged to watch and participate in the killing and maiming of our native wildlife for recreation in an activity notorious for its cruelty condemned by RSPCA and the Australian Veterinary Association. Many psychologists will attest to the problems of that and the dangers it poses to society when these children grow up ambivalent to the suffering of others or the value of our natural assets. Notwithstanding the dangers of toxic lead, harmful to childrens’ developing brains even in tiny traces. If children eat wild quail, they are likely to consume lead. If they eat wild duck, there is a chance they will consume lead as well. Twenty percent of wetlands tested by EPA between 2017 and 2020 had ducks with lead levels unsafe for consumption.

4-B Economic

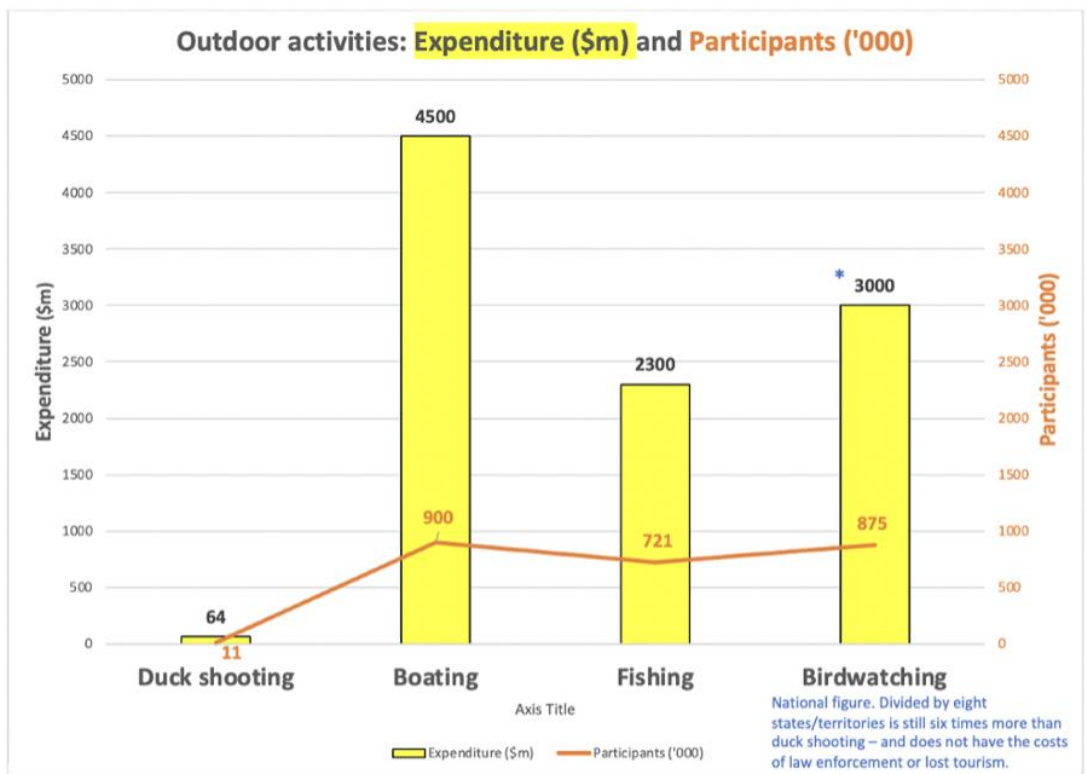
Shooters and some politicians (often members of shooting/hunting clubs themselves) suggest duck shooting is of economic benefit to rural communities. This statement is highly misleading. It is based on a small survey of shooters, answers unverified, which does not take into account the costs. A cost-benefit analysis has never been done.

The shooters survey report by DJPR in 2019 showed duck shooting expenditure (according to shooters) fell 46% in the five years from 2013. Quail shooting expenditure fell 58%. The recent Parliamentary Budget Office in 2021, put duck shooters' net spend at just \$4m - 10 m.

Neither of these reports include the cost to taxpayers of duck & quail shooting such as compliance monitoring, law enforcement, bird counts, lost tourism – as studies show shooting deters tourism. When one factors these in, as well as lost productivity – workers can't work from home, shift workers can't sleep, stock and horses are sent through fences...it's very likely the net impact of shooting is negative.

Independent economists including The Australia Institute say bird shooting is detrimental to the economy.

Shooting deters other more popular, family-friendly and financially beneficial activities such as boating, fishing and birdwatching.



Would committee members take their family fishing or birdwatching where there were men with firearms shooting birds?

In the year to September 2022, the number of domestic tourism visits for nature-based activities in Australia grew 13% and attracted spending of \$52 billion, almost double the \$29.5 billion expenditure from domestic tourism relating to outdoor sports¹². Domestic tourists alone who birdwatched, totalled 795,000, (almost double the number who visited the Great Barrier Reef), and bestowed \$522 million on our economy.

But domestic tourism is only part of the equation. Pre-Covid, three times as many international tourists (6.6 million), relished an outdoor nature activity as opposed to outdoor sport. Almost one in ten birdwatched and spent a staggering \$2.6 billion, or 8% of our total international tourism revenue.

Nature-based tourism is booming. But it is stifled by bird hunting, as per The Australia' Institute's research and polls by [UComms](#) and Kantar¹³. Public feedback obtained through our surveys support this also. (Refer to survey responses at the end of this submission).

In 2021, NSW and QLD (where recreational bird shooting is banned), received the lion's share of the lucrative domestic overnight nature tourism market with \$7.3 billion and \$8.8 billion respectively. Victoria received just \$4.4 billion.

"As a regional Victorian resident and tourism business owner I find it difficult to understand the continual bias towards hunters. Less than 2% of the state's population receive more support than lucrative and less damaging bird watchers and nature tourism visitors. My business was severely impacted in the 2022 duck hunting season; I closed my business after enduring weeks of unsafe shooting nearby. The More to Explore ap includes all wetlands in the state even when they are privately owned and not open to hunting. After trying for weeks to have this issue resolved, wetlands are still included on this ap designed to make it easier for hunters. I am wondering how I will manage if another duck hunting season is allowed. Why isn't the decline of water birds enough reason in itself to stop this outdated destructive pastime for a few? It has no benefit to regional Victoria, is destroying our unique wildlife and distressing regional communities."

Owner – Venus Bay Eco-Retreat

Above & below: two more extracts from our submission to GMA regarding the 2023 bird shooting season.

"It is well known in the travel industry that any form of animal hunting is anathema to most travellers and generally countries and regional centres have discovered in recent times that there is more financial benefit from 'wildlife viewing' than killing!

There is a worldwide travel industry movement to train staff in educating clients on 'Not riding or harming wildlife' at all and many of these so-called tourist attractions have been or are in the process of shutting down.

Regional centres would see more tourism financial benefit by changing their mindset to promoting wildlife especially as bird watching is becoming more and more popular."

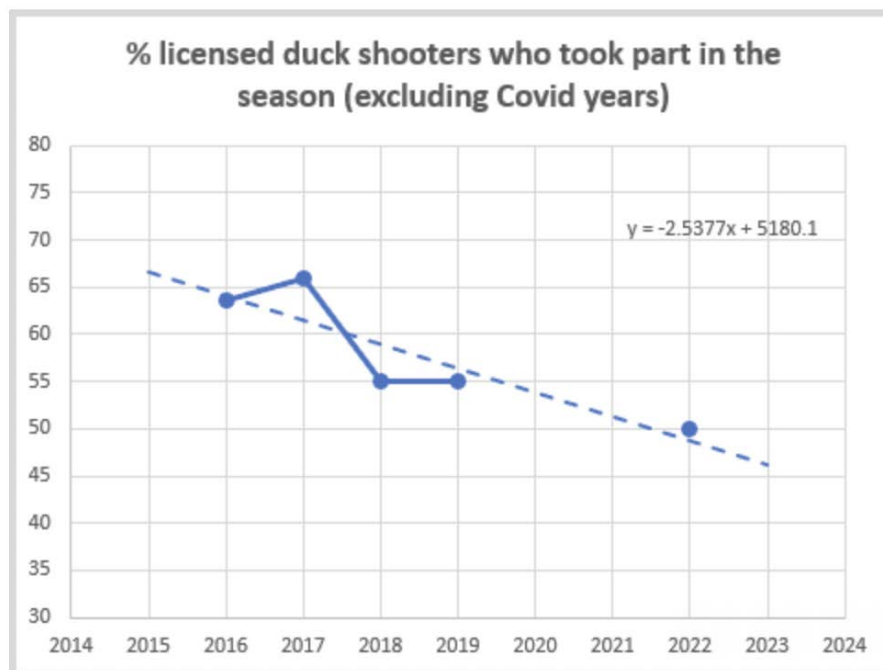


¹² Tourism Research Australia

¹³ Research by Kantar for RSPCA January 2023

4-B1 Bird Hunting is Unpopular as Well as Destructive

GMA incorrectly states duck shooting is “popular”, quoting numbers of game licences issued (26,000) which is misleading because the population of Victoria has boomed. The accurate measurement is the percentage of the population licensed to shoot duck or quail which is tiny (about half of 1% and declining). Only half of that tiny number again, are active bird shooters.



Above: Graph of GMA data

4-B2 Taxpayer Funds Supporting Unpopular Activity:

Aside from the adverse impact on mental health, on threatened species, on our environments and regional economies, eye-watering sums of government funds have been pumped into hunting.

It may shock taxpayers to learn how much they are paying to support an activity most oppose.

Information obtained from FOI requests and publicly available documents shows that direct government funding for hunting and shooting (GMA subsidies, Sustainable Hunting Action Plans, grants to gun clubs, and cleaning up lead contamination from shooting ranges) has exceeded \$70M during the life of the GMA. In the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012 which still apply, game licence fees were set very low, and taxpayers continue to subsidise hunting to this day.

In addition, the GMA’s Research Strategy 2020-24 makes it clear that scarce university research funds will be used for hunting issues through “collaborative research projects” with GMA.

The proposed Wounding Reduction Action Plan is an open-ended, long-range project with no defined targets or performance indicators. It will likely absorb millions of taxpayer dollars over many years unless bird shooting is banned. GMA’s 2023 brief to the Minister says that: “DJSIR has briefed government on funding required to implement the plan.

Public funding for one hunt club in particular which markets itself as "conservationists" has been substantial.

Mrs McArthur MP stated in parliament on 17 March 2021 that this club's wetlands projects get no government support. She was incorrect. (And also omitted to mention – while singing their praises - that she is actually a member of the club.)

According to our understanding of their Annual Reports, taxpayers have afforded this hunt club the following:

- 2011-12: \$29,363 in government grants and a \$100,000 donation from the publicly funded Trust For Nature (which co-incidentally shares a board member with GMA).
- 2013-14: \$504,000 to be paid over 10 years from publicly funded VicRoads tree offsets, via a Trust for Nature Native Vegetation Agreement.
- 2014-15: a \$750,000 grant from the state government's Shooting Sports Facilities Program (SSFP) to purchase a new property north of Melbourne.
- 2016-17: more than \$1,000,000 in grants from the state funded SSFP and a \$52,183 grant to develop a scoring system for their branches.
- 2017-18 state budget: The \$1m SSFP allocation to gun clubs across the state included funding for a Feasibility Study for one of this club's sites and funding to run the Shotgunning Education Program designed to improve the accuracy of duck shooters. (That program failed to attract interest, with only 57 participants out of 25,000 duck shooters in the years 2018 and 2019.) Also, a further government grant to digitise the records of its Hunting Archive.
- 2018-19: \$115,361 in government grants.
- 2019-20: \$99,500 in COVID-related assistance (from state/federal governments) and another \$77,516 for projects at one of their sites.
- An amount of \$224,798 (in the 2020-21 year) from the state government as a Victorian Community Sports Sector COVID-19 Short-Term Survival Grant.

Conservation or gun fodder?

The acid test for this club's conservation credentials is whether it would continue conservation work without being allowed to shoot waterbirds for recreation.

4-B3 Our Financial Opportunity

While duck shooting struggles to maintain 11,000 participants across the state:

- Winton Wetlands which banned duck shooting many years ago now enjoys over 65,000 visitors in a year to a single area near Benalla (2018/19 (pre-covid) Annual Report). This is more than three times the number of active bird shooters there are across the whole state.
- In 2021, Melbourne Water's Western Treatment Plant had approximately 30,000 birdwatching licenses.
- Phillip Island Nature Parks where they shoot penguins with cameras, welcomes 700,000 visitors a year which generates \$500 million a year to Victoria, \$120 million and 800 direct jobs just to the local Bass Coast Shire¹⁴.

Regional Victoria is home to stunning wetland habitats home to bird species unique to our country and remnants from the oldest culture on earth. If we ceased the barbaric and unpopular pastime of bird hunting, our regions would be able to enjoy better mental health and financial prospects.

¹⁴ [Phillip Island Nature Parks Media Release](#)

In closing;

According to reports received from around the state, this 2023 duck season has been one of the quietest ever. It seems bird shooting is dying out to a degree on its own. It will not be a difficult move for government to make that legally official, which is the right thing for government to do.

It is clear that native bird shooting is not only impossible to control which poses unacceptable risk to people and wildlife, it is socially, economically and environmentally, very destructive.

In the absence of a cost-benefit analysis or any social/economic impact study other than what we have run, we hope the government will listen to the voices of regional Victorians, in fact all Victorians, most of whom neither participate in bird hunting nor condone it, and ban it.

We note it wasn't long ago that the tradition (for some) of smoking was banned in pubs, despite the smoking industry warning that all pubs would close. Well all pubs didn't close, and now it is unanimously accepted that smoking is bad for the health. Most would agree that using firearms to kill native birds for recreation is not Australian culture. Nor is it "tradition" for most people.

In 2023, we no longer burn witches at the stake, we allow women to vote and we've banned barbaric pastimes like cockfighting. It's time Victoria left the barbaric destructive pastime of bird hunting in the past too.

Please take the time to read the feedback attached. It is vitally important the voices of growing numbers of regional Victorians are heard.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make this submission.

*"I am proud of the past when my people hunted, of their expertise in survival, relying on their Traditional lands to supply their foods rather than simply going shopping as is the case today. In this survival they neither spoilt the land the water or the air, living in a self-sustaining environment, with pollution not even a word.
Duck hunting in this year 2023 is classified as a recreation, a pastime, an enjoyment, when really it is nothing but a destroying activity.
Along with this activity, comes the degradation of the waters, the land and the killing of wildlife which may lead to extinction of some species.
I cannot see any reason for shooting ducks and even our native wildlife, either by choice or accident.
And really if it needs government intervention to protect ducks and native species along with the Australian flora and fauna one would surely expect it to be done.
I am hoping to see legislation in the future for the protection for all the flora and fauna in this country, including ducks. In fact, I would like to see duck hunters care about their shooting and their country and take up clay shooting instead. For surely the aim is marksmanship and not senseless killing of bird life."*

*Henry Atkinson (Professor)
Wollithiga Elder.
Traditional Owner of Country*

Attachments following:

- A. Recent FB comments: regional Victorians' feelings on the bird shooting season (page 49)**
- B. Recent Letters to Editors from regional Victorians (page 50)**
- C. Summary of 2023 Survey Responses (page 55-63)**
- D. FOI Police regarding hunting complaints – records not kept. (Page 64)**

Attachment A: Some recent FB Comments

Top fan

It is disturbing and stressful to be anywhere near duck shooting. The sound of the guns makes me anxious for my own safety and because I don't agree with unnecessary killing of wildlife. Young children in our locale thought the duck shooters were terrorists - so unsafe and distressing especially for young and vulnerable people in our community.

Like Reply Hide Send Message 20h

Stop this carnage. Lived in Kerang 60 years ago & we locals hated it then. Literally hundreds of shooters descended on the lakes & waterways annually, so many birds left to die

Like Reply Hide Send Message 3d

Yes very confronting, sleep deprivation, extreme stress & hypervigilance, hearing gunshots along waterways, seeing birds wounded, lost in inaccessible reeds & lignum, unburied waste, duck parts & Daniel Andrews calls Victoria the "progressive state???"

Sad Reply Hide Send Message 5d

live near Gippsland Lakes and rivers. We don't take our boat out during this time because the neanderthals are about in the wetlands. I don't trust their shooting prowess. This has to stop!!

Like Reply Hide Send Message 6d

we live near Gippsland Lakes and rivers. We don't take our boat out during this time because the neanderthals are about in the wetlands. I don't trust their shooting prowess. This has to stop!!

Like Reply Hide Send Message 6d

Follow

Sonya Burey it is a terrible time each year when it should be peaceful and beautiful on the Gippsland Lakes. It destroys so much on so many levels. Despair that this needless destruction can occur.

Like Reply Hide 6d Edited

This really is the saddest time of the year for our beautiful waterfowl and for all of us who cherish them and the wetlands they inhabit.

Like Reply Hide Send Message 6d

As soon as I heard the first shots, my heart sank with sadness! To shooters - your joy, my misery, and the same for thousands who other people!

Like Reply Hide 1w

Top fan

The guns sounded here this morning, we are on a corner of the Hopkins River. So sad. I suggested to my husband that if the shooting can't be stopped, the shooters could be required to complete twice as much time doing conservation work as they do shooting, as some of them claim to be conservationists.

Like Reply Hide 1w

shooting started on Anderson Inlet which is supposed to be closed to hunting, disgraceful! No GMA compliance officers anywhere and shooters running riot on our wetlands. Well done NOT Vic Labor for giving in to the bullies and allowing another season against all the compelling evidence that it should not have gone ahead. End this carnage.

Like Reply Hide 1w

I am dreading hearing the guns in the morning. Dreading the thought of the birds being shot and other birds on our beautiful Gippsland Lakes being terrorised by these neanderthals

Like Reply Hide 1w

Just phoned local Police, as shooting started. Illegally as usual on our creek. Maps clearly show no hunting. Was advised to contact Parks Vic or whatever the department is now! The Police will only assist the staff to accompany the staff. Police going to get a patrol to check. However, there is no sense of urgency and in the meantime my livestock are up at home area, to minimise stress. I hope this is the last year of this madness.

Like Reply Hide 1w

And this is the problem!

There is no person in Authority who oversees what happens on lakes, wetlands and creeks (I didn't even know this occurred) when the shooters are there shooting.

And in the meantime, there is absolutely nowhere safe for any waterbird to flee to.

And for nearby residents who have animals, the majority of our animals are also severely traumatised by these shooters, and the relentless noise of gunshots.

And as an animal lover who won't even kill a spider, it breaks my heart to think that every time I hear a shot, possibly another waterbird is suffering unbearable pain as it blasted from the skies above its home.

It is so, so wrong!

Sad Reply Hide 1w

Woke to the horrendous sound of gunshots in East Gippsland. It is horrifying! Lots of highly anxious dogs. Picked up one escapee!

Sad Reply Hide 1w

Already I am experiencing gut pain thinking about the utter hell that will be unleashed next Wednesday for 35 days. Already I am getting ready to go out & (try) to get as much footage as possible to put the final nail in the coffin of this terrible injustice & cruelty to native waterbird species.

Like Reply Hide 1w

Me too. Absolutely dreading it.

The guns are about to start in MacLeod Morass in Bairnsdale. We can hear them from our home. I just hate it!! Those poor ducks and all of the other birds on our beautiful Gippsland Lakes. They would be terrified. MP Tim Bull (Nats) you are a disgrace supporting this so called 'recreational sport'

Like Reply Hide See Response 1w Edited

This is exactly how it feels. I woke up this morning. The sun is out and all we hear are birds singing. It's a beautiful day.

But I am filled with dread about tomorrow. I am honestly feeling close to tears.

How can we look at these beautiful peaceful lakes, and wetlands knowing that those inhabitants living peacefully on their home today, may be dead and/or maimed tomorrow?

Today is ANZAC Day.....we all morn those who lost their lives in senseless wars, and we saddened, and hate what has happened.

And yet some people in society think nothing of creating a war on the wetlands, and on the innocent waterbirds. Surely ALL life is sacred? We cannot morn human life, and think nothing of taking the life of another species.

But sadly, it seems nothing is sacred. Some years ago, a kangaroo was shot on a wetlands, as well as a pet white duck. 🙄🙄

I recently looked at an Incident Reports on duck shooting from previous years where it mentions time, and time again, that threatened species were "accidentally shot".

How, and why is this allowed to happen???? Especially with no ramifications.

So the ongoing loss of waterbird life means that there will be even fewer birds breeding in the future. Haven't we lost enough animal species already?

Are "some people" so disconnected from the natural world, that they do not care or cannot see the terror and harm they create..... to all the waterbirds, as well as nearby human residents, and their own animals?

It absolutely breaks my heart ❤️❤️❤️❤️

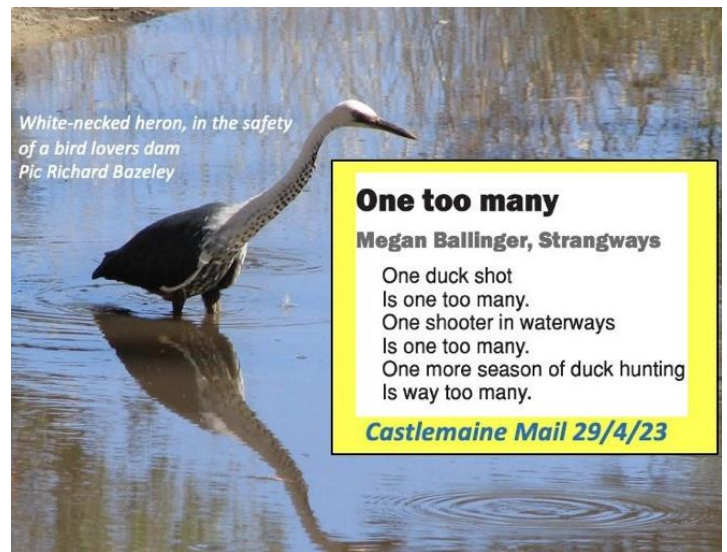
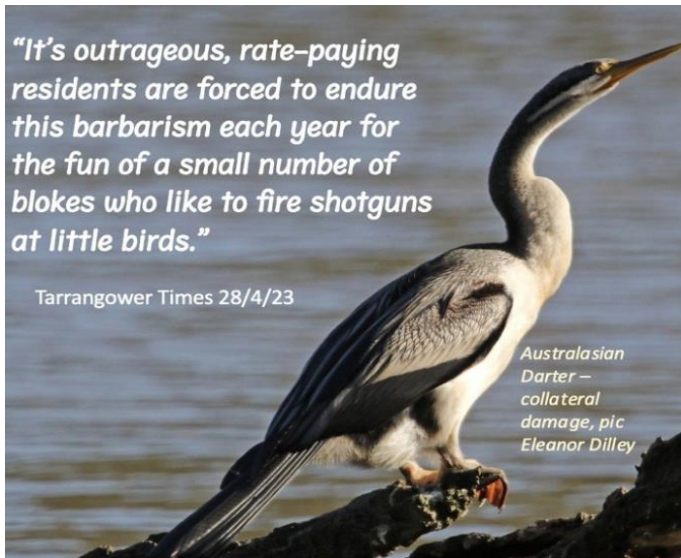
Like Reply Hide 1w Edited

13

Amazing that in Victoria where our government locked us down, incarcerated us for 23 hours a day, restricted our every movement and were willing to have us arrested for objecting, and all in name of KEEPING US SAFE... thinks it's ok for us to maybe have to dodge bullets while enjoying a country walk, just so some murdering assholes can shoot our wildlife at will!!! 🙄🙄

Chow Attachment

Attachment B: Some Recent Letters to Editors from Regional Residents



Public opinion is clear **The Age 28/4/23**

The attempt by rifle-toting people who enjoy killing ducks to say that their activity is only opposed by fringe groups is wrong. Every well-conducted survey shows that the majority of Victorians find the "sport" cruel and unnecessary.

Peter Barry, Marysville

Duck coup

The Age 28/4/23

Dear Ducks,

I must apologise to you for my efforts to persuade our government to ban people shooting at you. I have sent letters to my MPs decrying the cruelty of this supposed sport, but it seems that myself and other like-minded citizens have been ignored too. You do not have the means to defend yourselves. Your slaughter is not sport. If you can, please fly over here where you will be welcomed to my dam with a small duck community with no hunters in sight. On your way detour over parliament and drop a message of s--- with my regards.

Andy Indrans, Taradale

Dead duck blues

I live in Kerang in northern Victoria where there are RAMSAR listed wetlands.

Kerang is also known as "Victoria's Kakadu" as the sun rises, sunsets and big sky country are not dissimilar to Kakadu.

Tragically Kerang is also considered a duck shooters' paradise.

Already I have seen and heard the crack of shotguns and seen duck shooters slowly and inexorably coming into my town for duck-hunting season.

Shooters, primarily from Melbourne, descend on these beautiful wetlands and cause immeasurable suffering, wounding and death to waterbirds from the lethal barrels of shotguns.

The vile and reprehensible activity must be banned permanently in this state.

As a regional Victorian, seeing this first hand is confronting, deeply distressing and it is impacting on my health.

If Premier Daniel Andrews cares at all about Victorians, not just those based in the city and the impact duck shooting causes to those living near waterways, perhaps he could visit my town and I would be more than willing to show him first hand what goes on in the field.

Kate Bossence, Kerang

Herald Sun 1/5/23

Native bird protection

Drive around any regional area in Victoria and you will see many "no shooting" signs on farm gates and fences.

The fact that landowners need to do this shows the disregard some hunters have around trespass on private property.

You will not see signs advising "no bushwalking", "no birdwatching", "no four wheel driving", "no fishing".

Could the ETU and their supporters please note the issue being discussed is native bird shooting not outdoor recreation.

The government is not asking for submissions about any recreational pursuits other than duck and quail shooting.

Herald Sun 28/4/23
Liz Filmer, Sale

Beg to end duck hunting

WITH regard to the pending announcement of another duck shooting season in Victoria, I would like to make public what this could mean for many regional Victorians and our native bird-life.

During duck shooting season landholders and residents located near wetlands experience a very taxing time on their mental health, wellbeing, and livelihoods.

Some are forced to relocate livestock off their properties as the stock are in danger of being struck by stray pellets and spooked by gunfire which subsequently scares them through fences onto roadways.

Some farmers are forced to pay money to agist stock elsewhere away from the gunfire for the duration of the hunting season. Resident's pets also may have to be housed elsewhere due to the distress the gunfire causes them.

I am agonised by the gunfire as I brace for the sad and macabre sight of injured and dead birds (including endangered and non-game species) washing up on the foreshore of my property.

During duck shooting season there is always shooting outside of permitted hours. When this is reported to authorities no action is taken. There is trespass on private property which again is reported with no action taken. In several cases the authorities aren't even aware of the current legislation. If this dangerous and antisocial activity can't be monitored, managed, and policed effectively how can it be allowed to continue? There is shooting over such a vast area of wetlands across the state that effective monitoring by authorities is impossible.

Along with this, waterbird counts, (that are used to help determine duck shooting bag limits and duration of the season), show an alarming trend of rapidly declining numbers of water birds, yet the shooting continues. Most taxpayers would be disgusted to know how much of their money is being used by our government in an attempt to justify duck shooting.

It is estimated that for every four legally "bagged birds" one is left injured to suffer in the wild.

As a landholder I work hard to conserve the native wildlife and natural habitat that I am fortunate to have on my property. It is disappointing and disheartening to see the results of this work maimed by the selfish, recreational desires of such a small proportion of the population.

I'm begging for someone to listen to and support the regional people who witness firsthand what is happening during duck shooting season.

Elizabeth McCann
Newmerella

Gannawarra Times 24/1/23

It's time to ban duck shooting

RESPONSE to Emma Kealy (*Sunraysia Daily*, January 25):

Nationals MP Emma Kealy can't be taken seriously on duck shooting, until she first discloses that her boss, Peter Walsh, is a member of hunting lobby group Field & Game Australia.

The Andrews Government will save a heap of time and money by simply banning duck shooting right now. Hunting licence fees are too low to cover costs. New hunting regulations are due this year, and what a bun-fight that will be if duck

shooting is still in the mix. There has never been a cost-benefit study of duck shooting. Shooters would spend their money on other regional activities such as pest hunting, fishing or camping if duck shooting was banned. And non-hunting tourism would get a better go.

It's time for the ban, Dan.

Tony Harris,
Dandenong

*Sunraysia
Daily
1/2/23*

Walsh's comments wide of the mark

Quite a blast from Peter Walsh (*The Riv*, 26/2/23), a bloke with a personal history of duck shooting and a current membership of Field & Game Australia.

Mr Walsh confuses the economic contribution of duck hunting with that of all hunting (deer, quail, duck and pests).

Duck shooting brings in less than a fifth of the total.

The figures are from a 2019 hunting expenditure survey, which did not even check the shooters' claims.

The real-world test is what counts: other states did not suffer when they banned bird hunting.

As for science, Mr Walsh is again wide of the mark.

Not all on the hunt

SHOOTERS should stop playing the man ('Fowl called over 2023 duck season', 1/3).

Opponents of duck shooting are not just 'greenies' or 'activists'.

Many regional folk are tired of the annual duck slaughter and its perpetrators.

It's amazing how many armchair scientists we have now, pontificating on duck science - aerial surveys and computer models that they don't understand.

A few decades ago, duck numbers were up and we didn't need to argue the toss.

A shorter shooting season is a relief for regional residents, but a ban would be best.

A WHITE,

Geelong 3216.

Casterton News 8/3/23

The Game Management Authority has a controversial new computer model to predict bag limits based on the past 30 years, half of which were short seasons!

Mr Walsh ignores the longest-running science, 40 years of Professor Richard Kingsford's waterbird surveys across eastern Australia.

Shooters were happy with Prof Kingsford while duck numbers held up, but they dismiss his science now that long-term decline is clear.

If Mr Walsh is truly in touch with regional Victorians, he'd know most want an end to this bloody "sport".

M Mack,
Bendigo

Riverine Herald 1/3/23

No opportunity for numbers to rebound

NEW CEO of Field & Game Australia, Lucas Cooke, appears to distort science to defend duck shooting (Letters to the Editor, *Sunraysia Daily*, January 20).

Twenty years ago, before climate change really hit, waterbird scientist Professor Richard Kingsford was ambivalent about bird hunting.

But in 2015 he stated: "When you're down at the bottom of the trough, which is where ducks are ... if you have a duck shooting season you are really only going to be shooting adults which will reduce the capacity of the population to bounce back."

Kingsford's latest aerial survey shows the situation for "game" ducks - the ones shot in Victoria - is worse than in 2015.

This survey spans one-third of the continent and has been running for 40 years, through wet and dry cycles.

It's not the first time that waterbirds have dispersed as conditions improved, but the latest results are dire.

Game duck numbers have not rebounded, while other waterbirds are flourishing.

Game duck abundance is the third-lowest on record.

Contrary to his conclusion, science shows there is every reason to cancel the 2023 duck shoot.

And public opinion has turned against the shooters.

There is growing awareness of the suffering of mutilated ducks.

Chris Jones,
Shepparton

Sunraysia Daily 27//1/23

Gannawarra Times April 4, 2023

Lead shot requires attention

THE use of lead shot in hunting is a serious matter that requires urgent attention from the government.

When lead shot is fired, it can be scattered over a wide area, contaminating soil, water, and wildlife. Unlike other types of ammunition, lead shot does not break down and can remain in the environment for hundreds of years.

Studies show plants and animals can take up the lead from the soil and water, which can accumulate in the food chain and pose a threat to human and animal health.

Lead exposure is particularly dangerous for young children and unborn babies, as their developing brains and nervous systems are more susceptible to the harmful effects.

Even low levels of lead exposure can cause serious and permanent harm to a child's cognitive and intellectual development.

Lead exposure can cause developmental delays, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. In pregnant women, lead exposure can result in premature birth, low birth weight and developmental issues in the unborn baby.

Lead can affect a child's ability to concentrate and learn, leading to poor academic performance. Exposure to lead can also affect a child's behaviour, causing irritability, aggressiveness and other behavioural problems, as well as physical symptoms such as abdominal pain, vomiting and muscle weakness.

Despite the well-known dangers of lead, it is still allowed to be used, putting the health of children and unborn babies at risk.

It is not a question of whether or not individuals have the right to hunt or own guns, but rather a lack of responsibility on the part of the government and those who promote "responsible hunting".

The use of lead shot has been banned for decades in duck shooting due to its harmful effects, yet it is still permitted in other forms of hunting such as quail shooting.

Many hunters may unknowingly expose their families to the dangerous effects of lead by bringing back contaminated food.

Why isn't the Victorian Government taking action to ban the use of lead shot? Instead, the Victorian Government allows it to be sold in gun shops across the state and the Greens are silent.

Timothy Cole
Castlemaine

Herald Sun 28/1/23

Duck with rice

I AM a primary producer in northern Victoria. Does duck shooter Mr Reeves (YV, 26/1) realise that rice growers protect their crop predominantly with scare guns, and can obtain special permits to control the duck population?

His claim that shooters inject thousands of dollars into rural economies is unproven. And shooters are a menace to many rural landowners and their livestock.

Ducks aren't all bad. They control the fluke snail which reduces the need for chemical control by drenching, therefore cutting costs.

Arthur Byrnes, Barmah

Wetlands care no excuse for animal brutality.

"I ask, has anyone else noticed how Bev McArthur MP, other pro-shooter MPs and so many duck-shooters constantly deflect from the real issue of the actual shooting and maiming of native birds by using the crutch of wetlands care? (As if no other organisations are invested in it.)

Come to think of it, has anyone seen vision of Mrs McArthur in her waders installing the shooters' favourite "contribution" of taxpayer funded, \$160 (each), vogue nest boxes? As far as I can tell, wetlands conservation is not at issue - shooting on the wetlands is."

Susan Williams, Castlemaine
Wangaratta Chronicle 17/3/2023



Kevin L'Huillier: We are in a biodiversity crisis. Yet we continue to clear native vegetation, argue over water going to environment, shoot native critters and allow destructive pets and ferals to roam. Future generations will look at pictures of duck hunters and lament the lost opportunity to do good.

Riverine Herald Online
comments 1/3/23

"I can't believe there is a discussion on duck shooting. If you went out and deliberately shot birds in Mallacoota you'd be hated. It's 2023. We shouldn't even be having a discussion about this".

- Bridget, Mallacoota - ABC Gippsland 27/2/23

"Mr. Bourman needs to lose the "P" out of his party name. He doesn't represent anyone but shooters."

- Texter, ABC Country Hour 27/2/23



"Any shooting regardless of the length of time it takes place, is not good for regional people trying to live their lives. It has a profound effect on them."

- Elizabeth - ABC Gippsland
27/2/23

Warrnambool Standard 28/1/23
Outdated and cruel
Reports the duck shooting season in Victoria is to be banned should be a welcome development for most. This hopelessly outdated and cruel activity that kills and injures thousands of our native waterbirds every year has no place in a caring and modern Victoria.
Tony Delaney, Warrnambool

Please, end the shooting
Why, when there are laws to protect precious wildlife, do we argue about changing an outdated and barbaric one that encourages the massacre of native ducks during hunting season in Victoria - "Hunting season shortened" (*The Age*, 25/2)?
Megan Ballinger, Strangways
The Age 26/2/23

Bendigo Advertiser 28/1/23
Shot down in flames
Two related events are upon us. An extinction crisis and a decision by the Victorian government about allowing another season of barbaric duck hunting. Countless of our precious water birds will be shot and killed or maimed, left to die in agony.
Every other wild animal in the vicinity of the shooters will be disturbed - forced to stop feeding, to hide or fly and put under immense stress. These results alone should be enough to move the government to ban duck hunting forever. But human interests always seem to trump the environment and animal welfare. Yet even from a purely human perspective, waterways across Victoria could again be closed for months to many users - fishermen, kayakers, sailors and those who just want a peaceful sit by a lake or river.
Livestock and farmers near waterways will also be disrupted all for the sake of pleasing a tiny minority who like to kill native wildlife for fun. High time to call time.
Patrick Kavanagh, Strangways

Attachment C Summary of 2023 Survey Responses

Negative Impacts of Bird Hunting: Environmentally, Socially and Economically

We can hear shooting from our place of residence. Stressful to be woken by what sounds like cannon fire and to know defenceless ducks are being killed maimed and their habitat disturbed. Our favourite past time is kayaking and bird watching at Cairn Curran which is not possible during duck hunting season.

Being woken by gunshots pre-sunrise, the distraction of the shooting and distress of knowing our wildlife are under attack is greatly detrimental to my ability to concentrate while working from home.

Duck shooting restricts my ability to travel to wetlands during duck season. Observing wildlife at wetlands is a major part of my life.

I have duck shooters trespassing onto my private land to shoot over the irrigation channels and dams, putting my livestock and children at risk of flyer pellets and downright reckless shooting. They also leave their shotgun wads laying around, where livestock may find, chew and choke on them.

Constant early morning gun shots upsetting the dogs and myself. Dead ducks left floating in the creek. Shotgun cartridges left on the creek bank. Gunshot pellets landing on our roof from shooters shooting into the air on the creek at the back of our house.

I am uneasy about what is going to be shot along with the ducks. My cat was taken to the vet to have pellets removed and was ill for some time.

I usually really look forward to celebrating ANZAC Day. This year it is coming with dread. The next day the guns will start. I live in Bairnsdale Victoria with the Macleod Morass Wetlands nearby. We can clearly hear guns firing from our house and yard. It distresses me that every shot heard is being fired at the ducks. We have so many beautiful birds in the East Gippsland Lakes. I can't imagine the distress this noise causes them. I haven't witnessed visually the cruelty by the shooters as the general public are forbidden to enter the nearby wetlands during hunting season. I think this is disgraceful as we are the rate payers not the blow in neanderthal.

We live on a large rural property. Shooting impacts us through the disturbance to animals living with us from our dog who is terrified of gunshots, through to our horses, and scaring native animals causing panic. We run a rural accommodation retreat offering peace. This is shattered by gunshots.

It's extremely distressing hearing the gunshots. We live in an area where there are lot of ducks and to know they are getting slaughtered and/or injured and left is horrendous and bad for our mental health. We have families of ducks that come and go from our property, they trust us, I fear that if they go their lives will be taken. It's heartbreaking.

I am an avid bird watcher and photographer and I have witnessed duck shooting at Cairn Curran reservoir a few years back and all the birds, not to mention the ducks were so distressed from all the noise of the guns going off...they were flying aimlessly and criss crossing the reservoir without knowing where to go next....It was very sad and distressing to watch! I even sent a photo with an email to Daniel Andrews who (of course) never replied!!

I live on the Estuary Estate in Leopold. I hear the guns going off all the time during duck shooting season. It makes me feel sad, depressed & angry knowing that these poor innocent animals are being killed & mainly for recreational purposes. How can people be so cruel. If they want to shoot something they should stick to clay pigeon shooting!!!!

My family and myself used to live close enough. Every time it was duck shooting season we hated it because of the cruelty and it had a big impact on our 2 dogs who could hear the shooting more than us obviously... they we're constantly terrified of the noise affecting their behavior and I guess quality of life as well

I've lived rurally all my life, and have experienced and seen the negative effects of duck shooting for animals and humans. I hate this time of year, it's dangerous for all involved or nearby and so cruel. the emotional trauma affects both me and my husband badly.

We live in Regional Victoria for its beauty, the sense of community and peacefulness. We love the birds and animals

around us. In the duck shooting season this is taken away from us. We are exposed to the carnage and see shooters with dead bodies of the creatures we love. Why put our communities and creatures through this each year

Duck shooting gives me extreme anxiety and depression.

The noise on the duck shooting morning sounds like world war three and goes on and on. You wonder what environmental damage is been done. We , Paynesville Landcare, haven't been able to get a bike path put in through the Morass between Paynesville and Bairnsdale, even though Gippsland water approved it because the council said it was not environmental but duck shooting is allowed there every year and then for all that time the public are not allowed in the area. One wonders how duck shooting is environmental but riding bikes is not.

The sound of gun shots and seeing ducks flee to neighbouring areas is very distressing. The gun shots also cause much distress to dogs and other animals in the area.

I have had to end holidays as I could not stay in area where hunting was happening as it was too distressful knowing this was happening

The sound of gun fire is very stressful. We chose to live here because of the wildlife, including the abundant bird life. No one needs to use guns except professionals when other methods of putting an animal out of its misery cannot be used. No Victorian should be killing anything for fun/ sport. So wrong.

Have hit injured water birds on the road that can't fly out of the way due to damaged wings etc, always happens on the opening weekend of duck shooting, idiots shooting on private property dams. Have had birds that scoot across the ground from my dam making them easy pickings for cats and foxes.

I have thoroughbred agistment and rehabilitation at my property, and the shooting absolutely freaks the horses out, and they risk serious injury through galloping into fences in fright

After camping as a family we were extremely scared when people were suddenly shooting nearby and making horrible sounds. It was frightening to my children and very distressing. We found an injured duck the following day, which passed away with us in our car.

We live on the Murray River and the gun shots are frightening and stressful to our horses & alpacas. Also, we have several bird species living on our property and the slaughter and gun shots play havoc with their nesting, habitat and normal routines

Spoilt a holiday with shooters nearby taking over the area, loud and obnoxious, we had to leave and could not stand the sound of those poor animals being slaughtered

Duck shooting season always brings anxiety and distress to my family and others in my neighbourhood of Leopold, our suburb is part of the lake Connewarre and Reedy lakes system.

Early in the morning the sound of shots wake my home it's a destructive sound of a terrible activity which you know is happening so close to well established suburb the sound is loud and you have an unnerving feeling of the suffering and death of ducks and other wildlife.

We need to seriously help and speak out about the numbers of dwindling ducks in this horrible shooting season also acknowledge how close to extinction some are becoming. How can shooters make a distinction of what there shooting in times of diminished light, simply you can't.

Duck season is a blood sport and should be banned, many other states in Australia have already banned this archaic awful activity it really doesn't make sense to continue to allow the season to continue for the very few that partake. I went camping and unfortunately didn't realise I was near a duck shooting area. Consequently, we went home.

I live on a farm - i see ducks on the dams all the time - they are safe there - i forbid people to shoot on our land - the sound of guns is disturbing for our dogs, cats and livestock

It negatively impacts my ability to enjoy walking along Lake Colac. The constants sound of gun fire reverberates across the lake and knowing that our beautiful waterbirds are losing their lives as a result of that gunshot is really distressing.

I live near Lake Connewarre. I hear volleys of gunfire in my house. I can't walk my dogs at the lake for 3 months of the year.

My family feel deep stress and avoid holidays near where these people shoot birds.

I frequently visit the 'heart morass' near Sale ... and find the diversity of 'life' in general in that area quite astounding .. this of course includes many water birds ... living in peace ...briefly . I feel that the grief and trauma that I share with these creatures as they are being killed/ maimed/ absolutely for no reason except " sport" ... affects my mental health terribly , as do many , many injustices that sentient birds and animals suffer from the wanton selfishness of some humans.

Every start to duck shooting I feel sick in the stomach. i absolutely have mental anxiety when duck shooting occurs. We live close to Lake Connewarre a region with a "Game Reserve" classification.

I live on the Murray river and have seen boats with men dressed in cammo brandishing weapons whilst our children are enjoying water sports. Have also had to deal with the awful sound of guns blaring. It's not regulated at all and hunters don't give a crap about other residents or tourists. I've also seen dead animals left floating.

Knowing it is happening up the road from us fills me with dread, and anxiety & helplessness as the birds are needlessly killed.

The sound of shooting makes me feel nervous and anxious. I live in a bush area and I don't want to use the bush (cycling/walking) when I hear shooting. There are many feral species where I live such as deer whose carcasses have been left far too close to homes, which of course brings feral dogs in closer too. Not sure everyone shooting out in the bush is actually hunting for their own food.

We can hear gunshots from our home and it is scary. We have to deal with the thought of what cruelty is being inflicted these poor birds.

I live within earshot of the gunfire. I find it distressing and upsetting. Killing native ducks for sport is repugnant to me. I live on the Gippsland Lakes and love the wildlife and beauty and serenity of living close to nature. Duck shooting makes me anxious, upset and fills my days with dread thinking of poor defenceless animals whose habitat has been invaded. My poor dog is scared of the gunfire and this is distressing too. My friends and family from Melbourne will not visit during duck shooting season as it is too upsetting and unsettling. We all hate it.

I have seen the dead & dying birds after they have been shot. I was grief stricken.

Each year I'm affected by duck/wildlife shooting, simply by knowing it's happening or by the gun shots I hear.

We live next to Loch Garry in Bunbartha Victoria. Every duck season we have shooters near or property. Disrupting our animals and even have shotgun pellets landing on our roof of our home. Shooters offer shoot outside the times allowed also. The shooters also leave huge amounts of rubbish in the nature reserve on top of the devastation they cause to the local flora and fauna. Game management authority have been contacted on numerous occasions during the duck season but nothing gets done about the shooters, even when evidence is provided about illegal activities.

seeing ducks still alive but in agony - shot but not dead being dragged from the waterways which has been their home - so distressing ...and in the name of sport. Our local lake area turned into a shooting range - our peaceful space ripped apart. Ducks are peaceful and help to improve our waterways - seeing them scared away by the noise or worse killed is confronting.

The emotional distress leads to sleepless nights and general anxiety and personal distress. Having recently discovered quail on a family property and realising how beautiful but vulnerable they are, not just to predators but now shooters, is too much to bear. These fragile little birds need to be protected.

The term "recreational hunting" is incomprehensible to those of us that love these birds both quail, ducks and all the other birds that are shot during duck season.

What right have we to slaughter these birds and destroy our bird populations. It must stop.

I live near Lake Eildon and wildlife is a very important part of our region. Shooting birds and animals is not only awfully cruel and often leads to injured birds/animals left to die in agony, it detracts from human enjoyment of the lake. The sound of gunfire is very distressing and disturbs an otherwise peaceful environment. Shooting is not a sport and should never be considered one. Please help this senseless slaughter STOP!

Whilst on holiday during duck shooting season, we realised we were staying in an area that allowed the sport. We ended up coming home early as the sound of the animals being shot and killed for fun was horrendous, and quite distressing. While we were there we were stressed the whole time, waiting for the next day's shooting to start - or finish. Even then, we knew there were injured animals lying there dying. That's no way to spend a holiday.

Myself and some family members have been negatively affected emotionally by local duck and quail shooting. We can hear the firearms in the distance and it breaks our heart to think of these native birds being killed or harmed to lie suffering with horrendous injuries in the name of sport! It is cruel and unnecessary and it needs to be banned.

We live close to Lake Connewarre and since our 28 and 30 year old girls were pre-schoolers have been woken in the early morning of ducking shooting season by the constant sound of gun fire and, by association, the distressing realisation that huge numbers of ducks are going to be killed and maimed all for the pleasure of people who think that it's OK to kill animals for the fun of it. Very upsetting for children and adults.

I live nearby an area where duck shooting takes place. The shooters usually start before the allowed time and you constantly hear the guns going off. I also remember a time that my parents found a heap of carcasses dumped in the bush that certainly proved the shooters were doing it for the sake of just killing something. Duck shooting just isn't necessary.

Having walks in regional Victoria and hearing shootings has been an extremely stressful experience for me and my family, as well as causing us to turn back and leave the area in fear of accidental shooting.

We live in a rural area and our main recreation is bird observing. For weeks each year, we dare not go to many of our favourite locations because of the cruelty and danger due to duck shooting. Please make it stop.

I teach VCE Environmental Science, Biodiversity is studied at year 12. Strong scientific evidence predicts Avian collapse due to Climate Change. This is beside the impacts of habitat loss, predation & the senseless slaughter in legal killing. Knowledge of these facts impacts my students mental health. Not ok

We are keen field naturalists and birdwatchers, and members of local clubs. Over the decades we have witnessed the decline in habitat and decline in numbers of most birds including the ducks 'legally'. The decline in rarer species has been dramatic and of a huge concern to all members of our two clubs.

Suffer anxiety & stress that prevents me from going on nature walks because of fear that shooters may be in the area - as I have no clue as to where they may be and we have lots of wild beautiful ducks in our area

I have been out kayaking and engaging in other outdoor activities and had to put up with shooting. I do wildlife rescue and have had callouts to injured birds in backyards near wetlands and the birds have been x-rayed and found to have pellets, plus birds with obvious gunshot injuries. My family and friends are concerned because of the emotional impact rescuing shot birds has as it is preventable and cruel and therefore impacts me greatly.

Profound distress from the sounds of shooting.

We cannot visit friend in Gunbower during duck season due to pellets landing on his roof.

Unfortunately ended up camping in an area where there was duck shooting and it was so scary. I was scared for our lives, not knowing if we would end up in the line of bullet fire. I've also seen how aggressive duck shooters are and how intimidating they can be. It was also very noisy very early in the morning.

I have seen ducks still alive that have been shot but not killed brought into a Veterinary surgery where I was waiting for an appointment with my dog, the ducks wings half shot off 🙄

Our family was traumatised while visiting Victoria. Will never go down there again.

Constant feelings of anxiety at the needless suffering of wildlife. Hearing the shooting in the distance when out walking...worrying about the children.

I operate a business from home. Occasionally my clients will need to visit my premises in order for them to access my services. During duck shooting season I advise clients not to visit for their safety and for fear of the traumatic sights they may witness.

Nearby duck shooting makes the wetlands and public recreation areas unsafe for my guests. In the 2022 season I had gun shots close to my house 7.30am Sunday, I closed my business until the end of the season and was stressed and worried about further shooting and trespass until the season ended. It is extremely distressing hearing the gun shots and knowing that our beautiful water birds are being killed.

We are personally affected as the sound of gunfire indicates that someone is wanting to shoot the very birds that we care so much about. It is a very real reminder of all the things that are so wrong with imbalance of society and environment that is causing such devastation on our planet.

We feel unsafe when going about our usual business in paddocks that are adjacent to the Richardson River where bird hunters like to stalk their prey.

Our usual recreational walks around local lakes and waterways are curtailed due to the fear of accidentally being in the firing line of gunfire.

I enjoy walking around Lake Connawarre and I get very distressed when I see and hear shooting there and I cannot do my walk. I believe is grossly unfair that the public is denied access, and I see evidence of suffering and wounded birds. The wetlands should be a sanctuary, not a killing field.

I own a property for conservation purposes under Trust for Nature Covenant and duck shooters enter it by foot or 4-wheel motorbikes for duck shooting despite private property signs. I am unable to patrol it and ought not to have to do it. I feel always very sad and distressed hearing the shooting and seeing birds fly away in distress. (I live on the Murray River floodplain.

I am a descendant of the Kurnai. These birds are our property rights. They are also our ancestor's identity. Shooting them you're shooting our people.

Stress, anxiety levels rise. Feel unsafe in kayak on waterways. Confronted with aftermath of duck shooters dumping heads, feathers in waterways. Have come across duck hunters illegally camping and often intoxicated.

The nearby gunshots cause distress to my animals.

We live adjacent to a wetland that is now a game reserve. Our livestock and pets are frightened by gunshots, we've had shotgun pellets land on our roof on more than one occasion. I've had 2 horses shot over the last 12 years, one fatally. The bush is a no-go zone for myself and the neighbourhood kids during duck season as it is unsafe.

One of the joys of country living is the accessibility of walks that allow the spirit to understand the union of the land, its fauna and flora to the wellbeing of us all. That a minority are able to destroy aspects of this life for a sport is unconscionable in this time of man's history.

I'm a keen camper and bird watcher, own a small van and wish to support rural communities while spending time in the natural world. I'm deeply distressed throughout the shooting season by the knowledge such brutality and suffering is inflicted on the birds I love. I feel this behaviour is reprehensible. Our environment and biodiversity needs respect and protection not this appalling behaviour dressed up as sport.

Illegal shooters on our property

My parent's farm is hilly with river frontage located in Acheron, Vic. It overlooks the river & river flats of the Goulburn River on the other side. Duck shooters every year enter the river flats & fire at the ducks taking aim upwards & towards their farm as the ducks try & fly off. Bullets have passed by me as I was riding my horse (at 8.30 or so) in the morning. They seem to shoot indiscriminately & for hours after dawn.

We live and work on a rural property where our farm animals, staff, volunteers and neighbours fear stray bullets and dead native wildlife every duck shooting season. We spend all our spare time and a significant portion of our business earnings improving our properties' native landscapes through Landcare, Melbourne Water etc revegetation partnerships to PROVIDE habitat for and PROTECT ducks, quails etc. What's the point in doing all this work when a small self-serving minority of Victorians turn around for a few months a year and shoot these birds for "sport"?!

Higher stress, anxiety. Gun shots close to home. Can't kayak during this time. Impacts all wildlife. Sight of duck heads and feathers dumped in waterways distressing. Intoxicated hunters illegally camping. Hate this time of year!!!

The destructive nature of this event for our environment is ludicrous. I have collected kilos of cans, bottles, gun cartridges and general rubbish from along Joyces Creek as well as the poor bodies of wounded birds. This must stop.

My family lives on Reedy Lake. I'm now 47 but for as long as I can remember, we've been woken by gun shots throughout the season and well before season opening time. Wounded birds have landed on our property. Shooters have left rubbish all over the wetlands.

We are land for wildlife with many native birds on the property, terrified by the deafening sounds of gun shots. Shooters have shot into our property.

It's horrific. Every single year.

Disturbance from the sound of nearby shooting when staying on our bush block. The presence of unauthorized shooters coming onto our property without permission. We modify our birdwatching activity to avoid wetlands during the hunting season so do not spend money at local businesses in regional areas at this time.

I feel distressed when I hear the guns going off in the distance, knowing that many native birds will be killed and injured. I am involved through my work and my volunteerism in habitat restoration for our local fauna (including birds) and I feel discouraged and disheartened that the government condones slaughter of our wildlife.

The noise is distressing. Every shot brings with it the pain & suffering these creatures are subjected to.

Personal health and safety risk and trauma associated, no one wants to visit, unsafe, have to deal with trespassers, breach of covenants and licences and little help from stat. Bodies

I am very stressed and upset by the gunfire and subsequent death of birds.

Living close to the Gippsland Lakes system the sound of constant gunfire in the mornings is so distressing and knowing that our precious native birds are being killed while others are left suffering from gunshot wounds causes me grief and heartache.

There is duck hunting at our local reservoir. Can't bear to even go there and see the carnage.

Shooting within earshot of our town causes extreme anxiety and stress in our dogs, and makes me anxious about stray shots hitting people

I cannot have guests stay in my bed and breakfast cottages, hold revegetation days, collect plants for my distillation business or have family and friends over.

Hearing guns out in the countryside makes me scared to visit an area, so we don't go. We turn back home. I like to visit waterways and walk but I'm terrified of accidentally getting shot (as has nearly happened).

Holidays in east Gippsland hearing gun shots. Very stressful knowing what this means for a bird. Knowing what is happening to the birds. Knowing what they are going through. A living hell for the birds and us.

Bellarine Peninsula wetland networks and waterbird habitat should be protected as per The Ramsar Convention. Species extinction and/or great reduction in numbers is of great concern to me. Taxpayer dollars should not be spent on 'blood sports' like duck hunting that provide no great benefit to the majority of the community. When was the last Brolga seen in the wetland areas. The shooting of native ducks is a blight on our community and the collateral damage to other wild birds unconscionable.

I went to visit a wetland nearby forgetting it was duck shooting season. Autumn mornings are often particularly beautiful so I drove to Lake Bolac only to hear gunshots whilst the sun was just cresting. My first vision of the day was watching birds fall out of the sky. Less and less are there places to go where nature is allowed to rest from human interference.

I was visiting a lake for a hike and there were shooters in the area. I am from Belfast and it was extremely triggering and frightening for me as I grew up during the troubles and it reminded me of the terrorism that happened.

Every year we dread the war like feeling the encroaches upon our activities of daily living. we cannot sleep, we cannot entertain, we hardly run our business. after covid, after flooding it's a slap in the face to have duck shooters near the house.

I have several friends living in the bush who constantly complain about shooters trespassing, damaging fences, leaving a mess and disturbing the quiet. They also are concerned about stray shots.

Constant volleys of gun shot.. noise unbearable at times. Witnessing terrified wildlife taking off.

It distresses me enormously. My son witnesses shooters hiding in bush land when he is working.

I hate the noise, the disruption to other wildlife particularly birds, my dog is petrified and must be kept inside, the hoon driving of the shooters boats..I believe the shooters are trespassing but feel totally intimidated by their presence six cars and a camper van within 300 meters of my house. If I was to report this would be obvious as mine is the only house within a couple of kilometres.

shooting in public places is barbaric and blocks non shooters from enjoyment.

its next to my house, i know these animals, i love them, i watch them, its distressing to know every morning and night right near me ducks are being hunted and i can do nothing to protect them

Reluctance to travel in those areas.

Those of us who respect the Victoria's natural environment are distressed and physically sickened by the stress resulting from the government endorsed killing of native birds.

Trespassing onto our property, shooting from the roadside, shooting from adjoining properties over our property, frightening horses causing injury. Duck shooting induces very high stress levels in our family due to the behaviour of many hunters who have no regard for the law, who do not humanely deal with injured animals and who have, on a number of occasions, become aggressive when challenged (while on our property!!). The suffering of the ducks, who we love and encourage onto our dams and property, is shocking.

Growing up on Reedy Lake, the rest of the year was safe for my brother and I to visit and enjoy the wetlands and observe our native wildlife. During duck hunting season, we could no longer visit the lake for fear of being shot, abused, witnessing the mistreatment of bird life.

Shooters have shot into our property, well away from the lake. They have left rubbish all over the wetlands including thousands of shotgun pellets, polluting the waterways. Dead, unwanted, often illegally shot birds are left. Shots often occur well before legal shooting time. Native wildlife on our property are frightened by shots. It's really awful.

Finding a black Swan with a pellet in its neck dead on our property and finding other native birds that had been shot, it is so distressing and depressing

We live close to several water ways which we visit regularly but NOT during duck season because it is far too dangerous. I am fearful of being shot.

I am currently moving my livestock away from our boundary paddocks in preparation for Wednesday. There will be no more kayaking or bush walking until it is over... except for careful trips to retrieve injured birds.

Feeling unsafe in wetlands, seeing litter around the areas and increased fox activity due to the dead native wildlife

Gun shots heard very close during the day. Frightens the dog considerably and me.

Traumatised on a visit to Victoria to the point of our granddaughter having a panic attack. We had to put her in hospital for two days.

It ruins regional communities. Imagine how people living in the city would feel with constant gun shots ringing in the air for 2 months. They would NEVER allow it. Why do we think it's OK to impose this on country people.

Shooting over our property boundaries and frightening night time shooting close to our home. Scaring pet animals by close shooting. Wounding birds without collecting to humanely kill or seek vet assisted healing. Very distressing to see wounded birds on the water.

Over the years duck rescue has cost me a lot financially and has meant I've spent many weekends and other holidays committed to duck rescue rather than my own rest and recreation.

It is emotionally draining and upsetting dealing with such an injustice.

It upsets our family and our small children. We and our local community put up signs to tell traffic to slow down for ducks

in our Woodend area. Knowing people are going out and shooting ducks and other endangered wildlife defies common sense, logic and humanity. It's deeply distressing.

We don't visit local wetlands during duck hunting. Those big burley blocks in camouflage are seriously threatening.

The tranquillity at my parents normally peaceful rural home is shattered every year, with the sounds of firearms, often injured and dying birds are located. This is followed by months of silent days where there is no bird noise, and no birds to be seen flying, swimming, walking around. Litter and illegal camping and loud socialising also occurs which interrupts their ability to get sleep, often with after dark shooting of other wildlife.

Stress, anxiety and shame that it persists in this state. Trust is an issue around why this good state government allows duck shooting to continue.

Personally, it has caused, and continues to cause, immense stress. I have to research when and where the duck shooting is every season (in case it changes) to ensure I don't travel to, or through, any of those regional areas. I donate regularly to support those who are going out in the fields to try and put injured animals out of their misery. I am ashamed to call Victoria my home, given so many other states have banned the sport years ago.

I don't know what they are hunting but I scream out "QUIT IT" when I hear gunshots near my property. My livestock (sheep and horses) are nervous too and as I have a km of Kangaroo Creek on my property there are many ducks. I don't feel safe to walk down to the creek to confront the hunters, who appear to be on the other side of the creek) in case I accidentally get shot.

We can't move around our farm without being afraid of being shot at by duck shooters.

when you hear a gunshot very close by you have a lot of different concerns - then add the knowledge an animal may be hurt and the arrogant stupidity of the fools with big guns it is very concerning - if they can't shoot a duck they then blast a road sign - DDDRRR???

The number of ducks on our property lessen which makes us sad as there aren't very many around anyway.

It diminishes the trust in the Victoria Government.

It has distressed us all. Because of the gunfire I don't want to be outside or down on the lake. This significantly impacts my way of life as I always watch the sunrise and sunset over the lake each day and love to be outside gardening when I'm not working. I cannot bear to wake up to this awful sound knowing little defenceless birds are the target of the guns. I watch birds because I love them and they bring joy. I'm filled with complete sadness during duck season and in the months leading up to it.

The children are scared when they hear guns going off nearby. There is a danger of stray bullets.

I find it emotionally stressful to know that are shooting often without knowing what they are shooting. In my area livestock and pets have been killed and maimed by illegal shooters.

Unable to visit areas that i regularly walk in and engage in wildlife photography (birds) and landscape photography.

Friends can't go across road from their property to Lake without excessive drinking and threatening behaviour by loud groups of men. We find spent bullet cases in the park. Our scout group no longer goes to the lake as the atmosphere has become toxic and misogynist with male hunters there. I was warned off by Parks Vic from doing my TAFE project there as it is known as being unsafe due to hunting.

The rubbish and human waste toilet paper, left trees cut down for firewood, campfires still going, unable to visit our lake whilst these frightening men are around.

The dam on my property was always teeming with birdlife, but over the last 10 years the numbers have plummeted.

It upsets us and creates a disturbance in our beautiful tranquil part of the Otways.

We now avoid bushwalking or picnicking in any areas where duck shooting occurs. Personally, it's also distressing to know that waterbirds are being killed for fun during the mass extinction/biodiversity crisis.

We don't go near the wetlands when shooting is taking place...it taints the peaceful atmosphere and it is so upsetting to

come across injured birds left to die ..it's disgusting

I HATE THE SOUND OF THE GUNS AND THE DESTRUCTION AND FEAR EVERY SHOT IS CAUSING.

As well as my cat being shot the early morning shooting wakes us up and we fear for the other birds in the area. I fail to see how anyone can mistake a pelican or a Swan for a duck.

Constant trespassing, with zero respect or regard for safety for the occupants of the property or the livestock in the paddocks

It means I curtail my normal activities, and don't visit regional areas.

We feel anxious and distressed in the lead up to the season each year. Then very upset at the sound of gunshot each early morning and random other times.

It has caused me significant distress for as long as I can remember (at least 50 years). Affects my family's and my quality of life for a quarter of each year which is as much as 12.5 years of my 50 remembered. Stuff that and stuff the shooters! End it now.

Attachment D



VICTORIA POLICE

Our ref: 66341/19: AG

[Redacted]
Regional Victorians OTDS Inc.
PO Box 411
Ballarat VIC 3350

Dear [Redacted]

Public Support Services Department
Freedom of Information

Victoria Police Centre
GPO Box 913
Melbourne VIC 3001

DX 210090
foi@police.vic.gov.au

Office Hours: 8.30am – 4pm

Telephone (03) 9247-6801
Facsimile (03) 9247-5736

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

I refer to your letter received by Victoria Police on 8 May 2019, seeking access to documents under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the Act).

Specifically, you are seeking to access:

"Documents relating to complaints from the public to do with duck shooting, by area, over the last 4 years, including statistics. Please include statistics pertinent to complaints about duck shooting made to local stations as well as via 000"

I have contacted the Police Communications D24 who have advised that Victoria Police do not record requests for police assistance via 000 which would identify complaints specifically about duck shooting.

I am further advised that depending on what the caller complains about a number of different event codes could be used. As such it would be very difficult to identify these events which related to duck hunting. Possible event code would have to be manually checked on each entry to look for reference to duck shooting. This would be a very onerous task and is beyond the requirements of the Act.

Similarly, with regards to complaints made to local police stations, I have been advised that there is no central complaints register relating to phone calls made directly to police stations. D24 have also advised that they have no record of calls made directly to Police Stations.

Any call made directly to a Police Station is taken by the attending officer (or officers) on watch house duties for that particular shift. When calls are received, notes are taken in the individual officers day books and then actioned by the officer themselves, passed on to the Officer in Charge for further action, or the call is directly transferred to D24 for action.

As such, I am unable to locate documents which record complaints received either via 000 or made directly to Police Stations in relation to complaints about duck shooting.

I therefore draw your attention to the provisions of section 27(1)(e) of the Act which gives you the right to complain to the Information Commissioner where the advice received is to the effect that the document does not exist or, after a thorough and diligent search, cannot be located.

Any complaint should quote file reference number 66341/19 and be addressed to: