

RVOTDS appreciated the opportunity to be included in the discussion of July 22. Our attendance should in no way be taken as a sign that we support the SHAP in any way.

The objectives of the SHAP, that is, to attempt to portray hunting is safe, responsible, and sustainable, are not possible, and most certainly not in the current circumstances. Here's why:

#### **Lack of understanding of hunting areas.**

As a result of FOI, we know that no government agency understands where all hunting areas are, or can guesstimate the number of them, widely understood to be in the tens of thousands. How can authorities hope to map or signpost them, let alone monitor hunters for compliance? A very small number of hunting areas are signposted. Even fewer are monitored and for a very small percentage of time. This is an unacceptable risk to animals including threatened species, nearby residents and the public who would like to enjoy these public areas in peace.

Over 50% of Victoria's public land is open to hunters (less than 1% of the population).

Further, hunting maps are incorrect. The GMA has been advised of some specific examples. Nothing has changed.

After a simple online "test", likely done decades ago, hunters are allowed to fire, unmonitored, at animals in the dark. International visitors who do not know our landscapes or wildlife, and children as young as twelve (contrary to the National Firearms Agreement which stipulates a minimum age of 18 years) are allowed to fire without doing *any* test. Unlike in other states, hunters in Victoria do not have to register in advance to advise authorities of where they will be hunting.

There have only ever been safety risk assessments carried out at two wetlands in Mildura in 2019. These were subsequently closed to duck shooting for safety reasons. What about the rest of Victoria? Despite over a million Victorians living in regional areas, many near shooting areas (which in most cases was not known at the time of property purchase), no other safety risk assessments have been performed. FOI also confirms not even desk-top studies have been carried out to see the proximity of homes to shooting.

This is not safe, responsible, or sustainable.

#### **How is hunting impacting wildlife populations?**

There is a gross lack of understanding of the number of native waterbirds in existence. Long term studies show their population indices have significantly declined (EAAWS). This is only going to worsen with climate change. Expensive helicopter "counts" which survey a small percentage of the landscape, terrorizing farm animals and wildlife in the process, yet still not even capable of distinguishing between Chestnut Teal or Grey Teal, are a waste of taxpayers' money.

The 10% cull quota for "game ducks" is borrowed from America, based on different bird species and different climatic conditions.

On top of this, there is a gross lack of understanding of what is killed each hunting season including threatened species. Even if authorities were able to always monitor all hunting areas to see what is being shot, there is no consideration given to the impact of shooting one of a monogamous pair.

Many waterbird species are monogamous. There is no consideration given to the impact of shooting otherwise healthy animals of breeding age – particularly important to declining populations like our native waterbirds. There is also no consideration given to the impacts of toxic lead ammunition still used in many forms of hunting and remaining in the environment from decades of shooting because it doesn't break down. Lead is a cruel toxin that slowly kills animals which ingest it, such as birds mistaking it for food and secondary predators feeding on those birds. [It stops animals breeding in the interim.](#)

None of this is responsible or sustainable.

### **Why is cruelty which would be illegal any other time, overlooked in hunting?**

According to Labor's draft Animal Welfare Action Plan, 98 percent of Victorians abhor animal cruelty. Recreational hunting is known to be cruel with high wound (non kill) rates. When ballistics experts (Tom Roster) report that at least 25 percent of birds hit will be wounded only, even by the best shooters, and the expensive taxpayer funded SEP resulted in a dismally low take up by shooters, it is clear the cruelty cannot ever be acceptable.

### **Other comments:**

- Why would education sessions not apply to all hunters and every year? It was existing hunters who failed dismally according to the shooter's accuracy reports published late last year.
- Taxpayers should not be paying for any more grants for hunting clubs, nor any more social/economic impact surveys of hunters nor any more hunting fairs nor promotions. After millions in taxpayer support already – far more than any other recreation has been provided - It's time this minority group funded its own way.
- Government should instead divert funding to proper social/economic impact studies of hunting to the wider Victorian public especially those living near it, and to grants for wildlife conservation, not killing.
- To avoid appearing biased in favor of a minority recreation to which many Victorians are opposed, government should cease using glorified pro hunting phrases like "conservation hunting" (ridiculous) or "harvest" (which is what you do to crops).

Hunting is not and can never be "responsible" or "sustainable" when it is allowed in such a reckless one-sided manner as outlined in all the above. The only way hunting could ever be viewed as safe, responsible, or sustainable, is if it were ceased, at least until real numbers were known of each species, it was proven that the animals consented to be in the game which was classed as both humane and "fair chase", and the real impacts to the wider community - both human and animal - were known.

