

## Voices for the Voiceless

**DESPITE strong public opposition, Victoria's native bird shooting season has commenced and will continue until 30 May.**

Gunfire pierced the air from early Wednesday morning across Cairn Curran and its surrounds, sending birds into panic and residents into despair.

*"It's outrageous that 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," said a resident near Cairn Curran. "We can't enjoy our own homes, our kids and animals are traumatised and our friends from the city won't visit because they get too upset. At the end of it, we're left with plastic ammo cartridges and dead and dying birds around our beautiful waterway. It's not right."*

A community petition in 2021 showed overwhelming local support to end bird shooting in the area. Yet despite there being countless other areas where shooters can shoot, the local waterways remain open to them. Less than half of one per cent of the population shoots birds, according to Game Management Authority data.

There is growing resentment towards Goulburn Murray Water (GMW), who could stop the shooting at their storages, according to documents obtained through Freedom of Information. *"It's perplexing why GMW allow bird shooting,"* says Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc (RVOTDS). *"GMW know that the shooting poses safety risks even to their own staff, according to the documents obtained via FOI."*

RVOTDS is thanking the public for a terrific response to its survey. In less than a week, over 660 respondents have provided their experiences of bird shooting.

The results are damning. More than half of the respondents reported experiencing stress or anxiety due to bird shooting nearby. A huge 89.4% said they had reported illegal hunting to authorities and 89.6% said they were not satisfied with how their reports were managed. A significant 56% said safety was a concern with duck or quail shooting occurring nearby and a whopping 97.3% said they did not believe bird shooting was a benefit to their community.

These statistics will be included in the group's submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into native bird shooting.

RVOTDS is urging the public to make a submission to the inquiry if they haven't already and to complete their short survey. Links to both can be found on their website <https://www.regionalvictoriansotds.com/parliamentary-inquiry-2023>.

The public is also being urged to check for wounded birds around the waterways if safe to do so, and to report suspected illegal hunting, including bird shooting occurring before 8am or after dark. More details at <https://www.regionalvictoriansotds.com/report-unlawful-activity>.

***Regional Victorians Opposed To Duck Shooting***