

Shooting reported at Cair Curran earlier than permitted

DESPITE a community petition to ban duck shooting in Mount Alexander Shire last year, Cairn Curran Reservoir opened to duck shooting for three months from Wednesday 16 March.

The petition, signed by around 500 mostly local people, dwarfed a petition raised by shooters to have duck shooting remain, with only 21 signatures - just 11 of them local.

Leading organisers of the petition, Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc. (RVOTDS) today said, "It's deeply disappointing that community sentiment has not been respected by decision-makers."

One resident said, "With their clear lack of regard for the law, goodness knows what shooters are shooting. The shotguns have been blasting by the water since 7.30am - a full 30 minutes before legal start time, upsetting our children and animals. This is not fox or rabbit shooting. Where were the authorities?"

Another resident expressed disgust that rate-payers were expected to live in a war-zone, unable to enjoy their waterway and having to watch the birds they love get shot at for a quarter of the year. "Friends and family certainly don't want to come here either - that's a financial loss to the town".

Yet another resident described the sometimes incessant booming gunfire near homes as a risk to mental health.

RVOTDS understand that locals are hesitant to report illegal hunting for fear it makes no difference, with the GMA lines unattended after hours and callers being directed to police who are 'too busy to attend and if they do it's after the fact'.

Game Management Authority CEO, Graeme Ford said, "Illegal hunting and breaches to public safety laws will not be tolerated. Illegal hunting and illegal protesting activity can put the safety of the community, wildlife, livestock, and authorised officers at risk.

"The GMA and partner agencies, including Victoria Police, will be patrolling both public lands and private properties to ensure compliance with hunting, animal welfare and public safety laws. There are significant penalties for hunters and protestors who fail to comply with the law."

Mr Ford urges people to report illegal hunting and breaches of public safety laws to the GMA through its website at gma.vic.gov.au, the Customer Contact Centre on 136 186 or by contacting Victoria Police.