

ATTACHMENT A

The Voices of Regional Victorians – a key group among GMA’s stakeholders

Here we present an extract from 2018 survey submissions that RVOTDS received from people who live and work with duck shooting around the state including:

Alexandra, Armstrong Creek, Bairnsdale, Ballarat, Barmah, Barnawartha, Barabool, Basalt, Bobonawarra, Bolinda, Boort, Buckley, Bullengarook, Bunbartha, Bundalong, Bunninyong, Byrnside, Cassillis, Castelmaine, Churchill, Colac, Congupna, Connewarre, Crip Point, Crossley, Dereel, Drysdale, Dunkeld, Eagle Point, East Geelong, Elingamite, Geelong, Gherang, Grovedale, Hazelwood North, Healesville, Heathcote, Hoddles Creek, Homerton, Horsham, Kallista, Kennington, Killarney, Kirwans Bridge, Koondrook, Kyabram, Lakes Entrance, Launching Place, Leopold, Longford, Mallacoota, Maldon, Marlo, Maryborough, Mildura, Millgrove, Moe, Monbulk, Mooroopna, Mornington, Mount Eliza, Mount Taylor, Mount Duneed, Nagambie, Narbethong, Nathalia, Nerrena, Newmerella, Numurkah, Ocean Grove, Ondit, Port Fairy, Portland, Quantong, Raglan, Rosebrook, Rushworth, Seymour, Smythes Creek, Stuart Mill, Tambo Crossing, Torquay, Torrumbarry, Traralgon, Tuerlong, Upwey, Ventnor, Wahring, Wallington, Warburton, Wardiboluc, Warragul, Warrnambool, Wendouree, Wonthaggi, Woodend, Wycheproof, Yandoit, Yea

Summary of major concerns about duck shooting that were expressed in responses:

- Concerns for safety
- Had never seen any authorities at the waterways during shooting season
- Do not believe duck shooting benefits their communities
- Distress/anxiety from duck shooting in close proximity
- Issues with illegal trespass, removing habitat, leaving rubbish, fires unattended
- Children were upset/frightened

Specific comments are listed in the following pages grouped by theme.

- Loss of Freedom/Amenity
- Mental Health (including that of Children)
- Law Enforcement – Unhappy with Government/Authorities
- Environment Issues
- Economic Impact
- Violence and Cruelty
- Intimidation

LOSS OF FREEDOM/AMENITY:

"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"

"It's ridiculous locals can't enjoy the area in peace because they have to allow this barbaric activity"

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

"..stops amenity like bird spotting, cycling, walking"

"Exclusion from wetlands you tend all year is unfair"

"It impacts on my rights to access public land"

"As a rural person I hate it"

"It makes no sense shooting is allowed when so many people want to visit and are living in close proximity."

".. it's taking away the public's rights to enjoy the outdoors"

"Boats roar up and down guns blasting on an otherwise quiet wildlife refuge"

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

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

"[More] People are moving into the area [*near the duck shooting*].."

IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH, including CHILDREN

"The Vietnam vets in the town don't find the season pleasant"

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

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

"It's awful. Sounds like a war zone from first light.."

"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."

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

"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."

"Don't like it at all. Totally unacceptable. Our granddaughter is often in our back yard, and we have to keep her inside if shooters are around. "

"..noise and horrific sights of dead and injured animals"

"Distresses our family"

"The noise is disturbing and sickening to our family "

"Disgusted and ashamed it's happening"

"I am distressed by the idea and the noise of gunfire close to my home. I do not feel safe being outside"

"We're constantly tired during duck season and the guns scare our granddaughter. Our dog is terrified"

"On edge and extremely sad"

"Mentally disturbs me that people find joy in breeding game species and killing.."

"..accident waiting to happen"

"..uneasy, angry, distressed and disgusted"

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

"Safety wise, I hate shooters near my house and pets"

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

"..gunshot pellets raining down on our roof"

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

".. just end the shooting for the sanity and safety of local residents".

"It wakes us up and distresses the dogs and children"

"My horses run around the paddock terrified. My dog barks constantly. My cat hides. All the wildlife is very disturbed and so am I. It drives me crazy"

"..anxious and dread this time of year"

"We are all frustrated. Children and animals are frightened."

"My family are constantly scared"

"I was prescribed anti -anxiety medication"

"..[*there is*] gunshot in our water as pellets have fallen on our roof which collects our water supply"

"..sick to the stomache"

"It's distressing and unnecessary. It leaves smelly carcasses to rot. Children with me .. very upset to watch this useless destruction of life."

"The noise alone is interruptive to my sleeping children, which ruins their entire day schedule."

"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."

"My children don't need to hear the slaughter of animals. They become frightened. This is not a gun toting country. Duck shooting is un-necessary and cruel"

"I don't know a child that's comfortable hearing gunshots. Children in general are extremely sad if they know people are shooting animals"

LAW ENFORCEMENT - UNHAPPY WITH GOVERNMENT/AUTHORITIES

"..nieces and nephews ask why it's allowed. When I say the government allows it they say change the government"

"Get someone off their arse to come and have a look and experience it"

"I've photographed abandoned dead and injured "game" species and dead and injured protected species. My images have been sent to the Ministers"

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

"Trespassing on my workplace is common. We have no ability to prove who it was...we re-enforced our fences, but they still enter. Have been told there's nothing we can do."

"As landowners we find the need to roster ourselves to keep an eye on trespassers, drunken men with guns and native waterbirds dying around the lagoon"

"I complain every duck season to the shire, and they say it's legal. I complain to the Agriculture Minister (and) they say it's legal"

"Outrageous that we as landowners seem to have no rights"

"..appalling discrimination in favor of a minority. Very much a gender issue.. 99% are blokes"

"..outrageous really. When else would this impact be acceptable?"

"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."

"Duck shooting needs to be stopped. If they want to shoot, do it on their own land not ours. "

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

"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"

"..chainsaws to cut wood, human waste, toilet paper everywhere, rubbish thrown into the water, campfires left burning.."

"Complaints to Game Management Authority regarding illegal activities received nil replies"

"We have written to Parks Victoria and the Government and have been ignored by both"

"..barbaric activity, totally un-enforced"

"I was told shooters are local police officers and we can't speak out about them"

"..disgusted the government still allows this. Maybe in the 1950's ...but not now. "

"The taxpayer should not have to foot the bill to put environmental flows into our wetlands for a minority group to hold regional towns to ransom for 3 months of the year. Do what's right and let our towns flourish"

"I don't understand why people feel the need to kill and maim animals. They also seem to feel they have a god given right to travel through any private property they feel like"

".. In more progressive states like NSW where it's banned, the waterways are used by many people. The practice is so arcane, to appease a minority and Victoria needs to move ahead for the whole community"

"It's male dominated... encourages lack of respect"

ENVIRONMENTAL Issues

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

"The numbers of water birds is much lower than 10, 15 years ago. ..(and) they get blasted by shooters!"

"In my 40 years in a rural area I've never heard "Oh I'm glad duck shooting is on as the ducks are so out of hand" They've never been a problem"

"Shooting in the ..one area which is one of the five most important remaining habitats for the Orange Bellied Parrot, ... a recognised habitat for other endangered species ... is an abuse of natural heritage"

"In this day and age, we need to nurture nature not kill it. It's having a hard enough time as it is. The older generation has had the best from this planet. It's about time we take responsibility for our actions and set a good example for younger generations"

".. It's an accident waiting to happen, bad for tourism and a nuisance at the very least. Not to mention rare duck species here as well as spoonbills. One year a hawk was found with gunshot in it"

"Ducks are part of our landscape because they serve a purpose, they serve many purposes"

"No one needs to hunt ducks here in Australia in the 21st century"

NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT

"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."

"..unsettling stock"

"I have racehorses and it stresses them out"

"..(shot gun pellets) in the middle of a cow's head"

"..animals hate it. Chickens change laying times"

"..distresses my horses"

"I run a dog training school and the dogs are terrified"

"My neighbours horses bolted from shot pellets falling onto it and then it got tangled in the fence"

"I've had horses go through fences because of it"

"..stock caught in the fence"

"My dogs are terrified and urinate every morning when shooting starts. Through the day they hide under the bed"

"My hens stop laying"

"We move our outside animals away from the wetlands near us for fear of them being shot. "

".. dog who was so scared of the gunfire she escaped many times by biting her way out. She broke most of her teeth"

"I think most people find it barbaric and un-necessary. It's spoiling the chances of rural communities getting money from tourists"

"I had to give up my night shift job because I couldn't sleep during the day because of gunshots in close proximity... financial impact on my family"

"..(economic benefit of duck shooting) is total bullshit."

"Other states don't seem to suffer from banning duck shooting and neither would Victoria if we had some leaders with conviction"

"..they confirm it prevents tourists from wanting to be at the ..campground - especially the school groups that might otherwise come during that time of year"

"If anything, it scares tourists away"

"..international visitors at the local lookout have asked me what the gunshots are about and are appalled when I tell them"

"Tower Hill... attracts international tourists...that shooting and game dogs are permitted, the usual response is incredulity... a bad message for these people to take back to their home countries".

"..tourism access to the lake and bush areas is curtailed because of danger"

"It's never been (lucrative).. just ask the local store"

VIOLENCE AND CRUELTY

".. an injured duck.. its bill was split in half by a gun wound and it was unable to walk"

"Somebody shot a whole family of ducks on our waterhole last year except for one poor duckling who swam around by itself"

"I spent many years as a shooter.. witnessed swans, freckled ducks, cockatoos shot.. hundreds of birds. Birds are left injured."

"First-hand experience, as a boy driving past a river, seeing ducks wounded and trying to get away"

"It's dangerous and teaches young children that cruelty to animals is accepted by our community which it's not"

"..don't like getting injured wildlife on our dam"

"A neighbour found a dead wallaby with a spent cartridge in its pouch"

"I have wounded ducks flap across the ground to find shelter near our house"

"Violence has an impact on all people and animals in the vicinity and has the potential to encourage others to behave violently."

"It promotes violence"

"Calling it a sport doesn't change that it is killing for fun, something most humans have evolved past"

"Native animals and wildlife should be enjoyed not harmed"

"Killing anything un-necessarily is violence"

"Killing animals for fun and pleasure should be illegal and stopped. It is not a sport"

"It's archaic and cruel. It's also a minority of voters who want it. Most humans don't approve of unnecessary shooting and risking of endangered birds' lives"

"Duck shooting is a barbaric pastime, there is nothing sporting about it"

INTIMIDATION/ BULLYING

"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"