

COALITION AGAINST DUCK SHOOTING

Media Release

Saturday 6 February 2021

Call for Royal Commission to investigate Victoria's duck shooting regulator

The Coalition Against Duck Shooting is calling for a Royal Commission into duck shooting, following damning evidence of the Game Management Authority's alleged serious conflict of interest including its failure to prosecute duck shooters under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA Act).

Campaign Director Laurie Levy said today: "A Royal Commission is urgently needed to investigate every aspect of duck shooting in Victoria. This includes the decision to conduct a 2021 season and the GMA's continued failure to prosecute duck shooters as the sole regulator under the POCTA Act.

"The role of the pro-hunting authority is to cater to the needs of its duck shooting clients. Yet the GMA is also the regulator that is meant to prosecute its own duck shooting clients for cruelty offences. This is a serious conflict of interest that sees duck shooters protected from cruelty prosecutions.

"The Commission must investigate the decision to hold a 2021 duck shooting season because the GMA's recent survey of hunters' knowledge of the regulations showed that duck shooters failed the pub test," Levy added.

"The failed results of this shooter survey are a good reason why duck shooters shouldn't be allowed anywhere near wetlands in this state. Yet the GMA has still allowed for a modified season to proceed. This is the equivalent of a car driver failing a driving test, but still being allowed on the roads.

"The Royal Commission must also investigate how duck shooting seasons, albeit modified, can be conducted in times of climate change and dangerously low numbers of waterbirds, including native 'game' birds. According to Professor Richard Kingsford's latest aerial waterbird surveys across Eastern Australia, waterbird numbers have fallen by more than 90 per cent since his surveys began in 1983. Yet the shooting organisations irresponsibly called for a full three month duck shooting season with a bag limit of 10 birds a day," Levy said.

Kingsford's survey shows: 'Breeding abundance and breeding species richness has decreased considerably in 2020 when compared with the previous year. Breeding species richness was extremely low with only three species recorded breeding - this was the sixth lowest on record and black swans comprised 81% of all records. All game species abundances were well below long term averages, in some cases by an order of magnitude with 5 out of 8 game species showing significant long-term declines.

'In particular, the Grey Teal has declined significantly since 2019. Four of the five species that together made up 92% of game species harvested in 2020, the Pacific Black Duck, Australian Wood Duck, Grey Teal and Mountain Duck, continue to show long term declines in their abundance.'

"It took a Royal Commission to shine a spotlight on failed regulators like the banking regulator, ASIC, and other regulators who abused their trust and continually failed to do their jobs," Levy said.

"We believe it will take a Royal Commission to expose the GMA's alleged conflicts of interest.

"These include its stated aim to secure the future of duck shooting in Victoria, its close working relationship and advocacy for the shooting organisations, and its alleged failure to prosecute duck shooters for crimes under Victoria's anti-cruelty laws despite being provided with strong evidence.

(Short cruelty video wounded Pink-eared duck <https://youtu.be/SRSyn-HoLYI>)

"Until duck shooting is banned, we need a new anti-cruelty organisation that can prosecute duck shooters under the POCTA Act without fear or favour," Levy concluded.

For further information, contact:

Laurie Levy, Campaign Director, Mobile: 0418 392 826, Email: info@duck.org.au