

– from Laurie Levy, President and Campaign Director – 8 May 2023

(To be read in conjunction with the links provided to view powerful television and newspaper stories)

Summary

The progressive Victorian Andrews Labor Government acknowledges that *'animals are sentient, and experience feelings and emotions such as pleasure, comfort, discomfort, fear and pain'*.

The extreme cruelty inflicted on Australia's native waterbirds and all birds by recreational shooters is totally unacceptable in 2023 and must be therefore abolished.

The difference between duck shooters and volunteer rescuers is one of empathy for the victims.

Once duck shooting is banned, Victorians will look back and say, 'why did protecting our native waterbirds take so long?' And Victorian towns can open up their wetlands to nature-based wetlands tourism – providing long-term, sustainable benefits to regional communities, in the same way that visitors flock to see the Phillip Island penguins – the vision of Labor Premier John Cain & Ministers Joan Kirner and Evan Walker. The Kerang Ramsar Wetlands could become Victoria's Kakadu.

The vision of government to protect the Phillip Island penguins and establish one of Australia's iconic tourism destinations could be replicated at wetlands all over Victoria.

The Dja Dja Wurrung wetlands at Boort could also become a thriving tourist destination, plus many other wetland locations.

Introduction & overview

My submission focuses mainly on the conduct and impacts of recreational duck shooting seasons, based on 38 years of first-hand experience and expertise in rescuing wounded birds and providing on-site emergency veterinary care during every season in Victoria, and in other states. It includes disturbing footage, photographs and reports of alleged incidents of deliberate and aggravated cruelty, and serious wildlife and hunting offences, most recently recorded on the first day and during the opening of Victoria's 2023 duck shooting season.

CADS strongly believes that the violence and cruelty inflicted on defenceless, sentient native waterbirds and other birds by recreational shooters, including children as young as 12, is no longer acceptable and must be abolished on animal welfare grounds. Most Australians abhor animal cruelty, and the official polls show that most people, including regional Victorians, see duck shooting as a cruel and outdated activity that should be abolished.

I believe that Australia's nomadic waterbirds need permanent, year-round, national protection and sanctuary on the wetlands, including many of Australia's internationally recognised Ramsar wetlands where duck shooting is still allowed across three states.

My submission provides information about our work over the years as an emergency response wildlife rescue and veterinary team, with first-hand experience of the cruelty and brutality that 'protected' native waterbirds from other states are forced to endure if they fly into Victoria.

The experts warn that Australian waterbirds, *particularly* so-called native 'game' birds have seriously declined by around 90 per cent in just 40 years (since 1983 when the aerial surveys began) following many years of drought, and with hotter and drier conditions ahead.

About us

The Coalition Against Duck Shooting Inc. is a community volunteer, not-for-profit organisation founded to protect Australia's native waterbirds from recreational shooting. Duck shooting has been banned in three states since 1986 when the campaign began – Western Australia in 1990, NSW in 1995, and Queensland in 2005.

Our volunteers include concerned members of the public and experienced veterinarians and wildlife carers. We rescue wounded birds and Wildlife Victoria provides on-site emergency veterinary treatment during duck shooting seasons in Victoria. The rescuers also recover illegally shot protected and threatened species, but can only cover a handful of wetlands every season.

All CADS rescuers are volunteers. Rescuers are not covered by insurance when on the wetlands as insurance companies say that the work we do is too dangerous.

Our rescue teams have never been funded by the Victorian Government. Our campaign is funded by donations from concerned citizens who abhor the violence and cruelty that duck shooters enjoy inflicting on defenceless native waterbirds.

In 38 years, not a cent of government money has ever been associated with the rescue or the veterinary treatment of wounded sentient native waterbirds. Yet the government continues to fund duck shooters to the tune of millions of hard-earned taxpayers' dollars.

In the beginning

The first duck shooting opening I observed was at Lake Connewarre in 1985. I knew very little about native waterbirds at that time but was aware that the pelicans, swans, ibis, cormorants and myriad of other species being illegally shot were not native ducks. The injustice I witnessed to our beautiful birds was totally unacceptable. Regulating officers were themselves shooting birds instead of watching the hunters and no one was present to help the innocent and defenceless birds.

Later that year our intervention led to wildlife officers being prevented from shooting native waterbirds while on duty and a change to the opening times so there was less shooting before dawn.

No Victorian government department, either back then or now, has provided care or help for the stricken native birds, but instead ignores the shocking violence and cruelty that duck shooters inflict on Australia's native waterbirds. The job of providing help for these birds over the last 38 years has been left to volunteer members of the public. But their compassion and kindness often results in rescuers being arrested, fined and having to face the courts with some rescuers even receiving criminal records. Despite the obvious dangers from the shooters' guns as well as the trauma of sensitive people witnessing the appalling animal cruelty that shooters inflict on our native waterbirds, rescuers face fines of over \$1,000 for entering the water before 10am at a State Game Reserve. Yet courageous and committed members of the Victorian public still volunteer to help native waterbirds.

Our campaign to end duck shooting has always been very much a media campaign. Volunteers act with courage to rescue wounded native waterbirds. We are similar to the Red Cross, we go onto wetlands under fire to rescue the wounded and suffering. Our strategy was aimed at forcing duck shooters into the open where they had to debate the issue through the media. We play it hard but we play it fairly. The campaign is based on two images – one of a duck shooter dressed in camo gear shooting down small native waterbirds and the other showing a rescuer coming out

of the water carrying a wounded native waterbird. That second image showing acts of courage and kindness will always win the hearts and minds of the public over senseless acts of violence.

The difference between rescuers and shooters is one of empathy. Shooters derive great pleasure and enjoyment from shooting down defenceless native waterbirds, and have absolutely no feeling or concern for the pain and suffering they have just caused their victims, while rescuers on the other hand are traumatised at witnessing the brutality. However, from a rescuer's point of view there is no greater fulfilment and justification than rescuing a wounded bird and seeking urgent veterinary help.

Duck rescue commences and public opinion changes

The first duck rescue took place in 1986 when 15 volunteer rescuers confronted around 8,000 duck shooters on Lake Connewarre and provided first aid for the wounded birds. At this time there were at least 100,000 duck shooters in Victoria and the activity was unchallenged and accepted by the public. Guns and duck shooting equipment in those days were sold in Myer's Lonsdale St store and K-Mart as well as gun shops. Even newspapers in those days included lift-out catalogues advertising guns, ammunition, boats, decoys and everything related to duck shooting (the advertising supplements disappeared after our campaign on the wetlands started).

Our first rescue was only ever intended as a one-off action, however, the violence and cruelty that we witnessed shooters inflicting on defenceless sentient native waterbirds was so disturbing and the media coverage so powerful that a one weekend action turned into a protracted 38-year rescue campaign.

TV news crews and other media accompanied the rescue team and for the first time images and stories on the nightly TV news showed rescuers coming out of the water with wounded birds and illegally shot threatened and protected species. These powerful images also went national for all Australians to see.

We also provided a mobile veterinary clinic to treat wounded birds on the wetlands – a totally new concept, but one that continues some 37 years later that now involves Wildlife Victoria and its high-tech mobile X-ray machine that is used to find pellets lodged in the wounded bird.

Veterinarians have volunteered their time and expertise to staff our mobile veterinary clinics every year. Follow-up surgery for wounded birds has been provided by vets at Melbourne Zoo, Healesville Sanctuary, Lort Smith Animal hospital and the RSPCA.

Since 1986, media crews inside the vet clinics captured the images of dedicated veterinarians and their staff working tirelessly to mend the small broken bodies of our native waterbirds. It didn't take public opinion long to change.

One Victorian wildlife officer in 1986, who was also a duck shooter, mockingly said to me that we were wasting our time

and that 15 volunteer members of the public couldn't take on 100,000 Victorian duck shooters. He obviously underestimated the power of the media.



Over the years the change in public opinion has led to a decline in duck shooter numbers in Victoria from over 100,000 in 1986 to less than 10,000 active duck shooters today (duck shooters today make up only 0.2 per cent of all Victorians). The huge drop in duck shooter numbers has saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of our native waterbirds.

As well as so-called 'game' species, in the early years of the campaign, rescuers recovered hundreds, if not thousands, of illegally shot protected and threatened waterbirds and because successive politicians refused to attend the wetlands to witness the carnage they sanctioned, we displayed the dead birds outside the Premier's office. Images of the dead bird display would be on the nightly news for all of Australia to see. This became an annual event which again took place after this year's opening to the duck shooting season. See: <https://youtu.be/AsuYD-fH1gE>

To highlight how duck shooting has changed over the years, in 1989-90 Lake Buloke would attract 10,000-15,000 duck shooters on the opening morning of the season. It was a frightening experience as shooters used semi-automatic or pump action shotguns in those days and dead and wounded birds rained out of the sky.

In the lead-up to the 2023 duck shooting season there were tens of thousands of game birds on Lake Buloke, a favourite shooting wetland for duck shooters. Yet on the opening morning this year there were only three shooters present. It highlighted how times have changed. However, on a wetland close-by rescuers found illegally shot threatened Blue-winged Shovelers, Hardheads and a Freckled Duck.

Nine days into the season, at 11pm on Friday 5 May, the GMA closed Lake Buloke to shooting for the rest of the season because of the presence of threatened Freckled and Blue-billed Ducks.

The cruelty

Every year, hundreds of thousands of sentient native waterbirds suffer terrible injuries and painful deaths from the effects of the gunshot pellets that have impacted their bodies. At least one in four birds shot is wounded and not killed outright.

Politicians know that native waterbirds are sentient yet up until now have ignored the cruelty.

Just last week we again witnessed unacceptable cruelty at the opening of the 2023 duck shooting season. One of our seasoned rescuers was traumatised by trying to recover a wounded bird which flew off with its lower bill totally blown off and its tongue hanging out sideways. While suffering intolerable pain, this bird will probably die slowly from starvation or infection.

Examples of some of the cruelty CADS' rescuers have recorded in previous years can be viewed here: <https://www.duck.org.au/cruelty/>

Timeline

1988 – Minister Joan Kirner considers banning duck shooting

Victoria's Labor Conservation Minister, Joan Kirner was prepared to ban duck shooting if NSW's Labor Premier Barrie Unsworth banned the activity at the same time. Unsworth was facing an election in NSW and was never as popular as his predecessor Premier Neville Wran. After a couple of months of deliberating, NSW decided against a ban, which meant that duck shooting also continued in Victoria.

1990 – Labor votes to ban duck shooting

The Victorian Labor Party State conference voted overwhelmingly to ban duck shooting and in 1991 Labor's Victorian Country Caucus also voted to ban duck shooting. Unfortunately it was never implemented.

1990 - introduction of the Waterfowl Identification Test

After CADS extensive media exposure of the slaughter of Australia's rare and threatened Freckled Ducks, a one-off Waterfowl Identification Test was introduced for shooters to pass before obtaining a game licence. However, the WIT is ineffectual and Freckled Ducks and other protected species

continue to be illegally shot but it did result to a big reduction in the numbers of licenced duck shooters.

1990 – banned in WA

In 1990 the West Australian Conservation Council asked for our help as they were putting together WA's first duck rescue operation. I flew to WA for 10 days to help with their campaign. A few months later, on 3 September 1990, Labor Premier Carmen Lawrence released a media statement banning the recreational shooting of native waterbirds, stating: *“There is widespread opposition throughout the community to the cruelty and environmental damage caused by shooters...Evidence from previous [WA] seasons shows that injured ducks have been left to die, protected species have been shot, and fragile wetlands have been polluted by lead and cartridges. Our community has reached a stage of enlightenment where it can no longer accept the institutionalised killing of native birds for recreation.”*

2001 – lead shot banned in Victoria

South Australia banned lead shot from being used on Bool Lagoon in 1987 after it was discovered that Magpie Geese, Black Swans and Pacific Black Ducks were dying from lead poisoning. In the early 1990s lead shot was banned on all SA wetlands.

In the mid-1980s, the Victorian Conservation Department estimated that duck shooters fired approximately 350 tonnes of lead into Victoria's wetlands every duck shooting season. It was discovered that lead shot was a major problem following autopsies and X-rays organised by the Conservation Department on illegally shot waterbirds which had been recovered by rescuers. In 1988 an x-ray by the Conservation Dept. showed a dead Black Swan from Lake Boort had 220 lead pellets in its gizzard. In 1989 threatened Blue-billed ducks and Musk ducks had up to 80 lead pellets in their gizzards. It only takes a single lead pellet in a bird's gizzard to cause chronic lead poisoning and death over a 3-week period. In 1990 the government instigated a study into the lead problem on Victorian wetlands which resulted in the Department calling for a phase-out of lead shot by 1993. But the shooting organisations campaigned to retain lead-shot and stalled the ban until lead was finally banned on all Australian wetlands in 2001.

Despite the bans, tonnes of lead still remains in Victorian wetlands and unfortunately will continue to poison birds for the next 100 years. It is extremely concerning that today quail shooters can legally use lead shot which pollutes farmlands and can wash into waterways.

1993 – AWAC recommends a ban

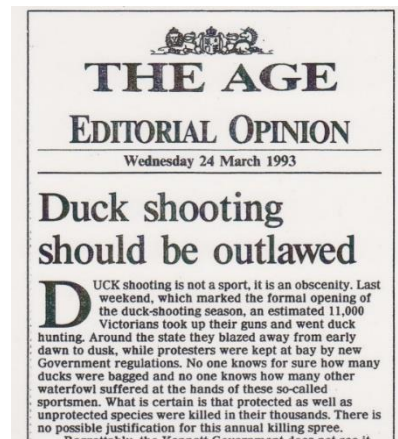
Since 1993, the Victorian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) has repeatedly recommended that duck shooting be banned on cruelty grounds but unfortunately both Liberal and Labor governments have ignored these recommendations.

1993 – Freckled duck slaughter at Lake Buloke

In the lead up to the 1993 duck shooting season, Dept of Conservation officers counted 300 Freckled ducks on the northern end of Lake Buloke. But instead of closing the whole of Lake Buloke, they only closed the northern end. As soon as the shooting started the Freckled Ducks took fright and flew out of the sanctuary and into the guns. Rescuers recovered 272 illegally shot Freckled Ducks.

1993 – media support

The media has long supported a ban on duck shooting. On 24 March 1993, The Age newspaper ran a powerful editorial that was headlined: DUCK SHOOTING SHOULD BE OUTLAWED. It went on to say that: *'Duck shooting is not a sport, it is an obscenity.'* Further editorials appeared in 2003, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 etc. See: <https://www.duck.org.au/newspapereditorials/>



1995 – banned in NSW

NSW Labor Premier Bob Carr banned recreational duck shooting in 1995. The decision followed the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) recommendation to ban duck shooting because of unacceptable cruelty.

2005 – banned in Queensland

Ten years later in 2005, the Queensland AWAC investigation into native waterbird cruelty recommended a ban on duck shooting. Labor Premier Peter

Beattie ended the activity saying that "*Queensland was now the smart state for looking after its native waterbirds*".

2007 - Roy Morgan Research Poll

Thanks to a grant from Voiceless, a professional Roy Morgan research poll of randomly selected city and country Victorians showed 75% wanted a permanent ban on recreational duck shooting. Once informed that the wounding rate is 1 in 4, that waterbird numbers had declined by 80% across eastern Australia since 1983 and that three states had already banned the activity, WA (1990), NSW (1995) and Queensland (2005), a huge 87% of Victorians said they wanted an end to recreational duck shooting. This was across all political parties. See: <https://www.duck.org.au/roy-morgan-poll-2007/>

2009 - Field & Game Australia water theft

During the long 13-year drought across eastern Australia, Field & Game Australia (FGA) resorted to stealing water. In 2009, one week before the opening of the duck shooting season we caught Field & Game Australia siphoning water from the Latrobe River to fill their private shooting wetland, Heart Morass, near Sale. Water was urgently required to attract some of the low numbers of waterbirds in Victoria at that time onto their wetland, to shoot on the opening weekend. This was at a time when farmers were walking off their land through lack of water.

Southern Rural Water investigated the FGA theft and prosecuted. On 23 June 2009, FGA's wetland manager Gary Howard pleaded guilty in the Sale Magistrates' Court to illegally diverting water from the Latrobe River and interfering with the flow in a river. We suspect this was not the first time Field and Game Australia had stolen water, but it was the first time they'd been caught in the act. See: <https://www.duck.org.au/field-game-australia-water-theft/>

2010 - Petition to parliament

In October, CADS and the RSPCA (including the late Hugh Wirth) jointly presented a petition of over 30,000 signatures to the Victorian Parliament requesting a ban on recreational duck shooting.

2011 - Rescuer shot at Lake Buloke

At Lake Buloke, near Donald, a rescuer was shot in the face and hands. She was extremely lucky not to have been killed or blinded.

This incident highlights the dangers rescuers are prepared to take in order to help native waterbirds.

Following the shooting, CADS was able to purchase the same ballistic goggles that the Australian Defence Forces use while on deployment overseas, which rescuers now wear on the wetlands.



For the full details and photos, including newspaper articles in the Sunday Herald Sun 19 March 2011 and a Channel 7 news story go to:

<https://www.duck.org.au/rescuer-shot-at-lake-buloke/>

2013 - Box Flat Massacre

On the opening weekend of the 2013 duck shooting season, I received a tip-off that a secret massacre of native waterbirds, including some 200 threatened Freckled Ducks, had taken place on a private wetland called Box Flat, in northwest Victoria. Sales representatives from gun and ammunition distributor Winchester travelled to the Box Flat wetland and provided the shooters with crates of free ammunition - so it was not surprising that a massacre had taken place.

For the full details and photos, including full page newspaper articles in The Age, 13 May 2013 and 14 May 2013 (Editorial) and the Weekly Times, 3 July 2015 go to: <https://www.duck.org.au/box-flat/>

2017 - Koorangie Marshes massacre

Due to large numbers of threatened Freckled and Blue-billed Ducks, CADS pushed for this wetland to be closed to shooting, but the request was unsuccessful. On the opening morning a barrage of shooting started 20 minutes early, yet the many regulating officers and police present were powerless to stop it. Game Management Authority compliance officers stayed on shore due to OH&S regulations. We exposed the massacre and recovered

183 illegally shot threatened species and 296 protected birds. Altogether that year 1,500 dead birds were collected.

For Ch 9 and Ch 7 News, 18 March 2017 and the ABC 7.30 program, 29 March 2017, and Ch9 Regional News go to: <https://www.duck.org.au/2017-koorangie-marshes-massacre/>

2018 - Pegasus Report into the Game Management Authority

After the Coalition Against Duck Shooting exposed the appalling massacre of native waterbirds which took place on the opening of the 2017 recreational duck shooting season at the Koorangie Marshes, part of the Kerang Ramsar wetlands, an assessment of the Game Management Authority's compliance and enforcement function was undertaken by Pegasus Economics. The assessment was damning and highlighted major problems within the GMA.

Click <https://www.duck.org.au/2018-pegasus-inquiry-into-the-game-management-authority/> for the following:

- 29 March 2017, ABC TV 7.30 program,
- 1 March 2018, ABC TV 7.30 program,
- 12 April 2018, ABC TV 7.30 program – GMA Manager of Compliance resigns over GMA's reluctance to prosecute shooters
- Pegasus report
- 1 March 2018, ABC TV 7.30 program online article – Agriculture Minister concerned that shooters regularly break the law
- 1 March 2018, Herald Sun article
- 8 March 2018, WinTV News – hunter behaviour under scrutiny after damning Pegasus report
- 11 April 2018, ABC 7.30 program online – Whistleblower says GMA incapable

2018 - Airboat incident

The 2018 duck shooting season was the quietest on record at that time, with very few duck shooters active on Victoria's wetlands.

On the final weekend of the season our rescue team targeted Lake Martin and Cundare Pool, near the town of Cressy, after 8,000 Pink-eared Ducks (a so-called game species) were counted.

The first two days of the final long weekend continued to be quiet. On the last day, only about seven shooters arrived at Cundare Pool (not enough shooters to keep birds in the air), so the shooters used an airboat to illegally skim across the shallow water to flush birds into the guns.

Rescuers captured powerful video images of the shooters' illegal actions. ABC radio was the first to run with the story, followed by Channel 9 and WIN

TV news. This was followed by Ch 2 in Melbourne:

<https://www.duck.org.au/airboat-incident/>

The Game Management Authority (GMA) was informed and seized the shooters' airboat. The owner of the airboat was prosecuted in the Geelong Magistrates' Court and fined \$5,000.

2020 - Drug bust

Duck rescuers and shooters, as well as wildlife, face huge risks from duck shooters who take alcohol and drugs while in charge of firearms.

During the COVID pandemic one of the CADS photographers, using a drone, captured images of what appeared to be two duck shooters snorting a white powder. The police were called and one of the shooters had his gun confiscated.

See ABC TV news and The Age, May 20, 2020 here:

<https://www.duck.org.au/2020-drug-bust/>

PFAS – (Per- and Polyfluorinated alkyl substances)

Per- and Polyfluorinated alkyl substances are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used for several decades in aqueous film-forming foams and other industrial and consumer products. It is a man-made chemical which was only developed in the 1930s, but today is used extensively throughout the world for a multitude of purposes.

Its dangerous effects have only recently come to light and scientists are still learning about the health impacts of human exposure. Most animal testing shows damage to the liver and immune system, low birth weights, birth defects, delayed development and new-born deaths. American research has shown that PFAS causes cancer.

It is present in firefighting foam which has contaminated some waterways and been taken up by native waterbirds and other wildlife.

Since 2018 the Environment Protection Authority has investigated PFAS contamination and in 2020 warned against consumption of native waterbirds, but the shooters ignored the risks and illegally removed warning signs which were erected at Hospital Swamp and around Lake Connewarre near Geelong.

Further notices were erected at Heart Morass near Sale, Gippsland, prior to the 2022 duck shooting season, yet shooting was not banned on this wetland.

The risks posed by PFAS could well be compared with the asbestos issue. In Australia it wasn't until the 1990s that the asbestos health concerns were taken seriously but it took until 2003 for a nationwide ban to be brought in. (According to WorkSafe Australia, asbestos is the single biggest cause of work-related deaths. Asbestos-related illnesses contribute to over 4,000 Australian lives lost every year.)

Because it is impossible to know which waterbirds are contaminated and which are not, consuming wild birds puts shooters and their families at risk of PFAS poisoning and cancer. Having flown from PFAS contaminated wetlands, any bird shot on other wetlands could be PFAS contaminated.

The question that needs to be asked is why do the Victorian gun groups continue to show no interest in the health of their own shooting members? We would have thought that the gun groups would be involved in PFAS research in order to protect the lives of their members.

Threatened and protected species

If DELWP seriously want to avoid species going onto the Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 – Threatened List, then it is imperative that recreational duck shooting is banned in Victoria.

Blue-winged Shovelers and Hardhead ducks were once plentiful and included on the so-called 'game' list but due to climate change and shooting, these birds are now listed as threatened. Inevitably, other game species will follow down the same path if duck shooting continues.

Even though the number of duck shooters were minimal on the opening of this year's duck shooting season, concerned volunteer members of the public still recovered several threatened Blue-winged Shovelers, Hardheads and a Freckled Duck from just a couple of wetlands. How many more threatened species have been shot across the whole of Victoria? It is only when rescuers recover these birds that we know they have been illegally shot but unfortunately we can't cover all of the 20,000 Victorian wetlands where shooting can take place.

Compliance officers don't undertake this job because the evidence collected would make their clients, the shooters, look bad.

For further information go to:

<https://www.duck.org.au/threatened&protectedSpecies/>

Shooters cheating the system

When a moratorium on duck shooting was called in 2007 during the long 13-year drought, a senior member of a shooting organisation encouraged their members to get their farming mates to apply for destruction permits to shoot Wood Ducks. This would mean they could still enjoy their opening weekend on private property. But as I was a member of that particular gun club under an assumed name, I read about this scam and contacted the Department of Conservation. The destruction permits to destroy Wood Ducks were consequently cancelled.

Nature based wetlands tourism

Once duck shooting is banned in Victoria, with correct planning, promotion and development, regional towns will be able to open up their wetlands to nature based wetlands tourism.

As well as the Gippsland Lakes being an important tourism attraction, the beautiful Kerang Ramsar wetlands of International Importance could become known as Victoria's 'Kakadu' and the Dja Dja Wurrung wetlands at Boort, just 40 kms from Kerang, could also become a thriving tourism destination. Lake Boort's Indigenous heritage background, with its scar trees, middens, burial sites and beautiful sentient native waterbirds would make it another important go-to destination for overseas and interstate tourists. Lake Boort tourism would be invaluable in rebuilding the population of this beautiful declining regional town.

Nature based wetlands tourism could be based on the vision that former Labor Premier John Cain and Ministers Joan Kirner and Evan Walker had for protecting Phillip Island's Penguins and establishing one of Australia's iconic tourist destinations which attracts one million international and interstate visitors and generates over \$570 million annually.

Overseas tourists would flock to these iconic wetlands, generating hundreds of millions of dollars once a successful regional tourism industry is established.

It would be seen as the vision of a progressive Andrews State Labor Government in the same way the Premier's vision set up the connection between China's Cheng Du Pandas and Phillip Island's Penguins in 2015.

State governments should be proud of Australia's native waterbirds and cherish their presence when these birds choose to visit Victoria.

If required, I would be prepared to work with Tourism Victoria, or any other tourism organisation, to help provide my vision for Victoria's nature-based wetlands and waterbird tourism which has the potential to generate hundreds of millions of dollars for regional Victoria.

Please watch this Labor tourism proposal compiled by CADS on 24 June 2018 following Premier Andrews visit to China. https://youtu.be/P2R4PK_VoXg

Thank you

I would like to thank all of the many thousand kind, courageous and compassionate volunteers who have risked their lives to help Australia's native waterbirds. And also the dedicated veterinarians who gave their time and expertise to treat our feathered victims. I would like to thank the medical doctors, nurses and paramedics who also gave their time and expertise to treat rescuers for hypothermia, and other conditions and injuries incurred on the wetlands. A special thank you to Melbourne Zoo and Healesville Sanctuary who operated on injured waterbirds; to the Lort Smith Animal Hospital for treating the wounds of our native waterbird victims and to the generous public who financially support our campaign to keep rescuers on the wetlands.

I'd also like to thank our supporters who successfully fought FOI battles to breach the unwarranted secrecy surrounding duck shooting policy and funding.

And finally, to a very special hero, who in the 1980s was prepared to risk a good career in government to help native waterbirds, by not only educating me about native waterbirds, but who also passed on important political information from the ARI and the Department of Conservation and government. This person must remain nameless.

Conclusion

Considering the violence and cruelty that duck shooters inflict on hundreds of thousands of native waterbirds during each duck shooting season – my question to the Parliamentary Inquiry is: *Would you treat your animal companions the same way duck shooters treat sentient native waterbirds?* If you wouldn't, then you must act now!

I am more than happy to provide verbal information to the inquiry, however, I face a medical operation in hospital on May 23 and will require several weeks to recuperate.

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