

# **TRANSCRIPT**

## **SELECT COMMITTEE ON VICTORIA'S RECREATIONAL NATIVE BIRD HUNTING ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Inquiry into Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements**

Sale – Monday 26 June 2023

#### **MEMBERS**

Ryan Batchelor – Chair

Michael Galea – Deputy Chair

Melina Bath

Jeff Bourman

Katherine Copsey

Bev McArthur

Evan Mulholland

Georgie Purcell

Sheena Watt

**WITNESSES**

Mr Dave Evans,

Ms Tania Begg,

Ms Helen Round, and

Mr Manfred Zabinkas.

**The CHAIR:** All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, can you each please tell me your name, and if you are appearing on behalf of any organisation, what that organisation may be.

**Dave EVANS:** David Andrew Evans, for the Coalition against Duck Shooting.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Manfred Zabinkas. I run my own shelter, but not for any specific organisation.

**Helen ROUND:** I am Helen Round, and I am from the East Trentham Wildlife Shelter that I run with Manfred.

**Tania BEGG:** My name is Tania Begg, and I also run a wildlife shelter in north-central Victoria.

**The CHAIR:** This session is supposed to be a bit of a panel discussion which is slightly less formal as distinct from the organisations we have been hearing from over the course of these proceedings. I might get people to introduce themselves now, and then we will go into proceedings. Bev.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Bev McArthur, Western Victoria Region.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Evan Mulholland, Northern Metropolitan Region.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Jeff Bourman, Eastern Victoria Region.

**Melina BATH:** Melina Bath, Eastern Victoria Region.

**Sheena WATT:** Sheena Watt, Northern Metropolitan Region.

**Georgie PURCELL:** Georgie Purcell, Northern Victoria Region.

**The CHAIR:** I am Ryan Batchelor from Southern Metropolitan Region and Chair of the committee. We will offer you the opportunity to make some opening remarks. You do not need to repeat everything you have all said individually in your submissions, because we have read those. But if there are a couple of minutes each that you want to take, we could do it short and try to make the intro about 5 minutes in total. I will just also say obviously this and the next session may elicit some interest, and I will just reiterate the comments I made at the opening of today's session that I expect all these proceedings to be done respectfully.

**Dave EVANS:** Sure.

**Helen ROUND:** Yes.

**Dave EVANS:** So is this where we do introductions?

**The CHAIR:** This is where you talk, yes. Fire away.

**Dave EVANS:** Okay, thank you. It is very hard to put 27 years into words. I started with duck rescue in 1996 because I was against all the protected species that were being shot – not so much the game species, but after 1 minute of being out there on the wetlands, all that changed. I saw beautiful birds being used and abused like a commodity. I saw males treat birds with no compassion or empathy or even value. I saw duck shooters acting as if it was a game of Space Invaders, where the target had no worth whatsoever. I continuously saw birds not being retrieved or put out of their misery. I realised the only way to stop this travesty was to get duck shooting banned.

I have been coordinating the rescue teams for 23 years now. I scout wetlands before the season. I collate information and direct rescuers where to go on the wetlands. I try to keep rescuers as safe as possible, and I attend every weekend of the Victorian season. I also organise the mid-week rescue of wounded birds throughout the state after the opening. Even after 27 years of duck rescue, I still get apprehensive before the first shots are fired and traumatised once the season is over. I have friends in duck rescue who are war veterans, who say that duck rescue is the closest thing to a war zone in Australia. The only good thing about duck rescue is meeting all the brave volunteers who come from all walks of life – doctors, vets, nurses, lawyers, social workers, paramedics, firefighters, teachers, wildlife carers, tradies and so on. Many take annual leave from their work to attend, and some come from interstate. We even have the adult children of duck shooters.

As coordinator and a rescuer, I have seen many things. I have found birds still alive but blinded by shotgun pellets, with bits of legs blown off or smashed bills irreparably damaged or shot away; wings broken, with protruding bones; and small bodies peppered with shot. I have escorted rescuers off the water who have been traumatised by what they have seen as well as by the abuse from shooters. You may think that after 27 years there have been massive changes. Well, there have been in the number of duck shooters. There was a time I could take my team to any wetland in Kerang or on any weekend other than opening and expect hundreds of shooters and many birds. Now we are likely to see only around 20 shooters, and bird numbers have dropped. But in regard to shooter crimes, they are always the same – wounding, shot-protected species, shooting over bag limit et cetera, et cetera. On the second day of the 2023 opening, while kayaking at Wooroonook and looking for wounded birds, I saw a grey teal with its lower bill blown off and its tongue hanging out, which flew away before we could get to it. Let us hope this will be the last year and birds will be safe and rescuers can finally rest easy. If not, we will be out there again until it is over. Thank you. That is my speech.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Evans.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** As I said before, my name is Manfred. I have been involved in wildlife rescue and care of wildlife for over 25 years now. To the best of my ability, I estimate that I have rescued somewhere in the vicinity of 15,000 to 20,000 animals over that time. I have a bachelor degree in environmental science. I am a former vice president of Wildlife Victoria. I operate a wildlife shelter in central Victoria and have been rural for quite a while, and I have operated a number of shelters over those 25 years. In 2005 I received the *Herald Sun* Pride of Australia medal for my work in animal welfare, and in 2020 I was awarded the Order of Australia. So I have pretty much devoted my life to animal rescue and animal welfare, and I take this very, very seriously.

I also own and operate my own animal rescue business now and have done that for over 15 years. So it is quite frustrating and it angers me to hear the way shooters talk about rescuers and people of authority talk about the people that go out and rescue as unemployed university students, someone with nothing better to do, someone looking for a bit of fun and that we have nothing better to do and get paid by Laurie Levy for it. That is quite offensive for me, because as you can see this is quite serious. Most of the rescuers I know are all professionals. They own their own businesses. They take this very seriously. We are passionate about the welfare of our wildlife and that is why we are there, not because of some ridiculous notion that we have got nothing else to do.

My first opening was in 2001 so I have been doing this for 22 years, and I have been to every single Victorian duck season in those 22 years, so I have seen it all. I will not mention some of my examples, but the things that Dave just spoke about and the visions that we see and the atrocities are with all of us. This is something that every rescuer gets to experience, unfortunately.

To rescue ducks and to have this commitment we leave our homes, we leave our families and we leave our shelters. For animals that are in our care we have to make arrangements. We leave our businesses, we leave our

income – this is very expensive for us as well, and it is not fun. I can honestly tell you I do not enjoy going to duck openings and watching our native animals get slaughtered. I would much rather stay home and care for the animals that are at my property that need my help as well. And it is expensive – just this year to go to the opening for one week cost me in the order of \$5000. It cost me over \$1000 just to come here today, but I take this seriously and so I welcome the opportunity to be here. I am hoping it is \$1000 well spent.

It is a massive commitment to fight for animal welfare, and it is not just financial. We witness all these horrific acts and we see a lot of cruelty and a lot of suffering – some of the examples which Dave mentioned – and it affects our mental health, so this is really damaging for us. Even if I do not attend – and people ask me why do I go, why do I put myself through that – laying at home knowing that we have got a duck season and knowing from 22 years of experience what happens out there causes me mental health problems knowing that I am not there, and I feel compelled to be out there and to do my best to minimise the carnage and do whatever I can to have this come to an end.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Zabinskas. Ms Round.

**Helen ROUND:** Hi. My name is Helen Round and I am a wildlife rescuer and carer based in central Victoria, and along with my partner Manfred Zabinskas OAM we together operate the East Trentham Wildlife Shelter. We make ourselves available to rescue and rehabilitate wildlife 24/7, 365 days a year. As just one little shelter, we spend on average \$55,000 a year in running costs which, according to Geelong Field and Game's 2021 financial statements, is about \$10,600 per annum more than their entire wetlands management program for that period. A study undertaken by the CSIRO's wildlife researcher Bruce Englefield and his team in 2018 valued the work of Australia's 20,000 wildlife carers to be at \$6 billion. Wildlife rescuers and carers in Victoria are criminally underfunded, and we self-funded volunteers provide a service that the public expects but government fails to provide. We bear the financial costs of rescue and rehabilitation whilst we pay a huge emotional and physical cost for the privilege of saving lives and ending suffering. The fact that hundreds of thousands of native waterbirds are unnecessarily killed and left wounded on Victoria's wetlands by the recreational duck-shooting season compounds the trauma we already carry and experience.

During this inquiry shooters have argued that they need to kill ducks recreationally for mental health reasons. I ask you, the committee, to please consider the mental health of the people who are actively out there serving the community performing wildlife rescue. We have colleagues and friends who have contemplated, attempted and actually committed suicide because of the difficult nature of the work we do. I have been a duck rescuer with the Coalition against Duck Shooting since 2009, and I return year after year at great physical and emotional and financial expense because of the cruelty and the injustice I see year after year.

No matter what alterations government makes to the season or what training is undertaken by shooters, nothing changes. Wounding will always remain unavoidable. Protected species will always be shot. The task of regulation will always remain impossible, and no matter what is thrown at us, duck rescuers will always remain to rescue and be a voice for the birds until the banning of recreational duck shooting in Victoria is achieved. I thank you for this opportunity to speak.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Ms Round. Ms Begg.

**Tania BEGG:** Well, as I said before, my name is Tania Begg. I work as an environmental consultant and a land management adviser. I run a wildlife shelter with my partner in north-central Victoria on 40 acres of conservation land. My involvement in duck rescue has been for the last 10 years, but I have been rehabilitating native birds for the last 19 years. I have worked with all sorts of vets, zoos, the Healesville Sanctuary – every organisation possible.

I guess I started off by getting in birds from wetlands that had been shot, prior to even being involved in duck rescue, and the birds that were coming in to me as a wildlife rehabilitator and the injuries they had were horrific. They were worse than the car trauma that I see on a daily basis – and these were the birds that had survived long enough to be rescued and to be brought in. That is when I knew that I had to be out there on these wetlands as well. We go out to these wetlands, as you have just previously heard. We do not actually like doing this. For us it is about the animal welfare concerns, and we see this all the way from Tallangatta to Kerang, all the way to the South Australian border. This is what we do, and I invite you guys to start asking us the

questions that you want to ask to find out more information, because we really appreciate the opportunity to be heard.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks very much. We have each got around 6 minutes, with probably a little give or take. And then I suppose between you you can choose how you want to answer them – but bear in mind that each of us does not have a lot of time, so calibrate your responses accordingly, I would say.

We have heard evidence before at this inquiry that things are better than they used to be. What is your perspective on that?

**Dave EVANS:** Well, it is only better than what it used to be because there are fewer shooters. That is a state of mind. The crimes are still the same. In 2017, which is not that long ago, my crew and I brought in 1489 shot birds that were shot and left by duck shooters, and of those – excuse me, I will just look at my figures – 296 were protected threatened species and 142 of those were wounded birds. That was 2017. In general, there are less shooters than there used to be, but that example highlights that it still happens en masse.

I take teams after opening to look for wounded and dead. We have crew throughout the state who essentially scout for us to see where the shooters are and where they are shooting. Generally, beforehand we already know where the birds are because we have scouted before the season as well. We get people throughout the state letting us know what is going on in other places – to pick up dead and wounded. On the 2017 example, we had a team of seven going out through that wetland that brought in 430 birds. That was after the 1489 birds – 430 birds that were shot and left. So essentially this is not a food-getting exercise at all; that proves it. And what proves it beyond a doubt is that 370 birds were found in two pits by a friend of mine, Luke, and me – whole birds that were not harvested or whatever that were just essentially shot and buried in order to hide the crime.

**The CHAIR:** I was going to say: why are birds put in pits?

**Dave EVANS:** Oh, to hide, essentially, what is going on. It is to clean up after because they knew they had stuffed up. Essentially, they were cleaning up the situation by burying them in pits, and we found them buried on the shore of the Koorangie marshes.

**The CHAIR:** How often, would you suggest, you find birds disposed of in that way?

**Dave EVANS:** Well, whenever we see an area that has obviously exposed soil – it could have wings on top or whatnot or heads or whatever or guts or whatever – we dig it up to see, because it is unfortunately quite common for shooters to bury whole birds in these pits. It is part of the process of, wanting a better term, cleaning up the wetlands after a shoot.

**Helen ROUND:** I was going to say, shooters do not like to reach their bag limit. They like to use their big boom-boom sticks, and they will shoot birds and shove them in logs. They will bury them in pits. It is not about harvesting food; it is about recreational killing. And when you say things have gotten better, it was decided by the Pegasus report that no matter how much public money was wasted on enforcement or anything, it is logistically impossible for duck shooting to be regulated. No matter how many officers you have, you cannot cover every wetland, and these atrocities occur at every wetland. Shooter culture has not improved. If anything, with social media it has got worse, and they egg each other on.

**The CHAIR:** On the question of where: are things different in different parts of the state?

**Tania BEGG:** I would like to disagree. At the same time that a large crew was out at the Koorangie marshes, I was at the opposite side of the state, at Edenhope, and I witnessed the exact same thing. There were two wetlands very close to each other, and there were several hundred shooters that played those two wetlands; they sent birds from one wetland to another. At that time, opening was not at 8 o'clock, it was not long after sunrise, and, essentially, there were hundreds of birds left. And by 11 o'clock in the morning the shooters had left those wetlands. There was no-one left, and from there I brought in several dozen injured and wounded birds that went straight to the Melbourne Zoo.

**The CHAIR:** And what are the most common sorts of injuries that you see on birds?

**Tania BEGG:** The injuries that we see on birds range quite a bit – it really depends on how the bird was flying when it was shot at – as Dave mentioned earlier, anything from fractured bills to bills shot off. I have had

birds that have had pellets embedded in their head. If you have read my submission, you will see an X-ray of a freckled duck. It has got a fractured wing and it has a pellet in each wing, so that obviously would have been shot from underneath. The other injuries that they receive are when the bird is coming down. Because it is wounded, it no longer knows how to fly steadily, and it can hit the water quite hard. It can land on the land quite hard.

Further to that, we do not just rescue the birds immediately after they have been shot. I have had birds that have been rescued either weeks or even months following duck shooting that have had old injuries that we can attribute to duck shooting because the X-rays have revealed that they have got pellets in them. They would be healed wing fractures, so people have been able to capture them easily. They are the birds that have survived long enough to have a healed wing fracture.

**The CHAIR:** And the birds you see, how many of them roughly do you think would be game birds and how many of them would be protected species?

**Tania BEGG:** That really depends on the wetland and the nature of the shooting. Every wetland has a different ecological composition and they have their own niches, and so you are going to find certain birds are more abundant on other wetlands. Every single wetland situation is going to be different.

**The CHAIR:** That is my time. Ms Bath.

**Melina BATH:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you all for being here today, noting your interest in this inquiry. You mention, Ms Round, social media. Part of our terms of reference talks about the social impact of native bird hunting arrangements, and social media is part of the way that people communicate. Are you the operator or owner, we will say, of the Facebook Duck Arm-y?

**Helen ROUND:** The Duck Arm-y? Yes, I am one of the moderators.

**Melina BATH:** Moderator and an administrator, so you are –

**Helen ROUND:** Yes.

**Melina BATH:** That is fine, thank you. Would you say that at all times you put appropriate comments on there with regard to hunters?

**Helen ROUND:** If you are asking if I describe them accurately, yes.

**Melina BATH:** Your definition of accuracy might not be a hunter's or another person's position on accuracy. How have you described duck hunters on your Facebook page?

**Helen ROUND:** Off the top of my head, I cannot actually remember. If you would like to give me an example, I am happy to answer – because you obviously have one.

**Melina BATH:** Have you encouraged hunters to self-harm on your Facebook page?

**Helen ROUND:** I might have encouraged them to take a worming pill because they are a parasite.

**Melina BATH:** Pardon?

**Helen ROUND:** I might have encouraged them to take a worming pill because they are a parasite, but that is jest and banter. I am also known on Facebook – on the shooter pages, like the Coalition against Coalition against Duck Shooting Facebook page, I am referred to as 'the redheaded swamp terrorist' and the admin there compared my pubic hair to the shag-pile carpet in the dunny of a fishing trawler. I am regularly referred to as 'the red rag'. I am referred to as 'the redheaded eco swamp terrorist', although today I have been rebranded by one of the shooters who stalks my personal page, Mario Dinatale, as 'the redheaded swamp dragon', which I kind of find – I wear that as a badge of honour.

**Melina BATH:** Thank you, because I am sure you will be able to continue with quite an amount of this questioning. Have you been arrested for duck-hunting protests? At duck-hunting protests, have you been arrested?

**Helen ROUND:** No. I have been taken off the water once, in 2011. I was fined.

**Melina BATH:** Taken off the water by?

**Helen ROUND:** I stopped because I had shooters that had a bag of birds submerged and tied to a fence line, and I had a shooter shoot a juvenile teal in front of me out of spite. So I stayed for the game man – well, back then they were the DPI officers –

**Melina BATH:** Pre-game management.

**Helen ROUND:** Yes. And so I stopped –

**Melina BATH:** So they removed you or asked you to exit the wetlands?

**Helen ROUND:** Yes, I stayed and waited for them and asked them to attend to it. And then Rodney Carter and Heath Dunstan, the two officers, took me back to shore in their boat.

**Melina BATH:** Thank you. Are you opposed to all shooting of all animals?

**Helen ROUND:** I am a person who euthanises animals regularly. I have killed more animals than I care to remember. I do not understand the recreational killing of animals. I do not understand that pathology. I have only ever euthanised an animal to end suffering. A mentality that is based on gaining joy from unnecessarily wounding and killing an animal –

**Melina BATH:** That was not my question, it was about all animals. Let me give you an example: so foxes are feral pests that create quite a lot of devastation amongst our native animals. So what is your position on fox-hunting?

**Helen ROUND:** Okay, so the shooters are scaremongering, saying this is the thin edge of the wedge.

**Melina BATH:** Well, actually, we heard that –

**The CHAIR:** Ms Bath, a question to answer if we can.

**Melina BATH:** Just for clarity, we just heard that from the Mining and Energy Union just prior –

**Helen ROUND:** Okay. They are saying this is the thin edge of the wedge and that if they ban duck shooting, we will go after everything else. I am a wildlife carer. I see firsthand the damage feral cats, feral foxes and other introduced species do. I am a pragmatic person. There are plenty of feral animals for shooters to shoot if they want to hunt, if they need to fulfil that role. As a pragmatic person, I see that there is a need for invasive species control, but this is about recreational duck shooting – we are talking about recreation.

**Melina BATH:** Thank you. Do you also disclose to your public liability insurer that you protest illegally against duck hunting and on illegal grounds?

**Helen ROUND:** I do not protest against duck shooting on illegal grounds. I go to every effort to be legal once I am on the wetlands. I have a game licence, I have a gun licence. I maintain my distance from shooters, and I do everything I can to comply with the law.

**Melina BATH:** Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Bath. Ms Purcell.

**Georgie PURCELL:** Thank you. Thank you for appearing today. I think given the line of questioning that Ms Bath has gone down about comments made about duck shooters, I would be particularly keen to hear from Ms Begg and Ms Round about what it is like to be a woman on duck rescue. I know from personal experience going out on duck rescue with the both of you that it can be a very intimidating experience. Shooters regularly tell us that we could share the wetlands. I certainly do not feel comfortable doing so. I am just wondering if you could tell us a bit about your experience.

**The CHAIR:** Can I just ask that in responding, just be careful about allegations you might want to make about specific individuals by name.

**Helen ROUND:** Yes.

**Tania BEGG:** I have gone to quite a few wetlands. I normally do not go with a large crew of people. It is normally me and one or two other people. We cover a much larger amount of wetlands, but a lot of them are smaller. Yes, I have encountered a significant amount of unwarranted abuse. Often it is misogynistic abuse, and it is unacceptable. I do not engage in that banter. I am not really interested in it. I am not there as an antagonist; I am actually there for the welfare of these animals. It is an unfortunate thing that we have to receive, and we should not receive it, because people should know how to behave like appropriate adults. Receiving abuse like that is unacceptable in anything, even if we slightly upset someone while we are doing it.

**Helen ROUND:** If I had a dollar for every time I have been called an unemployed lesbian by duck shooters, I would probably have a couple of hundred bucks by now. If I had a dollar for every time a shooter has offered to pop his penis in my mouth to shut me up, I would have probably about \$30. I have been called every name under the sun. As Tania said, the abuse is undeserved. It is misogynistic, it is filthy, and duck shooters do themselves no favours.

**Georgie PURCELL:** Thank you. Mr Zabinkas, you are one of the only qualified wildlife darters in the state, and you obviously do that as part of your wildlife rescue business. Could you explain the impact that you having to go out and duck rescue every weekend has on the wildlife rescue service more broadly statewide when you are not available?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** When any of us gets called out away from our own homes and things, not just things like duck rescue. I often get called to Echuca to do one rescue when other people cannot manage to do it because of needing special abilities and equipment. So of course it being necessary to go out, just because of my background and my experience and my ability to rescue animals, I have sort of made it my forte. I am quite valuable out on the wetlands obviously because I can conduct rescues and I understand animals and I work with animal welfare, so it gives me a massive advantage when you need to go out and be able to assess animals and what to do on a wetland. To go and do that, it feels terrible to leave your own area, with that much more burden on the other local rescuers. We are certainly experiencing a worsening of that situation, because shelters and rescuers are burning out. We have got less people on the ground now, especially in our area, to share the load, and so there is that bad feeling of knowing that you are putting a lot more pressure on other people.

I would not say I go off expecting that animals are not going to be rescued. There will always be someone like me that will go – it just means someone will have to travel further. We go to great lengths to train up people and to find volunteers that can look after our shelter and our animals while we are away. That takes enormous effort. We have tried – how many years in a row now have we tried to get away for duck rescue together? This is the first year we actually managed to achieve that end result. Every other year, on the first day something has gone wrong at the shelter and one of us has had to return, and we have cancelled our plans and we did not have that romantic getaway that we hoped to have. So yes, look, it really does put the pressure on other rescuers, other carers and, yes, that whole network.

**Georgie PURCELL:** Great. Thank you for that. Mr Evans, you spoke about Koorangie Marshes in 2017 in your response before. Could you tell us about some of the other instances of massacres of birds in your 27 years of duck rescue?

**Dave EVANS:** Sure. Well, most of you have probably heard of the Box Flat incident in 2013. We actually spent that opening of 2013 at Bael Bael. That also was quite a shocking opening, because I brought in six wounded pinkies in 20 minutes – pinkies being the smallest of game birds and generally shot and left behind because they only weigh 400, 500 grams. They were shot and left. With every bird shot, by the way, I asked the shooters, ‘This is your bird? This is your bird?’, and they did not want anything to do with it, so I picked them up and took them all to the vets. That is one thing I definitely remember about 2013.

But Box Flat happened because Laurie got a tip-off on the Sunday morning, and CADS – CADS being the Coalition against Duck Shooting – put out a media release, and Peter Walsh at the time set up an inquiry. We gave the government one week to clean up the massacre. I went in there with a team of about seven or eight to see what was left. I do not remember the number of game birds that were brought out, but even after their so-

called clean-up, we managed to bring in 43 freckled duck and 25 coots, of course freckled duck being one on the 10 rarest waterbirds list. Why weren't these birds found during the investigation, and how thorough was this investigation into the massacre at the time? We do know there were two wildlife officers at the time of Box Flat that were standing onshore while this was happening.

In the mid-week after Koorangie Marshes – it was a horrendous year – having 430 dead birds in the back of my car is something I will never forget, bringing them down to Melbourne to highlight what was going on out there. It was totally horrific. What other examples? So, there was the duck hunt challenge, which was a competition that Field and Game used to run. I as a Field and Game member at the time found out about the duck hunt challenge and where it was being held. That year it was at Cullens, so we went to Cullens. I only had a team of seven. What they had done is that various species brought in various points – so, the pink-eared duck at the time was the lowest-scoring bird, and the female chestnut teal was the highest-scoring bird. The legal bag limit at the time was five birds, so what was happening was the shooters were shooting all day and swapping the birds over for a higher-scored bird, because whoever got the highest score won prizes.

**The CHAIR:** Just quickly, so we can –

**Dave EVANS:** So my crew of six brought in I think 140-odd birds that weekend just by walking around the wetland, let alone going through the middle of it. This sort of thing happens all the time.

**The CHAIR:** All right. Thank you. Ms Watt.

**Sheena WATT:** Thank you all. Can I just start by acknowledging your very substantial submissions, which I imagine took a fair effort that I just wanted to call out. I have a couple of questions. They are all on very wideranging topics. I am going to start with: we heard this morning from the local council here that hunters have left the sites always in such wonderful condition – no rubbish et cetera. You mentioned – perhaps it was you, Ms Round – that that is not always the case. Is there anything you want to elaborate on from your experience about the conditions of the sites that are left by hunters?

**Dave EVANS:** I have four 44-gallon drums full of shotgun shells that beg to differ that the wetlands are clean. These are shotgun shells that are picked up by rescuers, because we clean up the wetlands as we rescue birds.

**Sheena WATT:** Okay.

**Helen ROUND:** I think they are taking credit for our work. There are human faeces everywhere and piled buried rubbish – or not even buried rubbish – everywhere. The fact that we find pits where birds have been gutted and had their heads pulled off and they are not buried – you find mounds of birds where they have stripped the breast and chucked the rest. They leave litter everywhere. The very nature of duck shooting means that for every shot fired, if they pick up their shells – which is a rarity, but if they do – they are still firing plastic wadding into the wetlands. If you look at the amount of lead shot that has been dumped into Victoria's wetlands before steel shot was introduced, it was 450 tonnes of lead that was pumped into Victoria's wetlands by duck shooters. So I do not think that they have left our wetlands in a better state at all.

**Sheena WATT:** Alrighty. Thank you for that one. I will probably go –

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Also each year there is the display of the birds that have been retrieved and the illegally shot birds. That display normally also has all the shells that were collected by rescuers in the –

**Dave EVANS:** Actually it is only a small percentage.

**Helen ROUND:** Yes, it is a tiny percentage.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** It is a small percentage of them, but there is always – and you will soon see that there is a hell of a lot of stuff that was left that has been collected by rescuers.

**Sheena WATT:** Thanks. What sort of training do you deliver to your volunteers in preparation for the season? I understand that you talk about the social and emotional and mental health challenges. I am interested to know the level of support in place for your people before they participate.

**Dave EVANS:** Sure. Firstly the person shows an interest in becoming part of our team, obviously. After that they must come to a talk of ours – if they do not come to a talk of ours, they cannot come out – whether that be over the computer or whether it be a personal meeting, and with that we highlight the dangers first and foremost. We do not want anyone out there who essentially has not the understanding of those dangers. Eventually after this meeting we will then go through whatever the strategy will be. Strategy changes depending on the wetland and the situation. We put people into teams. We have experienced rescuers in the team as leaders, not inexperienced.

**Tania BEGG:** Just to interrupt that, the training that we all have is far beyond just the training of rescuers out there. The rescuers out there have their own set of skills, but then those birds are coming into shore as well, to people who have an even more diverse skill set. So the training that you really need to think about is the years of experience that we all have. I have specialist avian training. I have got training in rehabilitation of native wildlife. Then you have got veterinary teams that are out there as well. So there is quite a huge amount of training that goes on.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** And a really important element of training that we emphasise –

**Sheena WATT:** I have only got a minute, so I am just going to go to my next question, which is about the destruction of culturally significant sites. This is the first that I have read about that. Can you talk to me about what you have seen when it comes to sites of Aboriginal cultural significance and destruction?

**Helen ROUND:** This year we went out with Paul Haw, who is a historian at Boort. He took us to five or six wetlands, and he showed us where scar trees were being cut up as firewood. We found shooters camping on cooking mounds. We found a scar tree that was about 850 years old that was being used as a toilet. At Leaghur we found cut up scar trees and we found multiple cases where shooters had cut standing trees to use for firewood. They had cut the dead limbs off standing trees to use as firewood. So yes, Indigenous culture and sites are being damaged by duck shooters. There is no training of duck shooters to identify them, and quite frankly I do not think duck shooters have any respect for them at all anyway, so Victoria's Indigenous history is being significantly damaged by duck shooters.

**Sheena WATT:** Thank you for that. With my last question, the mental health load that you have just all talked about in your opening remarks: what do you do to manage that and the people coming in to continue to support your work? Because it seems to me that this is having quite a significant impact on each and every one of you, both from your submissions and presenting today. Are there specialists that work in this field or are there people that you work with? I just want to understand a little bit more about how you actually support the mental health of each other.

**Dave EVANS:** We actually have counsellors on site on opening weekend, essentially as part of our crew. If people find things too traumatising, then that is what we have in place. I personally have the ability to switch off. But when I go out after 13 weekends with crews and I am seeing all of this stuff, it does hit me in the last week, and I have a couple of weeks of misery at the end of 13 weekends. It does take a hell of a lot out of you. But what keeps me going is the visual progress – in my first year, in 1996, I remember 8000 duck shooters on one wetland in Lake Buloke with pump action shotguns; birds would drop like rain; I saw one guy put four rounds into one single bird – to now and the figures that we have now.

**The CHAIR:** All right.

**Sheena WATT:** That is my time.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mrs McArthur.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, team. Just for the benefit of Hansard, Ms Round, can you confirm that you are the controller and the admin on the Duck Arm-y Facebook page?

**Helen ROUND:** I am one of the moderators, yes.

**Bev McARTHUR:** But you are the admin controller of it?

**Helen ROUND:** Yes.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Yes. Okay. Thank you very much. Your Duck Arm-y and the Five Freedoms Facebook page have donation buttons. How much money have you made from these donation pages?

**Helen ROUND:** Duck Arm-y does not have a donation button.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Do you receive donations from anybody via your Facebook pages?

**Helen ROUND:** No. Not for Duck Arm-y, no.

**Bev McARTHUR:** No. You receive no donations from the public via your Facebook page?

**Helen ROUND:** Not for Duck Arm-y, no.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Or via any other Facebook pages that you control?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Five Freedoms is actually my Facebook page.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Okay. Do you receive –

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** We do receive some donations in support of the work we do, yes.

**Bev McARTHUR:** How much?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** It varies greatly. I can tell you it is not a pinch on the actual costs. It would vary year to year. I do not have exact figures. I would be guessing to tell you. But generally, donations in the course of a year would be anything from hundreds of dollars to a couple of thousand.

**Helen ROUND:** Not much more than that.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Nowhere near the \$55,000 running costs that we actually have.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Do you have a firearms licence?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Yes, I do.

**Bev McARTHUR:** And do you own firearms?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Yes, I do – numerous.

**Bev McARTHUR:** And so you shoot animals with your firearms?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Yes, I do.

**Bev McARTHUR:** What exemptions do you have to destroy native wildlife?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** I am not sure what you mean by exemptions. I am entitled to destroy native wildlife that is suffering and badly injured and cannot be saved, as is anybody. You would be entitled to destroy native wildlife if you could prove that the animal needed to be put out of its misery. It is not an exemption. I do not have a formal exemption. Every member of the community has –

**Helen ROUND:** An obligation.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** not just the right but an obligation to render assistance.

**Tania BEGG:** Under the prevention of cruelty to animals.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** I do not do any shooting of animals for pleasure, and I do not shoot animals that are uninjured.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Are you opposed to just the killing of native animals or are you opposed to the killing of all animals?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Fundamentally I am opposed to the killing of animals in a great philosophical discussion. What I am completely opposed to is cruelty. Wherever animals need to be destroyed, for whatever reason or for whatever your belief is, I believe there is good room for discussion on that, but there is no room for discussion on permissible cruelty. I am completely opposed to cruelty; I am not completely opposed to the destruction of animals.

**Bev McARTHUR:** So you would be opposed to the way brumbies, for instance, are being destroyed in the High Country.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Yes. I am opposed to lots of other things. I would much rather talk about the ducks because I think we can give you plenty of examples about how ducks are badly destroyed.

**Helen ROUND:** And actually an important point there is that we know from the government's data, the GMA data, that the proficient shooters that took part in the wounding measuring program had a wounding rate of 29 per cent. After five days intensive training, it was reduced to 6 per cent. So the average shooter is probably wounding at 40 per cent, and they cannot eliminate wounding. Therefore cruelty cannot be avoided. So duck shooting, yes, we are opposed to that, because cruelty cannot be avoided, full stop. It cannot be eradicated, and that is government data.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** The methodology that shooters use to dispatch their game, which means to kill it – I will not say euthanise it, because it actually does not meet the requirements of euthanasia – if we were to perform that same technique at our shelter, we would be shut down, could be charged for cruelty and could be jailed.

**Helen ROUND:** Two-year jail penalties.

**Bev McARTHUR:** I go to Ms Begg now. Your website homepage has three direct links to making a donation and two references for your bank account details. Are you a registered charity?

**Tania BEGG:** Sorry, which page are you talking about?

**Bev McARTHUR:** Your website homepage.

**Tania BEGG:** My website, for me personally?

**Bev McARTHUR:** Yes.

**Tania BEGG:** I do not actually have a personal website.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Do you own the Terra Mater Wildlife Shelter?

**Tania BEGG:** Yes, the shelter's page. The shelter is its own organisation. It is not mine. And yes, the shelter does receive donations.

**Bev McARTHUR:** And is it a registered charity?

**Tania BEGG:** Yes, it is registered with the ACNC.

**Bev McARTHUR:** So it does not pay any tax.

**Tania BEGG:** No, it does not. It does not receive anywhere near enough money to even require it.

**Bev McARTHUR:** How many allowances or donations do you receive from Wildlife Victoria?

**Tania BEGG:** I would have to look it up.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Could you take that on notice?

**Tania BEGG:** Absolutely.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Thank you very much. Your wildlife shelter's webpage states that you work with Five Freedoms Animal Rescue. Is that correct?

**Tania BEGG:** Yes, we have done. Absolutely.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Both your wildlife shelters are part of the Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network. How often do you work with Five Freedoms Animal Rescue?

**Tania BEGG:** Look, it can vary. During the floods we had to call on every wildlife rescuer we could. We are just fortunate enough that Five Freedoms has skills and equipment that we do not have access to, and not many people do. So when we need them, we will call on them. But we also work with a huge variety of other wildlife shelters and organisations that might not have Facebook pages or might not want to be mentioned.

**Bev McARTHUR:** Mr Evans, you mentioned massacre of ducks. Have you ever found a massacre of ducks here at Heart Morass?

**Dave EVANS:** No.

**Bev McARTHUR:** At Connewarre wildlife –

**Dave EVANS:** Well, it is very hard with Connewarre because it is incredibly reedy, so the logistics are very hard – to find birds in the first place. That is the whole reason why the bird numbers that are brought in at Connewarre are very small, because generally shooters will shoot in amongst the reeds and they get lost in amongst the reeds. The logistics of Connewarre are very, very hard compared with open wetlands like in central Victoria where you have wide open spaces, so when you see birds drop it is quite obvious. Birds do get shot a lot in Connewarre; it is whether you can find them or not.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Mrs McArthur, your time has expired. Mr Bourman.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, guys, for coming in. And although I may not agree on everything, Manfred, well done on your OAM for the rescue stuff.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Thank you.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Let us say you were successful in getting duck hunting banned, what are you going to do about roughly the same amount of ducks being shot under authority to control wildlife permits? Are you going to protest that?

**Helen ROUND:** Given the technology of Cherrp – and I am sure you have heard about Cherrp – government departments are moving away from the shooting of birds and the need for authority to control wildlife permits.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** I may interrupt because we are short on time. That may or may not be so, but right now if you are a farm and the birds come in, you get an authority to control wildlife permit and someone with a shot gun comes and shoots it. It is on private land. It is an authority. Are you guys going to protest it?

**Tania BEGG:** The authority to control wildlife system is already in place. It has been in place for quite some time.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Yes.

**Tania BEGG:** There should not actually be any change to that, because unless people are recreationally shooting ducks on farmland –

**Jeff BOURMAN:** But that is –

**The CHAIR:** Let us let the witness finish up.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Sorry, it is just because I am conscious of time.

**Tania BEGG:** So unless people are recreationally shooting ducks on that farmland and now they are going to be moving across to authority to control wildlife, there should not actually be any crossover. And more importantly, a lot of the birds that are being shot during the duck-shooting season are not birds that spend very much time on farmland or in crops. They are birds that spend a lot of time on our wetlands.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Well, if the ducks are being massacred at the rate we are being led to believe, they have still got to feed. And it happens in other states – every state that has banned recreational duck hunting now shoots them under their version of the authority to control wildlife permit.

**Tania BEGG:** Well, we already do that here.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Yes, I know, but at the moment there is no real need to unless there is a very localised problem or it is out of season. So if they wipe the whole season, are you or are you not going to protest the authority to control wildlife permits when it comes to native ducks?

**Helen ROUND:** So you are arguing that duck shooting has no impact on populations, but if we ban duck shooting, populations will increase and birds will become a problem?

**Jeff BOURMAN:** No, I am actually putting your argument back to you. You are the ones that tell me that it wipes out so many ducks – fair? It is a yes or no answer.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** We regularly question ATCWs and have done for as long as duck shooting has been going on, and not just for ducks but for all species. So if we found evidence where ducks were being inappropriately shot under the auspice of an ATCW, we would question it. But none of us have been engaged in trying to have any practices under the ATCWs banned.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Well, that is not the –

**Helen ROUND:** And we are not protesting; we rescue. Do you see us with banners and signs?

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Yes, you call it what you like. I will call it what I call it.

**Helen ROUND:** We do not carry banners; we do not carry signs. We are not protesters, we are professional rescuers.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** In other states where they have banned recreational hunting, they have had to fill in the numbers with authority to control wildlife permits. Would you guys protest it? It is not a trick question. I am just asking.

**Tania BEGG:** I think it is safe to say we have not formulated a plan for that, but we really welcome the idea that duck shooting for recreational purposes will be banned in Victoria.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** I tell you what – let us ban duck shooting and we will –

**Tania BEGG:** Find out.

**Helen ROUND:** We will figure it out from there.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** We will meet you about that and have a discussion after it has been banned.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** I find the evasiveness a little strange, but let us move on. You both carry –

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Sorry, but all ACTWs only occur on private land, don't they?

**The CHAIR:** Mr Bourman should ask his next question.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Both you and Helen hold game licences, correct?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Yes.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Now, it is my understanding, from what you just said, that everyone has – not the right – the responsibility –

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Obligation.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** or the obligation to put animals out of their misery if you find them wounded.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Not to put them out – to respond to it.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** To kill them or euthanise them, whatever it might be, do you need a game licence to do that?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** We need a game licence to go out and rescue birds legally so that we can render assistance to them, yes.

**Helen ROUND:** On the wetlands.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** But if I may point out – I have only got 2 minutes – section 22A of the *Wildlife Act* is what empowers the Game Management Authority to issue the licences that you need to ‘hunt, take or destroy game’. So is your reason for holding those game licences to hunt, take or destroy game?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** If you care to look up the definition of ‘hunt’ –

**Helen ROUND:** As in ‘to seek out’, yes.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** my answer would be yes. I actually had a lawyer engaged to make sure that we do not misrepresent ourselves, and we have actually received renewal of our game licences legally and under appropriate circumstances.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** I find it extraordinary, because I know what you guys do. And you can do what you like, but I do not think that is hunting in any way shape or form.

**Helen ROUND:** That is your personal opinion –

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Well, then you need to look at the definition of hunting, because I have actually had it on notice from the legal department.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** No, I will. I –

**Helen ROUND:** Manfred has actually had officers take him off the wetlands to question that and to make that very point. The legal people have gone through the Act, and they have had to concede that we are legally allowed to do this.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Have you ever had to provide assurances to the GMA that you will actually hunt as proposed in the normal meaning?

**Helen ROUND:** Were we singled out? Yes, we were. Graeme Ford did single us out.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** No, I mean in writing.

**The CHAIR:** The questions answered, please.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Yes, in writing.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** Yes, yes we were. We do not understand that, and we actually had to engage the services of a lawyer to defend us, because we do not know why we were being treated so differently to every other person with a game licence in Victoria.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Well, you have got a very different motivation to have it.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** No, we have not. We have got the same motivation as hundreds of other people.

**Jeff BOURMAN:** Let us agree to disagree. Look, there are only a few seconds. I am going to leave it at that. Thank you for your time.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Bourman. Mr Mulholland.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Thank you. Thanks for appearing here today. I want to ask you all individually, are you a member of a political party, or have you ever been a member of a political party?

**Dave EVANS:** No.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** I have got to try and remember if I have joined. Did I join? I think I joined AJP.

**Georgie PURCELL:** I do not know, sorry.

**Helen ROUND:** I know I am in AJ.

**Georgie PURCELL:** I tried to get Helen to run as a candidate. She said no.

**Helen ROUND:** I am an AJP member.

**Tania BEGG:** I am not sure, but I do not think so.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Okay.

**Dave EVANS:** Actually, I am not sure, you know, because thinking right back –

**Tania BEGG:** Not recently, anyway.

**Dave EVANS:** And if it was, it was not very seriously.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** If you are not sure, could you take that on notice –

**Dave EVANS:** Yes, please.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** and to the best of your memory report that back to the committee.

**Dave EVANS:** Yes, sure.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** That would be great. I would appreciate that.

**The CHAIR:** Just so you are aware, though, Victorians are protected under equal opportunity law from discrimination on the basis of party membership.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Yes.

**Helen ROUND:** Quite a relief.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Dave –

**Dave EVANS:** Yes.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** if duck hunting was banned, would you be involved in any of the preservation works of the wetlands? We have heard today and from others that many of the hunters have undertaken –

**Dave EVANS:** I have been involved with revegetation projects for years. It has not been wetlands but other projects. In fact I did clean-up jobs for work, and I donate to an organisation that sells goods to go to money towards revegetation projects only. So whatever – if there was an opportunity, yes, of course. But I just do not like the idea that they are revegetating wetlands right now in order to shoot inhabitants. It just does not make any sense.

**Helen ROUND:** It was interesting. Gary Howard, who is the next person to appear, in his submission – he is the other person with an OAM, the one who pled guilty to illegally diverting water to Heart Morass to

artificially flood it for the duck season, not Manfred OAM, rescuer – he says in his own statement that if you remove hunting from the equation, then it will remove the impetus for duck shooters to participate in wetland rehabilitation projects. Their conservation efforts are based on gratification and what they get out of it, not on the conservation of our wetlands. I would argue that erecting branded nest boxes –

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** I will keep going with my questioning. David said it was quite common for hunters to bury birds. Do you have any quantitative evidence that this has happened recently, and were these incidents reported to authorities?

**Dave EVANS:** Let me have a think.

**Tania BEGG:** I uncovered a pit last year at – I think it was Murphy's.

**Helen ROUND:** There were 23 or 43 birds at Murphy's, and there is footage of Game Management Authority officers attending that pit.

**Tania BEGG:** Yes. We reported that immediately.

**Dave EVANS:** Yes. That was last year. I was trying to think of this year.

**Helen ROUND:** Yes, that was Murphy's last year.

**Dave EVANS:** This year – let me have a think. There were birds – can I get back to you on that one?

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Take that on notice, absolutely. That would be quite helpful.

**Dave EVANS:** Because so much happens during the season at times, I cannot really remember.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Yes.

**Dave EVANS:** I know a hole of 45 severed heads was found, but you are talking about whole bodies.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Yes.

**Dave EVANS:** I will have to get back to you on that one.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** No worries. And just for any of you – I will direct it to Helen – are you opposed to commercial duck farming for commercial duck meats in Victoria?

**Helen ROUND:** I do not like the consumption of animals, but the thing is that any abattoir that operated with a 40 per cent wound and release rate – or even if it was this fictitious 6 per cent that the GMA claimed that they could achieve by putting 26,000 shooters through an intensive five-day training program – even if an abattoir operated at 6 per cent, it would be shut down with public outcry, and there would be charges laid. Why duck shooters are above the law and are allowed to have a wounding rate that is completely and utterly unacceptable –

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** So you are saying that you are opposed to commercial duck farming?

**Helen ROUND:** I would like to see improved standards.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** But are you opposed, or you would like to see it improved?

**Helen ROUND:** Look, I cannot force my dietary preferences upon everyone. If people are going to farm ducks, I would like to think that it would be done humanely. I would like to see an improvement in the animal welfare standards that exist if it were to continue. But that is not about recreational duck shooting, is it? We are talking about people going out to kill animals for pleasure – not for profit but for pleasure.

**Bev McARTHUR:** You might eat that for food.

**Helen ROUND:** Well, the whole birds die. Your duck farm would not operate for whole birds dying for two strips of breast meat, for two nuggets. Whole birds die for two nuggets during the recreational duck-shooting season.

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** I am pretty sure you can go to the supermarket and buy a duck right now if you really wanted to.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** Do you know the wounding rate for commercial duck farming?

**Helen ROUND:** They do not have a wound and release rate. Any abattoir that ran with the wound and release rate that duck shooting has would be shut down with a public outcry.

**Evan MULHOLLAND:** We have heard a lot in this inquiry – I just wanted to get to it quickly; Manfred, I might ask you. We have heard today of the importance of hunting as a break from stressors, particularly with industries declining in this part of the world. Many workers see it as a mental health break away and hunting as a way of alleviating some of those pressures. Would you agree with that?

**Manfred ZABINSKAS:** I would have trouble agreeing with it because it is not something that I would personally experience. Quite frankly, from a personal point of view, I cannot even fathom the thought of gaining pleasure and mental good health from harming another animal and causing suffering, so I do not get that at all. There are lots of alternative ways that we could all keep good mental health. I actually am dumbfounded by the concept of getting that much joy out of killing an animal when it comes to a recreational activity. If you are hungry, you can go to the supermarket and buy food. You do not need to go and kill a duck – I am sorry.

**The CHAIR:** All right. We are out of time for this session. Can I thank each and every one of you for your participation in these hearings and for attending today and providing this evidence. You will receive a copy of the transcript of today's session for review before it is published on our website.

We are going to take a couple of minutes to reset the room. We will be back with our final panel for the day in a couple of minutes.

**Helen ROUND:** And I guess I would like to say, on behalf of the four of us, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Witnesses withdrew.**