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Inquiry into Auditor General Report No.202: Meeting Obligations to Protect Ramsar Wetlands (2016)

Joanne Keith

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YOUR SUBMISSION

Submission:

The shooting of waterbirds at RAMSAR sites destroys precious remnants of the oldest culture on earth, pollutes the water and riparian land with ammunition cartridges, toxic leadshot (illegal but still used as is reported most years), bird body parts and rubbish including plastic wraps and broken bottles. Notwithstanding the direct impact to our seriously declining numbers of native waterbirds, many species unique to our country.

The annual aerial survey of waterbirds managed by Centre of Ecosystem Science University NSW, is the most robust, long term data set we have about the health of waterbirds in East Australia. The surveys show waterbird numbers, habitat and breeding indices have been gravely declining for years with scientists now warning numbers have declined as much as 90%.

The future is grim, with experts predicting worsening climatic conditions and worsening drought across Australia. The Bureau of Meteorology, the CSIRO and any number of scientific bodies are pointing out that climate change will produce more frequent and severe droughts in the years ahead. (Michael Rowland for ABC News Breakfast July 2019).

To shoot around 400,000 birds a year in Victoria alone (GMA harvest statistics) is not synonymous with conservation, particularly when bird numbers are struggling and otherwise healthy birds of breeding age are shot. Further, the harvest numbers do not account for the numbers of birds shot and left behind including protected species. (These are found by members of the public most years). Hence the true toll is likely to be much larger.

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:

I have used the letter from RAMSAR as it succinctly puts forward most of the relevant points as to why shooting water birds is no longer an appropriate or useful hobby . It is a minority of people who want to use guns for this purpose. There are great benefits to focusing on more environmentally friendly ways of using our wetlands and waterways.

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Signature:
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