

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

Mr David Mould

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### **YOUR SUBMISSION**

#### **Submission:**

The RAMSAR convention is, sadly, poorly understood by the community at large and yet the wetlands referred to as RAMSAR wetlands of international significance are understood by Victorian's to be essential and significant nonetheless. It seems also that successive Victorian Governments have also failed to understand or value the contents of the treaty as they have continued to allow the recreational shooting of waterbirds within RAMSAR boundaries. This has put countless migratory birds at risk, making a complete mockery of the convention in the first place.

Recreational duck shooters have repeatedly demonstrated their contempt for the treaty and the non-game species residing in wetlands by scaring and even killing them with their shotguns. Though this is illegal, the State Government and it's enforcement bodies such as the Game Management Authority have been incapable and obviously unwilling to pursue criminal charges or take action to prevent such recklessness.

Over the last thirty years volunteer wildlife rescuers have collected evidence of hundreds of illegal shot and killed protected species.

Evidence that is harder to gather and easier to ignore is that of the potentially fatal disruption (scaring) of breeding and/or migratory species using RAMSAR wetlands, such as Lake Connewarre in Geelong, as a stop-over or vital habitat. Firing shotguns repeatedly in RAMSAR wetlands are destined to disturb birds who will have little recourse but to seek refuge elsewhere. If the birds cannot find refuge in a wetland that was specifically recognised and designated for that very purpose then it is self-evident that the Government is failing in its responsibilities under the RAMSAR Convention. Duck shooting as a recreational activity with the borders of a RAMSAR wetland must be prohibited as inconsistent with our RAMSAR duties.

#### **Do you have any additional comments or suggestions?:**

If the RAMSAR Convention is to be honoured properly the State Government must do three things:

1. Prohibit the recreational shooting of any animals, particular waterbirds, within the borders of any designated RAMSAR wetland in Victoria,
2. Provide funding for community education programs on the value and significance of RAMSAR wetlands, and
3. Facilitate community wetlands clean-up programs to improve the health of the wetlands whilst simultaneously engaging people in the ongoing preservation of the areas.

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**Signature:**  
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