**Coalition Against Duck Shooting**

**Media release Wednesday, 14 March 2018**

**Rescuers to target the Kerang Ramsar wetlands**

**Army needed to help control Victoria’s duck shooters and to protect threatened species**

**GMA compliance officer numbers decrease to two**

**Game Management Authority again bans RSPCA’s mobile vet clinic from the wetlands**

Despite Agriculture Minister Jaala Pulford’s ground-breaking statement to Parliament that animals are sentient beings that feel fear and suffer pain, another duck shooting season will commence on 17 March. To make the situation worse, the Game Management Authority has again banned the RSPCA’s mobile veterinary clinic from treating wounded waterbirds at the wetlands.

Campaign Director Laurie Levy today said: “We will again target the Kerang wetlands, following last year’s massacre at the Koorangie Marshes that saw rescuers recover 183 illegally shot threatened waterbirds, as well as a further 1,500 shot birds. There are presently threatened species on wetlands in the region and we know that the GMA’s two compliance officers cannot police the wetlands while they are forced to stand on shore.

**“That’s why we are calling on the Andrews Government to call in the Army to take control of Victoria’s wetlands and to police Victoria’s dwindling number of duck shooters,” Levy said.**

“Following the damning Pegasus report that slammed the ability of the GMA to control the widespread illegal shooting by duck shooters across the state, the previously low number of only five GMA compliance officers has now decreased to just two. If the situation wasn’t so serious it would be laughable. It is impossible for the GMA to police a single wetland let alone the 20,000 wetlands, rivers, creeks and private property across Victoria where duck shooting can take place. Consequently, our rescuers will be back on the wetlands this year even though they face fines of $950 for doing the GMA’s job.

“Duck shooting is a serious law and order issue. The police cannot be expected to be on the wetlands as they are required to protect all Victorians and deal with street crime, terrifying home invasions and car-jackings.

 **“If the Andrews government is serious about policing Victoria’s wetlands then the Army must be brought in to do that job. Australian soldiers are the best in the world and are experienced in fighting overseas terrorist groups, so they should be well equipped to take on Victoria’s dwindling number of duck shooters over the three-month duck shooting season,” Levy continued.**

“Even after the bloody massacre at the Marshes last year and the shocking cruelty and suffering that duck shooters continue to inflict on Australia’s native waterbirds, the GMA is still refusing to allow the RSPCA’s mobile veterinary clinic onto the wetlands to treat wounded waterbirds. Could this be because the Chairperson of the GMA is a duck shooter who has absolutely no empathy for the suffering native waterbirds are forced to endure?

Levy says until duck shooting is banned, the job of looking after our native waterbirds will always be left to concerned volunteer members of the public who join our rescue teams and volunteer veterinarians.

**For further information contact: Laurie Levy, Campaign Director, Mobile 0418 392 826**

**Footnote:** The Victorian Government has just announced that a number of major wetlands will be closed off to shooting across the state, due to the presence of threatened species. This is a certainly a move that we haven’t seen over the last 32 years.