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ACT GOVERNMENT PUTS PUBLIC SAFETY AT RISK

It is only one week into the annual kangaroo 'slaughter' and already the ACT Government is playing Russian Roulette with people's lives.

Protestors who were maintaining a vigil for the kangaroos reported gates left open on a number of reserves, at night when they were supposed to be closed off to the public.

Robyn Soxsmith, spokesperson for the Animal Protection Alliance (APA) said, "Leaving the gates open completely obscures the Government's signage. Last Thursday (19 May 2016) I spoke to some night cyclists I had seen riding around inside Mt Mugga Mugga Nature Reserve. The cyclists claimed that there were no closure signs on the cycle path leading into the Reserve.

"Last year we witnessed and reported secret shooting - overseen by government rangers and ignored by the police - on the Rose Cottage Horse Paddocks. Then the Freedom of Information Officer refused to release information about any other unannounced shooting on other off-reserve public places.

"It is clear the last thing on the ACT government's mind is public safety. Leaving gates open so members of the public can wander in and be shot is reckless in the extreme. Even worse when you consider that any of the hoons and vandals who frequent these roads at night could simply drive in and slaughter wildlife all by themselves."

Ms Soxsmith is concerned that the rangers left the gates open deliberately, hoping vandals would do something dastardly so the government can blame protestors again. "They make a sport of blaming us for anything that happens on or around the reserves."

Ms Soxsmith believes that this reckless attitude to public safety is the result of the growing ACT government obsession with secrecy. "It began with the government's inability to provide any baseline or subsequent data to justify their 'cull'. It became excessive when their routine cruelty to animals was exposed during the ACAT Hearings of 2012, 13 and 14."

Ms Soxsmith cites two examples of this cruelty:

- the veterinary autopsy report (by Dr Howard Ralph) and photographs from the government burial pit in 2012 - a joey had been shot, stabbed and bludgeoned, and eventually died of blood loss or suffocation;
- the 2014 evidence to ACAT of the expert witness (Dr George Wilson) who had been called to support the government case, but admitted under cross-examination that the kangaroo cull resulted in an entire ghost population of young at foot orphaned every year.

"And if more confirmation of the cruelty cover up is needed, what about the rangers calling the police to arrest a 71-year-old protestor, who was outside the Wanniasa Hills Nature Reserve, just because he tried to call the rangers' attention to a wounded kangaroo by blowing a whistle?"

Ms Soxsmith says "Thankfully, the public are starting to wake up to the ACT Government's propaganda, with protesters receiving good feedback by passing motorists keen to show their support".

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