

Whistleblower says Victoria's hunting watchdog 'incapable, unwilling' to investigate hunters

7.30 By [Lauren Day](#)

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PHOTO: A hunter plucks the single bird shot during a duck hunting session. (ABC News: Jane Cowan)

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A senior staff member at Victoria's hunting regulator has quit, claiming the organisation is poorly run and he was actively discouraged from investigating alleged breaches of hunting laws.

The Game Management Authority (GMA) has been under pressure since the [ABC's 7.30 program last month revealed](#) an independent review had found it was failing its responsibilities and the minister responsible refused to rule out shutting the GMA down.

Then manager of compliance George Bucchorn, a former homicide detective, claims the GMA was never committed to rigorously investigating hunters accused of breaking hunting laws.

"They don't have the skills and they don't have the will to investigate," he told 7.30.

"You can't regulate hunting with the resources that they have so it was almost destined to fail.

"They do not have the capability or the capacity to control hunters."

GMA 'actively trying to discourage me from investigating'



PHOTO: Former Game Management Authority manager George Bucchorn (ABC News)

Mr Bucchorn said he was blocked from applying for search warrants and obtaining sophisticated monitoring equipment, and his recommendations to pursue investigations were rejected.

"The GMA were actively trying to discourage me from investigating," he said.

"I was directed not to make any reference to cruelty or the code of practice that hunters should abide by."

He told 7.30 there were only five compliance officers tasked with overseeing thousands of hunters on Victoria's wetlands, which he believed was woefully inadequate.

In a statement, a GMA spokesperson said it took "any suggestion of wrongdoing seriously".

"We can confirm that there is already an investigation into these matters, however we cannot provide more detail about this investigation at this time," the spokesperson said.

"So far the overwhelming majority of duck hunters and activists have complied with the rules and regulations of this year's duck hunting season."

Mr Bucchorn tendered his resignation in late March, citing his "many ongoing concerns" with the GMA.

"If nothing changes, hunters will still carry on and behave the way they are. They can't self-regulate and eventually public opinion will put a stop to hunting, to game hunting," he said.

He said the GMA's responsibilities should be transferred to another agency.