

The Hon Jaclyn Symes  
Minister for Agriculture  
Level 37, 121 Exhibition Street  
Melbourne Vic 3000

Dear Minister

## **RE: STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS**

Your predecessor, The Hon Minister Pulford, wrote to the GMA on October 19 detailing a Statement of Expectations (SOE) for the Game Management Authority. This letter is to affirm the GMA's commitment to delivering the outcomes required by the SOE and to carry out its statutory functions and deliver sustainable and responsible game hunting in Victoria.

As mentioned in the SOE, the independent review by Pegasus Economics (the Pegasus Report) of the GMA's compliance and enforcement functions highlighted a number of challenges for the organization. Following the report, the GMA has reviewed its strategic direction, established five strategic goals and has commenced a restructure of the organization. The revised GMA strategic statements are:

- Our vision; Game hunting in Victoria meets community expectations as a sustainable and well-regulated activity based on science and conducted in a responsible manner.
- Our purpose; We regulate through education, research and enforcement to achieve responsible and sustainable game hunting in Victoria.

And the five 5-year strategic goals are:

1. Make evidence-based education a cornerstone of our work.
2. Understand the ecology and biology of game species and the impact of hunting on these species in order to achieve sustainability.
3. Be respected and recognised as an effective regulator.
4. Implement an effective risk-based compliance strategy.
5. Increase our capability and expertise.

Two million dollars has been provided to the GMA in the 2018-19 year to assist address the recommendations from the Pegasus Report including the employment of additional staff. The more recent commitment from the Government to increase operational funding by \$1.5 million per annum for the next four financial years will enable the GMA to maintain this increase in staff resources.

As was the case in 2017, the GMA will work with the Department to develop a funding proposal that covers the ongoing operational and research activities that are necessary to ensure the GMA is able to meet its statutory obligations.

### **Delivery of Pegasus Report Recommendations**

As noted in the SOE, the GMA Board has accepted twenty-six of the twenty-seven recommendations made by the Pegasus Report. The GMA has prepared an action plan for the implementation of these recommendations and incorporated the necessary actions with the Annual Business Plan that will be submitted to your office by December 31.

It is noted in the SOE that a number of the issues addressed by the Pegasus Report recommendations are the responsibilities of other Government agencies. Where this is the case the GMA will use its best endeavors to obtain the cooperation of the relevant agencies to deliver against the recommendations. This includes active participation in the development of an accountability framework with these agencies. The GMA has commenced implementation of a number of recommendations and to ensure transparency, commits to providing a quarterly progress update on the Pegasus report action plan and placing this update on the GMA website.

### **Effectiveness**

The GMA is in the final stages of selecting a preferred supplier for the development and implementation of a new game licensing system. As identified in the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan (SHAP) the new system will deliver an on-line capability for game license holders. It is expected that the build, testing and transition to a new license system will take from twelve to eighteen months. which will place full implementation in mid-2020.

Some of the accepted Pegasus Report recommendations aimed at strengthening the current licensing conditions will require regulatory changes to enable implementation. The GMA will work with the policy unit of the Department to ensure that any changes that are made are effective and achieve the intended purpose.

The GMA Board has already made steps to improve the effectiveness and strength of stakeholder engagement through the creation of a Board Stakeholder Engagement Committee. This committee is tasked with the strategic oversight of the development of a stakeholder engagement strategy. This will provide a foundation to guide the approach to stakeholders and be used to as a yardstick to measure the success of the strategies employed.

At the operational level, the GMA will boost its capability and focus on stakeholder engagement. This will include employing additional communications resources; redesigning the GMA website and Victorian Hunter App to improve desired functions as identified through surveys of hunters; regular meetings and consultations with key stakeholders; increased use of social media platforms; and through providing greater transparency around GMA activities and strategies.

A key element of stakeholder engagement will be the consultation with all groups on any regulatory changes proposed to strengthen license conditions. The GMA is developing a communications plan to ensure that stakeholders have opportunities to share their views and expertise and to inform the development and implementation of any change.

In order to improve behaviors of hunters, the GMA will review the guidance and education materials to evaluate relevance and effectiveness. Engagement with stakeholders in re-design of existing and the creation of new material will be undertaken. In addition, the GMA will provide greater transparency on the compliance posture of hunters; compliance outcomes and sustainability measures of game species to provide confidence in the community that hunting is conducted sustainably and responsibly.

### **Regulatory Governance and Approach to Regulation**

The GMA will restructure the areas of operations to improve its capability to ensure implementation of a contemporary risk-based approach to compliance. The first step in this process has been to increase the management expertise of the compliance and intelligence functions. This will be supported by recruitment of additional compliance staff and changes to the operating model of the GMA.

The development of an overarching risk-based compliance strategy supported by regional and game species compliance plans will ensure targeted activities, and improved compliance outcomes.

### **Operating Model**

The GMA will change its operating model to improve effectiveness. This will include creating four operational divisions, each focused on a core element of the GMA's responsibilities. The four divisions will be:

- Compliance and Intelligence
- Stakeholder and Hunter Programs
- Strategy and Research
- Corporate Support

These changes will ensure a focused effort at each divisional level on their particular core function and provide greater role clarity across the GMA. This will improve overall effectiveness and delivery of the statutory responsibilities of the GMA.

### **Capacity and Capability**

The additional funding committed to the GMA will be used to engage and maintain additional staff resources to improve capacity and capability. The majority of the staff increase will be targeted at the Compliance and Intelligence division with the number of in-field compliance staff to be doubled. The current intelligence analyst service being sourced through Fisheries Victoria will be doubled as well.

The communications capacity and capability of the GMA will be boosted through the employment of a communications manager. This will double the number of dedicated communications staff and increase the level of expertise.

The creation of the Strategy and Research division will include resources dedicated to the research function to build the capacity and capability for monitoring the sustainability of game hunting and the drivers of hunter behavior.

The new game licensing system will provide a significant boost to the GMA's capacity to deliver licensing services and increased functionality for providing testing of license applications.

To improve the effectiveness of the GMA, an evaluation of technology such as drone mounted cameras including infra-red, trail cameras, training in covert surveillance and in field equipment will be conducted. Where the benefits justify the cost, plans for the introduction of technology to operations will be implemented.

As required, a draft Annual Business Plan and a Pegasus Report Action Plan have already been provided. Final versions to be provided by December 31, 2018. These plans contain specific details on the operational activities of the GMA over the next three years.

The GMA looks forward to working with you and your office in the delivery of sustainable and responsible game hunting in Victoria.

Yours sincerely



**Brian Hine**

Chairperson

Game Management Authority

19 / 12 / 2018