Game Management Authority

Annual Business Plan

2023 - 24

Game
Management
Authority

Table of Contents

Message from the Acting Chairperson and CEO

On behalf of the Board, Executive, and staff, we are pleased to present the 2023-24 Business Plan for the Victorian Game Management Authority (GMA).

While this business plan sets out our work program over for the year ahead, it is important to note that a Victorian Government Inquiry into Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements is currently underway. We recognise that the Inquiry may result in changes to the regulatory environment for the recreational hunting of native game birds, and that any changes could have a flow on effect to the operations of the GMA. We have prepared this plan on a business-as-usual basis with an understanding that it may be necessary to amend this plan following the government's response to the Inquiry.

The goals and activities outlined in this business plan are guided by our obligations under the *Game Management Authority Act 2014*, the Victorian Government's Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2021-24 (SHAP), and our core values.

This year we revised our core values to clearly emphasise our focus on safety, integrity, accountability, excellence, and teamwork. Our values set the professional standard for our team, ensuring that we work collaboratively and act with respect and impartiality.

In the year ahead, we will continue to provide advice to government that is based on the best available science. Our research team will engage independent wildlife ecologists to investigate the abundance and distribution of game ducks and Stubble Quail, and the impact of hunting on these species. Conducting research into the distribution and abundance of game ducks is crucial to fulfilling the Victorian Government's commitment to introduce adaptive harvest management, which is designed to inform the annual duck season arrangements.

Our research team will also monitor waterfowl wounding, conduct research into the abundance and population genetics of Victoria's Hog Deer, and scope new research into the motivations of hunting offenders. In addition to informing advice to government, these research initiatives contribute to the development of the GMA's hunter education programs.

To improve the delivery of hunter education, the GMA has developed a suite of interactive online education modules. These online education modules will help equip and prepare Victorian hunters for the field, providing improved access to the information they need to hunt sustainably, responsibly, and to comply with the law.

The modules were developed in consultation with Victorian hunters, hunting organisations, animal welfare groups and Traditional Owners, and are a key deliverable in the Victorian Government's Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2021-24.

Achieving compliance with game hunting laws is further supported by our enforcement program. We embrace a targeted approach to enforcement, which is informed by collecting and analysing intelligence. Our team of Authorised Officers and Game Managers work closely with communities where hunting and illegal spotlighting occurs, holding community forums and information sessions, seeking feedback, and conducting operations and patrols. Where offences are detected, we take appropriate action to enforce the law.

Over recent years, the GMA has worked towards being one of Victoria's most actively engaged and effective natural resources regulator. The effective regulation of game hunting in Victoria relies upon partnerships and collaboration with numerous public and private land managers. To this end, we are also strengthening our relationships with our partner agencies, including Victoria Police, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR).

In addition to working with regional communities and government, we regularly engage with animal welfare and conservation groups, wildlife ecologists and hunting associations. We are also focused on building stronger connections with Traditional Owners and exploring how these connections can inform the future of game hunting regulation. We value the diverse range of perspectives of our stakeholders, and we are committed to taking a balanced approach to engagement.

From engagement through to research, education, licensing and enforcement, the regulation of game hunting

in Victoria is a multifaceted process. This plan provides the basis for delivering effective game hunting regulation, outlining the GMA's priorities, performance measures and budget for the year ahead.

Corrie Goodwin
Acting Chairperson

Graeme Ford
CEO

Preface

Prior to the beginning of the 2023 Duck Season a Legislative Council Select Committee Inquiry into Native Bird Hunting Arrangements was announced by Parliament.

The terms of reference for the Inquiry are:
- the operation of annual native bird hunting seasons
- arrangements in other Australian jurisdictions
- their environmental sustainability and impact on amenity
- their social and economic impact.

This Inquiry is scheduled to report to Government by the end of August 2023. The Government will then respond accordingly.

The GMA recognizes that recommendations from the Inquiry and the Government's response to those recommendations may have an impact on the operations of the GMA over the outlook period and require amendments to the plan.

1   Introduction

1.1   Purpose

Through engagement with stakeholders and targeted research, the GMA understands the potential harms associated with game hunting. We regulate through education and enforcement to reduce the incidence and impacts of high-risk harms and provide authoritative advice on game hunting.

1.2   Vision

Game hunting in Victoria is a well-regulated, evidence-based and sustainable activity that is informed by science and conducted responsibly.

1.3   Values

Our work is made stronger by the values that guide it.

Safety: We take responsibility for our own safety and wellbeing and that of our colleagues.

Integrity: We act with respect, impartiality, and transparency.

Accountability: We are accountable for our own work, performance, decisions, and actions.

Excellence: We pursue professional excellence, always.

Teamwork: We value diversity, we are inclusive, and we collaborate to achieve positive outcomes.

1.4   Role

The GMA is an independent statutory authority responsible for the regulation of game hunting in Victoria. It undertakes activities to promote sustainability and responsibility in game hunting in Victoria.

Under the *Game Management Authority Act 2014*, the GMA is responsible for:

•   issuing Game Licences, authorities and permits

•   managing open and closed seasons for game species

•   enforcing game hunting laws and taking action against those who do not hunt legally

•   educating and informing hunters on how to hunt legally in Victoria.

The GMA also has an important advisory role in the management of natural resources across Victoria including:

•   the sustainable harvest of game species

•   the humane treatment of animals that are hunted and used in game hunting

•   minimising any negative impacts on non-game wildlife, including protected and threatened species

•   the conservation of wildlife habitats

•   the environmental, social and economic impacts of game hunting and management.

1.5   Board

The GMA is accountable to the Minister for Outdoor Recreation and is governed by a Board. The Board's primary role is to ensure that the GMA fulfils its legislated functions effectively and complies with its governance obligations.

The Board sets the strategic direction and business objectives of the GMA and ensures that these are consistent with the GMA's legislative and regulatory framework. This includes:

•   setting and approving the strategic and annual business plans

- approving the GMA's annual report

- regularly reviewing major risks

- ensuring adequate risk management of all strategic business and operational risks

- providing recommendations to relevant Ministers

- reviewing internal financial and operational controls

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO) selection, appointment, succession planning and performance assessment

- oversight of the management of the GMA by the CEO to ensure effective operation and a culture of compliance and best practice business performance in all areas of operational, financial, human resources, risk management and asset management.

The Board has three committees: the Audit and Risk Management Committee, the Research Committee and the People and Culture Committee. Each year the board reviews the GMA's strategic direction including the Board's performance and committee structures.

The CEO manages the day-to-day operations of the GMA under the direction of the Board and is responsible for implementing the GMA's vision and delivering against the annual business plan.

1.6 People

The GMA recognises the importance of diversity, inclusion and respect in the workplace. Staff safety and wellbeing is a top priority.

The GMA is organised into four main business functions to deliver the projects and programs identified in this plan.

Stakeholder and Hunting Programs

The Stakeholder and Hunting Programs Division is focused on developing hunting stakeholder relationships and providing advice, education, licensing and training to hunters to increase voluntary compliance. This team maintains working relationships with industry and supports other GMA functions to manage open and closed seasons for game species, conduct field research and enforce game hunting laws.

Compliance and Intelligence

The Compliance and Intelligence Division's operational context incorporates a range of government policy and community drivers. This includes departmental compliance, policies and systems; legislation and regulations; Ministerial Statement of Expectations; Victorian community expectations; other government agencies and regulators; political; social; economic; resource protection and values.

The GMA is a risk-based, intelligence-led and harms-focused regulator with a strong emphasis on improved outcomes for the Victorian community.
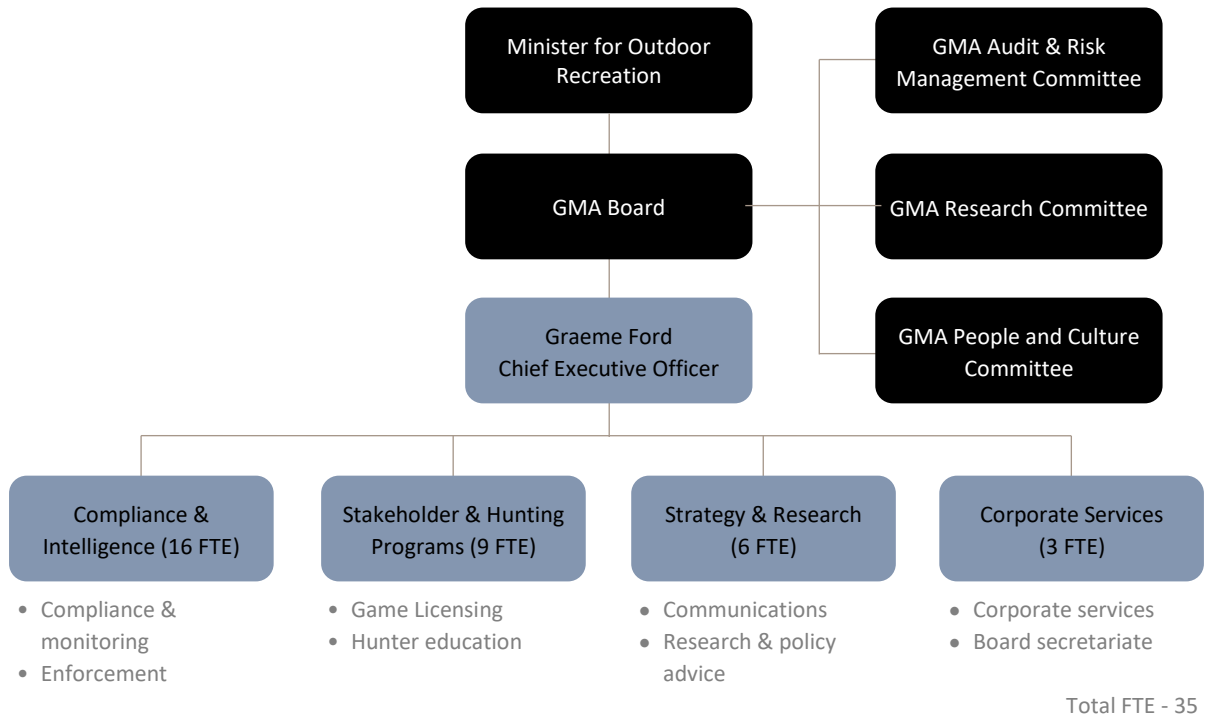
Strategy and Research

The Strategy and Research Division is responsible for developing advice for the Board and to government, providing communications and media services on behalf of the GMA, conducting and coordinating research, and monitoring the needs and performance of hunters, game harvesting and the impacts of hunting on game species.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services Division supports the CEO in managing the day-to-day operations of the GMA, including finances, risk management, procurement, information technology, human resources, audits, assets and other corporate service functions. This team also assists in the operation of the Board and its committees by providing secretariat services.

1.7 Organisation structure

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │ Minister for Outdoor│        │   GMA Audit & Risk      │
                    │     Recreation      │        │  Management Committee   │
                    └─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
                               │
                    ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │      GMA Board      │────────│ GMA Research Committee  │
                    └─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
                               │
                    ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │     Graeme Ford     │        │  GMA People and Culture │
                    │Chief Executive Officer│      │       Committee         │
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Compliance & Intelligence (16 FTE)	Stakeholder & Hunting Programs (9 FTE)	Strategy & Research (6 FTE)	Corporate Services (3 FTE)
• Compliance & monitoring • Enforcement	• Game Licensing • Hunter education	• Communications • Research & policy advice	• Corporate services • Board secretariate

Total FTE - 35

1.8 Stakeholders

Game hunting has broad social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts on the Victorian community.

The GMA has diverse stakeholder relationships and is often required to develop workable solutions with stakeholders that sit at opposite ends of the debate of supporting or opposing the hunting of native and non-native game species. The GMA understands the importance of listening to the views of stakeholders to ensure that game hunting is managed sustainably and responsibly. Building trusted, engaged and respectful relationships is essential.

The primary stakeholder is the Minister for Outdoor Recreation. The GMA also works with a broad range of stakeholders including state and federal government agencies and other public-sector entities, Game License holders, hunting, environment, and animal welfare interest groups, Traditional Owners and the Victorian community.

Engagement with stakeholders is through face-to-face meetings and workshops, attendance at shows, expos and demonstration days, interactions in the field, through digital communication channels and written consultation.

1.9 Partner agencies

The GMA works with partner agencies, including Parks Victoria (PV), the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR), Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA), Victoria Police, and the community to ensure that game hunting is sustainable, safe and humane.

1.10 Focus

Under the *Game Management Authority Act 2014*, the GMA's obligation is to promote sustainability and responsibility in game hunting in Victoria. As a modern regulator, the GMA works closely with the Victorian Government, partner agencies and hunters to ensure that hunters are aware of their responsibilities and obligations. The GMA also works closely with communities across Victoria to promote responsibility and sustainability in game hunting and raise awareness of how to report illegal behavior including breaches to public safety and hunting laws.

The GMA promotes compliance with hunting laws and takes enforcement action where breaches are identified. A compliance focus is placed on offences that risk causing the greatest harm to the community. By promoting and targeting compliance, community safety, the sustainability of native game species will be better protected and adverse animal welfare outcomes minimised. The GMA continues to drive the RESPECT: Hunt Responsibly program with stakeholders to help ensure the community has confidence that game hunting is conducted in a sustainable and responsible manner.

1.11 Summary plan:

The following table is a summary of the goals, outcomes and enablers for 2023/24. Full details are in Section 5.

Goal 1: GMA's advice and decisions promote sustainability and are based on the best available science and evidence	Goal 2: Licensed game hunters can demonstrate a level of knowledge and proficiency that enables them to hunt sustainably and responsibly	Goal 3: Compliance and enforcement program is informed by intelligence and targeted to minimise the greatest harms	Goal 4: GMA provides an inclusive, safe supportive and innovative workplace to attract and retain the best people for the best results
The **outcome** of achieving this goal is: • The GMA is a trusted authority • Stakeholders have confidence in us • Game hunting does not threaten the sustainability of native and game species Success will be **enabled** by: • Productive relationships with stakeholders and research organisations • Research focussed on building knowledge of native animal population dynamics • Expert staff capability and organisational capacity	The **outcome** of achieving this goal is: • Animal welfare outcomes are improved • Environmental outcomes are improved • More hunters are compliant • Hunting is conducted safely Success will be **enabled** by: • Investing in Learning Management Systems and contemporary education platforms • Productive relationships with delivery partners and training providers • Measuring change in practice and knowledge • Adaptable education and training programs • Global monitoring for best practice.	The **outcome** of achieving this goal is: • Enforcement activities are targeted and risk-based • Hunters have a constructive relationship with the us • The incidence of high-risk harm is reduced Success will be **enabled** by: • Intelligence collection and analysis capability • Regular community engagement • Transparent reporting of outcomes	The **outcome** of achieving this goal is: • The workplace is safe and supportive • Staff are trusted, capable and respected. • Staff are engaged and satisfied Success will be **enabled** by: • One GMA approach • Staff participating in establishing and maintaining desired culture • Allowing staff to be creative and make mistakes • Using contemporary tools, technology, systems, and equipment • Effective evaluation and QA

10

2   Regulatory functions

Pursuant to Section 6 of the *Game Management Authority Act (Vic) 2014*, the functions of the GMA are to:

a)   perform the regulatory, investigative and disciplinary functions conferred on the GMA by or under this Act or any relevant law

b)   administer the scheme for issuing game licences under the *Wildlife Act 1975* in relation to hunting, taking or destroying game

c)   promote and monitor compliance with this Act or any relevant law in relation to game hunting

d)   investigate compliance with this Act and any relevant law in relation to game hunting

e)   develop operational plans and procedures addressing:

   (i)   the sustainable hunting of game animals

   (ii)   the humane treatment of animals that are hunted or used in hunting

   (iii)   strategies to minimise any negative impact on non-game wildlife, including protected and threatened wildlife

   (iv)   the conservation of wildlife habitats

f)   work with public land managers to improve the management of public land and facilities on public land where hunting is permitted

g)   promote sustainability and responsibility in game hunting

h)   monitor, conduct research and analyse the environmental, social and economic impacts of game hunting and game management

i)   make recommendations to relevant Ministers in relation to:

   (i)   game hunting and game management

   (ii)   the control of pest animals

   (iii)   declaring public land open or closed to game hunting, open and closed seasons and bag limits

   (iv)   the management of public and private land as it relates to game and their habitat.

The GMA has the powers necessary to exercise and perform its functions under its governing Act or any other relevant Act. The GMA is also subject to written directions provided by the Minister for Outdoor Recreation.

2.1   Regulatory approach

The GMA's regulatory approach is to work across the compliance spectrum from education and the provision of information to enforcement action. Where people wish to be compliant, the GMA will endeavour to assist them to achieve compliance; where deliberate non-compliance is a problem, the GMA will actively enforce the law.

The approach taken in these activities is risk-based targeting those areas of greatest risk for non-compliance and harm to the community. The GMA delivers its regulatory obligations by considering:

•   legislative requirements as provided for under the *Game Management Authority Act (2014)*, *Public Administration Act (Vic) 2004*, the *Wildlife Act 1975* and relevant regulations

•   the Minister for Outdoor Recreation's Statement of Expectations, which elaborates on the requirement for the GMA to meet its statutory obligations in a manner that is consistent with Victorian Government policies and guidelines

•   the GMA's Strategic Charter outlines the work and activities that will be performed by the GMA to meet its legislative obligations

•   GMA Policy Frameworks, which includes a range of policies and procedures that outline core governance, actions and responsibilities.

3 Managing risks

The GMA identifies, prioritises and mitigates risk through its Risk Management Framework, aligned to the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework. Embedded into the risk management process is an ongoing focus on key areas of strategic risk identified by the GMA Board, including:

• Occupational health and safety – ensuring that the GMA provides a workplace that promotes the physical and psychological health and safety of its staff.

• Governance – ensuring that the GMA operates in a way that meets the standards of diligence and probity expected of a government body.

• Statutory reporting – ensuring that the GMA meets its legislative and regulatory responsibilities.

• Reputation – ensuring that the GMA is effective, fair, consistent, transparent, meets community expectations and treats all private data with the strictest confidence and highest security.

• Financial – ensuring that the GMA manages its finances diligently and sustainably.

• Regulatory – ensuring that the GMA's compliance and enforcement activities cover the breadth of the compliance spectrum from education for voluntary compliance, through to enforcement action. Enforcement is guided by intelligence and targeted at the activities posing the highest risk of harm. This approach will ensure compliance activities are conducted efficiently, consistently and effectively to reduce the likelihood and consequence of non-compliance.

• Stakeholder relationships – ensuring the GMA maintains effective relationships across government, stakeholders and the community.

Key areas identified above form the categories of the Strategic Risk Register, which includes controls/ mitigation strategies and a responsible person for managing each risk.

The Board considers the Strategic Risk Register at each meeting, approves amendments to the risk management framework and monitors the effectiveness of the risk management.

On an annual basis the Risk Appetite Statement (RAS) and the Strategic Risk Register is reviewed by the Board to ensure it remains current and enhanced, as required to comply with requirements under the Standing Directions 2018.

3.1 Risk in the operating environment

The GMA authorising environment may change as a result of the Government response to the output of the *Inquiry into Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements*. The GMA will review its risks to the operating environment as well as any ongoing funding risks associated with the Government response.

There are two significant macro level risks in the operating environment for game hunting:

• Social – the focus on hunting and the activism of those opposed to hunting will continue to challenge the community's acceptance of hunting as a recreational and commercial activity.

• Environment – a changing climate is creating a set of challenges that, over time, are likely to impact on game species and game hunting practices. Reducing negative impacts on the environment and on human health caused by hunting is also important.

From the social perspective, there are some sections of the community that actively oppose game hunting. For game hunting to maintain a social licence, a well-regulated hunting community needs to demonstrate that hunting meets the broader Victorian community's expectations of acceptable practice. The community expects that adverse animal welfare impacts are minimised and that hunters have the education and skill required to achieve this. The GMA is undertaking research and education to improve animal welfare outcomes and provide advice to government on areas of necessary regulatory reform. As the regulator, the GMA applies a compliance approach that aims to maximise voluntary compliance through educating and informing hunters of their legal obligations and good hunting practice. We also apply targeted enforcement action to effectively address breaches to hunting laws and regulations.

From the environment perspective, a drying climate and changes in land management practices are impacting on the range and abundance of game species. For native waterfowl and Stubble Quail, these changes appear to be negatively impacting populations. Managing the sustainability of native game duck and Stubble Quail hunting will require

dedicated research to strengthen the scientific understanding of population dynamics and the direct relationship between populations and the environment. This will include gathering science-based evidence about the fluctuations of game duck and Stubble Quail populations in response to climatic conditions and the impact hunting has on populations. Minimising the risks associated with game hunting on non-game native species, particularly those that are threatened or vulnerable, requires active management.

The challenge with deer is the possible risk of populations increasing to the point of causing increased environmental and economic damage. In this case, well-regulated hunting may be one valuable tool that could contribute to controlling deer populations.

Some materials used in hunting equipment can be a source of environmental pollution and impact on human health if not managed effectively. Plastics associated with gamebird hunting shotgun cartridges can pollute wetlands and waterways and pose a risk to other wildlife and act as a source of microplastics. Lead shot used in shotgun cartridges for Stubble Quail and non-indigenous gamebirds and lead in bullets used in deer hunting can be a source of environmental pollution, poison non-target species that consume lead from carcass remains or pose a threat to human health if ingested in game meat. The GMA will conduct research into some of these impacts, raise awareness among the hunting community and promote the use of more environmentally sensitive alternatives and provide advice to government on the need for regulatory reform where required.

4 Performance framework

The Minister's Statement of Expectations is a key driver of work, along with government election and budget commitments, and commitments contained in key government strategic documents, such as the Sustainable Hunting Action Plan.

These documents, together with the GMA's Charter, set the priorities to be addressed in the annual business plan. The GMA reports on its progress in its annual reports, which are tabled in Parliament and published on the website.

5 Business plan

The GMA delivers its statutory responsibilities through four strategic goals. These strategic goals are underpinned by the GMA's vision and values and guide the investment of resources into areas of priority.

Each goal is supported by enablers, outcomes, and time-bound performance indicators.

The next section documents the GMA's business plan for the 2023/24 financial year through to 2025/26.

5.1   Work program: 2023 to 2026

Goal 1	GMA's advice and decisions promote sustainability and are based on the best available science and evidence
Enablers	• Productive relationships with stakeholders and research organisations • Research focused on building knowledge of native animal population dynamics • Expert staff capability and organisational capacity

	Performance Measures		
Outcomes	**2023/2024**	**2024/2025**	**2025/2026**
The GMA is a trusted authority	• At least a total of three technical reports or peer-reviewed papers are published • Stakeholder Engagement Plan is revised in response to results from the community sentiment survey • Four major hunting and industry field-days/expos are attended • Compliance related statistics are updated and published quarterly	• At least a total of three technical reports or peer-reviewed papers are published • A stakeholder sentiment survey to determine attitudinal changes in trust in the GMA is conducted • Four major hunting and industry field-days/expos are attended • Compliance related statistics are updated and published quarterly	• At least a total of three technical reports or peer-reviewed papers are published • Stakeholder Engagement Plan revised as a result of sentiment survey • Four major hunting and industry field-days/expos are attended • Compliance related statistics are updated and published quarterly
Stakeholder confidence in the GMA is high	**Stakeholders engaged in research** • Stakeholders are involved in harvest surveys and wing collection programs **Communicate research results** • 80% of all research results reports are provided to stakeholders (via targeted comms, annual or biannual research information session or Webinars) within 180 days of program completion • Present on research findings at the Sustainable Use conference and Australasian Wildlife Management Society Conference **Complaint response KPIs** • 90% of illegal hunting complainants are notified of the assessment outcome within 15 business days	**Stakeholders engaged in research** • Stakeholders are involved in harvest surveys and wing collection programs **Complaint response KPIs** • 90% of illegal hunting complainants are notified of the assessment outcome within 15 business days	**Stakeholders engaged in research** • Stakeholders are involved in harvest surveys and wing collection programs **Complaint response KPIs** • 90% of illegal hunting complainants are notified of the assessment outcome within 15 business days
Game hunting does not threaten the sustainability of native and game species	**IHM** • The Interim Harvest Model updated and informs duck season recommendations **AHM** • Aerial and ground surveys to inform AHM population	**IHM** • The Interim Harvest Model updated and informs duck season recommendations **AHM** • Aerial and ground surveys of Victoria's game duck	**AHM** • The AHM model provides advice on how to achieve government harvest objectives • Aerial and ground surveys of Victoria's game duck abundance and distribution are conducted

Goal 1	GMA's advice and decisions promote sustainability and are based on the best available science and evidence		
Enablers	• Productive relationships with stakeholders and research organisations • Research focused on building knowledge of native animal population dynamics • Expert staff capability and organisational capacity		

	Performance Measures		
Outcomes	**2023/2024**	**2024/2025**	**2025/2026**
	model are conducted • Study undertaken to determine the extent and cost of expanding AHM helicopter and ground surveys interstate **Stubble Quail** • Investigate a project to use satellites to monitor fine-scale movements, habitat use and refuge areas for Stubble Quail • Stubble Quail abundance and distribution monitoring program and quail wing collection program conducted • Experimental design of a program to model quail abundance and distribution in response to environmental drivers is commissioned **Deer** • Technical report into the abundance, distribution and genetics of Victoria's Hog Deer population published • Research to evaluate the contribution of hunting to deer control commences	abundance and distribution are conducted • Waterfowl mortality and movement research commences (3-year project). Results will improve precision of the AHM population model • Partnerships with interstate agencies on waterfowl abundance monitoring are fostered **Stubble Quail** • Produce reports on Stubble Quail abundance and distribution monitoring program and quail wing collection program **Deer** • Research to evaluate the contribution of hunting to deer control continues **Research priority** • Identify priority projects in a forward research plan	• Waterfowl mortality and movement research continues. Results will improve precision of the AHM population model • Research to evaluate the contribution of hunting to deer control concludes and report published

Goal 2	Licensed game hunters can demonstrate a level of knowledge and proficiency that enables them to hunt sustainably and responsibly
Enablers	• Investment in Learning Management Systems and contemporary education platforms that facilitate learning • Measuring change in practice and knowledge • Adaptable education and training programs • Productive relationship with delivery partners and training providers • Global monitoring for best practice

Performance Measures			
Outcomes	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Improved animal welfare outcomes	**Waterfowl Wounding** • Produce a report on the waterfowl wounding monitoring program and publish • Relevant actions under the waterfowl wounding reduction action plan are implemented • Research the number of shots fired per harvested duck **Deer Wounding** • Commence development of the deer wounding reduction action plan **Animal Cruelty Complaints** • Animal cruelty complaints reduce by 10%	**Hunter Proficiency** • Program established to deliver proficiency testing model for different Game Licence types • Implement MyGL system changes to facilitate mandatory practical training **Waterfowl Wounding** • Produce a report on the waterfowl wounding monitoring program and publish • Relevant actions under the waterfowl wounding reduction action plans are implemented • A paper on the frequency of embedded pellets in game ducks is submitted to a peer-reviewed journal **Stubble Quail Wounding** • A Stubble Quail wounding reduction action plan is developed **Animal Cruelty Complaints** • Animal cruelty complaints reduce by 10%	**Hunter Proficiency** • Practical testing for all new Game Licence holders is delivered **Waterfowl Wounding** • Produce a report on the waterfowl wounding monitoring program and publish **Animal Cruelty Complaints** • Animal cruelty complaints reduce by 10%
Improved environmental outcomes	**Deer Control** • The contribution of recreational deer hunting to deer population control – ensure approvals are in place and undertake field surveys **Lead ammunition** • Report into the impacts / effects of the use of lead shot and bullets on game and other wildlife and consider the implications for human health	**Deer Control** • The contribution of recreational deer hunting to deer population control – complete field surveys and commence data analysis • Report on the efficacy of lead vs non-lead bullets in Fallow Deer hunting published **Online training** • Education module for balloted Hog Deer hunters, to replace current face-to-face engagement, is delivered	**Lead and plastics** • Commence phase out of lead and plastic in all ammunition used for game hunting **Deer Control** • Produce a report on the outcomes of the research into the contribution of recreational deer hunting to deer population control

Goal 2	Licensed game hunters can demonstrate a level of knowledge and proficiency that enables them to hunt sustainably and responsibly
Enablers	• Investment in Learning Management Systems and contemporary education platforms that facilitate learning • Measuring change in practice and knowledge • Adaptable education and training programs • Productive relationship with delivery partners and training providers • Global monitoring for best practice

Performance Measures			
Outcomes	**2023/2024**	**2024/2025**	**2025/2026**
A greater percentage of hunters are compliant	**Online training** • Baseline data on people voluntarily accessing online education modules established • Accreditation for online modules with the International Hunting Education Association obtained **Research hunter behavior** • Behaviours and actions of hunters and their impact on sustainable and humane waterfowl hunting investigated **International best practice** • Report on international developments in best practice approaches to hunting regulation	**Online training** • A 30% increase on baseline data in people voluntarily accessing online education modules • Remote testing for Waterfowl Identification Tests and Hound Hunting Tests is implemented **Research hunter behavior** • Commence research into the behaviours and actions of duck hunters in contributing to wounding	**Online education and testing** • All new Game Licence applicants complete online education and testing **Research hunter behavior** • Continue research into the behaviours and actions of duck hunters in contributing to wounding
Hunting is conducted safely	**Online training** • Advertising strategy to promote access to the online education modules delivered **In field engagement** • Six targeted education events/patrols held >300 hunters engaged in-field **Face to face training** • Four face-to-face Introduction to Game Hunting sessions are held for new Game Licence holders	**In field engagement** • Six targeted education events/patrols held >300 hunters engaged in-field **Face to face training** • Six face-to-face introductory to game hunting sessions are held for new Game Licence holders	**Face to face training** • 12 face-to-face introductory to game hunting sessions are held for new Game Licence holders

Goal 3	Compliance and enforcement program is informed by intelligence and targeted to minimise the greatest harms		
Enablers	• Transparent reporting of outcomes • Intelligence collection and analysis capability • Regular community engagement		

	Performance Measures		
Outcomes	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026
Targeted and effective risk-based enforcement	• 12 operations targeting the highest level of risk (i.e., illegal spotlighting) are undertaken • >100 proactive patrols are undertaken (based on intelligence) • 100% of GMA led operations are intelligence-led, risk-based and harms focussed	• 14 operations targeting the highest level of risk (i.e., illegal spotlighting) are undertaken • >125 proactive patrols are undertaken (based on intelligence) • 100% of GMA led operations are intelligence-led, risk-based and harms focussed	• 16 operations targeting the highest level of risk (i.e., illegal spotlighting) are undertaken • >150 proactive patrols are undertaken (based on intelligence) • 100% of GMA led operations are intelligence-led, risk-based and harms focussed
Those that we regulate have a constructive relationship with the GMA	• Revise and implement the Stakeholder Engagement Plan to reflect finding of sentiment surveys	• Stakeholder sentiment survey to determine attitudinal changes in trust in the GMA is conducted	• Community sentiment survey to determine attitudinal changes in trust in the GMA is conducted.
Reduced incidence of high-risk harms	• 10% decrease in illegal spotlighting related Information Reports submitted	• 10% decrease in illegal spotlighting related Information Reports submitted	• 10% decrease in illegal spotlighting related Information Reports submitted
Transparent reporting	• Compliance related statistics are updated and published quarterly on the GMA website • Report annually on key compliance themes from intelligence reports	• Compliance related statistics are updated and published quarterly on the GMA website • Report annually on key compliance themes from intelligence reports	• Compliance related statistics are updated and published quarterly on the GMA website • Report annually on key compliance themes from intelligence reports
Relationships with partner agencies	• MOU with Victoria Police is formally endorsed	• Identify opportunities with key stakeholders to put in place information sharing/ MOU agreements	• Review appropriateness and relevance of all existing MOU's with partner agencies/ stakeholders
Community engagement	• 4 community forums are held based on intelligence • 4 education sessions with local councils are conducted	• 4 community forums are held based on intelligence • 4 education sessions with local councils are conducted	• 4 community forums are held based on intelligence • 4 education sessions with local councils are conducted

Goal 4	GMA provides an inclusive, safe supportive and innovative workplace to attract and retain the best people for the best results		
Enablers	• Permission to be creative and make mistakes • Contemporary tools, technology, systems, and equipment • Effective evaluation and QA • One GMA approach • Staff participation in establishing and maintaining desired culture		

	Performance Measures		
Outcomes	**2023/2024**	**2024/2025**	**2025/2026**
A safe and supportive workplace	**Safety Stats** • Lost time due to injury (including wellbeing issues) less than 5 days per annum • No substantiated reports of bullying or harassment • All near miss incidents are reported in SIMS **OHS Audit review** • The Heath, Safety and Wellbeing Audit recommendations from 2021 reviewed to ensure they are embedded into practice **Traditional Owners** • One on Country cultural learning program is delivered to staff	**Safety Stats** • Lost time due to injury (including wellbeing issues) less than 5 days per annum • No substantiated reports of bullying or harassment • All near miss incidents are reported in SIMS **OHS Audit** • Conduct a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Audit with a focus on staff mental health **Traditional Owners** • A Cultural Safety audit will be completed to measure organisational change regarding cultural safety and awareness	**Safety Stats** • Lost time due to injury (including wellbeing issues) less than 5 days per annum • No substantiated reports of bullying or harassment • All near miss incidents are reported in SIMS **Traditional Owners** • One on Country cultural learning program is delivered to staff
We have trusted, capable and respected people	**Professional Development** • 60% of staff undertake professional development • All staff mandatory training is complete and current	**Professional Development** • 60% of staff undertake professional development • All staff mandatory training is complete and current	**Professional Development** • 60% of staff undertake professional development • All staff mandatory training is complete and current
Staff are engaged and satisfied	**People Matters Survey** • People Matter Survey results show 90% staff satisfaction **Turn over** • Less than 10% annual turnover	**People Matters Survey** • People Matter Survey results show 90% staff satisfaction **Turn over** • Less than 10% annual turnover	**People Matters Survey** • People Matter Survey results show 90% staff satisfaction **Turn over** • Less than 10% annual turnover

6   2023/24 Budget

The GMA has prepared its forecast budget for 2023/24 based on delivering the actions, projects and programs identified in *Section 5 Work program* and to support its operation as an independent statutory authority.

6.1   Financial risks and implications of financial projections

The 2023/24 budget has been prepared with consideration given to delivering the work program and the continued implementation of several reforms across the GMA's operations. The GMA is not reliant on funding through the revenue collected on game licences and therefore would not anticipate any financial risks in relation to revenue from licencing.

The majority of the GMA's operating expenses relate to staff salaries and associated staff cost.

The GMA implemented an online Game Licence System (MyGL) in 2021. This was a significant investment which involved years of planning, development and testing. Since its launch, the GMA continues to enhance MyGL with eLearning modules and regular application and security updates to ensure the system is robust. Ongoing expenses associated with MyGL are monitored through reporting provided to the Board and are spent within the approved budget, there is no significant risk expected with ongoing system maintenance.

The budget will provide for the following:

- Transparent best practice governance and delivery of the GMA's functions as described in the *Game Management Authority Act 2014*

- Compliance with all requirements of the *Public Administration Act 2004* and the *Financial Management Act 1994* (the FMA Act) and the Department of Treasury and Finance's Standing Directions 2018 (updated March 2021)

- External audits under the direction of the Victorian Auditor General's Office and the appointment of internal auditors as required under the *FMA Act*

- Meeting legal obligations in relation to the health and safety of staff and community safety

- Advice to Ministers on game hunting and game management matters

- Mitigating all risks identified by the GMA against the Victorian Government Risk Management Framework

- Ongoing maintenance and regular updates to the online Game Licence system

- Research to develop greater understanding of environmental impacts from game hunting, data analysis and stock assessments

- Compliance activities, including surveillance, intelligence, inspections, audits and education

- Game Licence education modules and practical testing framework

- Equipping staff with the necessary equipment and training to undertake their duties, including ongoing investment in new technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of staff operating in the field.

6.2   Mitigation strategies to manage the budget

The GMA has established a financial reserves policy, which ensures the GMA holds financial reserves at a level so as to ensure the fiscal responsibility of Directors is met and the GMA is able to pass a 'going concern' test.

Based on current approved funding over the forward estimates and existing cash reserves the GMA can meet the provisions of its financial reserves policy until end of 2025-26. The GMA will review revenue from government sources and operating expenditure to meet expected deliverables across the forward estimates after the Governments response to the *'inquiry into Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements*.'

Due to sunsetting and once off funding allocations across the Forward Estimates period the GMA is forecasting a significant reduction in revenue. The GMA Budget assumes a reduction in investment in future unfunded research programs and core employee related expenses and operating expenses in line with lapsed or lapsing fund sources.

The GMA will continue to draw from cash reserves to fund committed programs, noting that to meet the financial reserves policy additional or new funding will be required from Government or additional workforce management strategies and strategies to reduce operational costs will need to be implemented.

The GMA has an Audit and Risk Management Committee (A&RMC) to assist the Board in its governance, risk management and financial reporting responsibilities. The A&RMC provides oversight and review, and makes recommendations to the Board in relation to:

• overall policy direction of the audit compliance and risk management function

• effective management of financial and non-financial risks as directed by the board

• compliance with relevant laws, regulations and codes

• compliance with the Authority's policies

• timely, accurate and reliable financial reporting

• reviewing the external auditors annual report and management letter; and

• reviewing and monitoring the internal control framework.

The A&RMC meets a minimum of five times a year and reviews the CFO's financial report prior to Board approval. Questions raised by members of the A&RMC are addressed and resolved if required, prior to the Board approving financial reports.

In addition, regular management reports are provided to the GMA executives and the Senior Management Team. Any identified budget risks are highlighted in consultation with the CEO and A&RMC to enable appropriate planning. Mitigation strategies are also developed to prevent further escalation of budget risks.

6.3   Four-year budget forecast

The forecast revenue takes into consideration lapsing operational funds provided by Government such as '*Supporting recreational hunters and sporting shooters*' and '*Sustainable Hunting Action Plan*' as well as the expiry of additional services provided by GMA under Service Level Agreement, such as Forest Protest Management.

In 2019-20, the GMA received $6 million over four years from Government to increase the workforce by 30% to greater expand the footprint and serve the community across Victoria. The GMA has requested ongoing operational funding to maintain the capacity and capability at its current enhanced level.

The 2023-24 State Budget provided $1.8m to the GMA as part of the '*Safe and sustainable recreational game hunting*'. Funding has been provided to the GMA to maintain local enforcement, compliance with hunting regulation and stakeholder engagement. This funding is for one year only.

The proposed expenses in the 2023-24 budget include maintaining current workforce levels and delivering on approved research programs. In the forecast years, 2024-25 to 2026-27, expenditure is reduced to reflect the decreased income in the forward estimates. The reduction in revenue in the forward estimates period mainly relates to sunsetting grant programs. The GMA has forecasted expenditure reductions for employee related expenses, domestic travel and general operational costs where ERC approved budget allocations have not been renewed. The GMA will continue to negotiate financial arrangements under SLAs for the delivery of programs for DJSIR and DEECA.

The following tables provide the four-year budget projection, financial position and cash position based on the GMA's current approved funding allocation. Deficit budgets based on approved revenue and committed expenditure have been prepared for the next four years as reserves are drawn down to the level established under the Reserves Policy. Current forecasts suggest that by 2026-27 the GMA will need to increase revenue or significantly cut spending to meet its financial reserves policy (See Balance Sheet).

OPERATING STATEMENT	2022-23 Forecast	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget
Revenue					
Grants	8,856,981	7,941,886	5,931,690	4,872,315	4,872,315
Interest	220,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000
Total Revenue	**9,076,981**	**8,121,886**	**6,111,690**	**5,052,315**	**5,052,315**
Expenditure					
Employee Related Expenses	5,300,000	5,214,116	4,068,581	4,276,804	4,493,356
Professional Services / Agency Hire	175,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
IT Expenses	510,000	603,500	550,000	563,750	577,844
Purchases of Services from Govt	350,000	353,000	361,825	370,871	380,142
Occupancy and Property Holding	230,000	219,500	224,988	230,612	236,377
General Expenses (incl. VAGO, Audit and Legal)	200,000	315,000	176,000	180,400	184,910
Vehicle and Equipment Expenses	260,000	264,000	184,000	188,600	193,315
Staff Related Expenses (uniforms, training, etc)	120,000	117,800	88,800	91,200	93,296
Personal & Travel Costs	140,000	78,000	56,000	57,400	58,835
Communications	100,000	100,000	102,500	105,063	107,689
Office Expenses	200,000	170,000	174,250	178,606	183,071
Telecommunications	25,000	60,000	61,500	63,038	64,613
Vehicle Registrations / State Taxes	10,000	10,000	10,250	10,506	10,769
Interest Expense	40,000	40,888	37,810	33,777	29,461
Other Expenses	(20,000)*	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Total Operating Expenses	**7,640,000**	**7,605,804**	**6,156,504**	**6,410,446**	**6,673,679**
Operating Result	**1,436,981**	**516,082**	**(44,814)**	**(1,358,131)**	**(1,621,364)**
Depreciation and Amortisation	420,000	436,959	445,943	455,344	460,881
Research Projects	825,000	1,580,000	155,000	155,000	155,000
Total Depreciation and Research Programs	**1,245,000**	**2,016,959**	**600,943**	**610,344**	**615,881**
Total Expenditure	**8,885,000**	**9,622,763**	**6,757,447**	**7,020,791**	**7,289,560**
Net Result	**191,981**	**(1,500,877)**	**(645,757)**	**(1,968,476)**	**(2,237,245)**

* Prior period GST adjustment

Operating budgets over the forward estimates period will be reviewed and amended to deliver on the strategic objectives after the Government releases its response to the *Inquiry into Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements*.

REVENUE
Budget Paper No.3 (BP3) approved 2023-24 funding of $2.3m for '*Safe and sustainable recreational game hunting*'. Funding has been provided to the GMA to maintain local enforcement, compliance with hunting regulation and stakeholder engagement. The GMA is expecting a $1.8m allocation from the '*Safe and sustainable recreational game hunting'*.

With the State Government announcement to cease native forest logging by January 2024 the GMA does not expect a renewal of the SLA for Forest Protest Management beyond the 6 months of funding to December 2023.

OPERATING EXPENDITURE

Employee Related Expenses: 2023-24 budget based on expected staffing requirements as per the GMA organisation structure and allowing for an approved workforce management rate. The forward estimates are in line with the staff funded from approved grants funding.

Other Operating Expenses: The 2023-24 budget and forward estimates are in line with expected spending including any reductions based on sunsetting revenue sources.

Research Projects

RESEARCH PROGRAMS	2022-23 Forecast	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget
Revenue					
Funding from DJSIR Funding Agreements	1,085,000	100,000			
Total Research Funding	**1,085,000**	**100,000**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Expenditure					
SUSTAINABLE HUNTING ADAPTION PLAN (SHAP)					
Waterfowl wounding monitoring	95,000	100,000			
Quail abundance monitoring	120,000	200,000			
Hog Deer distribution and abundance		180,000			
Recreational deer hunting's contribution to deer control		350,000			
Develop and implement a waterfowl wounding reduction action plan	15,000	15,000			
Total SHAP Expenditure	**230,000**	**845,000**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Harvest monitoring and estimation (gamebirds, deer)	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey (EAWS)	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	35,000
Interim Harvest Model	16,000	20.000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Game duck abundance and modelling (AHM)	384,000	500,000			
Community Survey Work - Stakeholder sentiment survey (part 2)	60,000				
Conduct research into the motivations of hunting offenders		80,000			
Hunter behaviours and attitudes that contribute to wounding					
Total Other Research	**595,000**	**735,000**	**155,000**	**155,000**	**155,000**
Total Research Expenditure	**825,000**	**1,580,000**	**155,000**	**155,000**	**155,000**
Research Programs impact on Reserves	**260,000**	**(1,480,000)**	**(155,000)**	**(155,000)**	**(155,000)**

2023-24 research expenditure requires a $1.480 million drawdown from cash reserves as funding to deliver on research programs such as SHAP2 has been received by the GMA in prior period budget allocations. The forward estimates from 2024-25 provides for minimal investment in research to ensure the GMA is forecasting to meet its financial reserves policy.

OFFICIAL

Balance Sheet	2022-23 Forecast	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget
Assets					
Financial Assets					
Cash and deposits	7,802,314	6,423,396	5,908,582	4,080,451	1,989,087
Receivables	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000
Total financial assets	**8,152,314**	**6,773,396**	**6,281,395**	**4,525,829**	**2,558,027**
Non-financial assets					
Right of use - office lease	684,885	677,454	520,268	363,082	205,896
Office Fit out	398,138	313,138	228,138	143,138	58,138
Plant and equipment (incl. MV)	755,882	590,882	425,882	425,882	425,882
Game Licensing System	93,700	67,700	43,700	19,700	0
Total non-financial assets	**1,932,605**	**1,649,174**	**1,217,988**	**951,802**	**689,916**
Total assets	**10,084,919**	**8,422,570**	**7,476,571**	**5,382,253**	**3,029,003**
Liabilities					
Right of use - office lease	783,592	775,391	607,792	429,309	239,405
Payables	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000	400,000
Right of use - vehicles	458,927	498,000	498,000	498,000	498,000
Provisions	1,577,898	1,717,898	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
Total Liabilities	**3,220,417**	**3,391,289**	**3,005,792**	**2,827,309**	**2,637,405**
Net Assets	**6,864,502**	**5,031,281**	**4,470,779**	**2,554,944**	**391,598**
Equity					
Accumulated surplus	6,864,502	5,031,281	4,470,779	2,554,944	391,598
Net Worth	**6,864,502**	**5,031,281**	**4,470,779**	**2,554,944**	**391,598**

The GMA is not expecting any investment in capital programs over the forward estimate. Movements in balance sheet accounts primarily relate to the change in cash reserves through operating activities and the amortisation of right of use assets.

Cashflow Statement	2022-23 Forecast	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget
Cashflows from operating activities					
Receipts received from Government	8,856,981	7,941,886	5,931,690	4,872,315	4,872,315
Interest Received	220,000	180,000	180,000	180,000	180,000
Payments to suppliers and employees	(8,465,000)	(9,185,804)	(6,311,504)	(6,565,446)	(6,828,679)
Net Cash inflows / (used in) operating activities	**611,981**	**(1,063,918)**	**(199,814)**	**(1,513,131)**	**(1,776,364)**
Cashflows from investing activities					
Purchase of non-financial assets	(10,000)				
Net Cash inflows / (used in) investing activities	**(10,000)**	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Cashflows from financing activities					
Repayment of financial and property leases	(315,000)	(315,000)	(315,000)	(315,000)	(315,000)
Net Cash inflows / (used in) financing activities	**(315,000)**	**(315,000)**	**(315,000)**	**(315,000)**	**(315,000)**
Net increase /(decrease) in cash held	**286,981**	**(1,378,918)**	**(514,814)**	**(1,828,131)**	**(2,091,364)**
Cash at beginning of financial year	7,515,333	7,802,314	6,423,396	5,908,582	4,080,451
Cash at end of financial year	**7,802,314**	**6,423,396**	**5,908,582**	**4,080,451**	**1,989,087**

The change in cash reserves reflects the expected negative cashflow on operating activities of the GMA. Once the Government has provided its response to the *Inquiry into Victoria's recreational native bird hunting arrangements* the GMA will review cash requirements to deliver on the strategic objectives within the parameters of the GMA reserves policy.