



The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture

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Ref: BMIN-2-20-5931

Mr Brian Hine
Chairperson
Game Management Authority
GPO Box 424
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Dear Mr Hine

GAME MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY - 2020-2022 MINISTERIAL STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS

I am pleased to provide you with this Statement of Expectations (SOE) for the Game Management Authority (GMA). This SOE replaces the SOE previously issued to the GMA and applies for two years from 19 October 2020, or until otherwise amended.

This SOE is important to discharging my ministerial portfolio responsibilities and statutory powers. As Minister for Agriculture, I am responsible for the key legislation that enables game hunting administration and regulation in Victoria. This includes the:

- *Game Management Authority Act 2014*
- *Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012*
- *Wildlife Act 1975* (as it relates to game hunting).

The SOE should be read in the context of the objectives, functions and powers outlined in this legislation and associated regulations.

This SOE sets my expectations of how the GMA effectively and efficiently regulates game hunting in Victoria to the extent that the regulatory framework allows, including what the GMA can do to improve hunter compliance, animal welfare outcomes and community trust that game hunting is sustainable and well regulated.

Game hunting presents significant economic opportunities for Victoria through local and tourist driven participation and associated retail sales. To realise these opportunities, the Victorian community must be confident that game hunting is effectively regulated and sustainable, and that hunters act responsibly and ethically. To earn that confidence, it is

essential that the GMA delivers clear, consistent, contemporary regulation and administration of game hunting that is respected and valued by the Victorian community.

Elements of good regulatory practice

I have formed my expectations based on the elements of good regulatory practice I regard as most appropriate to the GMA.

Risk-based strategies

I expect the GMA to build on its understanding and use of risk-based and intelligence-led enforcement programs through which it can monitor, measure and improve compliance. This includes prioritising compliance effort according to the risk to the community. I expect the GMA to inform its assessment of compliance priorities through analysis of evidence and intelligence from its regulatory environment. Where research and evidence suggest that regulatory change is required to strengthen GMA's compliance capabilities, I will consider this on a case by case basis.

Factors that I expect the GMA to consider in building on its risk-based approach include:

- using evidence from GMA research and monitoring to inform risk-based regulation of hunting and programs to improve hunter capability and compliance
- encouraging stakeholder input to improve the GMA's knowledge of game species populations and hunting impacts
- building the GMA's knowledge of the environmental and community effects of hunting practices.

Compliance-related assistance and advice

Providing effective assistance and advice on game hunting rules and regulations reduces the risk of non-compliance. Poor or inaccessible advice may increase the time spent by and ability of regulated parties to understand their regulatory obligations and requirements.

To assist in minimising non-compliance, I expect the GMA to deliver a strategic approach to evidence-based education programs and publish accurate, accessible and up-to-date information about game hunting regulatory requirements. I expect the advice and information about game hunting compliance obligations will:

- be consistent and accurate
- explain the objectives of the regulations
- explain the potential consequences of failing to comply with hunting regulations
- be based on a sound understanding of hunter motivations, behaviours and capabilities.

A key outcome of these programs should be a measurable increase in the level of understanding of the game hunting laws and good hunting practice across licensed game hunters in Victoria. This should assist to build a culture for ethical hunting practices and improved compliance among hunters.

Role clarity

The GMA works with multiple agencies to enforce game hunting laws and to help ensure game hunting is conducted sustainably. Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the GMA helps stakeholders to understand who to go to for assistance and information.

To help game hunters and the community know how to get accurate information and assistance on game hunting in Victoria, I expect the GMA to clearly communicate what the GMA's purpose is and what services it provides in relation to game hunting in Victoria. This includes making information readily accessible to the divergent range of GMA stakeholders.

Clearly promoting the GMA's purpose, the functions it undertakes and the services it provides, can assist it to be recognised and respected as an effective regulator of sustainable game hunting.

A key role of the GMA is to provide advice to government to inform regulatory settings for improved responsibility, sustainability and animal welfare outcomes associated with game hunting. That advice will be considered and, where appropriate, implemented to ensure that the GMA has a functional regulatory framework within which to operate effectively and discharge its responsibilities.

To assist in achieving this outcome and provide greater clarity on the GMA's role I expect the GMA to:

- provide input to the DJPR led review of the Wildlife (Game) Regulations that will improve the safe, sustainable and humane hunting of game, and communicate any changes to the regulations to GMA stakeholders
- develop and implement strategies and partnerships as appropriate to ensure allied agencies understand each other's roles and to boost the overall effectiveness of game hunting enforcement and compliance.

Accountability and transparency

I expect the GMA to continue using and refining its information and intelligence systems and evidence databases to review the results of its regulatory activities. I expect the GMA to use this information to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of its compliance effort, identify continuous improvement opportunities and assist further planning of its compliance operations.

Where possible and appropriate, I expect the GMA to publish information about the outcome of its compliance efforts. This may help to deter further non-compliant behaviours and provide assurance to the community that the GMA is fulfilling its regulatory functions.

I also expect the GMA to review and update as necessary its Authorised Officer complaints management system in line with current best practice for complaint resolution.

Stakeholder consultation and engagement

I expect the GMA to engage constructively and thoughtfully with individual hunters, hunting organisations and the community. This includes incorporating education, communication and engagement strategies into its compliance approach.

I encourage the GMA to work collaboratively with and learn from other parts of the department regarding best practice stakeholder engagement approaches and activities.

Timeliness

Being an efficient regulator includes reducing the transaction costs for eligible hunters to get and maintain a hunting licence. This includes any mandatory, testing and verification processes as well as the simple functions of renewing a licence or updating personal details.

I acknowledge the work the GMA has already done to implement a new online licensing system that will streamline these processes and greatly improve the user experience. I expect the GMA to have the new online system operating in the first quarter 2021.

I also expect the GMA to continue to explore technological solutions that will make stakeholders' interactions with the GMA more streamlined, including through partnerships with other government innovation agencies. However, I also expect the GMA to retain enough flexibility to assist those who have limited digital literacy or capacity.

I expect the GMA to provide clear information to its stakeholders about any licensing, testing or verification processes or procedures that are required, including expected completion timeframes. I expect the new online licensing system to improve the GMA's ability to:

- meet its stated processing times
- track and report its performance against those timeframes
- evaluate its performance to identify potential for ongoing improvement
- deliver interactive on-line education.

Planning and reporting

Annual Business Plans

Consistent with other portfolio entities, I expect the GMA to deliver its draft annual business plan, in a form consistent with the requirements of Section 21 of the *Game Management Authority Act 2014*, by 31 May each year and a final Plan by 31 August each year. The business plans should include objectives, priorities and performance targets that address the requirements of this SOE.

Responding and reporting against this SOE

I expect the GMA to respond in writing to this SOE within two months of the date of this letter, outlining the specific activities (including measurable performance targets) the GMA will undertake to address my expectations. In developing the activities, I expect the GMA to consult with DJPR, the Commissioner for Better Regulation, game hunting stakeholders and the broader community, as appropriate.

The GMA should report progress against this SOE and the performance targets through its annual report. As a part of annual reporting, regulators are expected to report on:

- current baseline levels for performance targets set in this SOE or by the GMA (where relevant)
- activities to be undertaken to reach the performance targets and improvements set out in this SOE or by the GMA.

Subject to the GMA appropriately responding to this SOE, the SOE and the GMA's response to it must be published on the GMA's website. My Department will liaise with the GMA on this requirement.

I look forward to the GMA continuing its good work in implementing best practice administration and compliance of game hunting regulation in Victoria.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Thomas'.

The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Agriculture

DATE: 8 JUNE 2021