



Select Committee on Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements

Hearing Date: 26 June 2023

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Gary Howard OAM

Received Date: [Office use]

1. THE CHAIR Page no. 72

Question asked Gary HOWARD:

The CHAIR: Mr Howard, on notice, can you give us a breakdown of what your outgoing costs are for Heart Morass? You sort of mentioned it.

Gary HOWARD: Yes. I can give you a breakdown.

The CHAIR: High level – it does not need to be everything, just what your costs are.

Gary HOWARD: Give us some time, and I will come up with that.

Melina BATH: And income too, Chair, maybe for balance.

Income

The CHAIR: Yes, that would also be good.

Jeff BOURMAN: Do we need to provide receipts?

The CHAIR: Yes, please.

Bev McARTHUR: And do we calculate the volunteer hours?

The CHAIR: Well, if you would like to provide an estimate of the volunteer hours, I am happy to receive that.

Response:

Attaching receipts for all expenditure would be onerous – so ive instead supplied audited financial accounts. As 2021-2022 were severely Covid restricted, ive used accounts from 2017-2020. I've attached a breakdown of recorded maintenance costs and income. Over the past years, its consistently \$20-\$30000 in direct expenditure. We then have to add in the volunteer hours, as well as significant donations of plant and equipment. Most times if I need an excavator or truck for a week, we don't have to hire one – we ask members, and someone donates the time and equipment. This would be at least \$50000 in additional benefits if you were having to pay contractors.

The Heart generates income is a few ways – but does not receive any direct government support.

The main income sources are from the sale of access keys, the agistment of cattle which we use to help with management of non-native grasses and other weeds.

The Wetland Environmental taskforce also receives funds from a commercial agreement offset trees removed by Vic Roads. This agreement is in its last year, and will no longer be received from 2024 on.

This income over the past few years averages to:

Keys - \$14492.00 (highly dependent on duck season length/restrictions. In low bag/short season years this can be as little as \$5-6000, in full bag/length seasons it is closer to \$25000)

Agistment - \$5344

Vic roads offset (ends in 2024)– 2018-\$10894.50, 2019- \$9506.50, 2020 - \$8608.50

Volunteer hours work sheet for 2022/23 has logged 700hrs (3 months flooded out so no access).

In an average year FGA volunteers would log around 1200 hrs, in previous years when we have had cause to call for extra projects – this could be as high as 15-1600 hours

Based on November 2020 to November 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures, volunteers are now worth **\$46.62 per hour**

So even the low end value for 700hrs is \$32634

Based on of the above, I would calculate our yearly spend to average approx.:
\$26000 Direct spend

\$50000 Donated professional time/plant costs

\$30-75000 Volunteer hours

If the government was to try to achieve the same results on a conservation wetland, I would expect expenditure over \$1M per year of funding would achieve much less.

2. THE CHAIR Page no. 72

Question asked to Gary HOWARD:

There are the references in the documentation you gave us earlier to the WET trust and the underlying land ownership of the site. I am sure it is coming, but I just want that to be really clear as well, thank you.

Response:

The land at the Heart Morass is owned by the trustee of the Wetland environmental Taskforce.

At this time – the trustee is Field and Game Australia, but should FGA ever be deemed to not be acting in the best interest of the Trust, there is a process where WET could essentially change the trustee.

Of note here – there is also provision within the trust deed that insures FGA cannot dissolve the trust, and take ownership of this land. It has been deliberately structured to try to assure the land will always be a conservation wetland.