

6 August 2014

The Hon Ian Hunter
Parliament House
North Terrace
ADELAIDE SA 5000

Dear Minister Hunter,

I write regarding the Premier's recent decision to reform South Australian Boards and Committees, to tender a response on behalf of the General Reserves Trust (the Trust) for your consideration.

The current functions of the Trust, as a body corporate established under sections 45 B and 45 C of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (the Act), are to perform duties in relation to the management of reserves which do not have their own Trust established. This includes functions such as setting the fees and charges for reserves; collecting these fees; managing the General Reserves Trust Fund (*established under Division 2 of the Act*) and determining how these fees will be allocated to the management of those reserves.

The current operation of the Trust involves a monitoring and administrative function to fulfil legislative requirements and is limited to the development of an annual budget and the transfer of funds from revenue accrued to the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) to expend on the management of the specified reserves. A Notice of Assigned Duties (NOAD) assigns the remainder of the Trust's functions, in relation to the oversight of the fund, to DEWNR.

The Premier highlighted two key factors that will inform his decision making about the requirement for each Board and Committee; Efficiency and Independence. I provide the following information in response to those assessment criteria.

Efficiency

The membership of the Trust, which meets twice per year, consists of five DEWNR staff members appointed by you as Minister. This model already provides cost efficiency by removing the need for sitting fees and streamlining meeting requirements due to the NOAD. Although minimal, greater efficiency could be achieved by the abolishment of the Trust and the assignment of the remaining functions to the Agency.

Alternatively, the GRT could resume many of its functions currently assigned to DEWNR. However this would create complexity without adding value to the overall outcomes and this

would require additional meetings and effort from the membership and support staff, thus reducing cost efficiency.

Independence

Instituting the NOAD has also already removed much of the Trust's impartiality from Government by assigning these duties to DEWNR. This current arrangement has not caused public concern for either the transparency, impartially nor the accountability of decision making in its operation.

Public consultation and engagement in relation to the management of the protected areas system is undertaken by DEWNR staff and the Trust adds no value to the process of engaging the community to inform this process. Under their remaining obligations, the Trust meet to agree to transfer collected revenue to DEWNR for the management of protected areas. The prioritisation for expenditure of these funds is made through Agency decision-making processes to meet the management objectives of the Agency, specific parks and the community. The Trust does undertake a level of monitoring on the achievement of revenue targets, however this duplicates effort within DEWNR and can be undertaken effectively by DEWNR. Therefore the abolishment of the Trust would not prevent decision making about the distribution of funds across the protected area system or reduce ability to raise revenue.

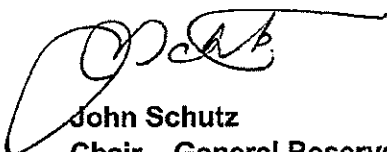
Given the current operation of the Trust, I do not believe the continuation of the Trust in its current form is necessary to meets the Government's objectives, nor is it the most suitable model of contemporary public policy development and delivery. I am supportive of DEWNR assuming the current functions of the Trust utilising existing or revised management processes to achieve the required outcomes.

Section 45 L of the Act provides guidance for the dissolution of the Trust and the disbursements of assets and liabilities. However, further consideration of legislative changes to the Act may be required depending on the outcome of your decision.

To assist in your decision making and preparation of a case to the Premier, I am happy to make myself available to further discuss the operation of the Trust and the detail contained herein at your convenience.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this information and I can be contacted on [REDACTED] as required.

Yours Sincerely



John Schutz
Chair – General Reserves Trust