



HANG GLIDING FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

Funding for World PG & HG Championships

There has been a lot of discussion regarding the CoM decision to provide financial support for our National PG and HG teams to compete in their respective World Championship events in July and August this year. In order to clarify and inform the discussion, the CoM is publishing this Airwaves to outline the considerations and circumstances that led to the decision to support our National teams.

Background

The CoM received requests in March (HG) and May (PG) this year for financial assistance for Australian Team participation in their respective World Championship events in Brazil and Italy. The HG request came via NSWHPA and the PG via the Comps Committee, which had also indicated its full support for the HG proposal. The initial requests totalled \$41,800 for HG and an amount between \$49,170 and \$57,365, dependent on numbers of pilots, for PG. The proposals were professionally presented, costed on the basis of experience and known costs, and contained information about the preparation and progress that both disciplines had made in recent championships together with goals and expectations for 2017.

These requests made for robust discussions within the CoM and all members in one way or another struggled with it. The CoM took a number of weeks to reach a position on the HG request. We were supportive of providing assistance but the sheer costs and the overall quantum of money involved was daunting. The feeling of CoM members from the outset was that we thought it appropriate to provide more than had historically been done, however, meeting the full request was not feasible. We worked to find a balance that would ensure our nation was appropriately represented at a cost we believed was responsible and affordable. There were many issues and factors to consider including, but not limited to:

- Our obligations to our sport under the HGFA constitution
- The historical approach to such requests
- Financial/budget considerations and ensuring any spend was costed and affordable
- What efforts had been made to raise funds from other sources
- Our responsibility to use our best endeavours to manage in the best interests of our sport coupled with our need to make decisions that are ultimately in the interests of our members
- Our likelihood of success and conversely the impact on performance without a reasonable level of support
- The potential to boost our profile
- The flow on effect of setting a precedent
- The request was for financial support for our national teams comprised of pilots who had met predetermined selection criteria and earned the right to represent Australia

represent Australia

- We were also cognisant of the need to seriously consider opportunities to present our sport as an attractive destination for future public & private sector funding.
- Having a successful representative pilot program is fundamental to building the sport.

Some State Associations considered the requests. NSWHPA put the proposal. HGAWA recommended around half of the requested amounts be provided on the basis that this was a 'once off'. After some weeks, a motion was submitted to provide \$22,500 to the Australian HG team to facilitate participation in the World's and the same amount for the PG team. Both motions were passed after extended deliberations. In total, the amount of funding support was less than half of what was requested.

Financial Considerations

The HGFA maintains an annual operating budget for the current financial year and two years ahead. Our Profit & Loss report for the financial year ending 30th June 2017 shows total operating expenses in excess of \$1.1M. World Championship events are usually held at two yearly intervals. The funding for the PG event was budgeted for in the 2016/17 financial year and the HG funding within in the 2017/18 year.

When compared to the total operating expenses for 2016/17 above, the budgeted PG funding represents around 2.05% of the total.

To achieve sponsorships and a share of the public and private sector funds available in Australia's sporting market, the HGFA must present its representatives on the world stage as a cohesive and professional unit.

Other considerations

The decision to support the World HG and PG teams was also contingent on:

- This was a one-off decision and no guarantees were given for the future. Notwithstanding this as can be seen from the foregoing there is a very strong case to argue that Australian teams have been starved of support from their national body for years
- All members were to be available for media coverage and promotional functions upon their return. Already we have seen press, radio and TV coverage for our sport (Channel 7, ABC and various reputable media outlets)
- The funding was for pilots who had met the qualifying standard and who had been selected to represent Australia
- All pilots were expected to make themselves available for clinics and pilot skills improvement programs
- All pilots were to take a team approach to participation in their respective events and their preparation and event performances reflected this

The CoM saw the outlay as fair and reasonable and we were confident that the expected results represented good value for the promotion of our sport. We also saw opportunities to:

- Secure improved international rankings for Australia
- Increase competition attendance boosting the viability of Australian competitions
- Transfer skills, experience, and learning's to local pilots
- Attract more members to competition flying which in turn improves pilot skill and improves the pool of pilot's capable of representing Australia
- Build a pilot community that is increasingly engaged with the sport and the HGFA
- Improve the profile of the sport within the Australian general community, which in turn encourages higher participation and acceptance of our activities within the greater community. The objective being, to be perceived by the public as credible, educated and trained sports men and women, participating in an awesome sport and representing Australia on the world stage

The CoM recognises, with the benefit of hindsight that a decision of this nature

could have included more engagement with the membership and, although the decision is ultimately the CoM's to make, the CoM has resolved to learn from this and to ensure more feedback from the membership in the future.

On the Horizon - New HGFA initiatives

Whilst this Airwaves has concentrated on the decision process in regards to supporting the competition pilots, it is also important to note that the CoM has recently introduced for the first time ever a basic level of personal accident insurance for all members. This was in response to a survey conducted last year and is a significant milestone for our sport. The CoM has also recently made funds available to support a number of XC Clinic's around Australia for non-competition pilots (you, our members). This is another important strategic initiative which should help improve our retention of pilots over time, increase piloting skills and therefore safety, and provide the enjoyable beginnings of a pathway into competition flying.

Some other great initiatives being focused on by the HGFA currently:

- Focus on highlighting our great sports to events such as the Olympic and Commonwealth Games
- Research into moving the HGFA to a Company Limited by Guarantee to improve our Governance and allow access to Federal-based funding and support for our sports.
- The CoM will soon be examining our strategy for the use of HGFA reserves, including investing in the infrastructure of our sport, along with the diversification of revenue streams to ensure things like, a reliable sustainable governing body, initiatives to increase pilot retention and safety and ensuring we are able to offer the privilege to fly to our grand kids and their grand kids. These strategies will pave the way forward for the federation.
- Promoting our sports to Government and Councils for the tourism potential already seen with many outdoor adventure sports. The CoM will be assessing ways of working with groups such as mountain bikers, trail riders, rock climbers, surfing and the like to present a combined lobby to secure areas and funding that can be utilised jointly by our groups.
- A focus on the possibility of Heritage listing flying sites.
- Exploration into a HGFA Hall of Fame to honour the Pioneers of our great sports.
- HFGA name change to make the name of our great organisation more relevant to the sports it governs.

There are many other matters not on this list that will find their way into the CoM agenda; these will be communicated to members, via their State or Regional associations for comment. The purpose for mentioning some of these things here is to ask for your patience as we look to improve our sport.

It's easy to look at something like the World's Funding in isolation and feel disadvantaged.

It's necessary though, to see this as part of a bigger picture of potential long overdue improvements across a range of fronts with resultant benefits for all our members. The feedback on Facebook and sent directly to the HGFA board has been invaluable and the committee has taken those views on-board. We hope that this information provides more context to the decision that was made and foreshadows our plans for long overdue improvements, across a range of fronts, with resultant growth benefits for all our members.

As always your continued feedback or comments are always welcome.

Kind Regards,

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