

# HMAA Member Financial Position Report

## Overview for members

Over the past several years, HMAA has grown into a national voice for horticultural media, storytelling, awards, networking and professional connection. With that growth has come increased activity — and increased costs — particularly in digital communications.

### This update explains:

- Where HMAA's money is currently going
- Why changes are being considered
- What options are proposed for members

### Our financial position (in brief)

- HMAA remains **financially solvent**, with no debt.
- HMAA have kept the membership fee increase at a minimum 6% increase (\$91 to \$98) over 7 years. CPI increased 29% for the same period.
- Cash reserves have reduced from just over \$100,000 in 2022 to around \$55,000 in 2025.
- The main reason for this change is increased investment in communications, including regular webinars, introduction of the weekly *Friday Blast* newsletter and major upgrade of the website.

Put simply: **our activities have grown faster than our income.**

### Where costs have increased

The biggest single area of growth has been digital communications:

- Website hosting, maintenance, content and support now cost **over \$20,000 per year**.
- The *Friday Blast* newsletter currently runs **48 times per year**, at a cost of approximately **\$15,000 annually**.

These tools are valuable and widely used — but now represent HMAA's largest operating cost.

- Increased cost to hold our 2 premier recognition events – The Laurels and The Joy Harland Photographic awards and dinner nights.
- The Committee has attempted to maintain a minimum cost for the attendees at same time to maintain a 'Cost Recovery' model.
- Gaining sponsorship for these events is very limited with less and less \$s available to our sector.

### Why changes are being considered

If HMAA continues operating exactly as it is now:

- Cash reserves will continue to decline
- By July 2028, reserves will fall below levels considered prudent for good governance

The Management Committee believes it is responsible to act **early and transparently**, rather than wait until stronger measures are required.

### Proposal 1: Adjust membership fees

- Current annual membership fee: **\$98**
- Required fee to maintain reserves and operate past 2028: **\$189.00** an increase of **\$91.00**

- After consideration the HMAA Management Committee agreed to Propose a new fee: **\$120, July 2026 – July 2027**

This change would:

- Add approximately **\$3,500–\$4,000 per year** to HMAA income (based on membership)
- Still keep HMAA membership affordable compared to similar professional associations
- Reduce pressure on reserves

Even with this increase, membership fees alone do **not** fully fund current activity levels — but they do meaningfully improve sustainability.

#### **Proposal 2: Reduce Friday Blast frequency**

- Current frequency: **48 editions per year (weekly)**
- Proposed frequency: **24 editions per year (fortnightly)**

This change would:

- Reduce newsletter costs by approximately **\$7,500 per year**
- Maintain regular, high-quality communication with members
- Allow more time to focus on content quality rather than volume

Importantly, this is a reduction in **frequency**, not a reduction in relevance or value.

#### **Broader membership considerations**

In considering these proposals, HMAA Management Committee has also reflected on broader membership trends that affect HMAA's sustainability:

##### **Membership numbers and growth**

- Membership numbers have largely **stagnated** in recent years (197 in 2022, 195 in 2025) with 49 new members mid 2022 - end 2025 balancing out the loss of 51 members over 4 financial years that included 13 of our members that we sadly paid our respects.
- There are currently 15 life members, accounting for approximately 8% of our membership. Sadly, we paid our respects to 4 of our life members between 2022 and 2025.
- Without growth, cost increases cannot be absorbed through scale.
- This increases reliance on existing members and reserves.

##### **Ageing membership profile**

- A significant proportion of members are long-standing and ageing.
- Retention remains strong, with an increase in the percentage of young members as new members.
- This presents a long-term risk to relevance, succession and renewal.

##### **State-based engagement and activity**

- Historically, state-based activities played a key role in:
  - Member engagement and connection
  - Attracting new members
  - Generating modest but meaningful event income
- In recent years, fewer state-based activities have been delivered.
- This has reduced both:
  - Opportunities for member connection

- Opportunities for local, self-funding engagement

### **What this means**

Without stronger local engagement and pathways for new members:

- Membership income will remain flat
- Reliance on fee increases alone will be unsustainable
- The Association risks becoming less visible at state and grassroots level

### **How the current proposals fit this context**

The proposed changes are intended as **stabilising measures**, not long-term solutions.

- A modest membership fee increase helps protect core operations.
- Reducing newsletter frequency helps manage costs responsibly.
- Neither proposal, on its own, solves the challenge of membership renewal or growth.

The Management Committee sees these changes as creating the financial breathing space needed to:

- Rebuild state-based activity
- Support locally led events with modest financial return
- Invest time and effort in attracting new and younger members

### **What this means for members**

The Management Committee's intention is:

- To protect the future of HMAA
- To keep membership affordable
- To continue delivering value, recognition and connection
- To avoid sudden or drastic changes later

Members are invited to consider these proposals in the spirit of shared responsibility for the Association's future.

### **What The Management Committee is exploring next**

While the current proposals focus on stabilising HMAA's finances, Management Committee is also actively exploring ways to strengthen engagement, relevance and future sustainability.

### **Rebuilding state-based activity**

The Management Committee is proposing a small number of **state-based activities** designed to:

- Reconnect members locally
- Provide visible value at grassroots level
- Generate modest event-based income

These activities may include:

- Informal networking events
- Talks, walks or site visits
- Joint events with allied industry bodies

The intention is to support **locally led, low-risk activities** that can be repeated or scaled if successful.

SE Queensland members meet at regular times and are actively involved in the Queensland Garden Show and holding an annual Social dinner in July, SA members meet approximately 4

times a year and Sydney members organise various activities throughout the year. QLD, NSW, Vic and SA come together for Christmas social events.

### **Engaging younger and emerging professionals**

The Management Committee recognises the importance of renewing the membership base, possibilities may include:

- Clearer pathways for students and early-career professionals
- Stronger links with education providers and industry employers
- Events and content specifically designed to appeal to newer entrants to the industry

These initiatives are viewed as essential to HMAA's long-term relevance and leadership.

### **Draft state-based activity funding model (concept)**

The following model outlines how state-based activities could operate with **modest financial returns**, while primarily delivering engagement value.

### **Guiding principles**

- Activities should be locally relevant and low-cost
- Financial risk should be minimal
- Events should aim to at least break even, with small surpluses where possible

### **Example event model**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Indicative Amount</b>
Venue / speaker / logistics	\$500–\$1,000
Ticket price (members)	\$20–\$30
Ticket price (non-members)	\$40–\$50
Target attendance	25–40 people

### **Indicative outcome**

- Gross income: \$800–\$1,500
- Costs: \$500–\$1,000
- **Potential surplus:** \$200–\$500 per event

### **Broader benefits**

Beyond modest income, state-based activities can:

- Improve member retention
- Attract new members
- Strengthen local networks
- Reinforce HMAA's national presence through local action

### **The Management Committee oversight**

- Calendar activities would be reviewed after 6–12 months
- Successful formats could be repeated or expanded
- Financial and engagement outcomes would be reported to HMAA Management Committee

### **Next steps**

- Member feedback will be considered
- Pilot activities will be scoped further
- Outcomes and decisions will be communicated clearly

Thank you for supporting HMAA so that we can continue our networks, media and social activities and evolve to meet the new generation of great horticultural writers, photographers, videographers, digital innovators .... People will continue to read no matter the media platform and the community will continue to garden so we will always have a role to play in supporting the communities in which we practice.

— HMAA Management Committee