

Recommendations:
Reforming management planning for
national parks, conservation parks and
nature reserves in Western Australia –
2010 and onwards

Report prepared for the Conservation Commission
of Western Australia

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October 2009



This report should be cited as: Moore, S.A. and Rodger, K. (2009) *Recommendations: Reforming management planning for national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves in Western Australia – 2010 and onwards*. Report prepared for the Conservation Commission of Western Australia. Crawley, WA.

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Executive summary

For many years Western Australia has provided best practice examples of management planning. With changing expectations of protected areas it is essential that management planning similarly changes and adapts. This report recommends how management planning for national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves ('terrestrial conservation reserves') in Western Australia can continue to improve.

Widespread concerns exist in Western Australia regarding the time it takes to prepare management plans and the associated low percentage of terrestrial conservation reserves with plans (20% in 2007-2008). Other issues include large plans, making them unwieldy to prepare and implement, and the lack of implementation of many of the actions in plans. These issues have been identified by other protected area agencies in Australia and overseas.

The objective of this review, conducted by researchers at the School of Environmental Science, Murdoch University, was to provide advice to the Conservation Commission of Western Australia¹ *on the development of a framework for producing good quality management plans that relate to a regional planning area, are concise and can be implemented, and where the framework emphasises both the planning process and product.* To be successful, changes will need to be embraced by both the Conservation Commission and the WA Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

During the review process a range of expertise was accessed including planning staff in Queensland, NSW and Victorian protected area agencies, and staff from DEC and the Conservation Commission.

The review process identified six main recommendations –

- Management plans need to be better integrated with other planning and policy activities in the Department. This involves:
 - Producing a strategic planning and management framework that vertically and horizontally integrates the planning and policy approaches being used by DEC, with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their planning and management efforts.
 - Developing 3–5 year regional integrated implementation plans and 1 year district operational plans that draw on management plans and all the other strategies that affect regional and district priorities.
 - Clearly linking operational plans to the strategies in management plans.
 - Ensuring that specialist plans (e.g., Regional Nature Conservation Service plans) and management plans are interdependent.
 - Making up-to-date, finalised policy statements publicly available, negating the need to repeat them in each plan.
- Management plans need to become more strategic and set the directions for the next 10 years. Detailed actions do not need to be included and instead are better placed in operational plans.
- Monitoring of management effectiveness is becoming part of the core business of protected area agencies for both reporting purposes and as a critical part of managing flexibly to improve outcomes. Management plans need to clearly define strategies and associated measures that enable management effectiveness to be monitored. Different measures (key performance outcome indicators) will be required for management plans in contrast to output measures for operational plans.
- Planning should be values-driven, with key values selected and explicitly defined, and desired outcomes and strategies identified and included in the plans. Performance indicators should be used to report on these values. Public consultation at the beginning of the planning process is critically important to define the values to be protected and the associated threats and opportunities, as well as the associated strategies (rather than specific operational actions).

¹ In Western Australia, the WA Department of Environment and Conservation prepares management plans for terrestrial conservation reserves for the Conservation Commission, who is responsible for their preparation and submission to the Minister for the Environment for approval (see *CALM Act 1984 (WA)* for details).

- Background information continues to be highly valued in management plans. However, such information occupies a large part of many plans and is not always directly relevant to management. As such, this information needs to be removed from plans but still publicly available. A web location is recommended for public use.
- Planning success depends in large part on the skills of the Department's planning staff. Planners need mentoring and training, with skills in project management and facilitation essential. Support is critical to achieve the reforms proposed in this report.

Implementation of these recommendations will require administrative and cultural changes over time. Critical to the success of these recommendations are:

- Support of senior staff in DEC for management planning and the proposed changes.
- Partnership between the Conservation Commission and DEC in preparing management plans and the planning process.
- 3-6 month period where DEC and the Conservation Commission 'reform' planning, making the strategic and cultural changes necessary to reinvigorate planning as a key activity in the Department.

1 Background

1.1 Terms of reference and scope

This report makes recommendations to the Conservation Commission of Western Australia regarding management planning for terrestrial conservation reserves in Western Australia. It provides ways of improving both the quality of the planning process and usefulness of the product. The report is the last of three² prepared as part of a review of management planning commissioned by the Conservation Commission and undertaken by researchers at the School of Environmental Science, Murdoch University.

The aim of the commissioned review was to:

Finalise the development of a framework for producing good quality management plans that relate to a regional planning area, are concise and can be implemented, and where the framework emphasises both the planning process and product.

This review focused on planning for terrestrial conservation reserves (given these fall within the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission) but with cognizance that planning for marine reserves is also undertaken by DEC.

It has included: (1) web-based investigation of planning practices elsewhere; (2) interviews with key planning staff from the Queensland Environmental Protection Authority, New South Wales Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, and Parks Victoria; (3) interviews with 36 staff from DEC; (4) discussions of the recommendations in this last report with senior staff in DEC and the Conservation Commission; and (5) peer review of this report by R.W. (Bill) Carter, Associate Professor of Heritage Resource Management at the Sunshine Coast University, Queensland.

The review was commissioned because of widespread concerns regarding the time taken to prepare management plans and that only one fifth (20.4%) of DEC's estate is covered by these plans.³ Similar concerns exist in other jurisdictions, as shown by reviews of management planning recently completed in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

1.2 Management planning in DEC

In Western Australia, the WA Department of Environment and Conservation prepares management plans for terrestrial conservation reserves for the Conservation Commission, who is responsible for their preparation and submission to the Minister for the Environment for approval. The Marine Parks and Reserves Authority has a similar function for marine protected areas. Management planning has been a core activity of DEC since the Department's inception in 1985. Such planning is a legislative requirement (*Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 WA*).

Draft and final management plans for terrestrial parks and reserves are prepared by planning officers from DEC's Planning Unit, located within the Division of Parks and Visitor Services (Appendix). In preparing a plan these officers establish and coordinate a planning team of other staff from the Department. Regional and/or district staff are generally team members. DEC currently has 9 planning officers in the Planning Unit, with 2 of these located in the regions (Warren and Mid-West). Two additional planning officers are located in Regional Services, one each in the South Coast and Goldfields Regions.

The process of plan preparation and approval involves numerous steps. It is guided by a Departmental planning manual. In addition, a comprehensive template has been used to guide the content of plans. Plans have been up to 300 pages in length and could take five years to move through the preparation and approvals processes. WA's management plans are regarded nationally and internationally as 'best

² The first report reviewed management planning nationally and internationally to learn from practice elsewhere. The second report analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with management planning in the Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation. This third and final report has been prepared as a stand-alone document.

³ Department of Environment and Conservation Annual Report 2007-2008

practice' based on their public engagement approaches, comprehensiveness of the background (resource) information and attention to monitoring.

Management plans are also prepared for regional parks by the Community and Regional Parks Branch for approval by the Conservation Commission. These plans follow a similar process to that described above, although planning and implementation are tightly linked because of the co-location of planners and managers within this group. The Conservation Commission also has responsibility for the preparation of management plans for State forest and timber reserves, through the Chief Executive Officer of the Department, and in consultation with the Forest Products Commission.

Planning for marine parks and reserves is undertaken by the Marine Policy and Planning Branch, with quite different legislative requirements. Before a marine park can be gazetted an indicative draft management plan is required, including zoning. Given that marine planning is undertaken for the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority, these marine planning processes and products were not considered in this review.

Over the last year the Conservation Commission has been introducing a changed approach to management planning. Key features are summarised in Box 1.



Changed Approach to Management Planning

1. Plans for groups of reserves
2. More concise plans
3. Precise, achievable, time-related and measurable objectives and actions

Box 1. Changed approach to management planning introduced by the Conservation Commission⁴

2 Management planning for protected areas in 2010 and beyond

2.1 Evolving focus of protected area management

The place of protected areas in society continues to change and evolve, as have societal expectations of their management (Figure 1). For the first half of last century and extending into the 1970s and 1980s at least, acquiring land for nature conservation and often but not always, recreational opportunities, was a central and essential activity for protected area managers worldwide. In many developing countries, acquisition (reservation) is still central to conservation efforts. As the new millennium approached, the emphasis of those responsible for conservation lands and waters shifted to management, especially addressing threatening processes such as pests and weeds, illegal logging, and declining water quality and quantity.

Experience in proactively addressing threatening processes has resulted in worldwide realisation and concern that reservation in itself is not sufficient to ensure conservation. Active and comprehensive management is needed to ensure that a reserve's conservation values are not compromised directly from internal pressures and externally from landscape-scale change. With societal demand for greater accountability in government, and the need to learn from managing protected areas with high levels of uncertainty and far from complete knowledge, greater emphasis is being given to management effectiveness: are the actions by managers leading to the desired outcomes?

Following publication of guidelines by the IUCN in 2000,⁵ management effectiveness evaluations have been increasingly used for reporting on management performance. In countries such as Australia,

⁴ Conservation Commission of Western Australia (2009) Management planning – changed approach. Available: <http://www.conservation.wa.gov.au>. Accessed 6th October 2009.

this holds governments and their departments accountable for the expenditure of public monies. For protected areas, this interest translates into evaluating if management action is achieving desired outcomes (effectiveness) and if these outcomes are being achieved in a financially efficient way. The intent is to formally ‘learn by doing’ to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

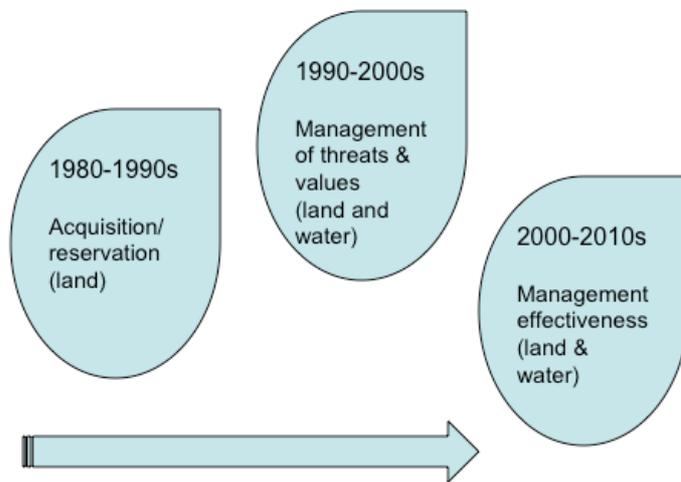


Figure 1. Evolving focus of protected area management

This changing management focus is reflected in the new approaches to management planning proposed in New South Wales and Victoria this year (2009). In these states, plans are given a central place in management effectiveness. In Victoria, for example, they are part of and drive a broader management framework. This framework requires evaluation of the extent of implementation of management strategies and actions, and whether management objectives have been achieved. In NSW, the recent review of management planning recommended a central role for management plans in monitoring and management reporting for parks. Significantly, analysis of NSW State of the Parks data reveals that protected areas with management plans, or a range of plan types to provide guidance in management, greatly improved management performance.⁶

2.2 Values-based planning and management

Using key values to drive management plans has advantages. A reliance on values rather than threats is less time-bound and gives a more holistic perspective. Also, values have much greater political currency than threats as they let politicians and other key stakeholders know what is important and should be protected. Selecting key values enables planners and other managers to focus on what is important and helps avoid the need to include large amounts of only indirectly relevant background information in management plans.

Here, we use the definition of values provided by Hockings et al. (2008, page 19)⁷ in their recommendations to the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water about their management planning processes:

‘Values are those qualities regarded by a person, group or community as important and desirable. They may be natural, cultural, social or economic and can relate to many things including a species, a community, an ecosystem, the landscape, a place, a story or an event. Values are a reflection of

⁵ Hockings, M., Stolton, S., and Dudley, N. (2000) Evaluating effectiveness: a framework for assessing management of protected areas. IUCN Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.

⁶ Bill Carter, pers. comm. 2009

⁷ Hockings, M., Wardrop, M., Carter, R. W. and Briggs, D. (2008) Review of the New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Division's plan of management process. UniQuest Pty Ltd, Brisbane Queensland. Unpublished report to the NSW Parks and Wildlife Division, NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water.

stakeholder interests. Managers need to identify, articulate and manage these values, but to be conscious that they are socio-culturally determined and therefore subject to change.’

2.3 ‘Good’ governance for protected areas

Governance – how decisions are made, who is responsible for these decisions and subsequent action (or inaction), and how stakeholders are involved – underpins successful protected area management, especially when public lands and waters are involved. Governance rests on managers having and maintaining legitimacy, and being accountable, fair, effective and efficient. Management plans and planning, through involving stakeholders and being transparent and accountable about plan content and the success or otherwise of management actions (through reporting on management effectiveness), are essential tools for protected area agencies pursuing good governance.

Central to good governance and also to good management is public engagement. Management plans provide a focus for public engagement. It is essential that this focus is not lost in any review of planning or changes in approach. Not only is such involvement integral to good governance, but the last two decades of public consultation associated with management planning in WA have established community expectations that extensive, meaningful consultation is part of ‘the way we do things here’ in protected area planning in this State.

Successful values-based planning depends on community consultation at the framing start of the planning process. This means consulting on what is valued, the threats and opportunities associated with these values, and the associated strategies to alleviate the pressures from the threats and realise the opportunities. Actions can then logically flow and form the basis of operational plans. Under this approach, management effectiveness can be assessed hierarchically and ultimately gives primacy to the reasons for reservation.

2.4 Adaptive management

To keep pace with societal change and include new knowledge, management plans must be flexible. The opportunity must exist to change how an area is managed as new information becomes available. To make adaptive management possible plans need to set broad, strategic directions so they can change with changing circumstances. They need to define a clear direction and framework for decision making rather than a prescription.

Adaptive management also relies on collecting information on the effectiveness of management actions and formally reflecting on what was achieved (outputs), their contribution to desired outcomes (values protection), and why success or failure may have resulted. Such information can only be collected if management plans or associated documents include measurable objectives and/or actions and there are mechanisms in place to report on implementation and feed the results back into management. A widely used framework for doing this is shown as Figure 2.

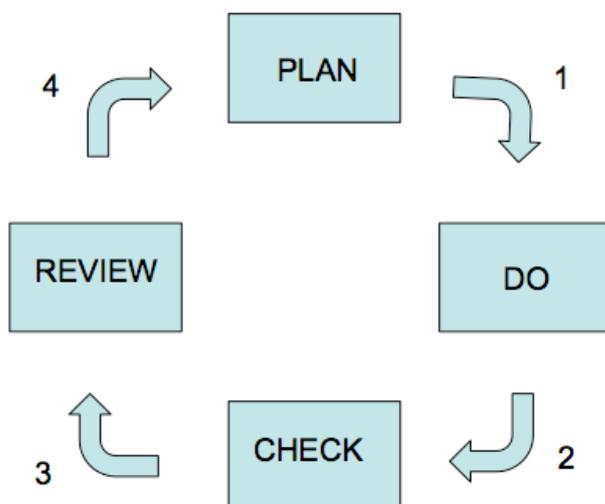


Figure 2. Responsible and responsive protected area management

3 Issues and opportunities in Western Australia⁸

3.1 Expectations of plans and planning

Management plans and the planning process are accompanied by unclear, too-broad and unrealistic expectations. Plans are expected to be repositories of background information, accurately reflect all relevant agency policies, solve an array of long-standing issues, have measurable objectives and include meaningful key performance indicators. A narrower, more clearly defined purpose is essential.

3.2 Policy and organisational issues

Having a statutory requirement for management plans (*CALM Act 1984 WA*) is highly regarded. Less well regarded is the time taken for plans to pass through the approval process – through the Conservation Commission and the middle and upper levels of DEC. The poorly developed process for amending plans also drew criticism.

Many comments were made about the lack of integration between Government priorities, Departmental policies, management planning and operational planning. This is a lack of vertical integration. Issues in horizontal integration were also raised: integration between management plans, Parks and Visitor Services planning and Regional Nature Conservation Service plans. The absence of a single policy group or a single point of responsibility for policy development was also noted.

Management plans were complimented for taking on hard issues, but the point was made a number of times that many issues could be resolved outside planning processes. Leaving issues for plans was noted as contributing to lengthy planning processes and placing unrealistic expectations on plans. Plans were noted as being able to provide a process for resolving apparently intractable issues rather than trying to deal with all issues at the time of plan preparation. Having inexperienced planners can make it difficult to deal with tough issues.

The complex relationship between the Conservation Commission and DEC with regard to management plans and the planning process, and especially the lack of clarity regarding authority and responsibilities, is making planning a difficult process. This difficulty is exacerbated by the lack of explicit, active support by DEC executive staff for management plans and the planning process.

An added concern is the relative inexperience of planners. This inexperience results in long plans, lack of skills to deal with complex, often longstanding issues and an inability to ‘require’ other parts of the Department to effectively and efficiently contribute to the development of plans. Staff also lack specific training.

Having a centralised planning unit was identified as a strength because it maintains quality and a uniformity in approach. A change in location of the Planning Unit, from within Parks and Visitor Services, to where they can work across Divisions (e.g. directly accountable to the Deputy Director General Parks and Conservation or located within Regional Services) was suggested.

More important to those interviewed than shifting the Planning Unit was getting cultural change in DEC to embrace planning, and connect planning to on-ground delivery. Management planning, although identified as a central, important function of DEC is not held in high regard across the Department.

3.3 Public engagement

Public engagement was universally commented upon by those interviewed as being one of the great strengths of management planning in WA. The only adverse comments related to the need to be more

⁸ These issues are summarised from interviews with DEC and Conservation Commission staff and observations by the authors of this report. For full details refer to Moore, S.A. and Rodger, K. (2009) Management planning for national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves in Western Australia: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Report prepared for the Conservation Commission of Western Australia. Crawley, WA.

selective about the engagement tools used, and acknowledging that a range of approaches are needed depending on the issues, the interested stakeholders, the adequacy of previous consultation by DEC staff in that area (the planning area) and the resources available.

3.4 Plan content, structure and style

Plans were universally identified as being too long. More maps and pictures were widely supported

A number of suggestions were made about how plans could be shortened. Interest was expressed in plans being explicitly focused on values, and on key rather than all values. Such an approach was identified as helping shorten plans, by including background information and management strategies for the key values only.

Repetition between plans was flagged, with statutory and policy material targeted in particular. The suggestion was made that this repetitive detail could be compiled and made available as a single guiding document for terrestrial conservation reserve management.

Background information was of great interest to most of those interviewed. It was highly valued in providing a detailed understanding of an area for staff (both existing and new) and a rationale for the management strategies in plans. Comments were also made about how the public likes having access to this information. Conversely, widespread concerns were expressed about the time it takes to collate and craft the information into a publishable format as well as the space it occupies in plans.

The newly changed approach of developing plans for groups of reserves was positively regarded, so long as the groupings were based on one or more of the following, in addition to ecological aspects: similar issues; social, political and economic attributes; capturing a range of recreation/tourism opportunities; current DEC management; and ensuring regional ownership through adequate consultation with regional staff.

Widespread concern was expressed about reducing plans in length (e.g. down to 30 pages). This was suggested as being particularly difficult if plans need to include precise and measurable objectives and actions, as per the requirements of this changed approach. Several other related comments were made. Having shorter plans will not save preparation time but it may achieve other outcomes such as plans being easier to read and use. Focusing on the content of plans alone will not improve planning.

3.5 Implementation and performance reporting

A gap between management plans and implementation was widely identified. Plans are completed and then the recommended actions do not occur. In addition, no mechanisms currently exist to report on actions undertaken, except for the limited auditing by the Conservation Commission. These audits, for a small number of conservation reserves, investigate the extent of implementation of the actions prescribed in management plans. From the interviews, gaps between planning and actions on-the-ground ('1' in Figure 2), actions on the ground and reporting on management effectiveness ('2' in Figure 2) and reviewing and planning, were evident. A similar problem was identified for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in 2004 by the NSW Auditor General. NSW has since responded with a comprehensive State of the Parks reporting system.

Increasingly in protected area management, the importance of having measurable objectives and actions is being emphasised. Developing measurable objectives will take time and is a worthwhile investment. Those interviewed noted that many of the objectives and strategies (actions) in plans were not measurable. Targets were also noted as lacking. Although lauded for having key performance indicators, the difficulty in measuring them was a point of comment.

3.6 Budget/resources

The lack of a dedicated budget accompanying plan approval and for plan implementation was a widespread concern. Allied to this was the perception that some plans are 'wish lists' rather than realistic management documents.

4 Key themes and recommendations

4.1 Theme 1. Management plans as part of integrated planning and management

Management planning in DEC does not occur in isolation and it is not the only place where policies are developed, canvassed and management recommendations made. Current issues with vertical and horizontal integration of policies have resulted in overlaps and gaps. Most importantly for this report, management plans have become a de facto repository and place for making Departmental policies public. This has resulted in plans taking a long time to prepare as policies are developed and negotiated and in long plans as they seek to make public the various underlying policies.

DEC (and most other protected area agencies) has a number of planning documents that together comprise the management framework for the Department. These are, moving from higher to lower in the planning hierarchy:

1. Legislative mandate (e.g. *CALM Act 1984 WA* and others)
2. Corporate plan. Written every 3 years.
3. Corporate policies, in particular policy statements (e.g. Policy Statement No. 18 Recreation). These Statements provide Statewide direction. They have no specific timeframe. Some but not all are publicly available and rarely have the public been consulted in their development.
4. Service Strategies (e.g., Parks and Visitor Services Strategy 2007-2011).
5. Management plans for reserves grouped regionally (recent initiative).
6. Regional fire plans (recent initiative). Have a 5 year life.
7. Regional Nature Conservation Service plans (recent initiative). These 5 year plans provide targets and actions for each region's biodiversity assets/values.
8. Regional integrated implementation plans (don't currently exist, but two regions are currently trialling new integrated approaches linking the corporate plan, regional planning, operational plans and budgets).
9. Regional Parks and Visitor Services plans (not currently prepared but being considered as a new initiative; there are 3 year rolling regional capital works programs).
10. District annual operational plans (i.e., works programs).

If management plans are to be delivered for groups of reserves, on a regional basis, then these plans need to draw on higher level policies (1-4), cross-reference and not duplicate other regional planning (6-9) and set the strategic direction for regional and district operations (8&10) (Fig. 3). If these plans are to be brief and easy to read and use, then operational actions must be placed elsewhere, in the proposed regional integrated implementation plans and annual operational plans.

Given the rate of change, plans must be able to support adaptive management, where management actions are monitored and the results fed back into management. Such flexibility is essential in the face of climate change and global economic uncertainties, both of which continue to change society's relationships with protected areas and hence their requirements of them. This means that strategic rather than prescriptive management plans are essential, given their 10 year term.

Integrated management also relies on implementing actions and knowing if they have been implemented and if the action has been successful. Performance reporting helps keep track of both these interests. Performance reporting for protected area management is currently poorly developed in DEC.

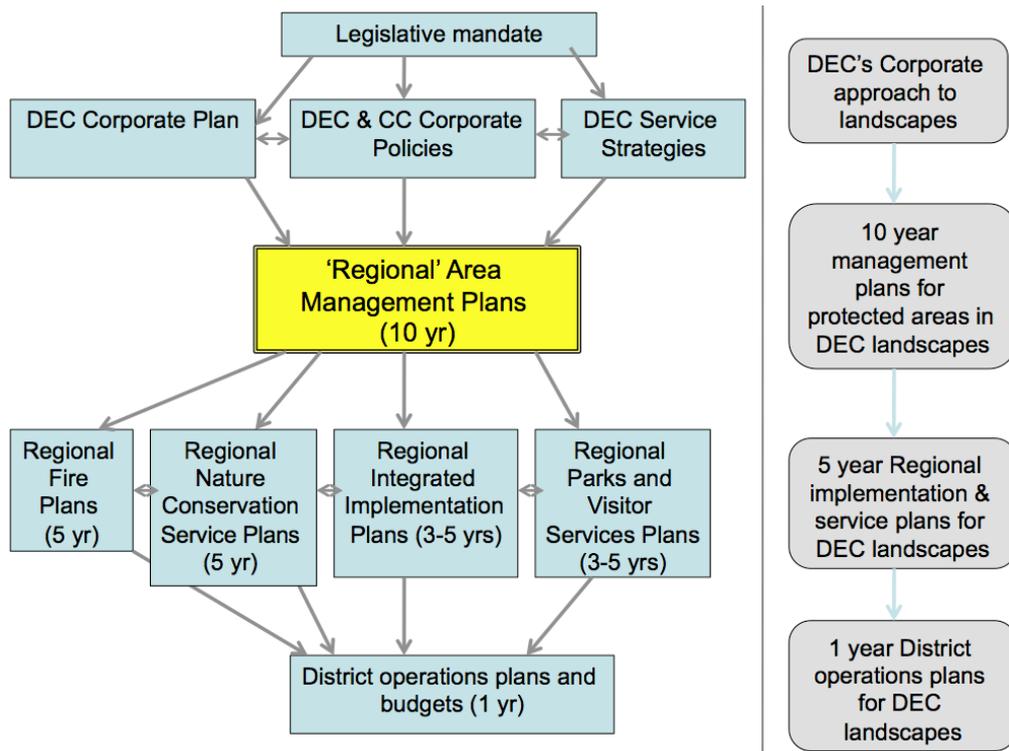


Figure 3. Strategic planning and management framework for DEC (Note. Relationships also exist upwards through the diagram)

Theme 1. Management plans as part of integrated planning and management - Priorities

- Further integrate management plans with other Departmental policies, planning and management and especially regional and district activities
- Set 10 year direction for parks and reserves using management plans that are prepared for the public and DEC managers
- Develop management plans as a central component of reporting on management effectiveness

Detailed recommendations for Theme 1

Theme 1	Management plans as part of integrated planning and management
Priority 1	<p>Further integrate management plans with other Departmental policies, planning and management and especially regional and district activities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce a strategic planning and management framework for DEC and the Conservation Commission that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provides a reformed approach to planning by DEC and the Conservation Commission based on the hierarchy given in Figure 3 ○ Explains how the different forms of planning inter-relate (both vertically and horizontally) ○ Provides definitions for planning terms such as values, targets, objectives, strategies, so these can be used in a consistent way across the Department ○ Clearly delineates the roles, responsibilities and working arrangements between the Conservation Commission, Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and DEC. 2. Develop 3–5 year regional integrated implementation plans and 1 year district operational plans that draw on management plans (and all strategies affecting regional and district priorities). Trial in 2 regions (forest, non-forest) and review. 3. Clearly link operational plans to the strategies in management plans (and these strategies clearly relate to protecting key reserve values). 4. Ensure management plans take account of specialist plans (e.g. Regional Nature Conservation Service Plans) that apply to parks and reserves where management plans are being prepared and vice versa. 5. Make up-to-date, finalised policy statements publicly available and link these to management plans rather than repeating the policies in plans. 6. Develop or refine public consultation associated with regional planning so the public can have input (e.g. into where recreation facilities go).
Action by	Conservation Commission and Directors (1) Planners, Regional Managers (2, 3, 4, 5, 6)
Priority 2	<p>Set 10 year direction for parks and reserves using strategic management plans that are prepared for the public and DEC managers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clearly define the values of the parks and reserves in consultation with the community, the associated threats and opportunities, and the strategic direction (through targets) for addressing these. 2. Use management plans to define strategies to address threats and opportunities related to the protection of key reserve values, and operational plans to define actions to implement these strategies.* 3. Group parks and reserves on a case-by-case basis in consultation with regional staff using the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bio-geographic similarity ○ Similar values, opportunities, threats and/or management issues ○ Group collectively offers a spectrum of recreation/tourism opportunities ○ Practical administrative boundary.
Action by	Planners, Regional and District staff (1, 2, 3) Specialist and Regional staff (3)

Priority 3	<p>Develop management plans as a central component of reporting on management effectiveness</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress a Departmental and Conservation Commission commitment to reporting on management effectiveness (and formalisation of an adaptive management approach). 2. Develop a suite of key performance indicators that can be used for management and operational plans. These may be very different for the strategic management plans versus the more action-oriented operational plans. 3. Ensure management plans include measurable objectives (these may be expressed as targets) and strategies.
Action by	<p>Conservation Commission Chair, DEC Director General (1) Conservation Commission staff, Science Division, Planners (2) Planners (3)</p>

* If detailed actions are included in management plans, and plans are prepared for groups of reserves, then they can not be brief or concise. If DEC is unable to develop regional operations plans (that are available for public scrutiny and include reporting mechanisms regarded as satisfactory by the Conservation Commission) then they must necessarily be much larger. They will be larger as they will have to include the detailed actions. Such plans will also become out-of-date more rapidly than the proposed 10 year strategic management plans.

4.2 Theme 2. Management planning process

Planning requires qualified, trained planners. A lack of experienced planners was identified as an issue in the interviews. Lack of experience is particularly a problem when production of good quality plans in a timely manner is expected. Training and mentoring can help. Also helpful is project management – establishing timelines and milestones and managing the planning process to achieve these.

For management plans, the process is as important as the plan itself. The process resolves issues, involves the public and hopefully gets their support for the Department and should produce the best possible plans. The efficiency and timeliness of planning have been compromised in the past by issues requiring months, if not years, to resolve before plans can be completed. Such issues include resolving tenure issues, the location of apiary sites and wilderness areas, and the continued presence of historic structures such as huts and shacks in national parks. All have stalled plans. Planners need guidelines on what issues to deal with as part of producing and writing management plans. Broader guidance on how to ‘plan’ as a decision-making tool would also be useful. For example, providing assistance for planners in making the difficult trade-offs between values that management planning often calls for.

Efficiency and timeliness have also been compromised by plans that have had to include *all* policies and recommendations for any likely value or threat. A template has been used to make sure that nothing is left out.

An issue for consistency in planning is the four different places in which planning occurs – the Planning Unit and Community and Regional Parks Branch for terrestrial conservation reserve planning and the Marine Policy and Planning Branch for marine conservation reserves. Planners are also located within the Regional Services Division, preparing plans for terrestrial conservation reserves.

Theme 2. Planning process - Priorities

- Build the planning capacity and skills of DEC and Conservation Commission
- Review the approvals process with the aim of reducing the time taken to approve plans
- Produce policy guidance on the management planning processes in DEC
- Facilitate ongoing sharing of ideas between planners in different parts of the Department

<i>Detailed recommendations for Theme 2</i>	
Theme 2	Planning process
Priority 1	<p>Build the planning capacity and skills of DEC and Conservation Commission</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide training in project management, including building and managing teams, project scheduling and milestone establishment and management.⁹ 2. Add a middle level/layer of planners to the Planning Unit and use a ‘buddy’ system so less experienced planners have the support needed to plan strategically and obtain the assistance needed from other parts of the Department and Government. 3. Provide annual training and workshop opportunities for planners, especially in public participation and facilitation, plus training in planning more generally for DEC and Conservation Commission staff on an as-needs basis. 4. Transition the role of planners to one of project managers and facilitators. 5. Encourage planners to complete easy-to-read plans in a timely manner (e.g. through facilitating them working on preferred plans, field trips, training course and conference attendance, temporary deployment to another region or branch, staff-nominated forms of encouragement).
Action by	<p>Parks and Visitor Services senior staff (all) Planning Unit Manager (all)</p>
Priority 2	<p>Produce policy guidance on the management planning processes in DEC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This guidance should include (and replace the Management Plan Template): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Values-based planning (see background to Theme 3 below) ○ Information on how to conduct management planning in DEC as part of adaptive management, especially through drawing on the IUCN management effectiveness framework¹⁰ ○ Details on how difficult issues should be addressed: using issues papers as part of a management planning process, as part of plan, by senior staff, by establishing resolution processes in plans. 2. Translate the Management Plan Template into a Statewide policy statement on managing protected areas.
Action by	<p>Planning Unit Manager, Planners (all)</p>

⁹ In project management, clearly delineate between DEC, Conservation Commission and Minister for the Environment’s responsibilities for timeliness. If a plan ‘stalls’ then it can be managed accordingly.

¹⁰ Hockings et al. (2000)

Priority 3	Review the approvals process with the aim of reducing the time taken to approve plans
Action by	Conservation Commission Director, Planning Unit Manager
Priority 4	Facilitate ongoing sharing of ideas and approaches between planners in different parts of the Department 1. Hold regular meetings between marine and terrestrial planners to share ideas.
Action by	Planning Unit, Marine Policy and Planning Branch, Community and Regional Parks Branch, Regional Services

4.3 Theme 3. Plan content, structure and style

Having shorter plans is not a matter of reorganising, editing and re-editing the existing contents. It is a matter of moving material elsewhere that currently resides in plans, being more strategic about what is included and then revising and presenting the remaining content in new, innovative and appealing ways.

Having values-based planning is part of the solution. This approach was advocated in Queensland in 2005 and adopted soon after. It is also a key recommendation from the recent review of management planning in NSW. The NSW review recommended a values-based approach to planning because:

- Values are usually the reason for protection in the first place;
- They are inherently more strategic than issues;
- They permit issues to be framed in the context of values; and
- They provide a firmer basis for managing in the face of uncertainty.

Issues can come and go but values are often more enduring.

Plans prepared by DEC currently begin with a list of key values, but these do not drive the whole plan and subsequent performance evaluation, if undertaken.

Management plans should be based on key values. The Nature Conservancy (2000, page IV-3)¹¹ recommends no more than eight ‘focal targets’ in their conservation planning work. Such an approach requires identification of all the major values of the park or reserve. This is followed by selection of the key values, working with stakeholders and available scientific evidence. Key values can then be integrated and ranked and management strategies developed. Having numerous values can make this process unnecessarily complicated and time-consuming. See Box 2 (PART 2) for how key values can be used to guide management plans.

Another way of reducing the size of plans is to place material on the web. Several opportunities exist. One is to place policy material on publicly accessible sites on the web, meaning it does not need to be included in management plans, merely cross-referenced. Another is to place background information (especially descriptions of the natural resources and history of an area: geology, geomorphology, flora, fauna, historic features, pests and weeds, fire history, history of recreational use) on the web, again in a publicly accessible place. Such placement means that the material can be regularly updated. And, if DEC has the resources, sites can use Wiki technology so the public can add information.

The background information currently included in plans is highly valued by operations staff and the public. The term ‘background information’, however, is very broad. By way of example, in the Cape Range National Park Management Plan (2005), background information on native plants includes a description of the regional biota, plant communities and threatened and other special plants. Part of this background also included management issues such as grazing and lack of information. Key points

¹¹ The Nature Conservancy (2000) The five-S framework for site conservation: a practitioner’s handbook for site conservation planning and measuring conservation success. Volume 1. 2nd edition. Available: http://smap.ew.eea.europa.eu/test1/fo1775744/fo1748073/The_Five-S_Framework.pdf. Accessed 18th June 2009.

summarising the background information and providing a rationale for management follow. What is most valued is the rationale supporting the management actions, with the ‘key points’ material fulfilling this function. As such the key points, or a similar rationale, need to remain in plans.

<p>Three parts to a management plan:</p> <p>PART ONE (2-4 pages)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Vision statement▪ Management intent (the intent for managing the key values)▪ Basis for management (legislation and agreements and traditional owners)▪ Location and context (includes maps) <p>PART TWO (1-3 pages per component depending on the number of reserves covered)</p> <p>For each key value of a park (e.g. landscape, water, plants and animals, Indigenous culture, visitor opportunities, community partnerships):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Values▪ ‘Values conservation table’ which is the critical part of the plan: a table presenting current status, desired outcome, and actions and guidelines. <p>PART THREE</p> <p>Summary table of key issues (threats and opportunities), status, desired outcomes, and actions and guidelines for responding to these. May not be necessary in parks without complicated management issues. Actions can be cross-linked to those conserving values.</p>
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Box 2. Value-based format for management plans used by Queensland Environmental Protection Authority (Sources: Leverington 2005,¹² Draft Fitzroy Island Management plan 2008, Girraween National Park Draft Management Plan 2009)

There has been great interest while this review has been underway in having measurable objectives. Such an interest suggests asking why? If the interest is in being able to know if the key values have been protected, then it would seem more parsimonious and effective to set key performance indicators for these values and reduce the focus on objectives. If there is still concern about the objectives in plans not being ‘measurable’ then a name change to ‘desired outcomes’ is suggested.

Modern attractive layouts using maps, tables, photos and diagrams are being advocated and adopted by most protected area agencies in Australia. Organisations that have already moved to clustering reserves are providing a chapter per issue across the planning region or chapter per reserve where the issues are sufficiently different. A value per chapter is another possible approach. The approach used by the Queensland Environmental Protection Authority provides a concise format (Box 2).

Theme 3. Plan content, structure and style - Priorities

- Make plans key values-driven
- Minimise the amount of background information in management plans while retaining sufficient detail to give a clear rationale for the management strategies chosen
- Use a ‘modern’ layout trialled and implemented elsewhere in one of the regions to guide plan structure so that plans are efficient to use
- Include objectives/targets and strategies to drive the content of management plans

¹² Leverington, F. (2005) Planning, evaluating and managing parks - bridging the gaps. Discussion paper (unpublished). Environmental Protection Agency, Brisbane Queensland.

<i>Detailed recommendations for Theme 3</i>	
Theme 3	Plan content, structure and style
Priority 1	<p>Make plans key values-driven</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use approaches such as those advocated by The Nature Conservancy (2000) and Leverington (2005) to identify and plan using key values
Action by	<p>Planners</p> <p>Regional and District staff</p>
Priority 2	<p>Minimise the amount of background information in management plans while retaining sufficient detail to give a clear rationale for the management strategies chosen</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include sufficient background information to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Provide an overview/context for the planning area o Provide a rationale for the management strategies to address the threats and opportunities associated with the key values 2. Place background information collated as part of preparing management plans on the web in a publicly accessible format 3. Use Wiki technology to encourage public engagement in collecting and collating background information as part of management plan preparation 4. Work with DEC Science to obtain support for the placement of ‘science brokers’ (from the Science Division) in the Planning Unit to collate and help interpret background information.
Action by	<p>Planners (all)</p> <p>Science Director (4)</p>
Priority 3	<p>Use a ‘modern’ layout trialled and implemented in one of the regions to guide plan structure so that plans are efficient to use</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modernise the layout of plans by using maps, tables, diagrams and photos 2. Use simple language and short plans (wherever possible)
Action by	Planners
Priority 4	<p>Include objectives/targets and strategies to drive the content of management plans</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use a values-based approach with targets/objectives for each value, strategies to manage that value and associated performance reporting
Action by	Planners

4.4 Theme 4. Linking management plans to resources

The lack of direct links between management plans and resources was frequently mentioned in interviews as being an impediment to plan implementation and effectiveness. In DEC financial resources are allocated on a 12 monthly cycle to regions and districts. Given this short-term cycle it is impractical to directly tie resource allocation to 10 year management plans.

Mechanisms need to be further developed to relate:

- 10 year management plans

- 3–5 year regional planning, especially the integrated implementation plans proposed in Figure 3
- 1 year operational/business plans that detail annual works programs and associated budgets at regional and district levels.

Links exist between some of the current regional planning (e.g. regional fire plans, 3 year rolling capital works program for Parks and Visitor Services) and 1 year district operational plans. The link between management plans and the proposed 3–5 year regional integrated implementation plans and 1 year district operational plans needs to be developed and formalised.

Theme 4. Linking management plans to resources - Priorities

- Link 1 year operational plans to management plans

<i>Detailed recommendations for Theme 4</i>	
Theme 4	Linking management plans to resources
Priority 1	<p>Link 1 year operational plans to management plans</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trial in 2 regions (forest and non-forest; preferably the same as identified in Theme 1), with attention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developing a regional integrated implementation plan that integrates all the regional planning (see Fig. 3) ○ Linking management plans, the regional implementation plan and yearly operational planning (and associated budgets) 2. Review and implement
Action by	Regional staff, planners

5 Implementation

5.1 The way forward

The changes proposed here are significant. To achieve effective change, a 3-6 month period is needed for planning staff, in consultation with other key staff in DEC and the Conservation Commission, to reform planning and achieve the following:

- Greater emphasis on and support for management planning as a vibrant activity central to the Department's function
- Provide information for the community about the changes to management planning and the implications for them
- Producing policy guidance on:
 - A strategic planning and management framework for DEC (Theme 1, Priority 1, No. 1)
 - Management planning processes in DEC (Theme 2, Priority 2, No. 1)
- Initiating and progressing making up-to-date, finalised policy statements publicly available (ongoing)
- Synthesising a policy statement on managing terrestrial conservation reserves in Western Australia that includes most of the current template material
- Developing new processes for background information collection, storage and presentation

- Developing a memorandum of understanding between DEC and the Conservation Commission regarding each party's role and responsibilities in management planning

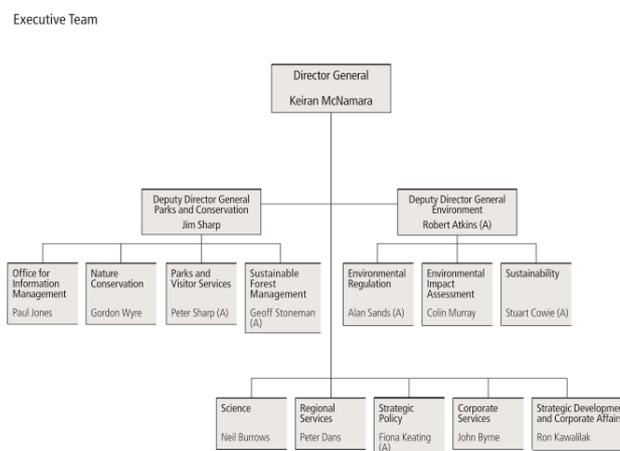
These listed activities are critical to get change underway. To succeed in reforming management planning and continuing to position DEC as a best practice organisation in protected area management, attention to all of the recommendations in this report is essential.

Reforming management planning in DEC will require commitment by senior staff and a strong working partnership between the Conservation Commission and DEC at an executive and officer level.

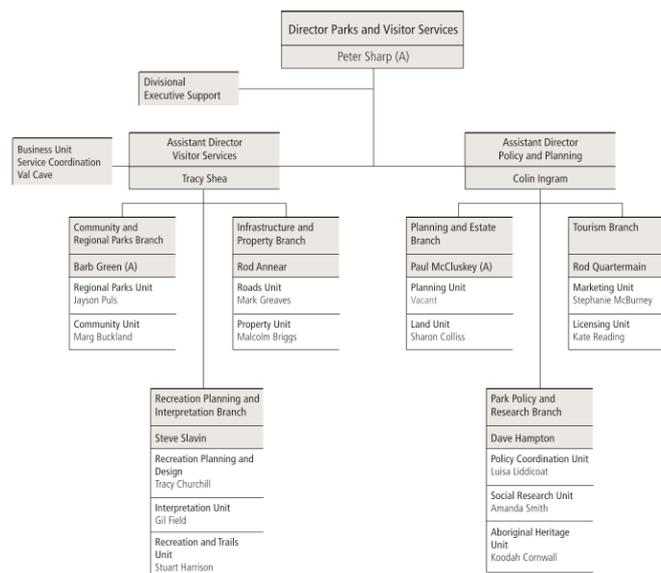
Acknowledgements

The time, effort and expertise contributed to this review by staff from DEC and the Conservation Commission of Western Australia are gratefully acknowledged. Associate Professor Bill Carter (University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland) provided useful comments on this final report. The research underpinning this report was funded by the Conservation Commission of Western Australia.

Appendix. DEC selected administrative structures



Executive structure of DEC (Source: DEC Annual Report 2007-2008)



Structure of the Parks and Visitor Services Division within which most of the terrestrial reserve planning activities take place (Source: DEC Annual Report 2007-2008)