

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

POLICY STATEMENT NO. 28

REPORTING, MONITORING AND RE-EVALUATION OF ECOSYSTEMS
AND ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

SEPTEMBER 1988

1. **BACKGROUND**

Effective long-term management of natural ecosystems requires the prediction and subsequent evaluation of the effects of management decisions. For many areas under departmental control, the scientific knowledge that should form the basis for management is incomplete. Because most areas under CALM's control are already subject to a range of potentially degrading influences, the Department does not have the luxury of postponing management decisions until all the essential research results are available; nor can it afford to commission immediately all of the studies necessary to provide the background information.

Furthermore, the Department spends public money on management of lands and waters under its control. There is an obligation upon us to ensure funds are wisely spent and to show that any problems resulting from management action (or inaction) are identified and corrected.

CALM inherited a variety of monitoring and research programs from the amalgamated agencies. None of these alone is adequate to cater for CALM's new and wider responsibilities

It is therefore necessary to develop a comprehensive approach to monitoring on departmental lands and waters throughout the State. Management will continue, but the effects of management will be studied. The results of these studies will be used in the review and restatement of management policy and plans. In this way, the monitoring program will contribute to a gradual improvement in knowledge and consequent management.

An effective monitoring system within CALM must possess the following key elements:

- (i) a comprehensive data storage, retrieval and analysis system using the expanded CALMIS system with regional access, in which will be recorded information on the progress and extent of activities on CALM lands and waters;

- (ii) a system of Biogeographic Benchmarks, established throughout the State, covering all biogeographic districts;
- (iii) a system of problem-orientated monitoring sites strategically located throughout the State addressing significant management issues including the impacts of management actions on selected aspects of the environment at each site; and
- (iv) a departmental commitment to ongoing staffing and funding.

As well as improving knowledge and understanding of the ecosystems being managed, a monitoring program will have the following benefits:

- (i) it will increase the interest of departmental staff, members of the public and user groups in particular areas. All these groups will be asked to participate in the monitoring program; and
- (ii) it will provide a focus for bringing together the research, planning and management functions within the Department and therefore lead to a more effective use of resources.

2. OBJECTIVES

There are four objectives:

- 2.1 To study and record management decisions and their effects on CALM lands, and to incorporate the information gained in subsequent development of policy and management plans.
- 2.2 To maintain up-to-date records of distribution and status of the State's biota, the management decisions that are made about that biota and about departmental lands (and waters) and the consequences of those decisions.
- 2.3 To provide a mechanism for systematically reviewing management policy and programs in the light of new information.
- 2.4 To provide an ongoing record system which will document changes in community species composition through natural ecological changes as well as management.

3. POLICY

The Department will:

- 3.1 establish and maintain comprehensive record-keeping systems (including archives) for management decisions and activities affecting CALM lands;
- 3.2 ensure that management decisions (including decisions to do nothing) and the reasons for those decisions are documented and incorporated into the records systems;
- 3.3 review progress in implementation of management decisions and plans and incorporate results of those reviews into the records systems;
- 3.4 continue to establish and regularly survey a series of benchmark sites representative of all major biogeographic districts in the State;
- 3.5 implement long-term monitoring programs to identify and study significant management issues throughout the State;
- 3.6 incorporate specific and detailed proposals for monitoring in management plans where critical gaps in knowledge can be identified;
- 3.7 seek the involvement of commercial users of CALM lands and members of the public in monitoring programs;
- 3.8 ensure that, as far as possible, departmental research and monitoring programs are compatible;
- 3.9 regularly review the results of monitoring programs with a view to incorporating findings in new policy and management plans; and
- 3.10 review policy and plans in the light of information gained through monitoring programs.

4. STRATEGIES

To implement the policies the following strategies will be developed:

- 4.1 An Ecosystem Monitoring Section will be established and staffed within the Environmental Protection Branch.
- 4.2 An Ecosystem Monitoring Co-ordinator will be appointed.

- 4.3 A manual of procedures to implement the policies will be developed.
- 4.4 Pilot programs in each region will be developed.
- 4.5 Implementation of the policies will be progressive with priority given to the most sensitive areas.

Policy item 2.4 will be the responsibility of the Research Division.



Syd Shea
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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