

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

POLICY STATEMENT NO. 36 POST-GRADUATE STUDIES AND STUDY GRANTS JANUARY 1991

1. OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 To ensure that CALM staff have the opportunity to obtain higher professional qualifications where this benefits both the Department and the employee.
- 1.2 To provide for study grants for Department staff where this benefits both the Department and the employee.

2. BACKGROUND

The Department of Conservation and Land management (CALM) depends to a large degree on the expertise of its staff who have a variety of qualifications.

Qualifications are of considerable value both to the employee and to CALM. For the Department, benefits include greater expertise, increased productivity and better advice. For the employee, the benefits include improved career options, better ability to carry out complex tasks, and greater peer recognition.

Post-graduate degree qualifications are becoming almost a requirement for research scientists, but are also of value to staff in specialist Branches and Operations.

Many staff in the Department did not have the opportunity to study for under-graduate or post-graduate degrees before they joined CALM. However, other staff did obtain higher qualifications at their own cost before joining the Department and any scheme to assist people to obtain higher qualifications should not discriminate against those who already have such qualifications.

Study grants may be likened to the system of sabbatical leave that operates for academic staff in tertiary educational institutions. Staff awarded a study grant are able to visit other institutions and learn new techniques and new approaches to problems by studying methods that are being used, or developed, within Australia or overseas and this is of direct benefit to CALM. Applications for Study Grants can be made by all CALM staff and considered on their merits.

Public Service Administrative Instruction 402 enables Chief Executives to grant full time study leave with pay to undertake:

- (i) Post-graduate degree studies at Australian or overseas tertiary education institutions; or
- (ii) Study tours involving observations and/or investigations; or
- (iii) A combination of post-graduate studies and study tour.

3. POLICY

The Department will:

- 3.1 Encourage Its staff to gain additional or higher qualifications, or broaden their experience where this clearly benefits both CALM and the employee;
- 3.2 Subject to finance being available, support applications from staff for study grants that clearly benefit CALM objectives and have the potential to improve productivity or efficiency;
- 3.3 Support a proposal from an employee that she/he remains in full time employment to study for a higher degree if:
 - (a) the course of study for a higher degree is one CALM considers a high priority;
 - (b) costs will be no greater than would have been the case if CALM had carried out the work in the normal way;
 - (c) the additional time commitment by the individual concerned is no greater than 15%; and
 - (d) the Department is satisfied that ongoing work commitments will not be unduly compromised;
- 3.4 If the criteria listed in 3.3 are not met, consider applications for leave without pay for all, or [if only 1 (c) is not met] part of the period of study;
- 3.5 Realising that taking leave without pay may be too high a financial burden for many employees, institute a scholarship scheme to support outstanding applicants during the period of study for a post-graduate qualification, where the acquired knowledge will be of direct benefit to CALM. All employees will have an equal opportunity to apply for support under this scheme;
- 3.6 Encourage staff to apply for study grants if:
 - (a) the subject(s) to be studied are of high priority to CALM; and

- (b) the person has already gained the level of expertise in the subject (s) necessary so the Department can benefit from the study grant.

4. STRATEGIES

To implement the policies the following strategies will be applied:

4.1 Leave Without Pay

- 4.1.1 Applications for leave without pay are subject to Public Service Commission Administrative Instruction 609, which states (in part)

"The Permanent Head may grant an officer up to three years leave without pay to undertake full time study, subject to a yearly review of satisfactory performance."

"The Commission may determine that any leave granted under this paragraph shall count as qualifying service for all purposes except annual leave."

- 4.1.2 The Executive Director may set a limit on the number of staff on leave without pay at any one time. Initially the limit will be a maximum of five persons.

4.2 Scholarship Scheme

- 4.2.1 A scholarship will be established to be known as "The Executive Director's Post graduate Scholarship" to support outstanding candidates for post-graduate qualifications.
- 4.2.2 Applications for the Executive Director's Post Graduate Scholarship will be called for by the Human Resources Branch in August every year. However, a scholarship may not be awarded every year.
- 4.2.3 Support from the scholarship may include permission to remain as a full time or part time employee on half pay when undertaking study if the employee's time commitment is greater than 15%.
- 4.2.4 Staff who wish to be considered for the scholarship must apply to the relevant Director by 30 September each year. Directors will forward the application with a recommendation to the Executive Director by 31 October. The final decision will be made by the Executive Director, who may appoint a selection committee to assist him.
- 4.2.5 There will be a limit on the number of scholarships awarded each year under this scheme. Initially there will be a maximum of two scholarships per year.

4.2.6 If an applicant has not obtained an Executive Director's Post-graduate Scholarship but has obtained an external scholarship, the Department will consider negotiating an equitable package to make up the difference in salary. The Department will be influenced by the extent that savings in salary can be used to employ a replacement for the period that the person is absent from duty.

4.3 Study Grants

4.3.1 Applications for study grants will be considered from all staff, and may include periods working at an institution in another State or overseas.

4.3.2 Study grant applications involving significant periods away from the usual place of work will be considered more favourably if:

- (i) leave is taken and, at least in part, the leave includes long service leave; and
- (ii) the applicant is making some financial contribution towards travel or living costs.

4.3.3 Normally, applications for a study grant will not be considered from a person who has been awarded a grant within the past seven years.

4.3.4 Applications for a study grant must be made to the relevant Director who will forward them to the Executive Director with a recommendation. Applications may be made at any time, but must be made at least three months before the proposed date of travel. The Executive Director will make the final decision.

4.3.5 There will be a limit to the number of persons away on a study grant. Initially a maximum of four persons may be away at any one time.

Syd Shea
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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