

# DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

## POLICY STATEMENT NO. 15

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND VOLUNTEERS)

MAY 1991

#### GENERAL

This policy supersedes Policy Statements No. 4, Department Advisory Committees, December 1985; No. 32 Volunteers, September 1989; and No. 15 Public Participation, April 1987. The three policies have been combined to eliminate areas of duplication and to include other aspects of community involvement with CALM and its functions.

The policy is supported by revised Administrative Instruction No. 31, Operational Guidelines for Public Participation in Planning and the Management of Advisory Bodies, May 1991. Administrative Instruction No. 43, Operational Guidelines for Volunteer Activities, September 1989 still applies.

#### 1. OBJECTIVES

- To encourage and assist the public to participate in the development of conservation and land management policies, advise on the implementation of plans and facilitate information flow.
- To encourage and facilitate voluntary activity which contributes to the achievement of nature conservation and land management objectives and which builds community awareness, understanding and commitment to these objectives.
- To facilitate involvement in educational and social development programs relevant to CALM's mission.

#### 2. BACKGROUND

Community involvement is an integral part of CALM operations. The community is encouraged to be involved in planning and management at all levels of the organisation. The principal benefits are:

- better informed decisions which will have greater public acceptance;
- a public that is more widely informed about land, and wildlife and management issues;
- identification of management alternatives;
- the availability of additional resources, including information, labour, and financial support; and
- the improvement in the relationship between the Department and the public through the development of an appreciation for the Department's role, responsibilities and actions.

## 2.1 Public Participation

Public participation is an interactive process by which interested and affected individuals, organisations, departments and government entities are consulted and involved in the decision making of a government agency or corporate body. This process both informs and seeks a response from the public.

The *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* requires public involvement at two different levels:

- (a) three controlling bodies were established under the Act, Section 18-31:

Lands and Forest Commission;  
National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority;  
Forest Production Council.

Public membership of these bodies ensures a breadth of knowledge and experience in matters relevant to conservation and land management.

- (b) Section 53-61 describe the requirements for preparation of management plans for all lands vested in a controlling body. Public notification of a proposed draft management plan is required and copies of the plan must be available for inspection. Written submissions on the proposed draft plan may be made by any person, organisation or body, and must be considered when finalising the plan.

An integral part of the public participation process is the establishment and involvement of Aboriginal Park Councils, and advisory and consultative committees. Advisory and consultative committees play an important role in representing the wider community viewpoint and provide advice to the Department, particularly within the planning process. Aboriginal Park Councils play an important role in advising on the interests of Aboriginal people in the planning and management of those lands managed by CALM, where Aboriginal traditional custodians have a long and established involvement.

## 2.2 Volunteers

A volunteer may be defined as someone who undertakes work of their own free will without payment and for the benefit of the community.

Volunteer groups and individuals can be involved either by working directly with the Department on activities managed by it or through sanctioned independent activities that assist in the achievement of CALM's objectives.

CALM has traditionally enjoyed support from volunteers working in groups or as individuals. Local Bushfire Brigades are an example of an independent volunteer group, working cooperatively in a well established relationship with CALM, to the mutual benefit of both organisations and the community.

This policy formally recognises the importance of volunteers to CALM operations, and seeks to provide a structure for the formal management of volunteers wishing to support CALM directly and associated volunteer programs.

Volunteers are of value to CALM because they build communication links and understanding between the Department and the community, as well as expanding the Department's work capabilities, knowledge and skills base at minimal cost.

The *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* provides for the appointment of Honorary CALM officers. Selected volunteers may be appointed under the Act and, after appropriate training, invested with certain powers to enable them to carry out certain functions for the Department.

### 2.3 Other forms of community involvement

A number of other groups also engage in unpaid work that assists CALM. These include:

1. those seeking work experience or research project as a requirement of formal studies;
2. work performed as part of a community development program; and
3. those required to perform community work as a result of a court order.

There are also a small number of volunteer groups which are paid a small fee to cover running costs for work done, for example, the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers. All of these groups deserve assistance from CALM.

Work experience provides students with an opportunity to assess conservation and land management as a career, and CALM as an employer. Many of these students may, in future become employees of the Department. There is also an increasing demand for undergraduate and post-graduate students and tertiary institutions to provide research opportunities for students. In most cases research benefits the Department.

Community-based Offender Programs are important for retaining and readjusting young offenders to community life. CALM believes that it has a social responsibility to be involved in this program.

While these groups do not conform entirely to the definition of volunteers they fall within the definition of community involvement.

Students seeking work experience who are not part of an educational course will be treated as volunteers.

## 3. POLICIES

### 3.1 Public participation

The Department will:

- 3.1.1 Establish formal processes for public participation at both the policy formulation and management planning levels, involving the:

Lands and Forest Commission  
National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority  
Forest Production Council

Public Submissions to planning documents released for public review.

- 3.1.2 Develop a wide range of procedures and techniques for public involvement, and criteria for selecting the appropriate approach for different situations.
- 3.1.3 Establish consultative committees and advisory committees where appropriate.

- 3.1.4 Play a major role on other advisory bodies established by, and advisory to the Minister which involve CALM responsibilities. For example, Aboriginal Park Councils and The Kangaroo Management Advisory Committee.
- 3.1.5 Seek public participation early in the decision making process on resource conservation and management issues.
- 3.1.6 Train staff in the techniques of public participation.
- 3.1.7 Continue to review and revise public participation procedures to ensure their ongoing effectiveness.

Final management decisions remain the responsibility of the Department, its regional and district managers, and senior management. Political decisions are the prerogative of government.

### **3.2 Volunteers**

The Department will:

- 3.2.1 Provide a range of opportunities for volunteers to assist the Department in ways which complement the functions of paid employees.
- 3.2.2 Support and encourage community groups and individuals in voluntary activities which assist CALM in achieving its objectives.
- 3.2.3 Seek and recruit interested members of the community as volunteers.
- 3.2.4 Provide volunteers with appropriate placements, training, equipment and identification of their status of volunteers.
- 3.2.5 Recognise the range of volunteer motivations and devise appropriate rewards to acknowledge the contribution of volunteers.
- 3.2.6 Train CALM staff in the management of voluntary activities.
- 3.2.7 Encourage the formation of friends groups and associations which focus on particular areas, and the organisation of voluntary assistance programs.
- 3.2.8 Administer and manage voluntary activities according to a code of work practices including safety, industrial relations, insurance cover, equity, and nature of activities to be undertaken.
- 3.2.9 Develop volunteer projects within guidelines and agreements developed through discussions with unions and industrial officers.

### **3.3 Other forms of community involvement**

The Department will:

- 3.3.1 Provide opportunities where possible for approved secondary school work experience programs.

- 3.3.2 Accommodate where possible tertiary students seeking work experience or research/study opportunities.
- 3.3.3 Cooperate with other community and conservation volunteer groups and assist where Departmental objectives can be met.
- 3.3.4 Identify and develop appropriate opportunities for Community-based Offender Programs.

#### **4. STRATEGIES**

In order to implement the community involvement policy effectively, the following strategies will be adopted:

##### **4.1 Public participation**

- 4.1.1 Operational guidelines (Administrative Instruction No. 31) will be provided to staff to guide them in the public participation process, the management of advisory and consultative bodies, and in the selection of appropriate procedures.
- 4.1.2 Advisory committees will be established to encourage an exchange of information between the Department and the public. Committees usually focus on a geographic area (e.g. a national park or group of reserves/parks/forests, but may be formed to advise on issues such as wildlife, research, recreation). Membership will be at the invitation of the Executive Director and will be based on expertise and experience. As wide as possible representation of all community views will be sought. As advisory committees are non-statutory bodies they will not be responsible for management decisions, although their advice will often be sought on management issues.
- 4.1.3 Consultative committees will be established at the invitation of the Executive Director, to exchange information and resolve issues between different organisations, authorities, departments and public interest groups. The committees may focus on a geographic area, single issue or group of issues. Members generally provide technical advice or exchange information to help in decision making. Consultative committees have no executive role or management responsibility and are non-statutory. Consultative committees are often part of a broader strategic planning exercise.
- 4.1.4 Aboriginal park councils will be established at the invitation of the Minister, for a particular park or reserve, to exchange information and provide advice on the proposals for preparation of a draft Plan of Management, and subsequently to participate in the implementation of the plan as approved. Aboriginal park councils will also provide advice to the Minister on issues and matters relating to Aboriginal involvement and interests in the area.
- 4.1.5 Other advisory bodies may be established at the discretion of the Minister, which may relate to the Department's activities.
- 4.1.6 Opportunities will be sought to involve the public in district and regional planning as well as in the preparation of statutory land management plans. At these times, the encouragement of public input will require a flexible approach, using a range of techniques which are appropriate to the issues at hand.

- 4.1.7 New initiative in public participation will be approved by CALM's Corporate Executive.
- 4.1.8 A register of special interest groups will be maintained by the Department.
- 4.1.9 Staff will be trained in communication skills, group discussion techniques and the public participation process.
- 4.1.10 Regular contact will be maintained between personnel in district, regional and specialist branches on matters pertaining to public participation.
- 4.1.11 The Department will continue to monitor developments in public participation in other States and overseas.

## **4.2 Volunteers**

- 4.2.1 Operational Guidelines (Administrative Instruction No. 43) will be provided to guide staff in the management of volunteers and volunteer programs.
- 4.2.2 Volunteer activities relating to CALM will be coordinated by the Community Involvement Coordinator.
- 4.2.3 An officer in each region (and some branches) will be given responsibility for the administration of volunteer activities. Districts and branches planning volunteer programs should budget appropriately.
- 4.2.4 Volunteers and CALM staff involved with them will be provided with the necessary training and equipment to ensure maximum effectiveness of volunteer activities.
- 4.2.5 Training opportunities will be developed enabling volunteers to progress through a series of standards in a range of disciplines relevant to their activities with CALM.
- 4.2.6 Registers of volunteer names, activities and hours worked will be maintained by all CALM staff working with volunteers. A central register will be compiled and maintained by the Community Involvement Coordinator.
- 4.2.7 Honorary CALM officers will be appointed for duties requiring long-term commitment and given specific powers under the CALM Act. These volunteers will be appointed for a probationary period and will be given extensive training prior to their formal appointment. A Departmental Certificate will be awarded to successful trainees. Administrative procedures will be developed for Honorary CALM officers.
- 4.2.8 Volunteers will be recruited where required (and feasible) to supplement the roles of Departmental staff and Honorary CALM officers.
- 4.2.9 An industrial assessment system will be used to consult affected staff and unions. The staff consultation process will include the planning, development and implementation of volunteer projects.
- 4.2.10 Guidelines and procedures will be developed to cover recruitment and termination, recoupment of out-of-pocket expenses, eligibility for uniform, etc for volunteers.

- 4.2.11 Friends groups will be encouraged and assisted bringing together people with a mutual interest in a specific park or area through recreational, conservation and educational activities. Friends groups and other permanent volunteer groups will aim to become self administering.
- 4.2.12 Each program will be evaluated at its conclusion. This will include evaluating volunteer expectations and motivations, and levels of satisfaction.
- 4.2.13 The Community Involvement Coordinator will evaluate the need for a regular forum for the discussion of volunteer activities as they relate to CALM. This forum would involve CALM staff and volunteers from around the State.
- 4.2.14 The Community Involvement Coordinator will monitor developments in volunteer management in other agencies, other States and overseas as necessary.

#### **4.3 Other forms of community involvement**

The Department will:

- 4.3.1 Develop Operational Guidelines for the management of work experience programs as a requisite of formal study programs, student research projects or theses, and for personal initiative work experience students.
- 4.3.2 Develop Operational Guidelines on the use and management of Community based Offender Programs.

Syd Shea  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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