

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

POLICY STATEMENT NO. 25

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

JANUARY 1988

1. BACKGROUND

The Department has wide responsibilities in the conservation of the State's flora and fauna, and the management of the State's nature reserves, national parks, State forests, conservation and marine parks and other reserves.

These tasks will be made easier if an effective community education and interpretation program is developed. In this context interpretation is the process of translating or simplifying information on subjects that for most people are unfamiliar, such as geology, zoology, botany or archaeology, and presenting it in a form which complements the environment in which it is being shown.

An effective program will achieve widespread positive attitudes toward protection of the physical environment and conservation of flora and fauna in Western Australia, and a greater understanding of the inter-relationships between people and nature.

The Department will be more easily able to achieve its objectives in conservation and land management if it has the support of an environmentally aware and understanding public. An informed public will be better able to participate in management planning and behave in ways conducive to effective land management.

The fostering of this awareness in current and future generations is intrinsically desirable, and consistent with a primary objective of the Department's corporate plan:

"Knowledge:

To seek a better understanding of the natural environment and to promote awareness and appreciation of its values."

2. OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE

To promote community awareness and understanding of the natural environment, and encourage public attitudes and behaviour conducive to conservation of flora and fauna and management of forest, park and reserve ecosystems.

3. POLICIES

The Department will achieve this objective by:

- * preparation and implementation of education programs; and
- * planning and undertaking interpretation projects and activities

for as large a proportion of the public as possible, using effectively a full range of communication channels, and through the efforts of many departmental staff.

It will liaise with associated agencies, organisations and interest groups to ensure integration of education and interpretation programs.

4. STRATEGIES

To achieve the policies, the following strategies are being developed:

- 4.1 A Community Education and Interpretation Section is established within the Information Branch. The staff of this Section have primary responsibility for development of standards, guidelines and procedures in community education and interpretation.
- 4.2 A community education and interpretative planning model, upon which program planning can be based, will be developed. Community education and interpretation programs will be documented, implemented and reviewed annually.
- 4.3 Departmental staff will be required to contribute to community education and interpretation as part of their job, coordinated and supported by the Section. Each regional unit will nominate a "community education and interpretation" officer to implement this policy. Some full-time officers will be provided by the Information Branch.
- 4.4 Regional and district managers will provide the funds and facilities necessary to communicate effectively with the public.
- 4.5 Regional and district staff will be trained in community education and interpretative planning and techniques, provided or coordinated by the Section.
- 4.6 Each region will produce a planned program of activities to cover conservation and land management in its area. Annual programs will be coordinated by the Section.
- 4.7 Interpretative facilities, materials and activities will be developed on the basis of:
 - proper planning;
 - creative selection from a wide variety of communication media;
 - cost effectiveness; and
 - consultation between regions and the Section.

A list of possibilities is attached in Appendix 2.

- 4.8 Section and other Information Branch staff will plan, produce and market educational and interpretative printed and audio-visual materials, and maintain a library of existing materials for regional and public access.

- 4.9 The Section will provide the Education Department and private school system with advice and assistance in curriculum development and, where appropriate, material and resources for education in conservation and land management.
- 4.10 The Section will initiate and other departmental staff will assist in the in-service training of teachers, teacher-trainers and relevant community leaders.
- 4.11 Section, regional and district staff will develop and maintain field study centres and will encourage their use by appropriate members of the public.
- 4.12 The community will be invited to undertake courses leading to the Certificate in Conservation and Land Management
- 4.13 The Section will carry out research and evaluation into available techniques and implemented programs for achieving the objective of community education and interpretation.
- 4.14 In all aspects of policy formulation, development of a model, planning, coordination of programs and provision of training, there will be close consultation with the Manager, Recreation and Landscape Branch, other Branch officers, and regional Parks and Reserves officers where appropriate.
- 4.15 Community education and interpretative planning and programs will proceed following appropriate liaison with other agencies - Museum, Zoological Gardens, Kings Park Board, Environmental Protection Authority, Water Authority, Sport and Recreation Department, Education Department, Tourism Commission, and State Planning Commission. Further liaison with environmental, industry, recreation and other special interest groups (e.g. WA National Parks and Reserves Association) may be desirable.
- 4.16 The Section will actively sponsor and cooperate with the CONCOM Working Group on Community Education and Interpretation, and other appropriate interstate and federal agencies.
- 4.17 Each five years there will be a major review of policies and strategies in community education and interpretation.

5. IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

A systematic approach to community education and interpretation requires that working arrangements between the Section, service branches, regions and districts are defined.

The Officer in Charge, Community Education and Interpretation Section, is responsible for the coordination of policies, planning and procedures within the Department, and for special projects.

Managers of regions and districts are responsible for preparation of community education and interpretation plans for the areas under their control, with the assistance of Section personnel. Once such a plan has been prepared and approved, the region or district will coordinate development or production of the programs.

Where proposals for minor projects arise, the manager of the region or district should ensure they conform to the interpretation policy guidelines and allocate funds according to local priorities.

Syd Shea
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Distribution: Lists A, B, C, D, E and F.

GLOSSARY

Environmental Education

Environmental Education is defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) as:

"the process of recognising values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the interrelatedness among man, his culture and his biophysical surroundings. Environmental education also entails practice in decision-making and self-formulating of a code of behaviour about issues concerning environmental quality".

The best explanation of the IUCN definition is given by Lucko (1981) who describes it as a process aimed at producing citizens who are:

- "1. knowledgeable about the biophysical and sociocultural environment;
2. aware of environmental problems and management alternatives for solving these;
3. motivated to act responsibly in developing diverse environments, optimal for living a quality life."

Interpretation

Interpretation describes the communication of information on subjects that for most people are unfamiliar, such as geology, zoology, botany and archaeology. It is a process of translating stories of the earth, life and people in terms that would motivate and inspire visitors to greater understanding. (NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service).

Why Community Education and Interpretation?

This term describes more accurately the work to be done.

"Community Education", because we are doing more than teaching students in the classroom. We use non-formal and outdoor teaching methods. We work directly with teachers, trainees and teacher-trainees and leaders from other organisations.

"Interpretation", because this is a special form of education targeting forest, park or reserve visitors. Personally supervised activities are considered the cornerstone of an effective interpretation programme. Most interpretation is done by the CALM officers themselves but integrated with other communication strategies such as visitor centres, self-guiding trails, displays, signs, publications etc.

- facilities
 - * tracks
 - * board walk
 - * lookout
 - * bird hide
 - * blind trail
 - * telescopes
 - * display shelter
 - * visitor centre
 - * nature trail
 - * drive trail
 - * senses trail
- publications/productions
 - * pre visit guide
 - * exploring booklet on natural system ecology
 - * drive trail brochure/signs
 - * information display shelter
 - * nature trail brochure/signs
 - * species lists/key/brochure
 - * poster
 - * bulletin/newsletter/rangers notes
 - * press release
 - * advertisement
 - * article in journal/newspaper/magazine
 - * educational materials/kit (resource notes)
- visitor centre
 - * displays
 - * models
 - * live exhibits
 - * interactive devices
 - * active devices
 - * technology - computers, videodisc, AV's (video, film, slides)
sound recordings.

Some of these techniques require special facilities for on-site use.