DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

POLICY STATEMENT NO. 34

VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ON LANDS AND WATERS MANAGED BY CALM

NOVEMBER 1989

1. OBJECTIVE

To ensure that all land uses and waters managed by CALM are planned and carried out in ways that sustain the beauty of the natural environment.

2. BACKGROUND

Many land uses and management practises can change the character of the landscape. Such uses and practices, while they may be scientifically or technically correct, do not always result in attractive landscapes, especially in the short term. Moreover, where operations are not carefully planned and executed, the result can be long term or permanent degradation of the visual resource. In many instances, it is this loss of scenic quality associated with environmental change that is most apparent to the public and which results in criticism of land-management activities. Often this can be avoided through sensitive planning and management of the visual resource.

Landscape management, or visual resource management (VRM) as it is frequently termed, is the scientific discipline concerned with the management of land, vegetation and water resources so as to maintain or improve their visual quality.

The prime goal of visual resource management is to ensure that all uses and activities are planned and implemented so as to complement rather than detract from the inherent visual qualities of the environments in which they occur.

Visual Resource Management is a positive and integral component in land use planning and management processes. It should not be regarded as a cosmetic exercise in which the results of careless planning and development are hidden from view, or superficially treated to make them more palatable to the viewing public.

3. THE BASIS FOR VISUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ON CALM LANDS

The term "landscape" refers to the appearance or visual quality of an area as determined by its geology, soils, landforms, vegetation, water features and land use history. Visual resource Management is based on the premise that the visual quality of a landscape is a resource in its own right. This resource can be assessed and managed in much the same way as other resource values such as fauna, flora, water, timber and recreation.

Managing the visual resource is dependent on a knowledge and assessment of the landscape itself as well as a thorough understanding of proposes land use (s). After the various landscape elements have been identified and assessed, it is possible to evaluate how particular management alternatives will affect the appearance of any landscape and subsequently to develop appropriate landscape prescriptions compatible with other resource management

In the past two years, the Department has adopted a systematic approach to inventorying and assessing landscape values bases on systems now operating in other Australian States and overseas. This approach enables scenic values to be described, evaluated, compared and mapped with a minimum amount of subjectivity. To date, landscape values in the Southern Forest Region and several national parks elsewhere in the State have been classified and mapped using the VRM System.

4. POLICY

In pursuit of the objective outlined in this policy statement, the Department will:

4.1 Formulate a visual resource classification and management system that can be used to identify, evaluate and ameliorate visual impacts and that is applicable to both broad scale assessment and detailed project planning management.

4.2 Prepare comprehensive landscape planning and management guidelines and prescriptions covering all operations or activities that have an effect on the beauty of the landscape.

4.3 Ensure that CALM staff and other individuals who operate on departmental lands are trained in and apply the Visual Resource Management System.

4.4 Harvest multiple use forest areas in which timber production is permitted in ways that sustain the beauty of the forest and according to accepted landscape planning and design principles.

4.5 Establish, manage and harvest plantations in accordance with accepted landscape design principles so that discordant or intrusive effects on the landscape are minimised.

4.6 Locate and design roads, walk tracks, fire breaks and trails and utility corridors to minimise visual impacts on the areas they traverse.

4.7 Plan and design facilities for recreation that are in harmony with the natural environment.

4.8 Locate and design all new buildings and structures using materials and colours compatible with the surrounding landscape.

4.9 Design and maintain a standard system of signs which are in harmony with the landscape to cater for the various sign requirements of the Department.

4.10 Ensure that all mining activities including exploration and rehabilitation phases are planned so as to minimise the impact on existing landscape values.

4.11 Ensure that dieback disease rehabilitation practices are carried out in a manner that is compatible with or enhances scenic impacts.

4.12 Plan fire management programs so as to minimise negative scenic impacts.

4.13 Evaluate land use proposals on adjacent lands in terms of their potential impact on landscape values and recommend how these can be mitigated.

4.14 Assess the landscape impact of all water supply proposals including the construction of dams and other structures on lands managed by CALM with a view to minimising visual impact.

5. STRATEGIES

Implementation of these policies will be achieved through the adoption of the following strategies:

Staffing

5.1 A Visual Resource Management Section will be established and staffed within the Recreation, Landscape and Community Education Branch. Members of the Section may be bases in regions.

5.2 A Coordinator will be appointed to head the Section.

5.3 Operations staff in regions and districts will assist with the assessment and mapping of visual resource values.

Landscape Assessment and Mapping

5.4 A Visual Resource Management System will be developed for lands and waters managed by CALM.

5.5 The assessment and mapping of visual resource values will commence in the South West Land Division, with the initial work concentrated in the three Forest Regions. Other areas managed by CALM will be assessed and mapped as time and resources permit.

5.6 Visual resource information will be progressively entered into the Department's Geographic Information System.

5.7 The assessment and mapping of visual resource values will, as time and resources permit, be undertaken as part of the preparation of all Regional and Area Management plans.

Preparation of Guidelines and Prescriptions

5.8 Management guidelines specific to timber harvesting and reforestation, road construction and maintenance, prescribed burning and other fire management methods, mining and dieback rehabilitation, location and design of utilities and firebreaks, structures and recreation facilities will be developed.

5.9 Field trials will be carried out to evaluate the appropriateness of management guidelines and to develop prescriptions specific to particular operations and landscape character types.

Training

5.10 An on-going program of in-service training courses, workshops and field days on VRM principles and procedures will be conducted for CALM officers whose activities impinge on the visual resource. Similar training programs will also be conducted for other users of the CALM estate, including the timber and mining industries.

5.11 Other government authorities will, as opportunities present themselves, be trained in the basic philosophy and principles of VRM and the VRM system employed by CALM. Organisations involved in landscape assessment or classification will be encouraged to adopt this system.

5.12 A comprehensive VRM Training Manual, which documents and explains system concepts, components, principles and assessment procedures, will be prepared and uses as a basis for in-service and external training courses.

Research

5.13 Research will be carried out on Scenic quality perceptions to provide a database for VRM.

5.14 Projects will be monitored to provide feedback and opportunity to refine methods.

Syd Shea
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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