CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 53

VISITOR RISK MANAGEMENT

October 2015

1. OBJECTIVES

To ensure that the Department of Parks and Wildlife implements visitor risk management (VRM) procedures and practices through a comprehensive and integrated program and a consistent approach that:

- minimises the potential for incidence of injury to visitors to department-managed lands and waters;
- encourages appropriate behaviour by visitors to department-managed lands and waters that will reduce the risks posed by their activities in and around natural, cultural and developed sites;
- aligns with industry standards and best practice principles; and
- will enable departmental staff to effectively manage visitor risk.

2. SCOPE

This policy is applicable to the lands and waters managed by the department that are classified in the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act) as State forest; timber reserves; national parks; conservation parks; nature reserves; marine management areas; marine parks; marine nature reserves; land referred to in section 5(1)(g) and vested in the Conservation Commission of Western Australia (Conservation Commission); land referred to in section 5(1)(h) under the care, control and management of the Conservation Commission; lands vested under the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* (SCRM Act); or land that, under an agreement made under section 8A(5)(b), and is managed for a public purpose that is consistent with the CALM Act. These lands and waters are referred to in this policy as "CALM Act land" and "SCRM Act land".

The policy is not applicable to unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves outside townsites and outside the metropolitan area where the department has responsibility for bushfire prevention and the management of feral animals and weeds.

The policy does not generally extend to situations where leases and/or licences transfer the responsibility for risk management and the provision of facilities and/or services from the department to other persons and/or companies. Where external proponents seek to develop commercial visitor opportunities on CALM Act land or SCRM Act land, the department will require that appropriate VRM processes are in place.

3. CONTEXT

The department manages more than 28 million hectares of terrestrial and 4 million hectares of marine reserves in Western Australia, and provides more than 1,200 visitor sites and services. In 2014, there were about 16.75 million visits to CALM Act land from interstate, overseas and local areas. The department places a high priority on the management of public risk and the provision of safe and rewarding visitor experiences, however serious injuries and occasional deaths still occur. In addition to a genuine concern for visitor welfare, the department has a moral and a legal responsibility to consider the personal safety and welfare of visitors to CALM Act land and SCRM Act land. The department will aim to manage the potential for injuries and trauma to visitors in a manner that does not unnecessarily diminish visitor experience and recreation opportunities nor alter the landscape qualities that attract those visitors.

Visitors are exposed to risks by the nature of their chosen activities and by the natural, cultural and developed sites that are managed by the department. The department endeavours to minimise these risks through the ongoing implementation of a VRM program. This involves a broad-based understanding of the risks encountered by visitors and by the provision of resources in the most efficient and cost effective way possible to minimise the likelihood and the severity of consequences of incidents.

4. LEGISLATION

Legislation that applies to this policy includes:

- CALM Act
- SCRM Act
- *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984*
- *Occupiers' Liability Act 1985*
- *Civil Liability Act 2002*
- *Civil Liability Amendment Act 2003*.

There is also a significant body of case law that is relevant to matters of liability for injuries sustained by persons recreating on or visiting lands and waters that are managed by public authorities. The Western Australian Government policy that is applicable to VRM is contained in:

- Treasurer's instruction 825 – risk management and security June 2012; and
- Public Sector Commissioner's circular 2009/19 – risk management and business continuity planning.

Departmental corporate policy statements that are relevant to VRM include:

- Policy Statement 16 – Diving;
- Policy Statement 84 – Boating;
- Policy Statement 18 – Recreation, Tourism and Visitor Services;
- Policy Statement 19 – Fire Management;
- Policy Statement 40 – Road Management;
- Policy Statement 56 – Risk Management;
- Policy Statement 59 – Moorings;
- Policy Statement 60 – Work Health and Safety; and
- Policy Statement 88 – Prescribed Burning.

5. **POLICY**

The department will:

5.1 continue to ensure that VRM is afforded high priority at all levels of the department;

5.2 develop, implement, maintain and monitor a VRM framework and associated processes that are consistent with AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management: Principles and Guidelines;

5.3 provide the resources, delegations, documentation and other organisational arrangements that are necessary to maintain a regular cycle of visitor risk assessment and risk treatment; and

5.4 minimise the potential for injuries to visitors to CALM Act land and SCRM Act land.

6. **STANDARDS**

The department's commitment and approach to VRM forms part of an organisational risk management framework comprising a systematic approach to the identification, analysis, evaluation and treatment of risks. The risk management process adopted by the department is derived from the international standard AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines.

Guidance in risk management for Western Australian Government agencies has been developed by RiskCover in the publication WA Government Risk Management Guidelines 2011. This policy is compliant with the guidance provided by RiskCover.

VRM operational guidelines provide the operational and practical basis for controlling designated risks in relation to visitor activities. They are dynamic documents that are updated in line with new information and are to be read in conjunction with this policy.

Oversight of VRM standards is provided by the visitor risk management operations group of VRM practitioners and the visitor risk management steering group (comprising directors of Regional and Fire Management Services, Parks and Visitor Services and Corporate Services).

7. **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

The policy implementation strategies are outlined in Corporate Guideline No. 28 Visitor Risk Management. Further information on visitor risk management is available at http://intranet/regionalservices/Pages/VisitorRiskManagement.aspx.

The **Director General** is responsible for approval of this policy, determining the department's risk criteria, ensuring that the resources and authorities are in place to enable the policy to be implemented and, assisted by the Director Regional and Fire Management Services, to monitor "very high" risks, the correct functioning of critical controls and the effective implementation of the policy.

The **Director Regional and Fire Management Services** is accountable to the Director General for ensuring that the staff managing VRM have the necessary competencies, delegations and resources to comply with the department's standards. The Director may delegate specific accountabilities and responsibilities in relation to

VRM and the acceptance of risk to other staff but will monitor the related performance of those staff. The Director chairs the departmental VRM steering committee.

The **Director Parks and Visitor Services** (PVS) is responsible for the provision of specialist advice, plans and specifications in relation to the planning and construction of visitor facilities, risk signs and for ensuring that PVS staff involved in providing this advice have the necessary competencies and resources to comply with departmental and other standards.

The **VRM Coordinator** is responsible for developing and updating the department's VRM guidance documents, for implementing and ensuring standards are met in regard to VRM across the department, for providing advice and guidance to districts and regions and for the recording and analysis of critical incidents involving visitors to department-managed or CALM Act and SCRM Act lands and waters. The VRM Coordinator chairs the departmental VRM operations group and is Executive Officer of the VRM corporate steering committee.

Regional and district managers are responsible for applying and complying with standards, procedures and documents relating to VRM in their areas of responsibility and for monitoring the correct functioning and ongoing applicability of risk controls. Regional managers are required to sign-off the VRM registers and VRM plans each year.

8. CUSTODIAN

Director Regional and Fire Management Services.

9. PUBLICATION

This policy will be made available on the department's website and intranet.

10. KEY WORDS

Visitor risk management; VRM; liability; injury to visitors; visitor safety.

11. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed no later than September 2020.

12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved by

Margaret Byrne

Margaret Byrne
ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL   Effective date: 20 October 2015