



CALM BRIEFING PAPER 1/87

SOCIAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME

INTRODUCTION

The Department has established a social research programme to gather and process information on public use, perceptions and attitudes towards conservation and land management in WA. Initially the programme will be focussing on visitor use of recreation opportunities managed by the Department. Ms de Bragança is the Officer-in-Charge of this project and is attached to the Recreation and Landscape Branch.



A working group has been established to provide advice, direction and assistance to Luisa and the Recreation and Landscape Branch in this programme. Group members have been selected according to the respective skills and experience they can bring to the project.

The initial emphasis of the programme on visitor use is indicative of the growing recognition of the important role that CALM has in managing lands and waters for recreational and tourism activity. The natural areas, the species they protect, and the environments of outstanding scenic and landscape value entrusted to this Department, form the basis of attractions which are increasingly being visited.

OBJECTIVES

Why Gather Information on Visitor Use?

1. To help in formulation of policy and broadscale planning objectives and management options.
2. To help determine budget allocations, develop economic forecasts, and set fees and charges acceptable to the users.
3. To assess effectiveness of existing visitor information and interpretation services (maps, brochures, tour guides).
4. To monitor site usage, and effectiveness of site design, facility placement and maintenance.
5. To ensure better management of recreation resources based upon a clearer understanding of public needs, perceptions and attitudes.
6. To identify and subsequently provide a diversity of recreation opportunities on CALM lands.
7. To evaluate recreation benefit of areas and help/assist in the allocation of resources.
8. To create a descriptive data base for modelling (e.g. social economic modelling).
9. To disseminate information to potential users (e.g. operations staff, planners, etc.).

METHODOLOGY

How will Information be Collected?

- Through surveys, questionnaires, interviews, traffic counts, and aerial photographs.
- Through gathering and collating of existing data. Some information on visitor use already exists (for national parks and State forests), although in a somewhat piecemeal manner. This information will have to be tabulated and analysed.
- Through systematic observation of visitor's patterns of behaviour.
- Through assessment of impact of visitation on site.
- Through indirect techniques, such as economic indices or trend indicators, as for example the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), or the THDI (Total Household Disposable Income), monitoring sales of equipment for recreation purposes and private use of tours.

Contact will be made with Regional and District Managers to assist in the investigation of available data for each district and region. Based on the outcome of this investigation, the need for additional visitor use information systems will be assessed.

It is important that all questionnaire design requirements for future use in recreation areas are reviewed by the Recreation and Landscape Branch, as specific expertise in this field is now available.

APPLICATION

Who will Benefit from this Information?

- Policy makers and planners - through better land use and funding allocation, better facilities and more responsive sites and more efficient use of funds.
- Managers - through more effective onsite programmes, maintenance and information/interpretation services.
- The public - through involvement in land management, resulting in happier users.

SUMMARY

Why is Recreation Research So Important?

The Recreation Research Project will utilise a variety of scientific methods of visitor information survey on CALM lands. A data base system will be established to process, analyse and interpret this information. The information will assist policy makers, planners, and managers in decision making and recreation resource management through a better understanding of levels of use, public attitudes, perceptions and needs.

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