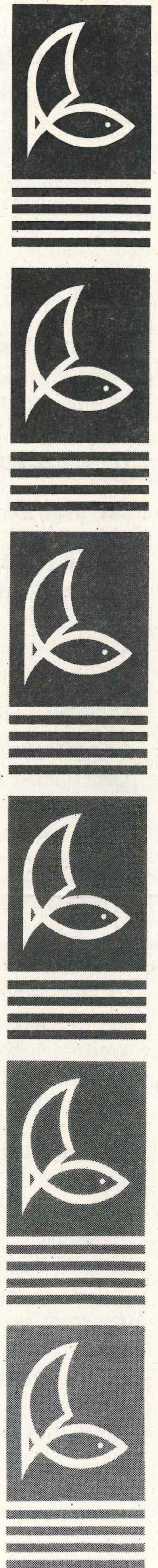


WATERWAYS COMMISSION

Guidelines for the preparation of waterways management planning documents

**- a guide for community groups, local
government and the community**

**Waterways Guidelines No 6
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□ WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT

The Waterways Conservation Act was proclaimed in 1976 and established the Waterways Commission. The Commission's role is to conserve and manage the State's waterways.

The Act allows for the management of local waterways through the establishment of waterways management authorities. These authorities are community based bodies which take on the responsibility of planning, managing and protecting their local waterways. These authorities can use the powers under the Act to help them protect their waterways.

Currently waterways management authorities exist for the Peel - Harvey Estuarine System, Leschenault Estuary, Albany Waterways, Avon River and Wilson Inlet.

The establishment of a management authority is not the only option for management of waterways. It is possible for local communities to take responsibility for their own waterways, without formal powers, and to undertake effective management action. The Commission encourages and provides technical advice to community groups who wish to manage their own waterways.

The Waterways Commission believes that waterways management is best carried out by local community bodies working in partnership with local government and State Government. Local groups and individuals are the best placed to make informed decisions about the future of their waterways.

The Commission recognises that dealing with the vast array of issues facing a waterway can often be an overwhelming task for a local community group. It aims to help these groups to tackle these issues and simplify the process of waterways management.

The purpose of this document is to provide information to groups who wish to manage

their local waterways. The guidelines are aimed at providing an understanding of how to approach waterways management, the issues involved and the procedure to follow when preparing documents which will help with long term waterways management.

The guidelines are general and rely largely on the experience of the Waterways Commission and their associated waterways management authorities in dealing with waterways management issues. They are designed to provide ideas for other agencies and groups wishing to manage their local waterways.

□ GETTING STARTED

Any organisation, whether it be a committee established to look at waterway issues, a local government authority or a community group needs to develop a direction for its work. This is often known as business planning or corporate planning. In simple terms these processes allow an organisation to look at its aims and objectives and to develop an approach to the job it wants to achieve. This approach gives perspective to an organisation's activities and identifies a purpose for its existence.

Often the easiest way to get started is for a group to develop a business or corporate plan. Such a plan would include a mission statement, key objectives for the organisation and strategies to help it achieve its objectives.

It is also useful if the plan includes a "vision" of how the group wishes to see the waterways in the future. The vision is usually for a reasonable length of time, say five to ten years and provides a goal to work towards. It gives perspective to the day to day work of tackling current waterways issues and problems. It is also important to set priorities to establish the most important things that need to be done.

The plan should be regularly reviewed to ensure that the identified objectives are in line with current issues confronting the group.

MANAGEMENT PLANNING

The Waterways Commission uses the process of management planning as a means to look objectively at the pressures facing a waterway, identify issues of concern and develop workable solutions to address issues. This process also allows for the views of various agencies, groups and the community to be coordinated. Management planning for waterways can be carried out by anyone. It need not be a complicated process.

A number of management planning documents can be prepared to provide a guide for waterways management. These documents can be prepared by groups wishing to manage their local waterways relatively simply. They will act as a blue print for action at both a regional and local level, providing coordination for work being undertaken by local communities.

A number of essential elements which should be included in any management planning process and go to make up any management planning document are outlined below:

- consultation with all stakeholders at a number of stages during the process.
- identification of roles and responsibilities.
- consideration of issues and development of management objectives.
- identification of problems facing a waterway and solutions to these problems.
- involvement of the community in management actions.
- provision of a mechanism for review and evaluation.
- consistency with the guiding principles of waterways management and integrated catchment management.

The following discussion outlines the various management planning documents used by the Waterways Commission and their various applications. These documents

can be prepared by any group using the procedure outlined on page 4.

Management Strategy

A management strategy is an overall guiding document which normally outlines how a whole waterway should be managed and who should have responsibility for management. A strategy looks at the issues facing the waterway and details how these can best be resolved.

The strategy forms the highest level of management planning and usually prescribes a management framework through which management can be achieved. This may be through existing legislation or the establishment of new legislation. A strategy usually takes a regional approach and looks at issues in a broad perspective.

The Waterways Commission has recently been involved in developing two management strategies:

- The Swan River Management Strategy which became government policy and which resulted in a new act of Parliament, the Swan River Trust Act which established the Swan River Trust as the responsible agency for managing the Swan River.
- The Avon River System Management Strategy which resulted in the Avon River Management Authority being established under the Waterways Conservation Act to manage the Avon River.

Management Programme

When a waterway management authority is established under the Waterways Conservation Act the legislation requires that a management programme be developed. This document binds the waterways management authority in its decision making. Under the Act a programme must be regularly reviewed. Experience has shown that it is usually necessary to undertake a comprehensive review of a management programme every 5 to 7 years as issues quickly change and management approaches become outdated.

A programme sets out the objectives of a waterways management agency and tasks it and other agencies will undertake to manage a particular waterway. These documents look at the whole of a waterway and usually integrate the actions of many groups and organisations.

A management programme can be prepared by organisations other than waterways management authorities. It's application is usually where the management structure in place is considered to be working well and the issue at hand is what to do to manage the waterways. Although a management programme should identify roles and responsibilities for management it does not attempt to prescribe changes to the management framework.

□ Management Plan

A management plan details how a specific area is to be managed. It could be aimed at a recreation reserve, a conservation area, an area of intensive horticulture, or a new subdivision. These plans are usually undertaken in cooperation with land owners,

community groups, proponents of development and or local government authorities. The formulation of management plans for specific areas around the waterways provide a means of coordinating the views of the various groups and agencies, resolving conflicts and solving particular management problems. Management plans also provide a framework for carrying out works for rehabilitation and improvement in accordance with the wishes of the local community.

There are different levels of management plans. The Waterways Commission prepares both localised and regional management plans. Localised plans focus on a particular foreshore reserve or small area of the foreshore which needs specific management attention, whereas regional plans focus on a wider area such as a section of a river or a subcatchment area.

Localised management plans, in particular need only be brief documents, addressing the pertinent issues. They definitely don't need to be a costly exercise.

Examples of different management planning documents

Many issues facing a waterway and no responsible agency for overall management	☛ Management strategy
Many issues facing a waterway with a group or organisation taking responsibility for management.	☛ Management programme
Uncontrolled access degrading a foreshore reserve.	☛ Foreshore management plan - localised
Conflict between recreational use and conservation area in the lower reaches of a river	☛ Management plan - regional
Nutrient intensive activity with the potential to export nutrients to the waterway.	☛ Nutrient irrigation management plan - localised
Degradation of river banks along a stretch of a river occurring as a result of stock access. Revegetation required.	☛ Management plan - regional
Residential development adding pressure for recreational use of a foreshore area.	☛ Foreshore management plan - localised

PREPARING A MANAGEMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Waterways Commission prepares many management planning documents for its management areas. In doing so the Commission utilises two guiding principles:

- The waterways contain a range of biological and physical functions which need to be retained. For this reason all proposed uses should be evaluated in terms of their capacity to adversely affect these functions. As these impacts are often unknown it is important to take a conservative approach to management and to be cautious when making management decisions.

Be cautious when making decisions - when in doubt use the conservative management approach.

- Information about a waterway is needed to be able to make management decisions. A waterways management organisation should strive to obtain more information about their waterways to improve the basis for management decisions.

Undertake research - strive to obtain more information on which to make informed decisions.

The Commission finds the following procedure useful when preparing its management planning documents.

Determine the level of management planning required

Prior to preparing a document the level of management required for the waterway must be determined.

The problems facing the waterway need to be briefly assessed and a decision made as to whether the problem is of a regional nature and may require a change in management

responsibility or whether it is a localised problem which can be managed within the existing framework of management. The number of issues involved and the area over which the issues relate should also be considered. This will determine whether a management strategy, programme or plan will need to be prepared. The examples given in the table on the previous page may help with this process.

Collect resource information

An assessment of the waterways environment including the physical, biological and social characteristics needs to be undertaken. This provides important resource information which can be used to make management decisions and might influence future planning and management. Information can be collected by means of a literature review and field studies if necessary. Local community members can also provide useful information through oral history.

Often some of the information required is not available because studies to obtain the information have not been undertaken or take a number of years to complete. In this situation recommendations should be incorporated into the management planning document to undertake the studies. It will not be possible to obtain all information before making management decisions.

Waterways are complex and dynamic systems. It is not possible to know everything about a waterway at one time. There are a lot of unknowns in the management planning process.

Identify roles and responsibilities

It is important to identify the roles and responsibilities of various organisations, groups and individuals operating in land and water care in the area around the waterway. Collecting information on what these bodies are currently doing is also important. The information is used to determine the most appropriate organisations, groups and individuals to carry out management actions.

Consult the stakeholders

The many stakeholders in the waterways environment should be consulted to ensure all ideas, opinions and needs are considered in the management planning process. Consultation will enable management decisions to be made which are supported by the community and therefore more likely to be successful.

Stakeholders include members of the community who use the waterway, local landholders, agencies with responsibilities for aspects of waterways management and groups concerned with protection of the waterways management.

The Waterways Commission uses a number of means to consult these stakeholders:

- Meetings with State and local government agencies to enable them to provide ideas and comments.
- Letters to all organisations, groups and individuals inviting their input to the process.
- Workshops for the community through which the needs and aspirations of the general public can be identified.
- Press reports and advertisements in local papers.

Identify issues and problems

Following consultation it should be possible to identify all the issues that need to be addressed when preparing the management planning document. It may also be necessary to group the issues into like categories to make addressing them easier. A list of waterway issues that may need to be addressed is given overleaf.

It may also be useful to prepare an issues list and circulate it to relevant organisations, groups and individuals to ensure it is comprehensive.

Develop an aim and set objectives

Once the issues that need to be addressed have been identified an aim for the management strategy, programme or plan

should be identified. The aim should outline what is intended to be achieved. This sets a direction for the document. Objectives for each issue or group of issues can then be decided upon.

It is important that the aim and objectives are clear, concise and achievable.

Identify actions

The actions or tasks which need to be undertaken to improve or manage the waterways environment should be identified. These are usually in the form of recommendations.

These can be as simple as:

Construct a fence on the southern boundary of the reserve to restrict access.

or as detailed as:

Liaise with the local government authority to develop a strategy to reduce the pollutant load to the waterway from industrial activities in urban areas. Include in the strategy:

- an industrial audit or account of all industries discharging to the waterway or the stormwater system.
- identification of the major contributors of pollutants.
- upgrading of existing drainage systems to incorporate the concepts of water sensitive urban design.

All actions or recommendations usually begin with a action word (ie. construct, provide, identify,) which prompts the responsible agency to do something.

The Waterways Commission finds it useful to list the key players that would be involved in implementing the action. This is listed in an abbreviated form following each action with the initiating agency listed first.

Prepare a draft document

A draft document should always be prepared so that the stakeholders can look at the overall management planning document. The draft should include a brief discussion of each issue, a list of recommended

management actions and priorities for implementation.

Consult the stakeholders again

The draft document should be circulated to as many organisations and individuals as possible. Making sure that the stakeholders agree with the recommendations will ensure its success.

The Waterways Commission releases most of documents for a three month public comment period during which the community has an opportunity to prepare written submissions commenting on the contents of the draft. Often advertising a public comment period in the local media can be beneficial.

Revise the draft document

Following collection and careful consideration of all the comments the document should be revised and a final version prepared. A list of submissions should be prepared and the common areas of concern identified. This list together with details of how these concerns were dealt with should be included in the final document or if large in a separate document.

Implementation and funding

Implementation of a management planning document is the most important part of the process. Often documents detailing effective and innovative management actions end up sitting on the shelf.

The document should identify the priorities for implementation and set a timetable for work to be done. It is useful to nominate an organisation or group to be responsible for overseeing this timetable and urging responsible agencies or groups to implement the actions.

It is also important that a large proportion of the community is involved in the implementation process. The community will then feel a sense of ownership for their waterway.

While waterways management authorities under the Waterways Conservation Act are government funded, additional funding is often required from other sources. State or Federal grants can be obtained to carry out management works. This document can be used by community groups to help them prepare applications for these types of funding.

Applications for funding the implementation of a particular recommendation made in a management planning document will also stand a better chance if the recommendation is part of an overall plan.

CHECKLIST

- Determine the level of management planning required**
- Collect resource information**
- Identify roles and responsibilities**
- Consult the stakeholders**
- Identify the issues**
- Determine the aim and objectives**
- Identify the management actions**
- Prepare a draft document**
- Consult the stakeholders again**
- Revise the draft document**
- Implement the actions**

WATERWAY ISSUES

The Waterways Commission has identified many issues which should be considered when managing waterways. For the purpose of management planning these are often grouped into categories. Depending on the problems being faced, the waterway issues will change in type and importance. The list below provides examples of the issues that may need to be considered when preparing a strategy, programme or plan.

Conservation and environmental protection

- water quality
- erosion
- landscape
- conservation areas
- foreshore vegetation
- aquatic vegetation
- wildlife
- mosquitoes
- ecosystems and habitats
- floodprone land
- greenhouse effect
- heritage and cultural sites
- fisheries
- catchment vegetation

Landuse and waterways planning

- regional and local planning
- foreshore ownership and management
- urban/ residential development
- industrial development
- commercial development
- nutrient intensive animal industries
- horticulture
- broadscale agriculture
- aquaculture
- dredging
- intensive agriculture

Coordination and liaison

- funding and resources
- roles and responsibilities
- research and monitoring
- administrative procedures
- networking

Community use

- recreation
- tourism
- navigation
- public access
- facilities
- user conflict

Community involvement and information

- public education
- community groups
- working groups
- displays
- publications
- school education talks
- leaflets

❑ OTHER USEFUL PLANNING MECHANISMS

The Waterways Commission uses other planning mechanisms to aid the management planning process. These include:

❑ Policies

The Waterways Commission and its waterways management authorities have recognised the need for policies on certain aspects of planning and management for waterways. These policies provide proponents, organisations and the community with information regarding the Commission's position on certain issues.

The Waterways Commission is currently developing a policy manual which will address issues common to all waterways management authorities. It may be useful for groups wishing to manage their local waterways to prepare their own policies on issues facing their waterways. These should however take into account government policies and consider the practices of other stakeholders involved in waterway management. It should be remembered that policies may be specific or general in nature. Eg:

Specific -Trapping facilities should be installed on all minor drainage networks to provide a point for the recovery for pollutants during spillage incidents.

General -Encourage developers to consider the principles of water sensitive urban design in subdivision and development plans.

❑ Guidelines

Guidelines are designed to provide specific advice to developers, landowners, individuals, community groups and government agencies. They may be designed to show how particular policies may be achieved and to detail the requirements of an organisation. Guidelines also assist in ensuring advice on particular issues is consistent.

The Waterways Commission is currently preparing sets of guidelines to assist in resolving particular issues on behalf of its

waterways management authorities. This document forms one of the sets of guidelines prepared.

❑ Administrative procedures

Administrative procedures are prepared by the Waterways Commission and its waterways management authorities to detail the necessary steps that are required to obtain licences, approvals and permits for certain activities and land uses under the Waterways Conservation Act. The procedures aid the community, other agencies and the Commission to simplify the legislative requirements of waterways planning and management.

Other groups may find it useful to prepare procedures for activities which relate to waterways planning and management. For example, these procedures may be useful for local government bylaws which can be developed for the purposes of waterways protection.

Other mechanisms may also be used by local government to protect waterways these are further discussed in Guidelines No 1 of this series "Local Government and waterways management-considerations in the planning and management of land near waterways."

❑ Operational planning

Operational planning is a tool used to determine activities an organisation will undertake in day to day operations. An operational plan is prepared on an annual basis to guide activities. The Waterways Commission also prepares operational plans for a three year period to provide forward planning in line with the Government budget process.

In preparing an operational plan the Commission and its waterways management authorities consult management planning documents to determine which actions need to be implemented. An attempt is made to include high priority actions in the operations plan for the following year. This will of course depend on available resources.

Working agreements

Working agreements are generally written between a waterways management authority and an individual land owner or manager. They are usually for a particular issue such as installation of a fence or recreation facility and often outline cost sharing and ongoing maintenance arrangements for a particular facility. They may also have a statutory component being a condition of subdivision or rezoning approval.

Foreshore management agreements can also be developed between a waterways management authority or local government authority and a local landowner. These agreements may be to manage a foreshore in a particular manner or to implement a recommendation made in a management planning document. The agreements are usually of a mutually beneficial nature.

SUGGESTED CONTENTS OF A MANAGEMENT PLANNING DOCUMENT

- Study area**
- Purpose and aim of the strategy/programme/plan**
- Description of the environment**
- Relevant studies, policies and plans**
- Issues**
- Objectives**
- Actions**
- Management responsibilities**
- Funding**
- Implementation**
- Review**

GUIDELINES IN THIS SERIES

1. Local government and waterways management - considerations in the planning and management of land near waterways
2. Guidelines for the preparation of foreshore management plans - a guide for proponents (Swan River Trust).
3. Guidelines for the development of a waterways protection precinct (in preparation).
4. Guidelines for residential wastewater disposal (in preparation).
5. Guidelines for the preparation of foreshore management plans in waterways management areas - a guide for proponents.