

ORD RIVER AND PARRY LAGOONS NATURE RESERVES

Analysis of Public Submissions

to the

Draft Management Plan 2010

Department of Environment and Conservation

for the

Conservation Commission of Western Australia

1. OVERVIEW

This document is an analysis of public submissions (APS) to the *Ord River and Parry Lagoons Nature Reserves Draft Management Plan* (the draft plan) (DEC 2010). It presents key issues and themes within the Ord River and Parry Lagoons nature reserves, as identified by submissions received on the draft plan. This APS informs the final management plan, where the draft plan has been amended to reflect submissions received as assessed by the criteria below.

The draft plan was released for public comment by the Conservation Commission of Western Australia from 14 September 2010 to 17 November 2010¹. A notice of the draft plan's release was published in the *Government Gazette* on 14 September 2010.

Notices advertising that the draft plan was available for comment were placed in two issues of the local newspaper, *Kimberley Echo*, and two issues of *The West Australian*. The draft plan was distributed to key stakeholders including relevant State Government departments, recreation and conservation groups, local government authorities, libraries, and other community groups and individuals who expressed interest during the preparation of the draft plan. The draft plan was available from the Department of Environment and Conservation's (DEC) website and submissions could also be made online. Printed copies of the draft plan were made available at DEC's Kensington and Kununurra offices. The draft plan could be inspected at DEC's metropolitan libraries and the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley library.

A total of 13 submissions were received and these were considered during the APS. All submissions have been summarised and changes have been made to the final management plan where appropriate.

2. METHODOLOGY

Each comment on the draft plan was analysed and assessed using the following criteria:

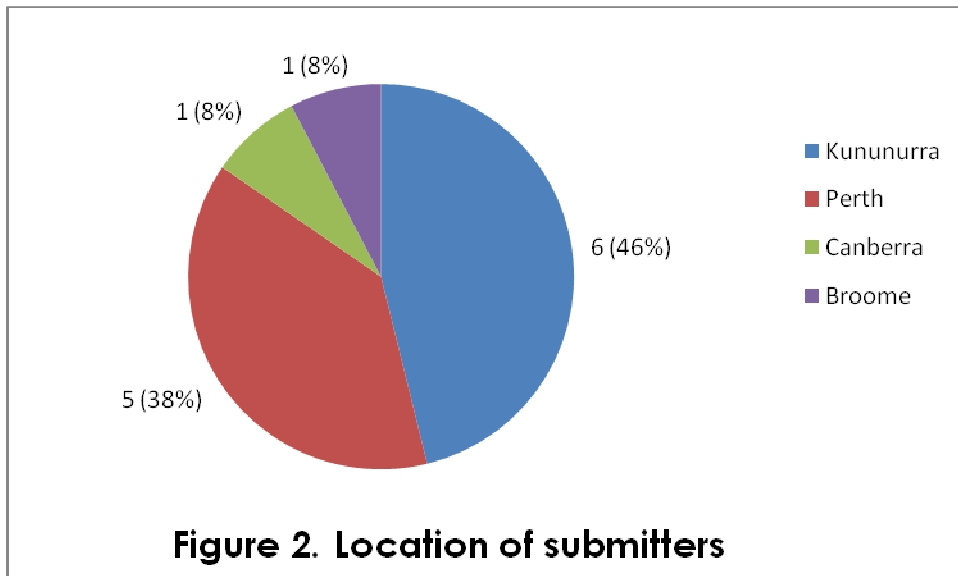
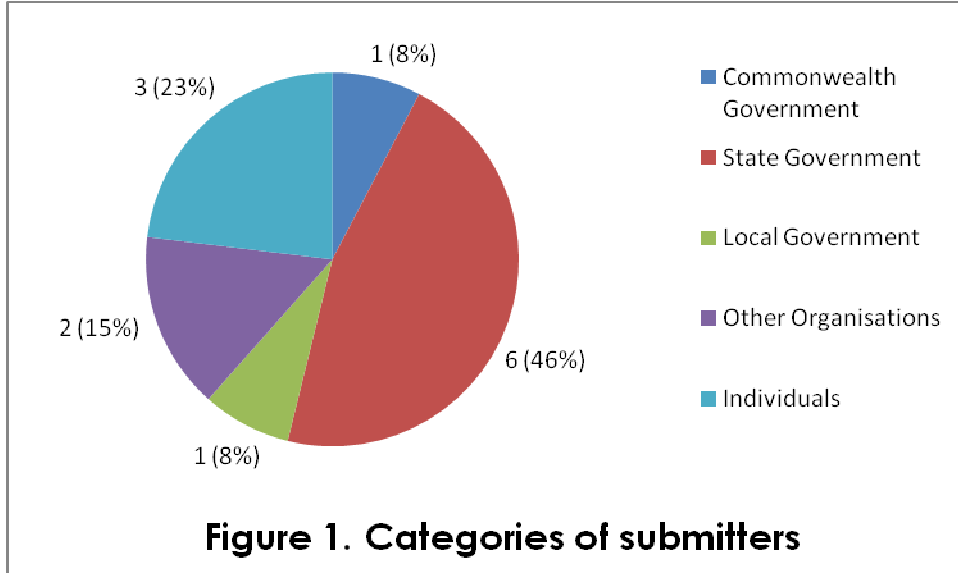
1. The draft management plan *was amended* if the comment:
 - provided additional information of direct relevance to management
 - provided additional information on affected user groups of direct relevance to management
 - indicated a change in (or clarifies) Government legislation, management commitment or management policy
 - proposed strategies that would better achieve management objectives; or
 - indicated omissions, inaccuracies or a lack of clarity.
2. The draft management plan *was not amended* if the comment:
 - clearly supported proposals in the plan
 - made general statements and no change was sought
 - made statements which were already in the plan or were considered during the plan preparation;
 - addressed issues beyond the scope of the plan
 - was one among several widely divergent viewpoints received on the topic but the outcome or action in the plan was still considered the preferred option
 - contributed options that were not feasible (generally due to conflict with existing legislation, Government policy, lack of resource capacity or lack of research knowledge to make decisions)
 - was based on unclear, factually incorrect information; or
 - provided details that were not appropriate or necessary for inclusion in a document aimed at providing management direction over the long term.

Comments made in submissions were assessed entirely on the cogency of points raised. No subjective weighting was given to any submission for reasons of its origin or any other factor that would give cause to elevate the importance of any submission above another.

¹ Late submissions were accepted

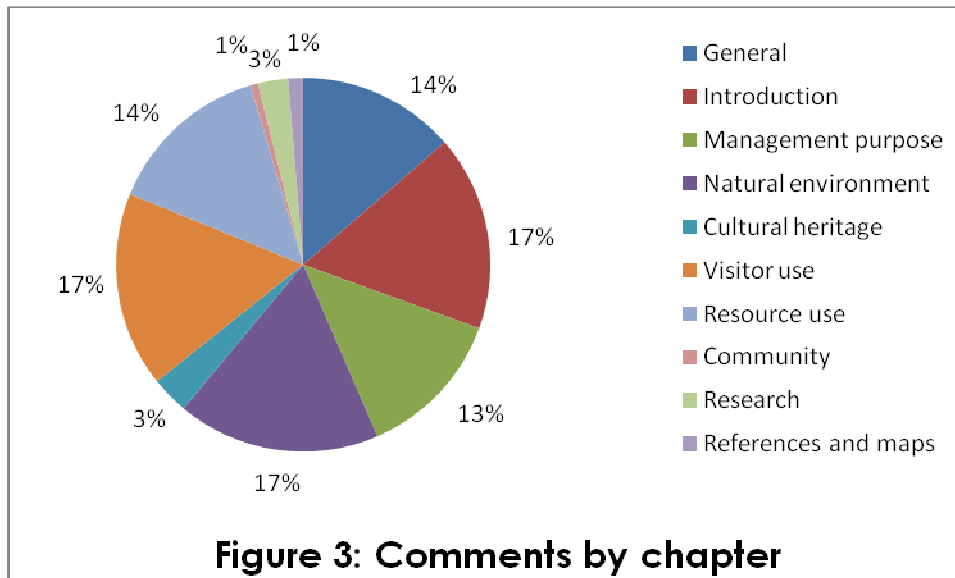
3. ABOUT THE SUBMITTERS

Thirteen submissions were received on the draft plan. Figures 1 and 2 show the breakdown of submitters by category and location.



4. KEY ISSUES AND THEMES

From the 13 submissions received on the draft plan, 154 different comments were made. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of comments by chapter in the draft plan. Of the comments made on the draft plan, 33% resulted in a change to the plan.



The key issues and themes raised by submitters are described below, as well as how the submissions were considered when amending the plan.

Management of Ramsar values

Comments made to the draft plan indicated that the plan required better links to the *Ecological character description of the Ord River Floodplain Ramsar site* (ECD) (Hale 2008) and needed to meet the Australian Ramsar Management Principles (ARMP) requirements. This included references to limits of acceptable change and critical components, processes and services. These changes have been taken into consideration during the preparation of the final management plan. This has meant that the plan has been amended to include more detail to adequately report on the ecological character of the Ramsar site, most of which is found within the Ord River and Parry Lagoons nature reserves. These amendments have also addressed concerns relating to comments over how the Ramsar values would be monitored.

A barrier to the plan not being able to fulfil the ARMP requirements is that the entire Ramsar site is not located on land vested in the Conservation Commission. As the plan is a *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* management plan, it can only go so far as to meet the requirements as specified in the Act. To address this, a greater emphasis has been placed on cross-boundary management and partnerships to work with the community and other government departments in protecting and conserving the values of the planning area.

Relationships – joint management

A number of comments were raised about providing more information about the Ord Final Agreement in the management plan. The management plan provides reference to the Agreement that contains the detail requested, although the plan has not been amended.

Concern was also raised about how this plan provides impetus to DEC in pursuing joint management and in procuring funding for this to occur. The plan provides strategic direction for this to occur and does not need to contain a greater level of detail.

Altered hydrological regimes

Submissions indicated concerns over flow regimes and how changes to flow regimes will affect the ecological character of the Ramsar site. To address this, the plan now includes monitoring to record the changes to flow regimes and effectiveness of the current environmental flow allocation. This data will assess the ecological response to the environmental flow allocation.

Knowledge gaps and research

Many submissions raised the issue of gaps in knowledge and how research is needed to reduce those gaps. To address this, the plan has been amended, to include additional management actions and key performance indicators.

The main concern from submitters was that the level of monitoring and research indicated in the draft plan would not be enough to report on any changes to the ecological character of the Ramsar site. The plan has been amended to bolster research and monitoring of key elements in the reserves so ecological character can be assessed.

Request for more detail in the plan

Some comments were received requesting that more information be presented in the plan. As this plan is a strategic document that will guide management direction over the next 10 years, it is not appropriate for the requested detail to be in the plan. The plan was, however, amended to guide readers to where they could find the information they required. This included reference to the ECD, where species lists for the Ramsar site can be found, and the plan also refers readers to DEC's Naturemap website <http://naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au>, and to the Department of Mines and Petroleum's Tengraph database. As these lists are not static, it will provide managers with access to the most recent information, rather than lists that are only accurate at the time of printing.

Specific details of day-to-day management of the reserves will be developed by DEC in subsidiary operational plans, which will meet the management objectives of the final management plan.

5. REFERENCES

Hale, J. (2008) *Ecological Character Description of the Ord River Floodplain Ramsar Site*. A report to the Department of Environment and Conservation, Perth.

DEC (2010) *Ord River and Parry Lagoons Nature Reserves Draft Management Plan*. Department of Environment and Conservation, WA.