



CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT NO. 28

SCIENCE

May 2024

1. OBJECTIVE

To establish the principles by which the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) undertakes science to meet legislative requirements, maintain scientific rigour and stakeholder confidence in the evidence used for decision making and priority setting, ensure efficient use of public funds and optimise biodiversity conservation, cultural and social outcomes.

2. SCOPE

Science refers to all scientific research, monitoring and science communication undertaken by and on behalf of DBCA, including staff contributions to externally run projects. The policy establishes procedures for ensuring high standards of scientific quality control, data management, reporting, accountability, knowledge transfer and archiving of science information.

Monitoring means measuring trends in the environment against agreed benchmarks, particularly trends in the condition of biological, physical, cultural, social and ecological values, pressures and the effectiveness and efficiency of management responses. Monitoring in this context includes evaluation and reporting but does not include 'monitoring' for enforcement, compliance or approvals.

Research means the creation of new knowledge or any systematic investigation to establish facts. In this context, research leads to improved understanding of: (i) the composition, structure and functioning of biological and physical systems; and (ii) human interactions with the natural environment. Research can include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative.

Science communication is the transfer of scientific knowledge to improve policy, planning and operational management, and positively influence community attitudes and behaviour towards conservation and sustainable use of the environment, with an aim of building confidence about governance, regulation and use of science and technology.

3. CONTEXT

The effectiveness of DBCA processes relating to the conservation, protection, use and management of biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural heritage, and public lands and waters, is dependent on the accuracy, applicability and availability of the scientific evidence used to inform them. Significant public resources are therefore invested in improving scientific knowledge of the status and condition of the State's biological, physical, cultural and social assets. As a matter of best practice, it is imperative that the evidence on which decisions are based, meets the highest possible standards of scientific rigour and public accountability, and that science delivery is prioritised, targeted and cost effective.

Application of this policy will help to ensure an optimal return on the public investment in DBCA science delivery and stakeholder confidence in departmental biodiversity conservation and land management operations.

Science is undertaken across DBCA to fulfil the department's obligations to conserve and protect biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage, and sustainably manage Western Australia's species, ecosystems, cultural heritage, lands and attractions, and to support nature-based tourism. Biodiversity and Conservation Science coordinates science policy and activity across DBCA and has a primary role in delivery of science and biodiversity knowledge to support the functions of the Parks and Wildlife Service, the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, the Zoological Parks Authority and Rottneest Island Authority, and to inform the decisions of other government agencies.

This Policy Statement should be read in conjunction with:

- The current version of the DBCA Science Strategic Plan
- Corporate Guideline 48: Science Implementation
- Corporate Guideline 49: Data management
- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018.

4. LEGISLATION

The policy refers to all science undertaken by, and on behalf of, DBCA to fulfil the requirements of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, *Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority Act 1998*, *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, *Rottneest Island Authority Act 1987*, *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* and *Zoological Parks Authority Act 2001*.

5. DEFINITIONS / GLOSSARY / ACRONYMS

For the purposes of this Policy, terms have the following meanings.

6. POLICY

- 6.1 All internally and externally funded science will be aligned with DBCA strategic directions and service priorities and will contribute to the Strategic Goals of the Science Strategic Plan in effect at the time.
- 6.2 Science will be planned and executed to maximise the likelihood of achieving clearly defined objectives, ensure value for money and avoid any long-term deterioration in natural or cultural values.
- 6.3 Science activities will comply with all relevant regulatory requirements.
- 6.4 In the delivery of science, departmental staff will observe the principles of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* and will remain honest, objective, rigorous, transparent and accountable.
- 6.5 Communication of scientific knowledge will be accurate and unbiased; protect confidential and sensitive information; appropriately recognise those who contributed to the work, acknowledge the work of others and be appropriate to the target audience.
- 6.6 Collaborative partnership opportunities will be actively sought to leverage optimal science outcomes and maximise Government investment in the science undertaken by DBCA. Scientific collaborations with external organisations should be formalised through collaboration agreements.

- 6.7 DBCA staff will recognise the right and value of Aboriginal peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them and will value and respect the diversity, heritage, traditional knowledge, intellectual property rights, cultural property and connection to country of Aboriginal peoples.
- 6.8 Traditional ecological and cultural knowledge and other information obtained through partnerships and consultation with Aboriginal people will be treated in accordance with CARE (collective benefits, authority to control, responsibility and ethics) principles for Indigenous data governance.

7. STANDARDS

This policy is consistent with the principles of the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*.

Science activities must meet the standards of all relevant regulatory requirements, Science Policy Guidelines and any other policies, guidelines, procedures and codes of conduct that relate to those activities.

Science involving the use of animals will comply with the requirements of the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* and the *National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*, and will adhere to best practice standards for minimising behavioural change and unnecessary suffering of fauna.

Human participants and communities that are affected by science will be treated with care and respect, giving appropriate consideration to the needs of minority groups or vulnerable people in accordance with the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, and *Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities*.

8. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- 8.1 All science undertaken by DBCA staff will be planned, assessed, prioritised and approved according to the procedures in Corporate Guideline 48: Science Implementation.
- 8.2 Details of all science activities led by DBCA staff and externally led projects involving DBCA staff, must be registered in a centralised system and accessible to all areas of the department.
- 8.3 Science projects will have a nominated project leader who will be responsible for project administration and delivery, reporting project progress, data management, adherence to regulatory requirements, ensuring science activities do not cause unanticipated impacts to natural or cultural values, and communication of results to relevant staff and external stakeholders.
- 8.4 Processes and systems will be maintained to ensure the long-term integrity of all scientific data. All reasonable efforts will be taken to ensure that data will be verified to be free of errors; appropriately labelled and described by metadata so that they are discoverable; maintained for long-term security and comply with Corporate Policy Statement No. 7: Information Quality Management and Corporate Guideline 49: Data Management.

- 8.5 Publication of science outputs in the international peer-reviewed literature enhances stakeholder confidence in DBCA science and is supported. Where science outputs do not meet international journal requirements, peer-review and publication by other means is encouraged. Publication of science outputs will follow the procedures in Corporate Guideline 48: Science Implementation.
- 8.6 Science outputs, including data, metadata, reports and publications are to be made accessible to all DBCA staff, as required.
- 8.7 Traditional owners of the land and water on which science is undertaken and other relevant Aboriginal people should be consulted prior to scientific activities commencing, so they can make informed decisions about their involvement. Engagement with Aboriginal people will continue over the duration of science projects and scientific outcomes should be shared with them at project conclusion.

9. CUSTODIAN

Executive Director, Biodiversity and Conservation Science.

10. PUBLICATION

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

11. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on commencement of the next Science Strategic Plan.

12. DIRECTOR GENERAL APPROVAL

Approved by



Stuart Smith
DIRECTOR GENERAL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Effective date: 7 May 2024