

# Terms of Reference for Reserves Advisory Group Members

## 1. Introduction

The Reserve Advisory Group (RAG) has been established to provide advice to the Serpentine Jarrahdale Council on the development, implementation and audit of reserve management plans. Members are appointed by Council to undertake an important public interest role in facilitating broad community input into planning and management processes.

This document has been produced to provide guidance to RAG members. It sets out a broad Council-endorsed framework to ensure that the advice provided by RAG is ecologically sound and gives due consideration to sustainable management of human activities in an equitable and integrated manner.

## 2. Background

There are over 170 reserves vested in the Serpentine Jarrahdale Shire. Many are of high conservation and/or recreational value and yet some reserves are under significant levels of threat. As urbanisation encroaches within the Shire, pressures are increasing and there is a need to manage reserves in a coordinated and orderly fashion. The biodiversity values of some reserves are of regional, Statewide and in some cases, national significance and this status is encapsulated in local, State and Commonwealth legislation and policies. The development of management plans not only provides an opportunity to develop a shared community vision for reserves within the Shire but also ensures that statutory and policy obligations and procedures are adhered to.

The Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale has long relied on the expertise and dedication of the local community for many aspects of reserve management. As both the number of reserves and threats to biodiversity within those reserves increase, the continuation of community involvement in all aspects of planning, on-ground management and auditing is essential to ensure the protection of reserve values.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The Council

- Provide strategic direction in relation to reserve management in the Shire.
- Provide a planning and management framework that includes decision making, implementation and audit processes plus reporting requirements for Shire reserves.
- Appoint and support Reserve Advisory Group members.
- Review and endorse draft management plans while taking account of Shire staff recommendations, public submissions and statements of resource requirements.
- Endorse annual works programs on Shire reserves.
- Allocate resources for reserve planning, management and audit functions.

### 3.2 Shire Staff

- Prepare draft management plans in consultation with RAG.
- Provide, or arrange for others to provide, expert advice to RAG members in terms of environmental values, social values and management considerations within reserves under consideration.
- Coordinate broader public consultation with a focus on existing community groups that actively manage reserves.
- Facilitate appropriate input from State and Commonwealth government agencies.
- Report the recommendations and actions of RAG to Council.

- Consider RAG advice and forward draft management plans to Council together with justifications for recommended changes, community submissions and statements of resource requirements for Council consideration.
- Implement management plans in partnership with the community.
- Assist RAG with the monitoring and review of management plans and address results.

### 3.3 Reserve Advisory Group

- Provide advice to Council on reserve values, threats to those values, management strategies and management targets;
- Develop draft management plans that include appropriate management strategies that will protect the ecological and social values and take account of community aspirations for the future management of Shire reserves;
- Consult with the broader community and work in partnership with existing community groups that actively manage reserves;
- Provide advice to Council and the Reserves Working Group relating to on-ground management.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness and efficiency of management plans and advise Council of RAG recommendations.

### 3.4 Individual RAG members

Reserves Advisory Group members have a very important and sometimes difficult public interest role. Given the broad range of community interests and levels of statutory protection, there is need for members to take an expansive view of issues rather than a narrow personal or sectoral view. Members have been chosen for their knowledge and expertise and general standing in the community and as such they need to take a considered position on issues and actively promote balanced outcomes. RAG members need to work towards outcomes that are both within statutory and policy constraints and are in the community's long-term interest.

The responsibilities of individual members include:

- Observing the RAG Code of Conduct;
- Working closely with local community groups which have a history of active management within a reserve;
- Seeking and considering expert advice and the views of the broader community;
- Contributing in a positive manner to the development of management options and working collaboratively with other RAG members towards consensus decisions.

#### 3.4.1 Temporary Membership

When management plans are being developed for specific reserves, temporary members may be co-opted to the Reserves Advisory Group from relevant stakeholder groups for the duration of development of the management plan.

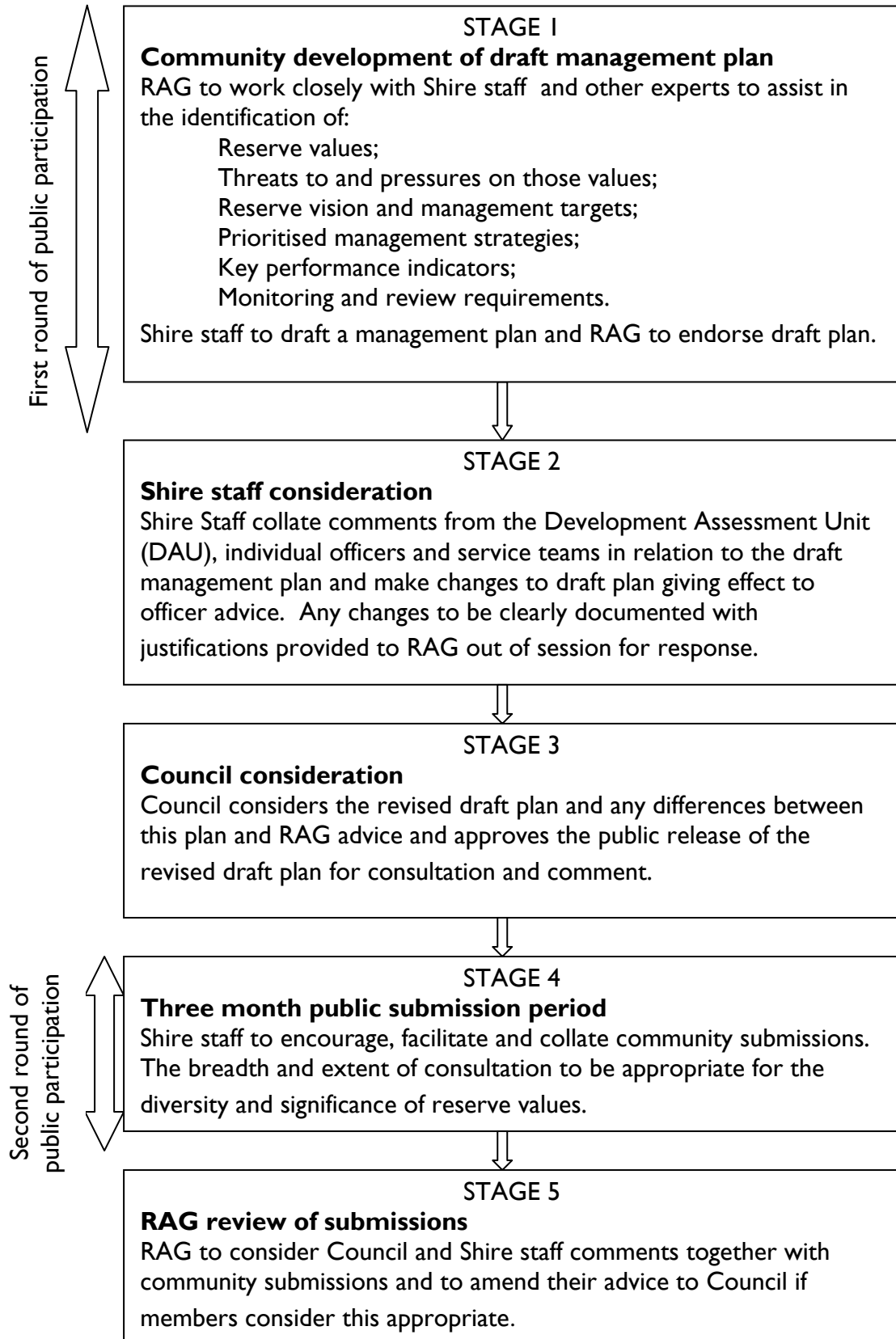
## 4. Management Plan processes

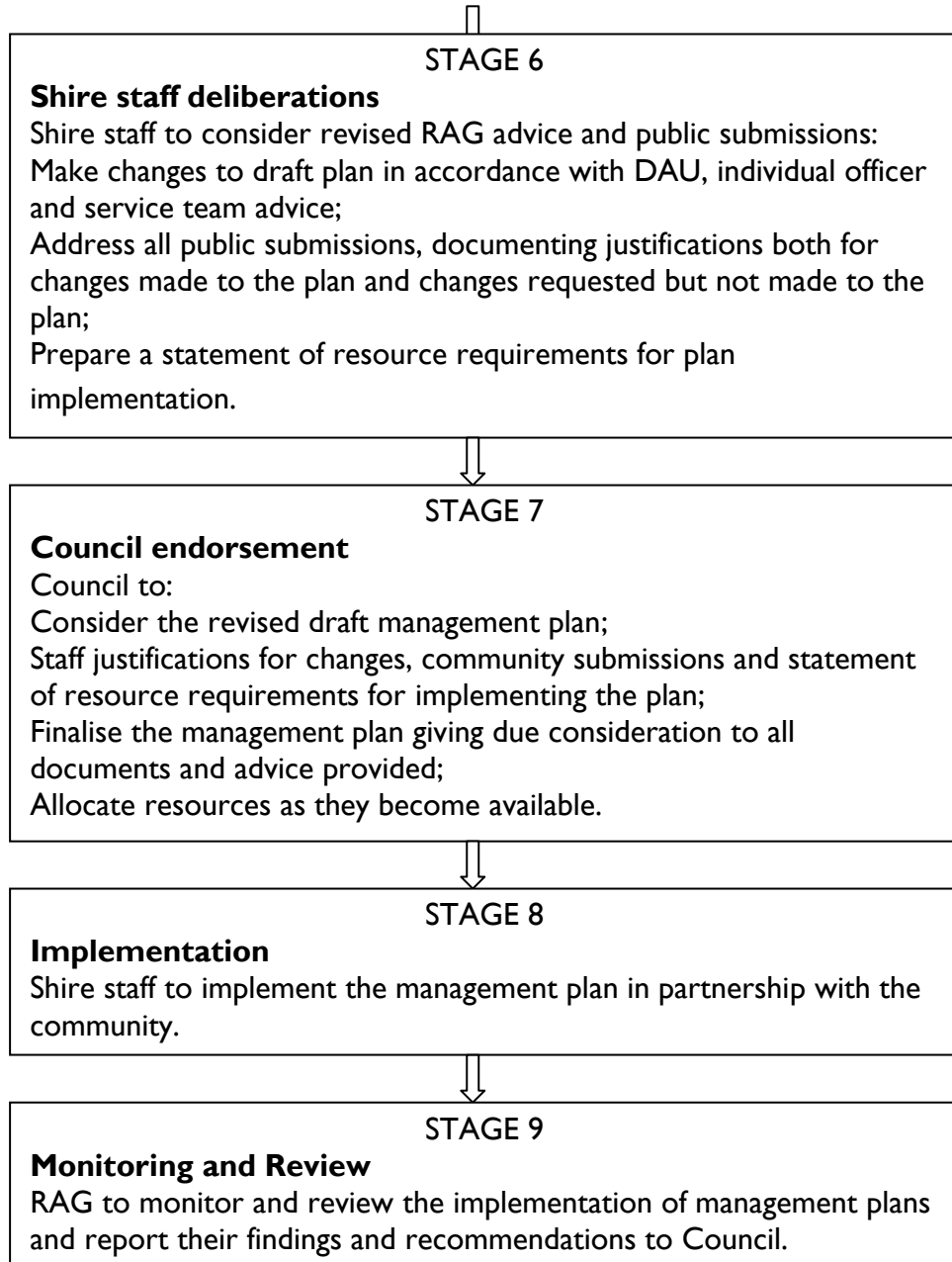
Although RAG is a central focus of the public participation process for Shire reserve management, there is an additional need for consultation with community groups and institutional stakeholders. Given that RAG members are non-representative, that is, are not operating to protect the sectoral views of individual stakeholders, their effective communication with experts and groups outside the RAG forum is particularly important in securing outcomes that are well informed and broadly supported by the community.

Shire reserves that require extensive community consultation because they have high biodiversity/conservation values, multiple or potentially conflicting uses are planned using process A. Other reserves with little or no biodiversity/conservation value, and with no potential for conflict are planned using process B.

**Process A**

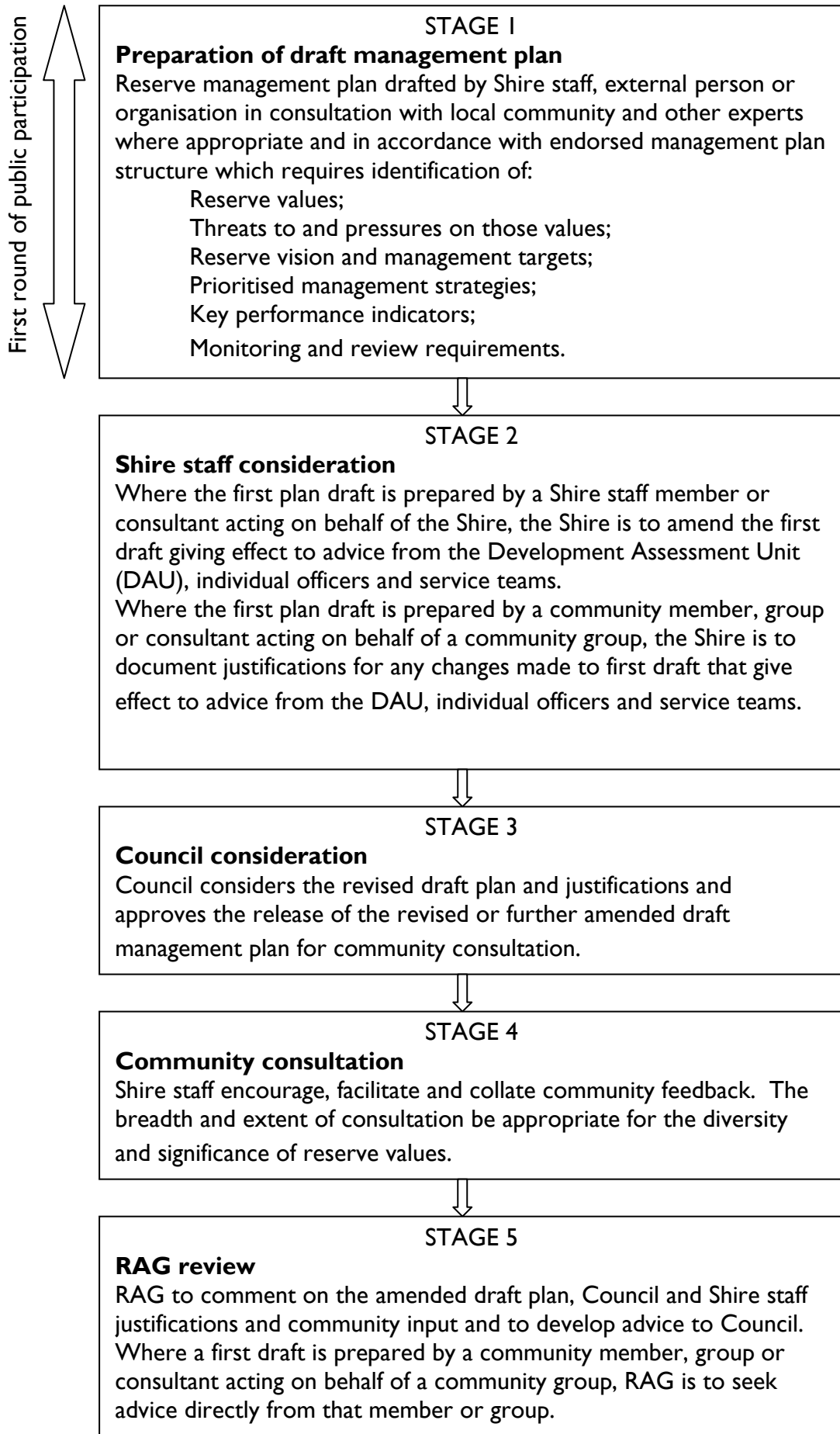
Incorporates two rounds of public participation and the draft management plan is developed by the community:

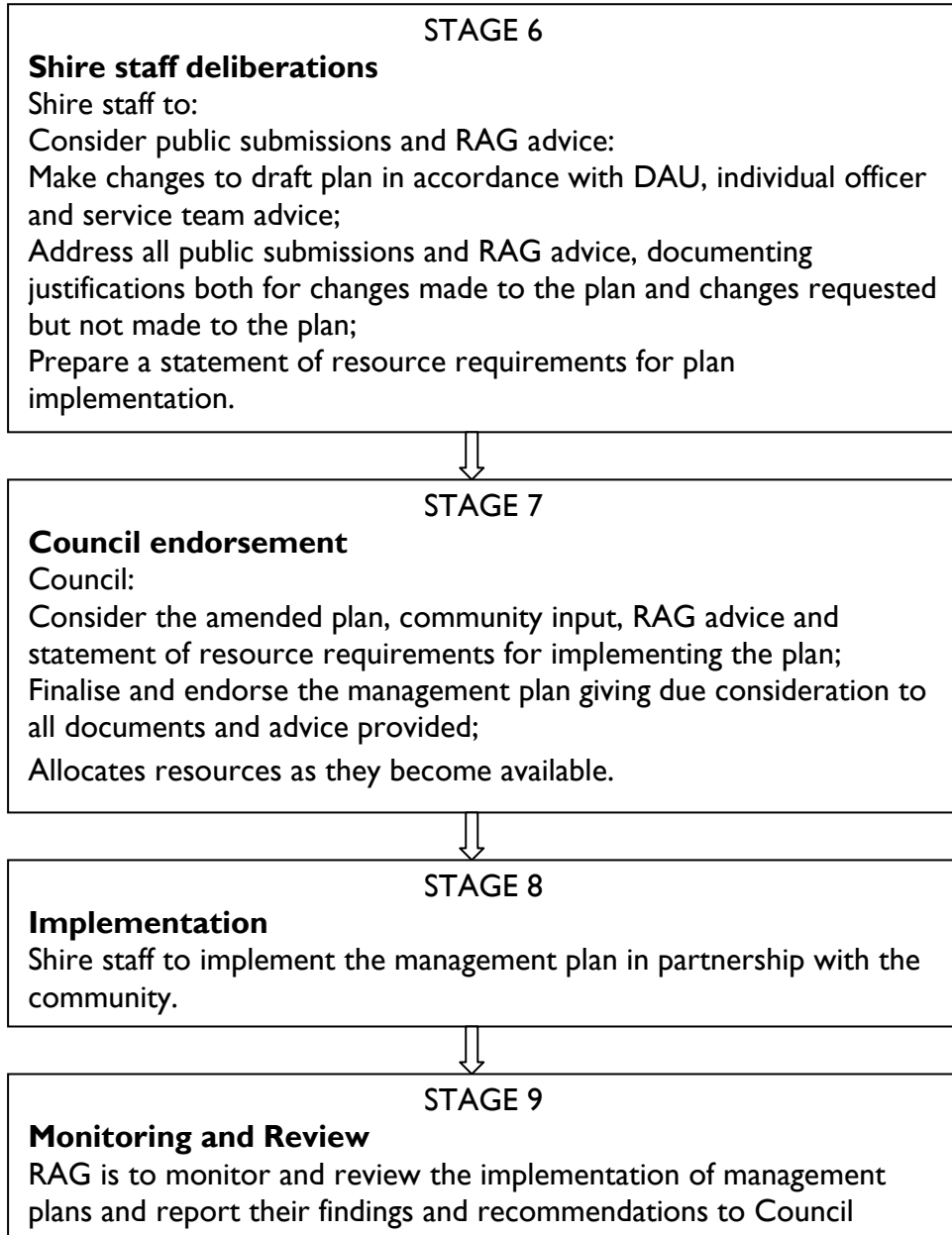




**Process B**

Incorporates one round of public participation and the draft management plan is generated by a professional or community group.





## 5. Developing a reserve management plan

### 5.1 Planning framework

The State and Commonwealth governments are committed to the establishment of a system of conservation reserves that are:

**Comprehensive** – include the full range of ecosystems that occur within each bioregion;

**Adequate** – include enough land to ensure ecological viability and integrity of populations, species and communities; and

**Representative** – include portions of all biological assemblages in a way that reflects the biotic diversity of each ecosystem.

This **CAR** system of reserves is also part of a wider international initiative and many of the reserves within the Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale have the potential to play a significant role in contributing to this network of reserves.

### 5.2 Precautionary principle

The precautionary principle refers to the general approach to planning whereby if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, the lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

### 5.3 Objectives

The objectives of Shire reserves are:

- To complement State Government reserves and other areas of high biodiversity value by preserving representative and special ecosystems within the Shire; and,
- To put a formal management framework in place to ensure that the various uses of Shire reserves are managed in an equitable, integrated and sustainable manner.

More specifically, the management plan should aim to provide for the maintenance or enhancement of biodiversity/conservation values and, as far as is practical, the maintenance of existing, and accommodation of proposed, human uses within an integrated, equitable and ecologically sustainable framework.

#### Conservation objectives:

- To maintain or enhance biodiversity;
- To maintain or enhance key processes and life support systems (ie, ecosystem structure and function);
- To create or enhance ecological linkages to develop resistance to climate change.

#### Recreational objectives:

To facilitate and manage a diverse range of recreational activities within an equitable and ecologically sustainable framework.

#### Commercial objectives:

To facilitate, manage and, where appropriate, assist in the management of commercial activities in reserves within an equitable and ecologically sustainable framework.

Science and education objectives:

To promote education, nature appreciation and scientific research.

Operational objectives

- To conserve and enhance biodiversity and ecological integrity;
- To manage human pressures on the ecological values;
- To ensure that existing and future uses of reserves do not significantly impact on other social values;
- To encourage and facilitate community involvement in reserve management;
- To facilitate, where appropriate, recreation and commercial activities; and,
- To promote education, nature appreciation and scientific research.

5.4 Generic Management Strategies

There are five generic management strategies that are applicable to the management of Shire reserves. They are:

Administrative frameworks

Administrative frameworks include statutory considerations such as reserve vesting, State Government responsibilities, the management plan itself and any resultant zoning gazettals and regulations. An effective administrative framework also includes: resource considerations in terms of human, financial and infrastructure / plant; the development of operational procedures; and, the development of mechanisms to integrate State Government, Shire and community management efforts.

Science: Research and Monitoring

Effective management requires an adequate knowledge and understanding of the environment and an appreciation of the potential impacts of human activities on biodiversity / conservation values and uses of the ecosystem. Without this information, it is not possible to allocate resources to the most pressing problems and to assess whether management is achieving its objectives.

As such, a reserve plan should provide research and monitoring strategies that:

- Gain knowledge and understanding of the functioning of the ecosystem and the effectiveness of ecosystem restoration techniques;
- Understand the nature, trends and implications of human activities on the environment;
- Monitor and assess the health of ecosystems; and
- Monitor the effectiveness of management strategies

To achieve these outcomes, there will need to be areas that are not significantly influenced by human activities in order to allow for comparisons with areas that are impacted.

Communication: community education, interpretation and public participation

Shire reserves are community assets and as such there should be a major emphasis on encouraging community involvement in the management of reserves once established. This will only come about when the local community understands and appreciates the wide range of conservation, recreational, commercial and educational values within reserves and the need for effective management if these values are to be protected. It is therefore appropriate for management plans to include communication strategies that encourage public participation, educate the community and interpret the environment.



### Compliance

Notwithstanding the emphasis on education and interpretation, the planning process must also ensure adequate strategies are included in the plan that provide an appropriate level of surveillance and enforcement of management controls within reserves.

### Environmental restoration

In areas that have been damaged to a point beyond their natural capacity for repair, there is a need to implement artificial restoration techniques. These include stream restoration, revegetation programs in weed infested areas and artificial tree thinning.

There is significant flexibility in how these five management strategies are applied.

### 5.5 Plan Structure

In developing their planning advice to Council, RAG members are requested to work through the following stages:

- Identify all environmental, economic and social values within the reserve;
- Assess the current status of environmental, economic and social values;
- Identify threats to and pressures on each of those values;
- Identify and define auditable management objectives and targets or preferred outcomes for each value; and,
- Identify and prioritise appropriate management strategies to protect each value within target levels.

The draft management plan should contain objectives and strategies that are realistic, achievable and measurable. These should be developed on the basis of a risk assessment approach to ensure that available resources and management effort will be directed towards managing those activities and processes that most threaten the key ecological and social values.

### 5.6 Vestings

All Shire reserves are vested (owned on behalf of the community) in the Shire for a stated purpose. In many cases the recreational values of a reserve are stated in the vested purpose, but conservation values have been omitted. RAG may wish to advise Council regarding both the vested purpose and the agency in which the reserves are vested.

### On-ground management

A program of works within Shire reserves is drawn up on an annual basis. Tasks are prioritised according to the biodiversity / conservation benefits that they will provide. RAG will be requested to provide advice both on the development and implementation of annual works programs for Shire reserves

### Monitoring and Review

The monitoring and review process provides a mechanism to check that the management of reserves is achieving prescribed management objectives. The independence of those undertaking this process is important to ensure that monitoring and review results are placed in the public arena where they can be scrutinised and decisions regarding the need to adjust management practices can be made in an open and accountable manner.

The independence of RAG makes it well placed to undertake monitoring and review of the effectiveness and efficiency of Management Plans for Shire reserves. RAG will need to forward the results to Council along with any advice that members wish to provide in relation to the results.