



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



Regional Park Community Advisory Committees Terms of Reference

What is a regional park community advisory committee?

Regional Park Community Advisory Committees are established by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (the Department) to provide a regular forum to hear public opinion and exchange advice on management issues affecting regional parks.

Traditionally, the community advisory committees have been established in connection with the management of land vested in the Conservation and Parks Commission of WA and managed by the Department. However, the role of regional park community advisory committees is not restricted to lands managed by the Department. As regional parks may consist of various land tenures managed by the Department, other State government agencies or local governments, it is expected that regional park community advisory committees will provide advice and exchange information on a range of issues spanning a number of management agencies.

The Director General of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) appoints community members of community advisory committees. Appointments are endorsed by the Minister for the Environment.

The functions of a regional park community advisory committee are to:

- provide advice on issues referred to the committee by the managers of the parks;
- advise on the preparation and implementation of management plans and work programs;
- provide advice on matters of public concern or interest relating to the parks;
- assist the managing agencies in the dissemination of information to the broader community; and
- provide liaison and assist with coordinating community input into the parks.

Committees are not empowered to administer management programs or activities, or direct departmental staff.

Community advisory committees provide an important liaison role for the Department regarding regional park management issues. Other community groups, State government agencies, local government and other landowners within regional parks also provide management advice. The Department's management decisions will take into consideration advice from all groups.

Membership

- (ii) Community members of a regional park community advisory committee will be selected primarily based on expertise, experience, personal interest, community networks and location.
- (iii) The Department will generally be represented by one officer. However, there will be cases when a community advisory committee needs additional support and advice from several staff members. Appropriate local government and State government staff will also be invited on to the committee.
- (iv) Members of the public should feel in some way represented on the community advisory committee. Community members will be drawn from a broad spectrum of park visitors and community interest groups. It is important that committees are of a “workable” size. In principle, community members are selected for committees based on their:
 - personal interest in the Park
 - commitment to progressing the work of the committee
 - ability to represent a broad range of relevant interests
 - understanding of the issues affecting park management
 - experience as a park visitor; and good community networks.
- (v) Community representatives on the advisory committees are chosen as individuals and are not selected to represent community interest groups, associations or commercial interests. This being the case, there is no provision for community representatives to organise proxies, or arrangements whereby other people can attend a meeting in the member’s absence.
- (v) Membership will be for a period of one to three years, with a view to rotating membership to ensure that the committee includes people who understand current community concerns and interests. Rotating membership will also ensure retention of committee experience.
- (vi) Members whose terms expire are eligible to reapply for reappointment either immediately or in the future, but there is no assurance of re-appoint.

Appointments to the committee

- (i) The Director General of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions will appoint community members of advisory committees. When seeking nominations for positions to a community advisory committee, the Department may call for expressions of interest by:
 - advertising in at least one edition of a relevant local paper
 - media Statements
 - corresponding directly with relevant organisations and individuals. Relevant organisations and individuals may be invited by letter to submit names for appointment to the community advisory committee.

- (ii) Offering the chairperson role to a community member will be based on the member's knowledge of the area, experience in meeting procedures and understanding of management issues.

Behaviour of committee members

General principles to guide the behaviour of committee members include that a person in his or her capacity as a committee member should:

- i) treat others with respect and fairness
- ii) act with reasonable care and diligence
- iii) act with honesty and integrity
- iv) avoid damage to the reputation of the Community Advisory Committee
- v) be open and accountable
- vi) base decisions on relevant and factually correct information
- vii) respect the decision-making processes of the committee which are based on a majority vote
- viii) information of a confidential nature must not be communicated
- ix) information relating to decisions of the committee must only be communicated in an official capacity by the Chair or a designated officer of the DBCA
- x) all outgoing communications are through the Chair or a designated officer of the DBCA

Conduct of meetings

- (i) Community advisory committees are established to hear public opinion and exchange advice on management issues. Where possible community advisory committees should attempt to reach consensus on issues. Reaching consensus, however, is not vital as all committee input will be taken into consideration in the final management decision.
- (ii) Regularity of meetings will be decided between the community advisory committee members and the Department.
- (iii) Meeting procedures adopted by a committee should be consistent with sound meeting practice. A meeting protocol, which inhibits fair input by all members, is not appropriate. It must be ensured that all members are provided with the opportunity to participate.
- (iv) The Department's representative must be in attendance for the meeting to occur.
- (v) Community advisory committees will be administered by the Department. This will include organising a venue, calling meetings, and circulating agendas and minutes.

Forward planning

In consultation with the committee, the Department will provide a schedule of meeting dates and venues for the coming year.

Liaison with other bodies

- (i) In most instances, the functioning of the committee will be best served by having meetings closed to the public and the media. Members of the committee can act as private individuals in their relations with government or the media, but may not speak for the committee unless explicitly authorised by the Department.
- (ii) When acting for the advisory committee, members should only correspond under the 'signature' of the Chairperson and / or through the Department.

Breaches to the Code of Conduct may lead to dismissal from the Community Advisory Committee which will be in the form of a letter from DBCA.

Regional Park Community Advisory Committees perform an integral role and membership should be viewed as a privilege. DBCA hopes you will enjoy your participation and we are appreciative for your service.