

ROTTNEST ISLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009-2014 – STAGE 1 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

These notes represent opinions expressed during consultation and not policy of the RIA

Community and stakeholder consultation

The first round of consultation to determine issues and views as a basis for developing the draft Management Plan (Stage 1 consultation) was carried out in mid 2008. Stage 1 consultation with Rottnest Island Authority staff involved eight staff workshops in July 2008. Stage 1 community consultation was carried out between 29 July and 17 September 2008. Comment was sought from key stakeholders, Rottnest visitors and the general public. Over 100 submissions were received, representing Government Departments, business and community organisations and 81 individual community submissions. Organisation submissions or meeting input was received from:

- Aboriginal stakeholders meetings
- Action Outdoors Association; Over 45s Social Canoe Club
- Boating WA
- Conservation Commission
- Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA)
- Experience Perth
- Fisheries Department
- Fremantle Ports
- Heritage Council WA
- Marine Parks and Reserves Authority
- National Trust WA
- Office of the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
- Rottnest Island Business Community and businesses
- Rottnest Society
- Rottnest Voluntary Guides Association
- Rottnest Volunteer Network
- Tourism Council WA
- Tourism WA
- WA Museum

Together, these submissions represent the views of thousands of stakeholders with specific interests including Aboriginal issues, boating, business, conservation, cultural heritage, education, environmental management, events, fishing, recreation, tourism and, of course, family holidays. The consultation process was not designed as quantitative market research but was a valuable way to gain an understanding of how 'special interest' stakeholders and Rottnest Island visitors feel about the Island's future and what issues they would like to see addressed.

Some people put enormous effort into their submissions, reflecting passionate concern for the Island. The issues raised were taken into account in framing policies and Initiatives throughout this Plan. (See 'How has the Management Plan considered community views?' Page 5).

RIA staff views

Overall the staff, stakeholders and community told the RIA that Rottnest Island is a very special place. Staff put emphasis on improving sustainability and managing recreation in the Reserve according to the sound principles of 'sustainable visitor capacity' so that 'people pressure' doesn't damage the environment that draws people to the Island. They put a high value on the environmental and heritage assets that are the basis of the Island's appeal to visitors. Staff members are keen to improve the

quality of services, products and facilities for guests. They also want to seek business revenue opportunities to enable investment in maintaining accommodation and facilities and managing the Island. They share concerns about the possible impacts of climate change and economic factors, especially rising fuel costs, on the RIA business and tourism. They see that a key issue for success is attracting and retaining quality staff.

Community support for a sustainable approach

Stakeholders and the community shared some common themes with staff, with broad agreement on the benefits of sustainability, especially use of environmental technologies in developing future power supplies and other Island utilities. The wind turbine, desalination and recycling initiatives are well supported. Many people want to see RIA taking a lead role in integrating sustainability in business and Island management to become a 'clean green icon'.

Support for accommodation refurbishment and current directions

Recent improvements in the standards of accommodation and service are appreciated. There is widespread support for current Island management including fairness of the booking system, friendly Visitor Centre staff, Volunteer Guides and Coach Captains, education programs and environmental and heritage management.

Mandate to protect scenic, environmental and cultural heritage values

The community places a high value on the Rottneest Island environment and its sound management. It is clear from responses that landscape and biodiversity values underpin the status of Rottneest Island as a tourism and holiday destination. There is a call for a continued strong focus on environmental management of the Island and the Marine Reserve.

People value the Rottneest Island holiday experience

A common theme was a call to maintain:

- a safe, low-traffic environment for bike riders and pedestrians,
- a relaxed, not over-crowded, nature-based experience,
- affordability – some holiday makers expressed concern about rising costs and accessibility.

Tourist icon or local holiday Island?

An issue that attracted diverse comment was the potential for Rottneest Island to attract greater numbers of tourists. There is potential to play a greater role in the tourism industry.

People want a range of accommodation

There is general support for well-priced family accommodation that is clean, well-maintained and well-presented and for a range of accommodation types to cater for a variety of demands from lower-end camping to hotel style. However some people are opposed to any further accommodation especially at the luxury end. Cleaning, maintenance and ongoing refurbishment of accommodation are important. A variety of views were put forward on the level of service that is appropriate and what facilities are desired (e.g. TV, DVD, computer connections). RIA will review service levels required by different visitor segments.

Demands for access to boating facilities are increasing

An issue raised by several people who come to the Island on private boats was the need for more access to moorings and other marine facilities including sullage disposal. Suggestions were put forward for improvements to jetties and other marine

facilities and for more equity in the way moorings are rented. Perceived conflicts in meeting and managing increasing demand for marine facilities while protecting the environment and amenity of the bays and beaches were raised. Some people feel that there are already too many boats for safety and enjoyment.

Suggestions for better service and facilities

Needs for improvement were identified, including operational changes to increase convenience of booking, key collection and transport. Many people would like to see more facilities and development of recreation opportunities including more nature-based and marine-based experiences, education and cultural heritage interpretation. There was a particular call for more focus on recognising the Aboriginal history and heritage of the Island and providing guests with opportunities for Aboriginal tours and other tourism experiences.

Some specific feedback included:

- The Visitor Centre should look at ways to improve customer service and provide more information especially on recreational opportunities and the environment.
- Some people would like more facilities such as shade, water, toilets and barbecues in the Reserve away from the Settlement Area but others caution against losing the 'natural' ambience.
- There is a call for improvements in standards and price-competitiveness of some commercial businesses and some people would like more choice especially in restaurants. Again, there is a caution about getting 'too commercial' and expansion of businesses outside the Settlement.
- Many people would like to see more events and things to do, especially family-oriented concerts and youth and children's activities that are in keeping with the relaxed holiday experience.