

ROTTNEST ISLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009-2014 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the RIMP?

The RIMP is a five-year plan which sets the direction for Rottnest Island Authority management of Rottnest Island.

The *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987* requires the Rottnest Island Authority to have a five-year Management Plan (Rottnest Island Management Plan, RIMP) to guide the management direction of the Island including accommodation, visitor services and conservation of the Island's environment and heritage. The Act states that:

Any management plan for the Island prepared under this Part shall contain:

(a) a statement of the policies or guidelines proposed to be followed; and

(b) a summary of the operations proposed to be undertaken,

in respect of the Island during the period of 5 years from the time when it is approved.

Why is the Rottnest Island Authority developing a new Rottnest Island Management Plan?

The *Rottnest Island Management Plan 2003-2008* is approaching the end of its span. The Rottnest Island Authority is developing a new Management Plan for 2009-2014.

Where can I get a copy of the draft Rottnest Island Management Plan?

You can view the draft Plan on www.rottnestisland.com

If you prefer to see a printed copy, you can inspect the draft RIMP 2009-2014 at the Rottnest Island Authority (E Shed, Victoria Quay, Fremantle), Rottnest Island Museum, State Library (Perth Cultural Centre) and Fremantle City Library.

You can purchase a copy of the draft RIMP 2009-2014 from the Rottnest Island Authority for \$20. (The charge is to cover print costs). It can be purchased from the Rottnest Island Gift Shop (in the Settlement) or at the Rottnest Island Authority (E Shed, Victoria Quay, Fremantle) or phone 9432 9300.

A **free summary and submission brochure** is available on line or from the places above.

Has the draft Management Plan considered community views?

The Rottnest Island Authority has taken stakeholder and community views into account in framing the policies and initiatives in the new draft Plan. Many of the initiatives reflect suggestions put forward.

Community consultation was carried out between 29 July and 17 September 2008 to identify issues early in preparation of the draft *RIMP 2009-2014*. Comment was sought from key stakeholders, Rottnest Island 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, 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.

Why is there a period of public comment?

Under the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987*, the Rottnest Island Authority is required to notify the public of proposed amendments to the Management Plan and accept written submissions for a period not less than two months from when the notice is published in the Government Gazette. This provides stakeholders, Rottnest Island visitors and the general public with an opportunity to put forward their views for consideration before the Plan is finalised.

Who is able to provide comment?

Everyone is welcome to provide comment on the draft Plan including individuals, groups, organisations, businesses and government agencies, from Western Australia and elsewhere.

What if the subject I want to comment on does not appear in the draft RIMP?

The Rottnest Island Authority is seeking feedback on directions for the next five years, as presented in the draft RIMP. The summary and submission brochure provides spaces so that you can tell us your views on specific policies and proposed initiatives. Any other comments, including those of a general nature or on other issues, can be made in the comment section at the end of the form.

Comments of an operational nature, for example about booking procedures, accommodation inventory or cleaning, Island businesses or specific issues with bike hire, can be provided on the Visitor Feedback form on the Island or in the Customer Feedback Form in the *About the Rottnest Island Authority* section of the website, www.rottnestisland.com

What if I do not agree with the direction the RIMP is taking the Island?

This is your opportunity to have your say. Put your comments in writing in the submission form.

How do I submit commit comments?

You can provide comments on this draft *Rottnest Island Management Plan* by:

- ✓ completing the on-line submission form on www.rotnnestisland.com and submitting by email
- or
- ✓ printing and completing the 'summary and submission form' on www.rotnnestisland.com
- or
- ✓ collecting a submission form from the Rottnest Island Authority (E Shed, Victoria Quay, Fremantle), Rottnest Island Visitor Centre, State Library (Perth Cultural Centre) or Fremantle City Library, or request one by calling (08) 9432 9300.

Mail the form to:

Rottnest Island Management Plan Submissions
Rottnest Island Authority
PO Box 693, Fremantle,
Western Australia 6959

Or deliver it to the Rottnest Island Authority Quayside Visitor Centre, E Shed, Victoria Quay, Fremantle

Why can't I drop off the form while I'm on the Island?

Comments should be submitted by email or post or hand delivered to the E Shed Rottnest Island Authority office so that you can be assured they are received securely and properly recorded.

When do I need to comment by?

Submissions must be received by the Rottnest Island Authority by 5pm on Tuesday 5 May 2009

What will happen to my comments?

The Rottnest Island Authority will consider all comments before the draft Plan is finalised. The Management Plan will be reviewed according to the criteria below. A summary of submissions will be published on the Rottnest Island Authority's website, with an indication of how the Plan was amended or not amended in response to the submissions. However it will not be possible to respond to individual submissions.

Criteria for considering submissions:

1. The draft Management Plan may be amended if a submission:
 - provides additional information of direct relevance to management;
 - indicates a change in or clarifies government legislation, management policy or commitment;
 - proposes strategies that would better achieve the management objectives;
 - indicates omissions or lack of clarity.
2. The draft Management Plan may not be amended if a submission:
 - addresses issues beyond the scope of the Plan;
 - makes points that are already in the Plan or were considered during its preparation;
 - makes points which are operational rather strategic in nature;
 - contributes options that are not possible due to legislation, government policy or funding requirements.

Why is the Management Plan for five years only? What about a 10-year or 20-year plan?

The *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987* requires the Rottnest Island Authority to have a five-year Management Plan. The Rottnest Island Authority also recognises that a 'long-term sustainable approach' must take a very much longer view than a five-year Plan. Initiatives in this Plan are based on sustainability principles – 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (The World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Decisions taken now must take an inter-generational view. Long-term planning must be based on understanding trends in environmental, social and economic factors that affect the Island including awareness of changing weather and environmental conditions with climate change. Information gathering and research over the next five years will inform implementation of this Plan and provide a basis for a long-range future outlook.

An important proposed initiative in the draft Management Plan is to develop an informed twenty-year vision based on an improved understanding of external social, environmental and economic trends and the aspirations of stakeholders including the Rottnest Island Business Community.

How is Rottnest Island management funded?

The Rottnest Island Authority operates primarily on the revenue received from visitors in the form of admission fees and charges for holiday accommodation and recreational services (including mooring and anchoring fees, bike hire, tours and transport). Funding is also received from business leases, a State Government annual contribution and through grants and sponsorship.

How is the income spent?

Under Section 11 of the Act, the control and management of Rottnest Island is vested in the Rottnest Island Authority for the purpose of enabling it to:

- (a) *provide and operate recreational and holiday facilities on the Island;*
- (b) *protect the flora and fauna of the Island; and*

- (c) *maintain and protect the natural environment and the man-made resources of the Island and, to the extent that the Authority's resources allow, repair its natural environment.*

The operations undertaken to perform these functions are complex and include:

- providing and operating a range of holiday homes and facilities;
- providing recreational services such as education, interpretation and tours;
- supplying utilities for water, power, gas, wastewater and rubbish management;
- providing and operating transport services and infrastructure including public transport, roads and paths, boating facilities and airport; and
- managing the Island's A-class reserve (terrestrial and marine) and heritage assets.

How will the initiatives in the RIMP be funded?

The initiatives presented in the draft RIMP have an identified cost and funding source and are assessed to be achievable on the basis of current financial projections.

Funding sources include:

- Rottnest Island Authority budget (revenue and loans);
- external funding e.g. grants, sponsorship, arrangements with commercial operators, public private partnerships;
- requesting additional Government funding.

Funding needed to pay for the new RIMP initiatives will be generated by a combination of increasing revenue generation, achieving efficiencies to reduce costs, and re-prioritising expenditure.

Some initiatives, for example repair and interpretation of the Aboriginal Burial Ground, a new permanent camping ground, upgrading Kingstown, constructing the Coastal Walk Trail and new marine facilities, are dependant on external funding. These are specified in the draft RIMP.

Some necessary works such as major repairs or upgrades of utilities, jetties, roads and marine facilities are not funded. Cost-effective management of infrastructure and utilities is under review.

Will fees and charges go up?

The *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987* (Section 34, Relationship of revenue to expenditure) states that: '*The Authority shall perform its functions in such manner as to ensure that, taking one year with another, its revenue is at least sufficient to meet its expenditure.*'

Some sections of the community have asked the Rottnest Island Authority to maintain affordability by keeping fees and charges down. However this needs to be balanced with generating sufficient revenue and funding to maintain the Island's physical assets such as accommodation as well as environment and heritage values at an acceptable level.

Financial business modelling has demonstrated that Rottnest Island Authority's commercial operations are sustainable. However significant costs are associated with conserving Rottnest Island's natural and cultural heritage assets and maintaining essential infrastructure. Current sources and levels of funding are not adequate for the Rottnest Island Authority to become financially sustainable in the medium to long-term.

The Rottnest Island Authority is reviewing fees and charges and commercial revenue opportunities to strike an acceptable balance between revenue generation and maintaining the quality of accommodation, infrastructure, facilities and natural environment that the community expects. Consideration is being given to implementing different categories of admission fees.

How will the current global economic crisis affect Rottnest Island?

The medium and long-term effects of the current global economic situation are hard to predict, including potential impacts on the tourism industry in general and Rottnest Island in particular. Changes in visitor numbers, visitor spending patterns and costs of fuel and transport, among other things, could impact the Rottnest Island Authority's income and expenditure. The Rottnest Island Authority will monitor leading indicators (e.g. level of advance bookings) on a quarterly basis to gauge any effects.

A proposed initiative in the draft RIMP is to '*Identify external environmental and economic threats to the sustainability of Rottnest Island as an ecotourism destination and its associated natural and cultural values and pursue strategies to address the effects of those threats.*' This will enable the Rottnest Island Authority to take advantage of opportunities that arise and be in a better position to plan for long-term responses to threats, including possible tourism downturns, rising costs and climate change.

Will the proposed initiatives proceed if the economy gets worse?

The initiatives presented in the draft RIMP have an identified cost and funding source and are assessed to be achievable on the basis of current financial projections. The potential for a worldwide and local recession may adversely affect financial management of the Island. The policies and initiatives outlined are therefore qualified on the basis that currently projected funding levels are maintained and anticipated levels of revenue and funding are achieved.

Like any other business, the Rottnest Island Authority needs to adapt to the constantly evolving financial situation. It may become necessary to review priorities and defer or reschedule some projects. However the overall management direction would remain the same.

What developments are proposed over the next five years?

In the five years covered by this RIMP, it is proposed to undertake the following new developments in the Settlement. (Some developments are subject to funding or public private partnerships).

- a new permanent camping ground at South Thomson;
- expansion of guest accommodation on a site adjacent to the Hotel Rottnest (Quokka Arms);
- replace the existing fibro units in the Settlement with the new style of chalet that has been trialled successfully;
- new staff accommodation at 'Windy Hill' (Parker Point Road) and/or on vacant land adjacent to the current operations workshops;
- redevelop the Army Jetty and its surrounds for commercial use e.g. ferry services, barge services, charter boat services, fuel and sullage tank facilities;
- new volunteer accommodation;
- a hotel with meeting facilities (Mt Hershel).

In keeping with the *Utilities Master Plan*, consideration is being given to establishing a new powerplant at the old landfill site.

What happened to the Precincts in the Settlement Area?

The *RIMP 2003-2008* defined precincts for specific land uses in the Settlement Area, for example visitor accommodation, services and operations and commercial use. This approach has not been workable, as many factors change during a five year period, and the Authority has been hindered from making effective development decisions. It is proposed that a single Settlement zone (the area defined in the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987*) with clear policies, development controls and sustainability guidelines offers better protection for the heritage, environment and social amenity of the Settlement. This will also result in a more transparent planning and approvals process and greater planning efficiency. Upgrading the Rottnest Island Authority's *Guidelines for Sustainable Development* with approval from the Minister for Tourism will give them greater strength and authority and provide a clear and effective basis for development planning, assessments and implementation.

How will the Settlement's environment and heritage values be protected?

Development is limited to the designated Settlement Area, as specified in the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987*, unless approved by the Minister or provided for in this five-year Management Plan.

Any development proposals are subject to strong controls through legislation, stringent development planning controls, and Rottnest Island Authority *Guidelines for Sustainable Development* and other related policies in the *Sustainable Development: Rottnest Island Planning and Development Toolkit* (available on the website). The policies and guidelines for sustainable development will be reviewed and updated in line with the sustainability initiatives in the draft RIMP. These will be approved by the Minister.

Any new development proposals in the next five years beyond those listed in the RIMP will be required to be consistent with the published guidelines and the RIMP, and to be approved by the Minister.

How will the standard of accommodation be maintained?

Community consultation and market research have indicated that visitors greatly appreciate the higher standard of accommodation that resulted from the comprehensive refurbishment program between 2004 and 2008.

The Rottnest Island Authority will maintain the quality of Rottnest Island Authority visitor accommodation through a rolling refurbishment program. Implementing a cyclical refurbishment program over a 10-year period will ensure that all Rottnest Island Authority accommodation undergoes a minor refurbishment in the first five years and a major refurbishment in the later five years. The first 10-year phase will start in 2009-10. The cyclical approach will ensure that every year a portion of the accommodation is undergoing refurbishment of some kind with minimum interruption to the visitor's experience.

This is a major commitment in the draft RIMP, with an investment of some \$2 million annually.

Will lower-cost accommodation options still be available?

The Rottnest Island Authority will continue to offer lower-cost accommodation including developing a new permanent camping ground at South Thomson, replacing the existing fibro units in the Settlement with the new style of chalet that has been trialled successfully, and offering backpacker accommodation at Kingstown. Low priced accommodation options on the Island include the iconic bungalows. Even in peak season, the current cost per head per night for four people sharing a bungalow is a maximum of \$20. Other low priced options include the Caroline Thomson cabins (\$70 - \$81 a night for up to six people).

Why is the Rottnest Island Authority looking at alternative methods for managing the accommodation?

There is a need for increased revenue to allow necessary investment in the Island. The Rottnest Island Authority proposes to explore the potential for alternative rental management structures for a segment of Island accommodation in order to contribute to cash flow and financial sustainability, allowing reinvestment in services and Island management. The current model of short-term rental of all Rottnest Island Authority accommodation by ballot or booking up to one year ahead does not allow flexibility to maximise rental throughout the year or maximise revenue.

Alternative options might include outsourcing management of some accommodation to a private operator or forward leasing. This means offering a segment of accommodation (not necessarily all in one area) for advance booking by ballot for one week per year for 10 years. An up-front investment would secure holiday accommodation for 10 years – something that would be attractive to some visitors – and give the Rottnest Island Authority advance revenue for investment in Island management.

How will the boating community's needs be addressed?

The Rottnest Island Authority needs to plan to meet increasing demands for moorings and marine facilities while protecting the marine environment and visitor amenity and safety. A Boating Management Strategy based on sustainable visitor and boating research will provide a basis for planning new marine facilities during the life of this Management Plan.

New facilities under consideration include mooring sites suitable for larger vessels, installation of moorings for key dive sites and a feasibility study for development of a commercial marina in the vicinity of the Army Jetty. Any new facilities will be based on a feasibility study of financial, social and environmental sustainability.

Will there be a marina development?

The Rottnest Island Authority proposes to redevelop the Army Jetty and its surrounds for commercial use e.g. ferry services, barge services (an alternative to the current Main Jetty location), charter boat services, fuel and sullage tank facilities. This would provide advantages both to the boating community and to other Island visitors who would benefit from reduced congestion at the Main Jetty. It is suggested that while boating numbers may increase, better facilities will enable the marine environment to be better managed and protected.

A commercial marina was suggested during the Stage 1 community consultation leading up to preparing the draft RIMP. This could provide boat pens, facilities for charter boats and larger commercial vessels, and services for boat owners. The Rottnest Island Authority is interested in a public private partnership to undertake a feasibility study for development of a commercial marina in the vicinity of the Army Jetty.

How will the Island utilities be managed?

Water, electricity and gas supply and wastewater treatment are currently undertaken by the Rottnest Island Authority and managed under the Facilities Management Contract. An investment in the infrastructure of the utilities is required due its age and expected increase in future demand. The Rottnest Island Authority's responsibility for providing and maintaining its own utilities cannot be supported in the current funding framework. A review is underway to determine the most cost-effective means of carrying out this function including outsourcing or shifting the responsibility to other government agencies.

What recreational activities are planned?

Feedback provided in this consultation will be valuable input to identifying the nature of experiences and recreational facilities that people would like to see on Rottnest Island.

Community consultation in the early stages of developing the draft RIMP indicated that people are interested in experiences that celebrate and allow people to interact with the environment and heritage of Rottnest Island. The Coastal Walk Trail and a variety of low-impact visitor opportunities including events, tours and activities based on ecotourism, nature appreciation, cultural tourism and environmental education principles will be developed in the Reserve on the basis of the results of sustainable tourism (visitor capacity) research. An Ecotourism Strategy will underpin research, and product and business development.

What new facilities are planned?

Visitor feedback over several years has indicated a need for more facilities such as bus shelters outside the Settlement. Drivers for this change include the aging population and changing visitor expectations. Other people express a desire for the Reserve outside the Settlement to remain natural.

The Rottnest Island Authority has initiated sustainable tourism (visitor capacity) research in the Reserve outside the Settlement to understand current visitor use and pressures. This information, together with feedback received during this consultation on the draft RIMP, will be used review the need for and develop low-impact visitor facilities in the Rottnest Island Reserve. These may include lighting, toilets, shade, bus shelters, water and recreational facilities. Some facilities will be developed in association with the Coastal Walk Trail, which is in the planning stages. Existing toilet facilities will require replacement over time.

How will the environment be protected?

The RIMP is based on the fundamental principle of sustainability including the environment. Specific initiatives that will contribute to protecting Rottnest Island's marine and terrestrial environment are:

- progressing sustainability through external accreditation, sustainable tourism (visitor capacity) research and identifying external environmental and economic threats (including climate change);
- stringent development planning controls;
- sensitive development of recreation and facilities in the Reserve outside the Settlement underpinned by sustainable tourism (visitor capacity) research and an Ecotourism Strategy;
- protecting and managing the terrestrial environment through a new Terrestrial Management Strategy that will coordinate the range of management plans;
- implementing the *Marine Management Strategy 2007*;
- education and interpretation;
- providing increased opportunity for marine and terrestrial scientific research and monitoring.

How does the Rottnest Island Authority propose to prevent unruly or drunken behaviour disturbing the peace on the Island?

Initiatives in the draft RIMP propose to offer community services with a focus on excellent customer service and encouraging a family-friendly Island culture based on the values of friendliness, safety and respect for others and the environment. This will include a partnership approach with the various service providers on the Island and an increased focus on providing appropriate recreational opportunities for visitors and Island residents, including a recreation centre.

The Rottnest Island Authority and Police take a strong stand against antisocial behaviour. The Rottnest Island Authority will consider a policy of 'blacklisting' serious or repeat offenders to prevent them visiting Rottnest Island for a defined period. Feedback on the degree of community support for a 'no tolerance' policy will assist development of policies in this regard.