

ROTTNEST ISLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT 2007

REPORT ON PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESS

Executive summary

The Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) recommended amendments to the Rottnest Island Management Plan 2003-2008 (RIMP). These amendments relate to zoning changes in the area known as the old Tearooms site (Central Thomson Bay) and at Mt Herschel. The amendments will effect a resolution between the RIMP and the 2004 Rottnest Taskforce recommendations, which have been implemented by the RIA under the direction of the Minister for Tourism.

The Rottnest Island Authority proceeded with a formal process following the procedure laid out in the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987* (the Act) concerning amendments to the RIMP.

Under the terms of the Act, the amendments were released for a two-month public consultation period which concluded at close of business on Monday 23 April 2007.

The Evaluation Panel met on Monday 30 April to consider the 206 submissions received. The terms of reference were to:

1. Analyse all submissions received from the public consultation process.
2. Identify issues raised in the submissions.
3. Provide recommendations to the Minister for Tourism with respect to the issues raised and the outcome of the proposed amendments to the RIMP 2003-2008.

A total of 206 submissions was received from the public consultation process. Of these submissions, less than 2% were opposed to Amendment 1 while 76% supported this amendment relating to the relocation of the Dome Café (the remainder did not specifically comment). Overall, 71% of submissions supported rezoning Mt Herschel for additional accommodation. Sixty submissions opposed some or all amendments or specified opposition to the proposed accommodation development at Mt Herschel.

Attached is a summary of the main issues resulting from the public submissions, the Evaluation Panel's discussion relating to these comments and the outcomes from the discussions (Appendix 1). The Evaluation Panel now submits its recommended amendments to the RIMP to the Minister for Tourism.

Background

A performance examination conducted by the Office of the Auditor General in 2003 found that *“Without urgent attention the RIA will be left with little choice but to reconsider public access and use of the Island”*.

As a result the Government established a Taskforce to investigate the sustainability of Rottnest Island. The Rottnest Island Taskforce presented a blueprint for improvements to the infrastructure and the financial sustainability of Rottnest Island on 30 May 2004.

The Taskforce worked with RIA staff and Government agencies to undertake a thorough analysis of the infrastructure, services and facilities on the Island. Their investigations were underpinned by the RIMP, which was produced after two-months of public consultation.

A wide variety of stakeholders was consulted during the formulation of the Taskforce recommendations, including:

- The Rottnest Society
- Rottnest Island Volunteer Guides Association
- Rottnest Island Foundation
- Rottnest Island Business Community
- Boating Industry of WA
- Australian Hotels Association Western Australia
- Conservation Commission of Western Australia
- Department of Conservation and Land Management
- Department of Fisheries
- Department of Indigenous Affairs
- Department of Local Government and Regional Development
- Department of Planning and Infrastructure
- Department of Treasury and Finance
- Heritage Council
- Office of the Minister for the Environment
- Office of the Auditor General
- Office of the State Solicitor
- Office of the Treasurer
- Western Australian Museum
- Western Australian Tourism Commission

The Taskforce Report contained 103 recommendations with funding of \$20 million to be spent on upgrading infrastructure, services and accommodation on the Island. State Government accepted 101 of the 103 recommendations.

The proposed amendments have been developed to ensure consistency is maintained between the recommendations of the RIMP and the Taskforce Report.

The RIMP Amendment consultation process

In line with the Act, a Gazettal notice and advertising in two editions of *The West Australian* alerted the public of Western Australia to the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed amendments during a two month period of public consultation. This process closed on Monday 23 April. Advertising included:

- Notice in the Government Gazette 23 February 2007
- The West Australian advertisements:
 - Saturday 24 February 2007
 - Wednesday 28 February 2007

Full details of the proposed amendments to the RIMP (see Appendix 2) were made available to the public:

- on the Rottnest Island Authority Website www.rotnnestisland.com;
- in hard copy from the RIA Reception, E Shed, Victoria Quay, Fremantle, and the Salt Store Gallery, Rottnest Island; and
- telephone enquiries could be made to the RIA at 089 432 9300.

Assessment of submissions received

At the conclusion of the public consultation period, all submissions received were analysed by an Evaluation Panel with representatives from the RIA, Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco Tourism (FACET) and Tourism Western Australia:

- Paolo Amaranti, Rottnest Island Authority (Chair)
- Laurie O'Meara, Chairman Rottnest Island Authority
- Claire Wright, Rottnest Island Authority
- Colin Brandis, Rottnest Island Authority
- Pat Barblett, FACET
- Stuart Richardson, Tourism Western Australia

In attendance:

Penni Fletcher-Hughes, Rottnest Island Authority

The Evaluation Panel (the Panel) requested that it be noted that two members of the Panel served on the 2004 Taskforce.

The Evaluation Panel met on Monday 30 April to consider the 206 submissions received. The terms of reference were to:

- Analyse all submissions received from the public consultation process.
- Identify issues raised in the submissions.
- Provide recommendations to the Minister for Tourism with respect to the issues raised and the outcome of the proposed amendments to the RIMP 2003-2008.

The Panel's conclusions are summarised below. A summary of the main issues resulting from the public submissions, the Evaluation Panel's discussion relating to these comments and the outcomes from the discussions is attached (Appendix 1).

On completion of the assessment of the public submissions, the Panel members reached unanimous agreement on recommendations to the Minister for Tourism.

Panel conclusions

The Panel noted that 206 submissions had been received which provided a reasonable cross section of public opinion.

Of the 206 submissions received, less than 2% were opposed to amendment 1 while 76% supported this amendment relating to the relocation of the Dome Café (the remainder did not specifically comment).

Amendments 2-8 ensure the inconsistencies between the RIMP and the Taskforce Report relating to building additional accommodation are resolved.

Overall, 146 (71%) submissions were in favour of amendments 2-8, representing individuals, families, businesses and recreational organisations with considerable member base. Comments in favour of these amendments related to:

- support for financial sustainability for Rottneest;
- support for a wider choice and range of accommodation/tourist accommodation;
- support for provision of more amenities, infrastructure and facilities to improve the visitor experience and meet changing demographics and community needs;
- tourism and the benefits it can bring;
- opinion that these changes are in keeping with, or can be carried out in sympathy with, sustainable development of the Island;
- general support for the Rottneest Island Authority management of the Island.

Overall 60 (29%) submissions opposed the amendments or made general comments against the development. Most came from individuals, families and special interest organisations. Comments opposing the amendments related to:

- favouring retention of the area for water catchment or infrastructure use;
- opposition to any change to Rottnest's current use or character;
- opposition to the concept of a luxury/tourist resort;
- concern about the potential need for more services and facilities;
- concern about environmental impacts from the development or from additional visitors, including vegetation destruction, noise, increased vehicle movements and pressure on the fragile Island environment;
- specific concerns about the design of a hotel;
- concern about the planning or lease process;
- opposition to the concept of financial sustainability.

The Panel also noted the comments of a respondent who had researched the original intention of Governor Bedford when the Island was first withdrawn from public ownership for the people of Western Australia:

*"In 1907 Governor of WA, Admiral Bedford, Minute states that the Island should be a public park for the enjoyment of the people forever and no one should be able to own any part of it; **Accommodation should be erected to keep pace with demand.**"*

The panel considered the issues raised for and against the amendments (see Appendix 1) and were satisfied by advice from the RIA that:

- Guidelines for Sustainable Development are in place to ensure the protection and retention of the Island's environmental and social values.
- The RIA had followed the procedures outlined in the *Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987* for amending the Rottnest Island Management Plan.
- Vehicle and traffic management was an issue being addressed consistently by the RIA such that the proposed additional accommodation would contribute minimal or no impact.
- Utilities upgrades are a feature of the Rottnest Island Taskforce Report and were required to be undertaken regardless of the additional accommodation development. These funded upgrades will take into account future demands.
- The Rottnest Island Taskforce identified that the Island's water supply is sustainable using the dual water sources of the shallow aquifer and the desalination plant. The ongoing reduced rainfall received at Rottnest Island combined with the costs to repair and maintain the catchment area has resulted in rainfall catchment being considered not viable as a water source.

The Panel concluded its evaluation of the submissions and makes its recommendations to the Minister for Tourism as indicated in the recommendation section below.

Recommendations

That the following amendments to the Rottnest Island Management Plan 2003-2008 be approved:

Part B: Management Planning, Chapter 2. Reserve Zoning Plan and Settlement Planning Scheme

1. Point 2.4.1.1 is amended to delete the final sentence in the second paragraph which relates to the land on the western side of Colebatch Avenue, between Henderson Avenue and Forrest Avenue.

The paragraph relating to the arrival and departure precinct now reads:

“Key elements of this precinct are the Main Passenger Jetty, Visitor and Information Centre, Accommodation Office and the Seawall.”

2. Point 2.4.9.1 is amended in the fourth sentence by deleting the words “the bituminised catchment area,” after the word “contains”, deleting the words “and is the site of the proposed wind turbine.” and inserting the words “and the site surrounding the wind turbine.” after the word “tanks”.

The sentence relating to the Service and Operations Precinct now reads:

“A third area located around Mt Herschel contains the desalination plants and water collection tanks and the site surrounding the wind turbine”.

3. Point 2.4.6.1 is amended to include after the word "Longreach" the following phrase "(including the area located around Mt Herschel)".

The sentence relating to the Geordie Longreach and Fays Bay Visitor Accommodation Precinct now reads:

“Geordie Longreach (including the area located around Mt Herschel) and Fays Bay visitor accommodation precinct provides a unique style of accommodation, and all units have an exceptional outlook.”

4. Point 2.4.6.2 is amended to include an additional dot point which reads under the heading Geordie, Longreach and Fays Bay Visitor Accommodation Precinct - Issues:

"The Rottnest Island Taskforce, appointed by the Minister for Tourism in 2003, identified the Mt Herschel site as being able to be used for an additional accommodation project."

5. Point 2.4.6.3 is amended to include an additional dot point which reads under the heading Recommendations:

"Build additional accommodation on the Mt Herschel site."

Part B: Management Planning, Chapter 6. Holiday and Recreation Services and Facilities

6. Point 6.5.3.3 is amended to insert a new dot point after the first dot point to read under the heading Amount of Accommodation – Recommendations:

"Build additional accommodation on the Mt Herschel site."

Part B: Management Planning, Chapter 10. Infrastructure and Utilities

7. The final dot point in point 10.2.1.3 and recommendation 225 are deleted.

This removes the following sentence from the heading Potable Water – Recommendations:

"Develop and implement a bituminised catchment maintenance program to ensure maximum possible yield from the remaining bituminised catchment."

[Note: Chart 4 of the RIMP is not amended, despite the amendments to precincts outlined above as the Chart is merely indicative and, as such, no amendments are necessary]