

Operational policy

Workforce and Safety

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships operational policy program

Operational policies provide a framework for consistent application and interpretation of legislation and for the management of non-legislative matters by the Department of Environment and Science. Operational policies are not intended to be applied inflexibly in all circumstances. Individual circumstances may require a modified application of policy.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the function and requirements of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWS&P) operational policy program. QPWS&P operational policy provides guidance to staff on a range of matters related to park and forest management. It is crucial this is supported by a system that incorporates processes to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of the policy program.

Background

QPWS&P operational policy comprises of a range of document types that are primarily used to provide information and advice to QPWS&P officers and the public regarding day-to-day operations and to assist with decision-making. Using policies in this way promotes informed, transparent and consistent decision-making and also helps to ensure legislative obligations are met.

Standard operational policy includes the following document types - operational policies, procedural guides, guidelines, technical manuals, information sheets, checklists, application forms, codes of practice, forms and notices. These document types form part of the approved policy document list and accordingly, must be approved, published, stored and reviewed as outlined in the 'procedure' section of this document.

The establishment and function of the QPWS&P operational policy program is designed to:

- maintain the systems and standards for QPWS&P policy document development, consultation, approval publication, storage and record keeping;
- provide a resource for information to QPWS&P staff to assist them in aligning with the systems and standards;
- ensure approved policy documents are available to staff via the QPWS&P policy pages and general public via the external website; and
- update management on the status of the policy program with periodic reports.

QPWS&P branches are responsible for components of the operational policy program, including the development, review, approval, publication and record keeping of policy documents.

Policy matters that affect multiple areas of responsibility or do not clearly fall within the business area of any particular branch will be allocated to a responsible work area by the DDG, QPWS&P.

Policy needs are usually identified by the QPWS&P branch responsible for the area of policy or as a result of a request for assistance from other QPWS&P officers. From time to time, urgent policy development may be requested by the Minister, Director-General or relevant Deputy Director-General or Executive Director.

Procedure

Templates

Policy documents are drafted using the relevant approved template available on the ITP policy register (via the QPWS template section or upon request via email QPWSPolicySupport@des.qld.gov.au). Standard templates exist for all operational policy document types. Document types are tailored to reflect the information to be communicated and the intended audience for the information.

Consultation

The standard period for internal consultation on policy documents that are new or under review is 4 weeks. Shorter periods may be appropriate where a policy document is required urgently, is unlikely to be contentious and/or does not involve external stakeholders.

Consultation with government departments, Traditional Owners and stakeholders is often required to develop accurate and effective operational policy. The relevant director is generally responsible for determining if and how external stakeholders will be consulted at an officer-to-officer level. Formal or public consultation requires a higher level of approval (see below).

When planning any consultation it is important to consider meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners. It is important to consider Traditional Owner engagement obligations or other rights and interests (including Native Title and Cultural Heritage issues) relating to the content of new policies being developed or existing policies that are being reviewed.

Document approval and review process

All QPWS&P policy documents must be approved by the DDG, QPWS&P.

Once approved, all policy documents must be reviewed every 5 years and resubmitted to the DDG for approval to ensure policies are maintained and contemporary.

Minor amendments to policy documents may be approved by the relevant director or executive director responsible for the policy. Minor amendments are changes to an approved policy document that do not change the meaning or context of the policy, such as updating policy document templates and making corrections to references and phone numbers. A minor amendment approved by a director does not affect the review timeframe.

Note, changes to references of the department name, do not constitute a minor amendment. Accordingly, policies may be updated to reflect new department names, without further approval, using the approved policy template subsequent to Machinery of Government changes.

The QPWS&P Executive Management Group (comprising of the DDG QPWS&P, executive directors and other key staff) considers all policies prior to final approval by the DDG QPWS&P and has requested briefing regarding:

- all proposals for new or substantially revised policy;
- all proposals that require public consultation;
- distribution of draft policies within QPWS&P for consultation; and

- consideration prior to QPWS&P policies being recommended for approval by the DDG QPWS&P.

Document management – naming, publication, storage and record keeping

1. Naming

Naming of policy document files should be in accordance with the file naming convention which comprises a combination of document type, business type, policy theme and document title. For example, the naming convention for *Operational policy – Mountain biking in QPWS managed areas* which sits under 'visitor management' and relates to 'Parks and forests' is **op-pk-vm-mountain-biking.doc**.

2. Publication

All approved policy documents must be:

- published to the ITP Policy Register (this is the primary publication location for all QPWS&P approved policy documents);
- available to the general public via the department's website (unless exempt); and
- available to staff via the QPWS&P Policy Pages.

3. Storage

All approved policy documents must be:

- stored electronically in the QPWS&P policy management system in both MSWord and PDF (via Adobe Professional); and
- the signed versions stored in hard copy and/or electronic copy on the internal filing system.

4. Record keeping

Approved policy documents must also be recorded in the QPWS&P policy master list to ensure current version details are updated recorded and old versions are archived.

All QPWS&P policy documents are public records and as such are publically available. Accordingly, policy documents should be accessible via the department's external website.

A step-by-step guide on 'how to develop and publish a policy' is available on the QPWS&P Policy Pages.

Policy documents are grouped according to themes and subjects. This structure ensures documents are searchable under their relevant subject matter and provides a consistent approach for document management.

The policy program enables the searching of historical policy documents. From time to time, requests are received to search archival records for the purposes of facilitating obligations such as Right to Information (RTI), internal review processes or court proceedings. For example, when decisions are challenged and the department's policy on a specific matter, at a certain point in time, is required.

For further information on document management procedures refer to the QPWS&P Policy Pages, or to search archival records, email QPWSPolicySupport@des.qld.gov.au.

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Disclaimer

While this document has been prepared with care, it contains general information and does not profess to offer legal, professional or commercial advice. The Queensland Government accepts no liability for any external decisions or actions taken on the basis of this document. Persons external to the Department of Environment and Science should satisfy themselves independently and by consulting their own professional advisors before embarking on any proposed course of action.

Approved By

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Signature

29/09/2013

Date

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