

# Feedback Analysis: priorities for management planning

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Sustainable Development Facilitation and the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council  
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## Introduction

As part of a broader process of *participatory management* a workshop session was held as part of the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council's (PHCC) Annual Community Forum, at Coodanup Hall in December 2007. Over 100 community, government, business and non-government organisation representatives attended the workshop to discuss priorities for managing the wetlands that comprise the Peel-Yalgorup System. The wetlands include the Peel Inlet and Harvey Estuary, the saline lakes of Yalgorup National Park and the freshwater marshes of Lakes McLarty and Mealup. Together these wetlands are recognised as 'internationally-important' under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. To ensure the conservation of this world class wetland system, the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council initiated a process of developing a management plan for the wetlands with a focus on engaging local community and stakeholders in the planning process.

Four objectives underpinned the December workshop;

- (1) to clarify and re-affirm the vision for managing the Peel-Yalgorup System
- (2) to identify the objectives/management priorities that will feed into an action-oriented plan
- (3) to build commitment from the stakeholders towards progressing the management plan, and
- (4) develop a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility for the preservation and management of the wetland system.

## Method

### *Strategy for stakeholder engagement*

The workshop forms the third event in the strategy for community and stakeholder engagement. It follows on from a stakeholder survey completed in October 2007 and a planning session with the project's Technical Advisory Group held in November 2007.

Remaining steps in the strategy include further meetings of the Technical Advisory Group, web and email based communication with all stakeholders and the consultation with representatives of key agencies and organisations.

The planning workshop was held as part of the PHCC Annual Community Forum, to take advantage of the high number of stakeholders that were expected to attend. It was also decided that combining the workshop with the broader PHCC Forum would also help to minimise stakeholder consultation fatigue.

### *Stakeholder identification*

Early work to identify and map key stakeholders was undertaken in mid-2007, to develop a better understanding of the complex range of stakeholders involved (both directly and indirectly) in the conservation and management of the wetlands. The purpose of stakeholder analysis was also to generate a better understanding the diversity of stakeholders to allow the engagement process to be

tailor to the needs of different interest groups, so to achieve the best possible result from each of the planned events.

As part of the survey undertaken in October last year, respondents were asked to indicate their preferred method of involvement: participation at workshops, written correspondence or regular updates. Of the 45 respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in future workshop-style events, 30 were in attendance at the December workshop<sup>1</sup>.

The PHCC Annual Community Forum invitees included representatives and stakeholders from a diverse range of backgrounds and organisations including: local government, state government, NGOs and community groups, planners, developers, Aboriginal organisations and business representatives. Over 100 people (comprising both registered stakeholders and other guests of the PHCC Annual Community forum) were in attendance.

### *Workshop formula*

The two hour workshop comprised a short background presentation followed by the interactive group discussion. Participants were asked to break into small groups to discuss the vision for management of the Ramsar wetland system and to consider the proposed key priorities/objectives<sup>2</sup>. Groups were mixed, with representatives from diverse backgrounds grouped together to promote sharing of views and opinions.

In addition to the six proposed key priorities, opportunity was also given for participants to suggest additional priorities of their own.

Participants were firstly asked to individually rank the six key priority/objectives. They were then invited to discuss the ranking within their group, before being asked to reach a consensus in submitting a group answer to the workshop facilitator. Finally, participants were then asked to again consider their original, individual, response to the ranking process, and to indicate if their assessment had changed.

The process of discussion and agreement on the ranking of proposed key priorities was expected to generate a basis upon which specific objectives, strategies, actions and key performance indicators for the management of the Peel-Yalgorup System could be derived.

### *Analysis of the results*

Feedback from the workshop session was assessed in order to generate the following outcomes:

- a general indication of priority ranking
- inference about key priorities and whether those proposed were adequate in reflecting the most 'important' aspects of Ramsar site management and planning
- a refined vision for site management
- supporting information for the development of strategies actions and measures of success – the outline draft management plan

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 45 stakeholders who registered interest in attending the December workshop, 30 people attended, 10 were unable to attend and 5 did not reply to the invitation. This represents a conversion rate of 66% which is considered to be a very positive response.

<sup>2</sup> The proposed key priorities were developed as a result of the earlier Technical Advisory Group meeting, held in October 2007 (as per step 2 of the strategy).

The feedback from the workshop was considered together with the analysis from earlier steps to make recommendations for the management plan.

## Discussion: process and results

A proposed **vision for management** of the Peel-Yalgorup System, for consideration by the participants, was first developed based on the discussion of environmental priority presented in the *Peel 2020* document: *A Valued and Protected Environment*<sup>3</sup>. The geographical scope covered in *Peel 2020* includes the areas that comprise the Peel-Yalgorup System and it was therefore felt that the proposed vision would reflect the sentiment and values already inherent to the area. This proposed vision was then presented to the workshop participants as the first topic for group discussion.

*“We value the Peel-Yalgorup Wetland System for its biodiversity and ecology, and worldwide recognition as a major environmental asset. Its diverse waterways must be used wisely and its flora and fauna must be conserved and protected for long term positive impact”.*

Whilst the majority of participants did not make written comment about the vision, there was some consistency among those that did<sup>4</sup>. The most common comment regarding the existing vision is the use of the term ‘*positive impact*’; this was generally not well-liked. Suggestions included ‘*outcomes*’ or ‘*conserve and protect for the long term*’ or ‘*future generations*’. The statement has since been amended to best reflect the sentiment and suggestions that were made at the workshop.

To generate **feedback on proposed priorities**, each individual was first asked to rank the six priorities. It was expected that at this stage, the response of each individual would rely heavily on their own set of values and their individual ideas on the services and benefits of the wetlands.

<b>Proposed Priorities</b>
Clear Guiding Principles: <i>recommendation for action, statutory processes</i>
High Level Strategic Commitment: <i>State/Federal, Local Government, Planning Agencies.</i>
Community Engagement: <i>leads to political pressure and local action</i>
Performance Targets & Monitoring
Increased Resources: <i>including Enterprise &amp; Business Involvement</i>
Clear Boundaries: <i>what is part of the System, extend, define, agree, promote</i>

Individuals then formed small groups to consider and discuss the proposed key priorities/objectives and to ultimately determine a group-based ranking. In submitting their responses, groups were also asked to justify their decisions.

<sup>3</sup> Page 29, Peel Sustainable Development Strategy 2020, Peel Development Commission November 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Analysis of comments on the proposed vision is provided in Appendix 2

After discussion with group members, individuals were then invited to reconsider their original ranking and reorder priorities where necessary. It is interesting to note that there were some significant changes to the ‘before and after’ responses of individuals. Since these changes follow on from the group discussion, it is reasonable to assume that exposure of individuals to new attitudes or options accounts was a principle motivator for the changes in attitudes and/or opinion. This is supported by the notes taken during some group discussions and from some of the written comments provided to the facilitator. Many of the participants were persuaded by the viewpoints of others and were willing to concede that their original priorities were perhaps not in the best interests of the entire Peel-Yalgorup System.

At each stage, individuals and groups were given the opportunity to propose additional key priorities/objectives. Other priorities listed were: raising awareness throughout the community about the value of the System, media support and campaigns, education at schools and other institutions, aboriginal consultation, stewardship, and climate change and other external impacts such as recreation.

In total 76 feedback forms were received and analysed<sup>5</sup>.

*Clear Guiding Principles* was rated the highest priority both by groups (40%) and individuals (41%) and was ranked second by 30% of groups and 26% of individuals. Clearly this is considered to be a critical priority. Comments on the feedback sheets suggest that establishing this is a crucial priority in setting out the planning objectives. Also, policies are seen as the ‘starting point’ from which to move forward.

The objective which received the second greatest priority was the need to attract **high level strategic commitment** to the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar management plan and its implementation through appropriate governance and legislation. This involves lobbying for strategic commitment to build support for the management of the wetlands and would rely on the commitment from all levels of government – federal, state and local, as well as planning agencies such as Department of Water, Department of Environment and Conservation, and Department of Planning and Infrastructure<sup>6</sup>. Most of the written comments from the workshop suggest that building high level strategic commitment is essential.

One third of all groups and one quarter of the individual responses listed both *High Level Strategic Commitment* and *Clear Boundaries* as equally important, in second place. This result was also supported in many of the written comments, revealing the difficulty for some participants to decide the importance between *Clear Boundaries* and *High Level Strategic Commitment*<sup>7</sup>. Some comments such as “we need to know what is protected” and “we need to know where” were examples of why some

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<sup>5</sup> All 10 groups provided a combined response. The remaining 66 were provided by individuals.

<sup>6</sup> This priority was ranked as number 2 by two groups, but 2 other groups also ranked it as number 1; therefore it is considered of high importance.

<sup>7</sup> Priority 4 is the only priority that is not clearly defined by groups and individuals. The objective ranked number 4 by groups was *Clear Boundaries* (30%), whilst individuals ranked *Strategic Commitment* at number 4 (21%). Given that both of these priorities were also ranked high in Priority 2, it would seem that workshop participants expect both of these to be given similar importance in the management planning process. *High Level Strategic Commitment* was generally rated higher than *Clear Boundaries* by individuals (from level 1 – 4) (See Appendix 3; *High Level Strategic Commitment* by Individual). For this reason it could be concluded that *Clear Boundaries* should be priority 4 and *High Level Strategic Commitment* ought to retain a higher status.

people thought *Clear Boundaries* ought to rank higher than *High Level Strategic Commitment*. For others however, *Clear Boundaries* was not viewed as such a critical priority – comments such as “don’t set (the boundaries) in concrete, be flexible” and “there’s only one target” suggests that some perceived *High Level Strategic Commitment* to be of higher importance.

The third highest priority for both groups and individuals was *Community Engagement*. Fifty percent of groups and 35 % of individuals rated community engagement as third highest in importance. Establishing and carrying out a community engagement process is considered to be of high importance because it will provide the catalyst from which wider support can be developed, and build awareness of the importance of ‘stewardship’.

Both groups and individuals considered *Performance Targets & Monitoring* to be the fifth most urgent priority. Fifty percent of groups and 39% of individuals ranked this as the fifth priority. Comments relating to this priority were mixed: many participants felt that other priorities need to be in place before performance targets can be met and monitored whilst some pointed out the importance of monitoring & evaluation in determining the success of projects and conservation initiatives.

Increased resources was considered to be the least most urgent priority with 40% of groups and 32% of individuals ranking it at this level. There were only a small number of comments suggesting a need to increase resourcing.

Other priorities suggested by stakeholders indicated similarities amongst the suggestions of groups and individuals. The most frequently raised priorities were: raising community awareness through media support, awareness raising among state and federal politicians, education, climate change, indigenous consultation, stewardship, research and development, restricting urban development and regulation/policing.

<b>RE-PRIORITISED LIST</b>
1. Clear Guiding Principles: <i>recommendation for action, statutory processes</i>
2. High Level Strategic Commitment: <i>State/Federal, Local Government, Planning Agencies.</i>
3. Community Engagement: <i>leads to political pressure and local action</i>
4. Clear Boundaries: <i>what is part of the System, extend, define, agree, promote</i>
5. Performance Targets & Monitoring
6. Increased Resources: <i>including Enterprise &amp; Business Involvement</i>
Other: media support, awareness raising among state and federal politicians, education, climate change, indigenous consultation, stewardship, research and development, restricting urban development and regulation/policing.

## Conclusions

At present, boundaries are unclear and stakeholders are confused about where the Ramsar boundary starts and stops. Many stakeholders also indicated support for boundary extensions to include environmentally significant landscapes that are not currently included.

Boundaries need to be promoted to appropriate parties so that everyone is clear about who is managing or monitoring specific areas. This supports the need to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of management organisations both in the management of the site itself, and within the context of broader scale catchment management.

The need to define clear guiding principles is paramount.

Lobbying for support and commitment from all levels of government, as well as planners and developers (government and private) is considered a critical step by stakeholders. Partnerships with local community groups and non-government organisations provide a significant opportunity for improving future management of the system and achieving the principal objectives.

Engaging the wider community through education (both in schools and general community education via the media) to promote cultural values is of high priority. Behaviour change -in they way individuals view and treat land, waterways and wetlands, for in recreation and commercial purposes- is of high priority. The importance of a systems-based management approach should also be communicated.

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## Appendix 1: Workshop Feedback Form

Group:		Comments on the vision	
<p><b><u>Vision:</u></b> We value the Peel-Yalgorup Wetland System for its biodiversity and ecology, and worldwide recognition as a major environmental asset. Its diverse waterways must be used wisely and its flora and fauna must be conserved and protected for long term positive impact.</p>			
PRIORITIES/OBJECTIVES	Level of importance (Rank 1-6)	Final level of importance (including others)	Reason for importance
1. Clear Guiding Principles: <i>recommendations for action, statutory processes</i>			
2. High Level Strategic Commitment: <i>State/Federal, Local Government, Planning Agencies.</i>			
3. Community Engagement: <i>leads to political pressure and local action</i>			
4. Performance Targets & Monitoring			
5. Increased Resources, <i>including Enterprise &amp; Business Involvement</i>			
6. Clear boundaries – <i>what is part of the System, extend, define, agree, promote</i>			
7. Other – any other priorities? (please list)			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			
Other Comments:			

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## Appendix 2: Suggested Changes & Comments by Workshop Participants for the Peel-Yalgorup System Ramsar Vision

<b>1. Use of the term “used wisely”.</b>
Ok until: Its diverse waterways must be used wisely to conserve and protect its flora and fauna for long term effect.
Change 'used wisely' to 'benefit'. Change 'impact' to 'recreational, economic/social and conservation balance.'
Change to: "must be used wisely to conserve and protect its flora and fauna for the long term."
Change - "Its diverse waterways must be used wisely to conserve and protect its flora and fauna for long term positive impact."
'Wise use' for all groups, not just the environmental aspects. Important that this is portrayed to the community.
Define "used wisely".
Delete the term "used wisely" as it can be interpreted so differently.
Promote integrated approach to catchment management.

Many of the comments suggest that the term ‘used wisely’ was not popular as it is open to interpretation. The original reason for including the term was to reflect the Ramsar slogan ‘wise use of wetlands’. However, given the strong feedback from the community engagement process it is clear that ‘used wisely’ has not been well received. Therefore, the revised vision will consider how the term ‘used wisely’ can be adjusted or qualified to reflect the feedback received.

<b>2. Use of the word “impact”.</b>
Change 'positive impact' to 'rehabilitation and maintenance of its original ecological character and Biota. Protected for future generations.
The word 'impact' is the wrong word - doesn't make sense.
Change 'impact' to 'outcomes'.
"..conserved and protected for future generations." (change for long term positive impact.)
"..must be used wisely and its flora and fauna must be rehabilitated, conserved and protected forever."
Last sentence to read: "must be conserved and protected for the long term."
"..for long term rehabilitation and maintenance of its original ecological character and biota.
Remove 'positive impact'.
"...must be used wisely to serve and protect its flora and fauna". (remove for long term positive impact).

It is clear from feedback that the word ‘impact’ implies a negative connotation and that a more positive word should be used in its place. This feedback will be considered and used when the vision is revised.

<b>3. Other suggestions/comments.</b>
Look after the flora.
I think the statement sums it up well
Time sequence all linked.
Vision needs more passion! Very bland.

Biological characteristics, unique organisms and maintenance ecological integrity.
Would like to see more humanity - a place to play, learn, recreate, fish, apply stewardship, connect to the land.
Some people are too Mandurah focused.
Need to add cultural sites and significance to the list
Fully agree.
The Peel-Yalgorup System is valued for its biodiversity and ecology and has worldwide recognition as a major environmental asset. Its diverse waterways are used wisely and its flora and fauna are conserved and protected for long term positive impact.
Agree with vision statement but I think there should be more leadership at state level to protect wetlands and push for Ramsar listing.

Based on the other types of comments received, it is clear that greater emphasis needs to be given to the ‘services’/how the wetlands are used by a whole range of groups and people. Although some people agreed with the current vision, others suggest that it needs to reflect the ‘human aspect’ of how we use the System, giving it more meaning and passion. The revised vision will consider the various ways we use the wetlands.

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## Results of the Dec 2007 management planning workshop: integrating results into the plan structure (draft)

<b>Comments on the Vision</b>	<p>The Peel-Yalgorup wetland system is internationally recognised as a major environmental asset and is highly valued for its biodiversity, and ecological social and cultural benefits. The diverse wetlands and waterways are managed wisely as a place and space for all to play learn and live in a sustainable way. We acknowledge our stewardship role in the conservation and protection of the land, water, flora and fauna for the long-term and for future generations.</p>				
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>		<b>KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS</b>	
<b>Define clear principles for wise use (to guide conservation activities)</b>	Define clear boundaries	Review existing boundary and identify possible areas for consolidation/extensions	Work with stakeholders to prepare a proposal to extend the Ramsar area	Extended Boundaries & responsibilities are agreed by all stakeholders	Nomination proposal submitted to the Australian Government
	Establish targets & monitoring processes	Establish an effective & practical program for assess management effectiveness	Identify ongoing resources to fund ongoing review/updates to management plan	Identify and implement a management effectiveness framework	Undertake regular reviews of the monitoring plan
	Ensure ongoing, adaptive management by determining an institutional arrangement that will ensure effective, long-term site management	Work with key stakeholders to investigate institutional arrangements		Responsibility for Ramsar site management undertaken by a key organizing body	Formal commitment/support from agencies
	Institutional review	Identify gaps/overlaps in current management arrangements and identify opportunities to integrate Ramsar management into catchment scale processes	Develop recommendations for administrative arrangements and integration into existing	Representation at key consultative committees	Creation of a management body vested with responsibility for management of the Ramsar site

			management structures		
	Spatially define wetland values and threats	Work with stakeholders to consider threats and values	Create spatial representation of management recommendations	Zoning maps created	Zoning recommendations incorporated into complementary planning process (at agency or local levels)
	Legislation Policy and Planning Review	Compile a full & complete list of legislation & policies and identify any changes required.	Make policies & legislation readily & easily available to all stakeholders. (Social Marketing)	Stakeholders are aware of specific policy & legislation relevant to their management responsibilities	Changes to legislation to better protect the System.
<b>All Stakeholders are engaged in an active stewardship role.</b>	Define a strategic approach to communicating wise use principles	Review the CEPA* plans of other key Australian Ramsar sites	Develop a CEPA plan with involvement of stakeholders	Actions implemented from the plan	Level of partnership in implementing CEPA plan actions
	Secure High Level Strategic Government Commitment to protect the values of the System	Gain commitment in writing. Identify areas of unclear roles. Responsibilities, commitment	Document Govt. bodies/politicians who do not confirm in writing & identify reasons for concerns/apathy	No. of letters received to confirm commitment and extent of commitment	No. of letters not received to confirm commitment, risks due to lack of commitment and remedial actions identified.
	Increase awareness of the Ramsar status of Peel-Yalgorup System	Devise (include in CEPA planning) & run a series of community awareness raising	Media articles in local newspapers/radio	No. of participants present at workshops, implementation	Conduct survey to assess awareness e.g. repeat of 2006

		workshops.	to raise awareness	activities & independent queries at PWC.	survey?
	Engage Community, Business, Developers & Local Government in stewardship activities	Survey community (eg, boat users) on how their activities impact on the System.	Hold regular free open forums to educate about Ecosystem Services and Values.	No. of businesses & developers engaged in stewardship activities.	No. of community groups and local govt. programs focused/engaged in stewardship activities.
	Secure sufficient resources to develop & support stewardship activities	Lobby State/Federal & Local government and Planning Agencies for funding		No. of successful grant applications	Total amount of funding secured.
<b>Long term positive outcomes are achieved for the Peel-Yalgorup System.</b>	Bio-diversity: monitor to ensure that the system continues to meet the criteria for which it was Ramsar-listed	Prepare monitoring plan as pre ECD recommendations;	Consult key stakeholders to confirm their responsibilities re. monitoring activities required	Key knowledge gaps filled	Priority monitoring implemented
	Threats and risk assessment	Management plan prepared and continually reviewed ; LAC underpins management plan revisions	Adaptive management recommendations implemented	Management plan revised with review of limits of acceptable change	Knowledge gaps are reduced
	Ecological values	Review limits of acceptable change	Review knowledge gaps identified in ECD.	Limits of acceptable change not exceeded	Limits of acceptable change reviewed
		Monitor limits of acceptable change	Consult key stakeholders to delegate responsibility for	All targets & monitoring processes are delegated to stakeholders.	System enables results of monitoring to be reported & interpreted.

			undertaking recommended actions (pg. 134 & 135 ECD)		
	Social/cultural	Stronger partnerships with indigenous custodians in wetland management	Develop strategy for Ramsar management and Aboriginal NRM		
		Incorporation of Ramsar principle into social planning	Stronger partnerships developed with social development organisations and local councils in promoting wise use principle	Achievement of CEPA plan recommendations	Formal or informal agreements with local government planning departments
		Greater participation of stakeholders: local residents and visitors participate positively in plan implementation	Promotion of social values via CEPA plan	No. of participants in implementation activities	
	International recognition	PY System incorporated as case study in international processes	Communication of international recognition to local stakeholders and community	No. of mention of PY system in Australia and overseas.	Advertisement of international recognition at the local scale

\* CEPA, communication education and public awareness