~ Chapter 5 ~

**Awareness, use and value of the
QPWS Interpretation and
Education Strategy 2000 - 2002**

Chapter 5

Awareness, use and value of the QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy 2000–2002

> *It does provide direction in some ways but I don't feel that it has been adopted by a lot of people. I don't sense much ownership. Whether people follow it or not is a mystery to be solved.* [IN 57, q8][15]

5.0   Introduction

This chapter outlines QPWS interpreters' and park managers' awareness and use of the *QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy 2000–2002* (*I & E Strategy*) and the value of the document to provide the 'framework' to guide the development and implementation of regional, district and park visitor education strategies and actions. It provides a critique of the issues investigated by the thesis research objective: "To assess the extent that visitor education policies and processes were meeting the objectives of protected area management in Queensland". Key issues investigated by this chapter include the awareness, ownership and desire of interpreters, park managers and other park staff to use the *I & E Strategy* as a framework to guide the range of visitor education duties performed, and services delivered on behalf of the Queensland Government. The level of agreement that interpreters and park managers held as to the success of the *I & E Strategy* to achieve key nature conservation outcomes is also explored.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. Each section explores and describes interpreters' and/or park managers' opinions as to the framework that the *I & E Strategy* provided. Section 5.1 provides the background to the chapter – it outlines interpreter involvement in the development of the *I & E Strategy* and their aspirations for a document that would provide direction for visitor education within the QPWS. Section 5.2 details how interpreters found out about policy and/or policy changes in the QPWS. This section also identifies interpreters' level of awareness of the *I & E Strategy*. This is important as interpreter awareness and use of the Strategy is crucial

---

15   Direct quotes with a reference commencing with either 'IN' or 'PM' are drawn directly from survey data. 'IN' indicates that the source is found in the Interpreter data set while 'PM' refers to the Park Manager data set. The number, in this case '49' indicates the 49th line of data (i.e. survey recorded). In addition, direct quotes taken from an open ended question are further identified by the question number (e.g. q5) while direct quotes taken from question 'additional comment' are referenced 'ac'.

to the successful implementation of the Government's community nature conservation agenda. Interpreter opinions of the appropriateness of performance measures, annual targets and key messages to guide the visitor education work they performed are detailed in Section 5.3. This section also reviews the inclusion of specific statements to highlight the importance of visitor education as a park management tool. Statements about visitor education provide the connection between theory and practice – they are inspiration for interpreters to conduct visitor education activities.

Interpreters' opinions of the success of *I & E Strategy* key outcomes and the priority they placed on key Strategy elements to guide their visitor education practice are outlined in Section 5.4. This section also provides an analysis of interpreters' opinions on whether the *I & E Strategy* provided adequate direction for visitor education in the QPWS. This analysis is important, as the function of *I & E Strategy* was to link the intent of Government expressed both in the EPA's Corporate Plan and the QPWS's Master Plan into actions that may be implemented at an operational level. Section 5.5 details QPWS park managers' awareness of the *I & E Strategy* and their opinions of the success of the key outcomes detailed in the Strategy. This section also details how park managers find out about policy and policy changes within the QPWS. Section 5.6 draws together the issues affecting the awareness and use of the *I & E Strategy* by interpreters and park managers identified in the preceding sections. This summary is important as it identifies the issues that require further analysis to determine their overall affect on the acceptance and use of visitor education as a park management tool. Section 5.7 provides the conclusion to this chapter.

5.1   *I & E Strategy* development

The development of the *QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy 2000–2002* commenced during the March 1999 state-wide interpretation workshop. The intent of the workshop and subsequent development of the *I & E Strategy* was to replace the previous *Strategic Plan for Public Contact in the Division of Conservation 1998–2000* (QNPWS 1997). The overall aim of the new *I & E Strategy* was to reflect the direction for visitor education within a new departmental corporate structure – the Queensland

Parks and Wildlife Service[16] (QPWS 1999b). It also had the objective of guiding the delivery of improved visitor education services (QPWS 2001b).

Thirty-five people attended the 1999 workshop, including 28 staff directly involved in the planning and delivery of QPWS visitor education initiatives (QPWS 1999b)(Table 5.1). This included 11 regional/district interpreters, 15 field/centre-based interpreters and two technical officers, and represents a 62 percent participation rate by interpreters from an estimated 1998/99 staffing level of 45 (Parkin 2003a).

**Table 5.1: Interpretive staff by position designation who attended the
QPWS state-wide interpretation workshop in March 1999**
(source: adapted from QPWS 1999b)

Region	Regional/District staff (AO & PO positions)	Field/Interp Centre staff (OO positions)	Technical officers (TO positions)	Totals
Head Office	2	0	0	2
Southern	6	12	1	19
Central	1	1	1	3
Northern	2	2	0	4
Totals	11	15	2	28

As part of the workshop, participants evaluated past performance and identified traits that they wanted to take forward into the new corporate structure. This included being proactive and strategic, and the ability to deliver information and education programs to change visitor attitudes (QPWS 1999b). Characteristics that they wanted to leave behind included their reactive and scattergun approach to many projects, the regular occurrence to overcommit thus failing to deliver, and their negative attitude of not deserving better. Workshop participants also stated that they wanted to stop 're-inventing the wheel' and adopt a state-wide approach to common issues (QPWS 1999b).

Workshop participants used the findings of the '*ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education Study*' (DNRE 1999) to develop the structure of the *I & E*

---

16   The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) replaced the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service (QNPWS) on the 11 December 1998; however, the new corporate structure did not take effect until April 1999 (Jono Walsh, pers comm. 12 December 2001).

Strategy, establish key outcomes, identify strategies to achieve the key outcomes and set performance measures and annual targets (QPWS 1999b). The performance measures and annual targets were additionally developed using the Service's 'Managing for Outcomes' budget process (QPWS 2000), and were designed to be a measure of 'best practice' for QPWS visitor education activities across the State. The establishment of performance measures and annual targets aimed to allow the effectiveness of visitor education initiatives to be measured and the success of the *I & E Strategy's* key outcomes to be evaluated.

The identification of key messages and the establishment of guiding principles for interpretation best practice were also discussed and documented during the workshop (QPWS 1999b). These elements were to assist interpreters in the development of their regional, district and park interpretive strategies and actions, and provide the means for a co-ordinated state-wide approach to the achievement of visitor education outcomes.

By the time data collection commenced in August 2001, three quarters of interpreters surveyed stated they had no involvement in the 1999 state-wide Interpretation Workshop nor provided further assistance in the development of the *I & E Strategy* (Figure 5.1).
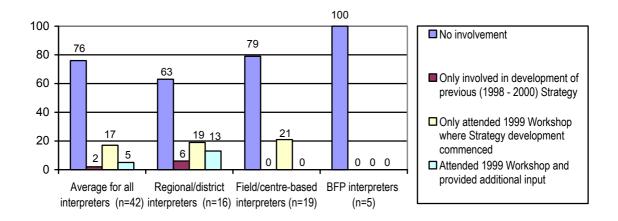

Figure 5.1: Interpreters' reported level of involvement in the development of the *QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy 2000–2002*

While 32 percent of regional/district interpreters and 21 percent of field/centre-based interpreters claimed they were involved in the development of the Strategy, only 13 percent of regional/district interpreters said they provided additional input to its development. In contrast, three quarters of interpreters said they had no involvement

in the development of the Strategy. Consequently, while some regional/district interpreters may have claimed a sense of ownership of the *I & E Strategy* most field/centre-based and all BFP interpreters appear to have held little or no ownership of this document.

5.2   Interpreter awareness of the *I & E Strategy*

5.2.1   Communication of policy and policy changes among interpreters

During the course of this study, the main way interpreters found out about visitor education policy and policy changes was through email and other electronic media (regional/district interpreters – 63%; field/centre-based interpreters – 74% and BFP interpreters – 80%) (Figure 5.2). It was the preferred medium used by the Service to communicate with staff quickly and efficiently across the State (Jono Walsh, pers comm. 12 December 2001). (Nonetheless, one interpreter reported that they did not have access to email during the conduct of the survey due to a telephone line fault).
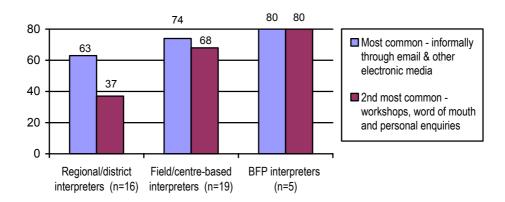

Figure 5.2: Two most common methods how interpreters found out about policy and/or policy changes in the Department

In addition, many interpreters also relied on more informal means of communication such as attendance at workshops, word of mouth and personal enquiries to find out about policy and policy changes within the Team. Field/centre-based interpreters (68%) and BFP interpreters (80%) were more likely to find out about policy and policy changes through these methods than their regional/district counterparts (37%). Very few interpreters learnt about policy changes through written correspondence (Appendix 2: Question 13).

5.2.2   Interpreter awareness of the I & E Strategy

Nearly three quarters of all interpreters surveyed reported that they were aware of 2000–2002 Strategy (Figure 5.3). However, only 50 percent of interpreters admitted they had read the *I & E Strategy* at least once or referred to this document on a more regular basis. This included 69 percent of regional/district interpreters and 53 percent of field/centre-based interpreters. Regional/District interpreters (42%) were four times more likely to refer to this document on a regular basis than their Field/Centre-based counterparts. In addition, 19 percent of interpreters said that they were aware of the document, but acknowledged they had not read it previously. No BFP interpreters said they were aware of this document.
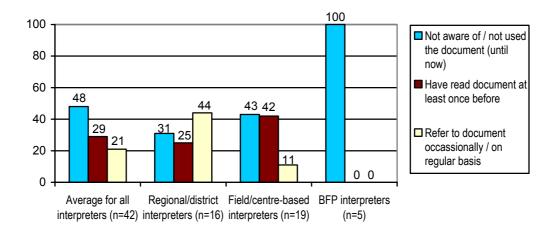

**Figure 5.3: Interpreters' level of awareness and familiarity with the
QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy 2000–2002**

Twenty-nine percent of interpreters said that they were unaware of the *I & E Strategy* prior to the survey. This included 6 percent of regional/district interpreters, 32 percent of field/centre-based interpreters and nearly all BFP interpreters. The lack of awareness of the *I & E Strategy* among BFP interpreters can be directly contributed to their recent integration into the QPWS (Pamela Harmon-Price, pers comm. 27 August 2002). BFP interpreters had not been made aware of this document prior to this survey. However, the reason why 6 percent of regional/district interpreters and nearly a third of all field/centre-based interpreters surveyed were unaware of this document is unknown, as this question was not asked.

5.3 Appropriateness of key *I & E Strategy* elements to guide the visitor education work performed by interpreters

5.3.1 Appropriateness of Performance Measures and Annual Targets

In general, interpreters believed the performance measures ascribed to each key outcome were appropriate indicators of 'best practice' for QPWS visitor education activities (Table 5.2). The exceptions were two performance measures ('Brochures produced/updated' and 'Park visitors from local community [within 50km])' under the '*Greater support for nature conservation*' key outcome. Most interpreters thought that these performance measures were inappropriate indicators of 'best practice' because of desired outcomes and regional priorities. For example:

> *Depends on the target (e.g. Just because we produce more info brochures up to date and on time, does not mean that our outcome has been achieved). (e.g. Putting more staff on [Public Contact] does not mean people [visitors] are having a more enjoyable, low impact visit).* [IN 49, q4]

> *Each place is different. Where I currently work, I could not reach certain targets due to the nature of the job. Targets don't allow you to enjoy the journey.* [IN 21, q4]

Nonetheless, data interpretation revealed that differences of opinion existed between the three groups of interpreters as to the appropriateness of particular performance measures. The most notable differences were with the views held by BFP interpreters. BFP interpreters disagreed on more occasions than their regional/district interpreter and field/centre-based interpreter counterparts (Refer Table 5.2). For example, while the majority of regional/district interpreters and field/centre-based interpreters believed the following Performance Measures were appropriate, BFP interpreters did not::

- 'New topics/parks covered in information media' and 'QPWS website hits' under the '*Greater support for nature conservation*' key outcome, and

- 'Volunteer hours provided' and 'Number of joint QPWS/community projects' under the '*Greater community involvement in nature conservation*' key outcome; and 'Staff and volunteers trained in interpretive and communication skills' under the '*Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education*' key outcome.

Table 5.2: Interpreters' opinion on appropriateness of Performance Measures as indicators of 'Best Practice' for QPWS visitor education activities

Key Outcome	Performance measure	Annual target	Appropriate indicator for Best Practice?			
			Average all interp	Reg/Dis interpreter	Field/Cent interpreter	BFP interpreter
			Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Greater support for nature conservation	Brochures produced/updated	25	26 ~ 57	38 ~ 50	21 ~ 63	20 ~ 60
	New topics/parks covered in information media	5	45 ~ 40	63 ~ 25	44 ~ 42	00 ~ 100
	Availability of information to answer public enquiries	70%	67 ~19	75 ~ 13	58 ~ 26	80 ~ 20
	Customer satisfaction with park and wildlife information	70%	69 ~ 14	88 ~ 00	58 ~ 21	60 ~ 40
	Complimentary letters to the Minister or newspaper editors	70%	62 ~ 24	69 ~ 25	63 ~ 16	60 ~ 40
	Park visitors from local community (within 50km)	10%	40 ~ 45	56 ~ 38	26 ~ 53	40 ~ 60
	QPWS website hits	20,000	45 ~ 40	56 ~ 38	47 ~ 32	00 ~ 100
Enjoyable and minimal impact park visits and wildlife encounters	Public contact hours across the State	30,000	45 ~ 36	65 ~ 25	37 ~ 37	20 ~ 80
	Places with regular interpretive programs	40	67 ~ 19	81 ~ 13	68 ~ 11	20 ~ 80
	Reduction in common regulation breaches	10%	62 ~ 21	81 ~ 13	53 ~ 21	40 ~ 60
	Park visitors satisfied with interpretive services	85%	81 ~ 05	94 ~ 00	74 ~ 05	100 ~ 00
	Park visitors who access interpretive services (including signs, displays and activity prog)	135,000	55 ~ 31	75 ~13	47 ~ 37	20 ~ 80
Greater community involvement in nature conservation	Volunteer hours provided	6,000	57 ~ 24	69 ~ 06	63 ~ 21	00 ~ 100
	Number of joint QPWS/community projects	24	55 ~ 29	69 ~ 13	63 ~ 21	00 ~ 100
	Number of volunteer projects/programs across State	100	60 ~ 24	63 ~ 19	68 ~ 16	20 ~ 80
	Participation in nature conservation programs (Queensland community)	1%	52 ~ 31	63 ~ 19	47 ~37	60 ~ 40
Increased cultural heritage awareness	Parks with cultural heritage information	70%	67~ 21	75 ~ 19	58 ~ 26	80 ~ 20
	Aboriginal rangers working in interpretation	6	50 ~ 38	69 ~ 25	47 ~ 37	20 ~ 80
	Indigenous community involvement in park interpretation	30%	67 ~ 21	81 ~ 13	58 ~ 26	60 ~ 40
Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education	Information produced within planned time frames	70%	62 ~ 24	75 ~ 19	53 ~ 26	80 ~ 20
	Currency of park and wildlife brochures	60%	62 ~ 26	81 ~ 13	53 ~ 32	60 ~ 40
	Public contact ranger time spent on interpretation	50%	62 ~ 24	81 ~ 06	53 ~ 32	40 ~ 60
	Parks meeting interpretive standards	50%	55 ~ 33	75 ~ 19	47 ~ 37	40 ~ 60
	Staff and volunteers trained in interpretive and communication skills	50	55 ~ 33	75 ~ 19	53 ~ 32	00 ~ 100

Instances where the majority of interpreters thought the performance criteria were not an indicator of 'best practice'

A difference of opinion also existed between regional/district interpreters, some field/centre-based interpreters and some BFP interpreters in respect to the performance measure, 'Customer satisfaction with park and wildlife information'. Twenty-one percent of field/centre-based interpreters and 40 percent of BFP interpreters did not think that this was an appropriate indicator of 'best practice' (under the 'Greater support for nature conservation' key outcome), even though all regional/district interpreters did. A difference of opinion also existed between regional/district interpreters and some field/centre-based interpreters and some BFP interpreters in respect to the performance measure, 'Public contact ranger time spent on interpretation'. Thirty-two percent of field/centre-based interpreters and 60 percent of BFP interpreters did not think that this was an appropriate indicator of 'best practice' either, even though the majority of regional/district interpreters did. Annual targets of 70 percent and 50 percent respectively were ascribed to these performance measures. While it is unclear why some field/centre-based interpreters and some BFP interpreters did not support these performance measures when the majority of regional/district interpreters did, these performance measures are related to service delivery. A number of interpreters did indicate that some annual targets should be higher to provide a better measure of 'best practice'. For example:

> I believe the annual targets are a tangible focus and can be reached quite easily, but I also believe that many targets are too low to increase any greater support for conservation of natural or cultural values. [IN 39, q4]

Interpreters who agreed that setting 'annual targets' at a State level were appropriate, did so because they believed that annual targets provided a tangible outcome by which performance and goals could be measured, and present a level of accountability that could be used to lobby for more funding and resources. For example:

> Must have something to aim for. Need goals otherwise no direction. Can force Line Managers to put resources into interpretation in order to meet targets. [IN 13, q4]

> Need consistency across State, yet state-wide targets allow a degree of flexibility at regional level. Would like to see more accountability at regional and district levels and performance targets/measures at those levels too. [IN 20, q4]

In addition, some interpreters who said that yes, the setting of annual targets provided a valid measure of 'best practice' for QPWS visitor education activities at a State level, also suggested that annual targets should reflect regional performance. This, they

claimed, would allow regional goals to be measured and the information used to lobby for resources and provide more accountability in each region. For example:

> *Annual targets need to be addressed and met at Regional/District levels through co-operative recognition of shortfalls in resources, funding and opportunities and commitment to rectify the shortfalls. At a State level, the 'targets' provide valuable information to senior management (Regional/District) to assist PC/Interp staff in developing work programs and in developing/ensuring support is provided by the other regional/district/park.* [IN 33, q4]

Most interpreters felt that the setting of 'performance measures' was appropriate. However, many interpreters also felt that setting 'annual targets' did not provide a valid measure of 'best practice' for each performance measure. For example, many respondents who said 'no' to the statement that *the setting of 'annual targets' at a State level for each Performance Measure provides a valid measure of Best Practice for QPWS interpretation and education activities*, commented on the quantity *vs* quality aspect of annual targets. Quantity, they said, was easily measured, while quality was largely subjective and therefore not easily assessed. For example:

> *An annual target does not indicate quality which is surely more important than quantity – however, whilst saying that I don't mean that all resources go into only a few areas and produce something huge, it can be smaller but high quality.* [IN 48, q4]

> *As much as we need to have targets and measure things quantitatively for funding etc., I feel there needs to be more qualitative measures for best practice (e.g. 30,000 public contact hours. Were they quality interp? Did people get the message?).* [IN 57, q4]

> *I could have answered this yes and no. These targets are useful indicators of interpretive activity but they did not take into account quality or effectiveness. Really need to survey the community to determine effectiveness.* [IN 8, q4]

Other interpreters who said 'no' claimed that State 'annual targets' had no bearing on what was happening or being achieved at a local level. Many of these respondents indicated that targets should also reflect regional achievements. For example:

> *Setting targets for performance is a valid approach, however, [I] feel they are somewhat meaningless without something to measure against (e.g. How does 6000 volunteer hours across the State translate to volunteer hours in my District?).* [IN 23, q4]

> *Needs to vary across regions, districts etc.. Therefore a target may not suit needs across Qld. Best Practice is about quality not quantity; qualitative measures are required (in-built) into each sort of program on regional basis*

(e.g. Face-to-face, publications; AV; website etc.) and collated at State level.
[IN 54, q4]

*Needs to be at a more local level, particularly in relation to the specific
demands on centres with large urban populations nearby.* [IN 12, q4]

Some interpreters also stated that performance each year depended on the budget,
staff levels, issues arising and politics. Depending on when annual targets were set,
one may or may not be able to realistically achieve any or all. However, visitor
education aims to change people's attitudes and behaviours towards the environment,
a process that takes time, and one or two interpretive contacts alone may not do it (Bill
Carter, pers comm. 15 January 2002). As one respondent noted, the setting of 'annual
targets' was not indicative of actual practice and the time it takes to achieve educative
outcomes. For example:

*Unfortunately for us, interp and education is one of those things that is very
hard to 'measure'. Outcomes are more long term than a financial year. It may
be any number of years for the effects to be felt. Outcomes are also attitudinal,
related to understanding, inspirational, awareness. How are these measured?
Can a dollar value or a mathematical value be placed on that? I think not.* [IN
11, q4]

5.3.2   The use of statements about interpretation in the I & E Strategy

The statement, "*Through interpretation, understanding; Through understanding,
appreciation; Through appreciation, protection*" (commonly attributed to Tilden [1977,
p38]), is often used to provide a *raison d'être* for the role of interpretation. It was used
in the *I & E Strategy* to highlight the use of visitor education as a process to improve
QPWS communication and promote nature conservation (QPWS 2000). Most
interpreters said that the inclusion of this statement in the *I & E Strategy* was
appropriate as it answered "the question of why do any interpretation – to protect, to
conserve, to educate and to understand" [IN 44, q6] (Figure 5.4). Replies such as, "*it is
a simple and succinct summary of the value and importance of interpretation*", "*it
outlines the goals we aim to achieve as interpreters*", and "*to me this should be the
ultimate goal of interp within QPWS*" provided evidence of the support that this
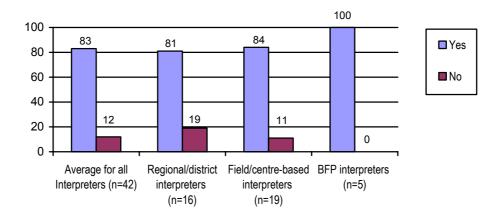statement had among interpreters (Appendix 2, Question 6).

Figure 5.4: Interpreters' response to whether the statement, "Through interpretation, understanding; Through understanding, appreciation; Through appreciation, protection" was an appropriate statement to include in the *I & E Strategy*

A few interpreters also commented on the appropriateness of this statement by using words such as '*inspirational*', '*underlying philosophy*', and '*sense of ownership*' in their explanations of why they thought it was appropriate. For example:

> *… I don't think there is anything wrong with having an inspirational statement to help keep people focussed.* [IN 21, q6]

> *This is the underlying philosophy for interpretation and an inspiring statement.* [IN 20, q6]

> *Basic ethos of education and how to motivate people to have a sense of ownership – that's what protects our Parks – that the Park users care and become ambassadors for conservation.* [IN 27, q6]

However, not all interpreters held this view. One respondent remarked that interpretation was a tool and not an entity in its own right. This person believed communication was the key and that public contact was more about client service and community partnerships than a way to educate people about QPWS business through 'visitor education'. For example:

> *Interpretation is a tool, not an entity in its own right. Communication is the key. Public contact is about Client Service and Community Partnerships, not just about a rather patronising way of educating people about QPWS business through 'interpretation'.* [IN 17, q6]

Another interpreter felt that the language of the statement needed to be stronger. This interpreter also felt that there was a need to place more emphasis on the use of visitor

education to provide the link between people and places to minimise the impact of humans on the natural environment. For example:

> *I think that the language should be stronger and the link between people and place should be more emphasised because that's what we are trying to do, and not until people care about their place will they be interested in trying to protect it.* [IN 28, q6]

However, some interpreters felt that while good-intentioned, the use of some statements may in fact entrench negative beliefs about the value of visitor education and the role of interpreters to assist park management. The context in which a statement was used may need to be more appropriately considered. For example:

> *Interpreters and many others know it's true, but interpretation is often seen as the fuzzy warm stuff and is not taken seriously. For us to be seen as "professionals" get rid of airy fairy statements and write strategically.* [IN 60, q6]

> *… but* (the statement) *can't be used over and over without losing its impact. The Strategy should look at new and creative ways of promoting the values. Surely the whole purpose of interp is to be creative and adaptable.* [IN 12, q6]

Kohl suggests the statement "Through interpretation, understanding; Through understanding, appreciation; Through appreciation, protection" does have its limitations: understanding does not equal appreciation and appreciation does not equal protection (John Kohl, pers comm. 24 October 2001). There are too many steps in the equation for the statement to hold true. Howard also suggests that the statement to some extent works against the principles of interpretation (Jonathon Howard, pers comm. 22 October 2001). He claims that there is a considerable body of literature that indicates that:

1. Interpretation is based on the affective side rather than the cognitive side [although factual information is a key component of interpretation (Tilden 1977)];

2. Cognition does not lead to appreciation; indeed the link is weak, as there are too many other influences and factors involved; and

3. Appreciation sometimes leads to behaviour change, but social factors are critical.

Yet, the philosophy behind the statement remains sound (refer Tilden 1977). It provides a *raison d'être*. But, as one interpreter noted, without the ability, mechanisms and resourcing to link the processes, this statement is no more than:

*a naïve belief … (that) … discounts a lot of external circumstances, which
interpretation has no control over.* [IN 34, q6]

5.3.3   The identification of key visitor education messages

In a park management context, visitor education aims to assist the visitor, promote
public understanding and appreciation, and accomplish management goals (Sharpe
1982). Hockings, Carter and Leverington (1998) refer to this as resource focus,
management focus and client focus interpretation. As a result, many visitor education
activities are message driven to assist individuals and communities to acquire the
knowledge, values, attitudes and practical skills considered desirable to develop a
positive ethic towards nature conservation.

The *I & E Strategy* provided interpreters with a list of 44 key messages. These key
messages are divided into the theme areas of environment, nature conservation,
wildlife conservation, protected areas, cultural heritage on parks, marine parks and
coastal protection. Interpreters were encouraged to convey these messages through
visitor education material and activities delivered to the public, where appropriate
(QPWS 2000).

In most instances, the number of interpreters who agreed or strongly agreed with the
survey questionnaire statements about these 44 key messages were greater than
those who neither agreed nor disagreed or disagreed/strongly disagreed with them
(Table 5.3). The exceptions were with the statements, '*The Key Messages did not
focus enough on safety and risk issues*' and '*Too many Key Messages are listed to
provide a logical and coherent framework for planning education and interpretation
activities*'. Most interpreters neither agreed nor disagreed on the issue that key
messages sufficiently focused on safety and risk issues while most interpreters
disagreed or strongly disagreed that there were too many key messages.

Table 5.3: Interpreters' level of agreement with statements about the Key Messages for visitor education included in the *I & E Strategy*

Key Message statements	Regional/district interpreters (n = 16; no answer provided = 6 - 19%)			Field/centre-based interpreters (n = 19; no answer provided = 26 - 32%)			BFP interpreters (n = 5; no answer provided = 0 - 20%)		
	agree/strongly agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree/strongly disagree	agree/strongly agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree/strongly disagree	agree/strongly agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree/strongly disagree
The Key Messages define the scope of interpretation and education within the QPWS.	**50**	25	19	**47**	16	11	**100**	0	0
The Key Messages and Key Outcomes in the *I & E Strategy* are strongly linked.	**50**	19	25	**58**	11	26	**100**	0	0
The Key Messages should reflect a State-wide approach to nature conservation rather than being related to theme areas such as protected areas, wildlife conservation, cultural heritage, etc.	**44**	25	25	**31**	21	21	**60**	20	20
The current broad range of Key Messages is better than five or six well-defined messages	**44**	19	31	**37**	21	16	**80**	20	0
Too many Key Messages are listed to provide a logical and coherent framework for planning interpretation and education activities	19	**38**	31	26	11	**42**	0	40	**60**
The Key Messages should be incorporated into all interpretation and education programs	**75**	0	19	**37**	16	32	**100**	0	0
The minimal impact Key Messages for marine conservation ought to apply to all areas and themes	25	25	**32**	31	**37**	0	**40**	**40**	0
The Key Messages did not focus enough on safety and risk issues.	19	**38**	31	11	**47**	16	**40**	**40**	20

☐ Level of agreement held by the majority of interpreters in each category

The opinions of regional/district and field/centre-based interpreters were within 5–15 percent of each other. The opinions of BFP interpreters also reflected the views held by regional/district interpreters and field/centre-based interpreters to the statements about the key messages. That is, they either agreed or disagreed with the statements in a similar manner to regional/district interpreters and field/centre-based interpreters. However, a difference of opinion was observed between regional/district interpreters and the other two groups of interpreters in respect to the statements about the provision of a logical coherent framework for planning visitor education activities and minimal impact (Appendix 2: Question 5).

Most regional/district interpreters were undecided as to whether, '*Too many Key Messages are listed to provide a logical and coherent framework for planning education and interpretation activities*', while most field/centre-based interpreters and BFP interpreters did not believe that this observation was true. Most regional/district interpreters believed that the minimal impact key messages for marine conservation should not apply to all areas and themes. However, no field/centre-based interpreter or BFP interpreter held the same view. Most field/centre-based interpreters and BFP interpreters either agreed that the marine conservation minimal impact key messages ought to apply to all areas and themes or were undecided on this matter.

A difference of opinion also existed in the level of agreement among the three groups of interpreters in respect to the statement that '*the current broad range of key messages are better than five or six well-defined messages*'. Most regional/district interpreters (44%) and 80 percent BFP interpreters agreed with this statement while only 37 percent of field/centre-based interpreters did (Figure 5.5). Thirty-one percent of regional/district interpreters and 16 percent of field/centre-based interpreters disagreed with this suggestion. Around 20 percent of all interpreters were undecided on this matter (Appendix 2: Question 5).
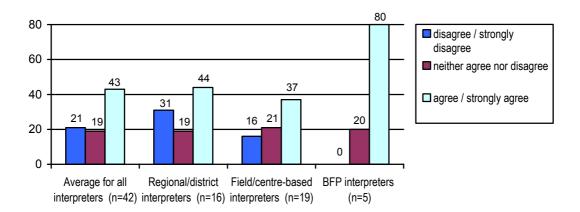

Figure 5.5: Interpreters' response to statement that the current broad range of Key Messages were better than five or six well-defined messages

5.4   Value of the *I & E Strategy* to guide the visitor education work performed by interpreters

5.4.1   Key Outcomes - Level of success achieved

Five key outcomes supported the Interpretation Team's vision of "people supporting nature conservation, sharing responsibility for protecting parks and wildlife, and enjoying park visits and wildlife encounters in Queensland" (QPWS 2000, p1). They were:

- Greater support for nature conservation in Queensland;

- Enjoyable and minimal impact park visits and wildlife encounters in Queensland;

- Greater community involvement in conserving Queensland's national parks, other protected areas, marine parks and native wildlife;

- Increased awareness of Queensland's history and indigenous culture and willingness to protect that heritage; and

- Best practice in park and wildlife visitor education in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS 2000, p1).

These key outcomes also provide the means by which visitor education performance and success can be measured. This can be achieved by measuring the level of success of each key outcome based on QPWS interpreters' perceived knowledge of their audience. This is because interpreters commonly use a perceived knowledge of their audience to plan and develop visitor education materials and activities to meet a range of client needs at a park, locality, region and/or State level (QPWS 2000). In addition, interpreters also use audience receptiveness and response to the materials and activities developed as a measure of their success, in lieu of formal evaluations. Consequently, most interpreters believed these key outcomes had only achieved a 'very little or varying' success rate. However, differences of opinion existed (Appendix 2: Question 3). For example, while most regional/district interpreters and field/centre-based interpreters believed the key outcomes, *Greater support for nature conservation in Queensland* and *Enjoyable and minimal impact park visits and wildlife encounters in Queensland* had only achieved a 'very little or varied' rate of success, BFP interpreters said these key outcomes had achieved 'fairly or quite successful' level of success (Table 5.4).

**Table 5.4: Interpreters' opinions of the level of success
of each *I & E Strategy* Key Outcome**

I & E Strategy Key Outcomes	Regional/district interpreters (n = 16; no answer provided = 13 - 19%)			Field/centre-based interpreters (n = 19; no answer provided = 16 - 21%)			BFP interpreters (n = 5; no answer provided = 0%)		
	no observable success	very little -varying success	fairly – quite successful	no observable success	very little -varying success	fairly – quite successful	no observable success	very little -varying success	fairly – quite successful
Greater support for nature conservation in Queensland	13	**63**	13	11	**69**	5	0	40	**60**
Enjoyable and minimal impact park visits and wildlife encounters in Queensland	13	**51**	25	11	**47**	26	0	20	**80**
Greater community involvement in conserving Queensland's national parks, other protected areas, marine parks and native wildlife	13	**50**	19	16	**43**	26	0	**60**	40
Increased awareness of Queensland's history and indigenous culture and willingness to protect that heritage	6	**63**	19	11	**63**	5	0	**100**	0
Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service	6	**50**	31	26	**37**	21	0	40	**60**

<div style="background:yellow">   </div> Level of opinion held by the majority of interpreters in each category

The divergent opinions expressed by the three groups of interpreters for the key outcome, *Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service* is worth further investigation. This is because interpreters have more-or-less given an evaluation of their performance and ability to meet the 'best practice' benchmarks identified in the *I & E Strategy*. While 31 percent of regional/district interpreters and 21 percent of field/centre-based interpreters believed the achievement of 'best practice' had been 'fairly successful', 44 percent of regional/district interpreters and 37 percent of field/centre-based interpreters believed that only a 'varying' level of success had been achieved (Figure 5.6). Six percent of regional/district interpreters said that 'very little success' had been achieved in meeting this key outcome; in contrast, most BFP interpreters (60%) believed that the key outcome had achieved a 'fairly successfully' success rate, while 40 percent said that a

'varying' level of success (20%) or a 'very little' success (20%) rate had been achieved.
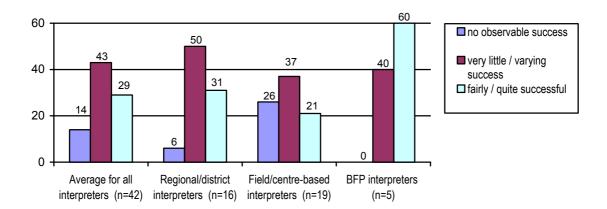No interpreter believed the achievement of 'best practice' had been 'quite successful'.

**Figure 5.6: Interpreters' level of opinion to the success of the Key Outcome,
"Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education"**

Twenty-six percent of field/centre-based interpreters and six percent of regional/district
interpreters believed that the key outcome, *Best practice in park and wildlife
interpretation and education in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service* had
achieved 'no observable success'. While some interpreters also identified a belief that
'no observable success' had been achieved for the other key outcomes listed, their
level of belief that 'no observable success' in the area of 'best practice', especially
among field/centre-based interpreters is the most notable (Appendix 2, Question 3).

5.4.2   The priority interpreters placed upon key I & E Strategy elements

The *I & E Strategy* consisted of a number of elements that singularly and in
combination provided interpreters with the means to support the Queensland
government's role in nature conservation through visitor education. These elements
included the *I & E Strategy*'s mission statement, key outcomes for visitor education,
strategies to achieve key outcomes, guiding principles for best practice, key messages
for interpretation, the identification of interpreters' core business and capabilities, and
guidelines for interpretation on parks.

The language of the document was also an important element of the *I & E Strategy*.
The use of words such as 'enrich', 'inspire' and 'empower' imply a proactive approach,
while encouraging interpreters to experiment with new ideas and practices promoted

innovation. The *I & E Strategy* also provided 'guidelines for on-park delivery' through the identification of what was considered 'core business' and 'capabilities of interpreters'.

Most interpreters placed a 'high to very high' priority on the *I & E Strategy* elements identified to guide the visitor education activities they performed (Table 5.5). However, data interpretation revealed that the emphasis placed on these elements varied between the three groups of interpreters. For example, regional/district interpreters preferred to place a higher emphasis on the 'key outcomes' (63%); 'strategies to achieve the key outcomes' (69%); 'guiding principles for best practice' (63%); and the 'key messages for interpretation' (56%) elements to guide the visitor education work duties they performed, while field/centre-based interpreters preferred to place their emphasis on the 'the mission statement' (42%); 'key outcomes' (48%); 'key messages for interpretation' (63%); 'promoting a proactive approach' (53%); and 'encouraging innovation' (47%) elements. In contrast, most BFP interpreters preferred to place a high priority on all of the elements listed. The only exceptions were with the elements 'strategies to achieve the key outcomes' (40%) and 'guiding principles for best practice' (40%).

Very few interpreters placed a 'very low' priority on the range of *I & E Strategy* elements identified, only a few field/centre-based interpreters did (Appendix 2: Question 7). Notable differences in the level of emphasis interpreters placed on these elements were:

▪ the 'very low to average' priority placed on the mission statement by most regional/district interpreters (51%) compared to the 'high to very high' priority placed on this element by most field/centre-based interpreters (42%) and BFP interpreters (80%)

▪ the 'very low to average' priority placed on core business and capabilities by most regional/district interpreters (56%) and field/centre-based interpreters (38%) compared to the 'high to very high' priority placed on this element by most BFP interpreters (80%)

▪ the 'very low to average' priority placed on promoting a proactive approach by most regional/district interpreters (37%), compared with the 'high to very high' priority placed on this element by most field/centre-based interpreters (53%) and BFP interpreters (80%)

- the 'very low to average' priority placed on encouraging innovation by most regional/district interpreters (44%), compared with the 'high to very high' priority placed on this element by most field/centre-based interpreters (47%) and BFP interpreters (80%)

- the 'high to very high' priority placed on core business and capabilities by most BFP interpreters (80%), compared with the 'very low to average' priority placed on this element by most regional/district interpreters (56%) and field/centre-based interpreters (38%), and

- the 'high to very high' priority placed on guidelines for on-park interpretation by all BFP interpreters, compared with the 'very low to average' priority placed on this element by most regional/district interpreters (37%) and field/centre-based interpreters (37%).

Table 5.5: The priority placed on particular *I & E Strategy* elements by interpreters

I & E Strategy elements (e.g. Sections, components, etc)	Regional/district interpreters (n = 16; no answer provided = 6 - 31%)			Field/centre-based interpreters (n = 19; no answer provided = 21 - 26%)			BFP interpreters (n = 5; no answer provided = 0%)		
	low – very low priority	average priority	high – very high priority	low – very low priority	average priority	high – very high priority	low – very low priority	average priority	high – very high priority
The Mission Statement	13	38	**44**	21	16	**42**	0	20	**80**
Key Outcomes	6	25	**63**	10	16	**48**	0	20	**80**
Strategies to achieve the Key Outcomes	6	19	**69**	21	21	**32**	0	**60**	40
Guiding principles for 'Best Practice'	0	31	**63**	16	26	**37**	0	**60**	40
Key Messages for Interpretation	6	31	**56**	16	0	**63**	0	0	**100**
Core business and capabilities	31	25	**38**	27	11	**33**	0	20	**80**
Guide-lines for 'On-park Interpretation'	6	31	**38**	16	21	**33**	0	0	**100**
Promoting a proactive approach	6	31	**32**	5	21	**53**	0	20	**80**
Encouraging innovation	6	**38**	26	5	26	**47**	20	0	**80**

Priority placed on *I & E Strategy* elements by the majority of interpreters in each category

Data interpretation also showed that the *I & E Strategy* elements, 'guidelines for on-park interpretation', 'promoting a proactive approach' and 'encouraging innovation' recorded an average non-response increase of at least 20 percent among regional/district respondents, while no corresponding net increase was recorded for field/centre-based interpreters or BFP interpreters (Appendix 2: Question 7). While the element 'guidelines for on-park interpretation' was also a separate policy that should have been read in conjunction with the *I & E Strategy*, the Appendices relating to 'guiding principles for best practice interpretation' and 'core business and capabilities' provided direction for the planning and delivery of on-park interpretation activities including involvement in the development, implementation and review of park/district (unit) interpretive/public contact plans (QPWS 2000, p16).

The language and content of the *I & E Strategy*, especially the strategies that supported the achievement of the key outcomes, encourage interpreters to be proactive in the planning and delivery of their visitor education activities. In addition, the 'interpreters' vision', included as part of Appendix 1 to the *I & E Strategy*, detailed that interpretation and community education in QPWS will be, "delivered by a capable and motivated interpretive team that experiments with new ideas and practices" (QPWS 2000, p7) – providing the scope for innovation. Many of the regional/district interpreters who did not respond to this question wrote on their questionnaires that these elements were not part of the *I & E Strategy*, while field/centre-based interpreters and BFP interpreters thought they were.

5.4.3 Providing adequate direction

Most interpreters (55%) believed the *I & E Strategy* provided adequate direction for the range of visitor education duties and activities they performed on behalf of the QPWS (Figure 5.7) (Appendix 2: Question 8). However, regional/district interpreters (63%) and BFP interpreters (100%) were more likely to have this view than their field/centre-based counterparts (42%).
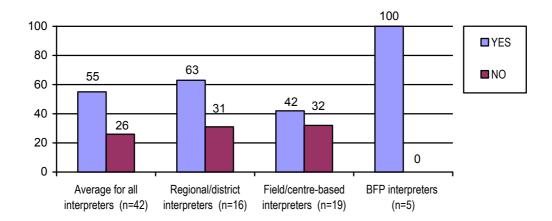
**Figure 5.7: Interpreters' response to whether the *I & E Strategy* provided adequate
direction for visitor education within QPWS**

Interpreters who thought that the *I & E Strategy* provided adequate direction claimed
that it guided the development of regional/district/park interpretive strategies and
actions. For example:

> *The Strategy provides a 'framework' to guide the development and
> implementation of regional/district/park interpretive strategies and actions. It is
> understood easily that this is the purpose of the document.* [IN 33, q8]

Many of the interpreters who said that the *I & E Strategy* provided adequate direction
also expressed concern that it would be largely ineffective if it was not used or
resourced appropriately to achieve stated visitor education outcomes. For example:

> *Most areas seem to be covered but without relevant guidance, training etc., for
> the ground force then the Strategy is only words on paper. In other words – it
> all sounds great in theory, let's hope it can be practised.* [IN 6, q8]

> *Provides a framework but does not necessarily assist in providing activities,
> need more resources and management resources.* [IN 58, q8]

Interpreters who thought that the *I & E Strategy* did not provide adequate direction cited
reasons such as the broad nature of the document, the lack of priority given to actions
and the failure to address fundamental issues such as communication and policy
implementation. The reality of budget constraints, resourcing and addressing
regional/district needs were other factors that interpreters identified as reasons to why
the *I & E Strategy* did not provide adequate direction for visitor education in QPWS.
For example:

*Mission and Vision are vague; Key Outcomes are OK; the detail under the
Outcomes are more useful; Performance Measures did not address the
qualitative issues; proposed actions not prioritised, or given to anyone or given
a timeframe and it is compartmentalised info themes of protected
areas/wildlife/cultural etc when interp is about integrating the 'whole'.* [IN 54,
q8]

5.5 Park managers' knowledge of their organisation's *I & E Strategy* and their opinions on the success of its key outcomes

5.5.1 *Communication of policy and policy changes among park managers*

The principal means by which QPWS park managers found out about departmental
policy and/or policy changes was through formal written notifications (i.e. letters and
memos on departmental letterheads), email and other electronic media. For example,
45 percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 41 percent of Senior Rangers and 44 percent of
District Managers said formal written notifications were the main method by which they
were informed of policy and/or policy changes in the Department while, 42 percent of
Rangers-in-Charge, 48 percent of Senior Rangers and 38 percent of District Managers
singled out email and other electronic media as their main source of communication
about departmental policy (Figure 5.8). Only 11 percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 6
percent of Senior Rangers and 12 percent of District Managers said that they
predominately found out about departmental policy and/or policy changes through less
formal means such as workshops, word-of-mouth and personal enquiries as their main
source of information about policy and/or policy changes in the Department.
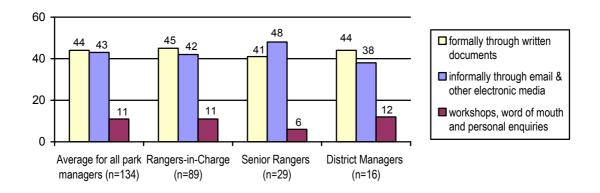

**Figure 5.8: The main ways park managers find out about
policy and/or policy changes in the QPWS**

5.5.2 *Park manager familiarity with the QPWS* I & E Strategy

The QPWS's *I & E Strategy* assists and guides interpreters, park rangers and other park staff in the development and implementation of park/district/regional interpretive strategies and actions. It promotes a state-wide approach to the interpretation team's mission of 'inspiring people to appreciate and enjoy Queensland's parks and wildlife and share responsibility for their protection' (QPWS 2000). QPWS park managers have access to this document through the Interpretation and Community Relations' Unit in Central Office and through regional interpretive officers.

In general, QPWS park managers were either 'not aware of this document' or 'aware of the document, but have not read it' (Figure 5.9). Only 8 percent of Rangers-in-Charge and 6 percent of District Managers claimed that they had read the document at least once previously. Thirty percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 52 percent of Senior Rangers and 38 percent of District Managers said that they were 'aware of the document, but had not read it' while 61 percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 48 percent of Senior Rangers and 56 percent of District Managers said that they were 'not aware of this document'. Of the QPWS park managers who had read the *I & E Strategy* (n = 8), all but one came from a park or region where visitor education activities were delivered by a Public Contact or Interpretive Ranger (Appendix 7).
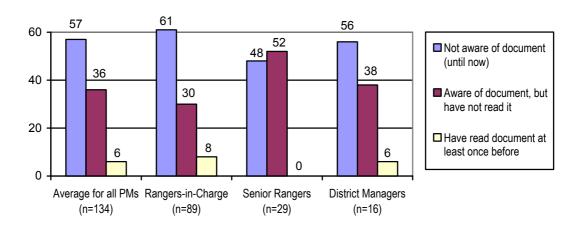

Figure 5.9: Park managers' level of familiarity with the *I & E Strategy*

5.5.3 Park manager opinions on success of I & E Strategy *key outcomes*

The opinions of park managers on the success of the five *I & E Strategy* key outcomes
are similar to opinions expressed by interpreters (refer section 5.3.1). That is, each key
outcome had achieved 'very little or varying success' (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Level of opinion held by park managers on the success of each
I & E Strategy key outcome

I & E Strategy Key Outcome	Rangers-in-Charge (n = 89; no answer provided = 19 - 21%)			Senior Rangers (n = 29; no answer provided = 10%)			District Managers (n = 16; no answer provided = 19%)		
	no observable success	very little or varying success	fairly or quite successful	no observable success	very little or varying success	fairly or quite successful	no observable success	very little or varying success	fairly or quite successful
Greater support for nature conservation in Queensland	9	**47**	25	14	**59**	17	0	**82**	0
Enjoyable and minimal impact park visits and wildlife encounters in Queensland	4	**56**	19	7	**62**	20	0	**63**	19
Greater community involvement in conserving Queensland's national parks, other protected areas, marine parks and native wildlife	7	**45**	29	10	**65**	13	0	**63**	19
Increased awareness of Queensland's history and indigenous culture and willingness to protect that heritage	7	**61**	13	7	**69**	13	6	**69**	6
Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service	13	**47**	18	7	**72**	10	13	**69**	0

Level of opinion held by most QPWS park managers in each category

Similarly, data interpretation also shows a difference of opinion between the three
groups of park managers, and in particular, the key outcomes, '*Greater support for
nature conservation in Queensland*'; '*Greater community involvement in conserving
Queensland's national parks, other protected areas, marine parks and native wildlife*'
and '*Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education in the Queensland
Parks and Wildlife Service*'. For example:

▪ District Managers (82%) more likely believed the key outcome, '*Greater support for
nature conservation in Queensland*' had achieved 'very little or varying success'

compared to the opinions held by most Rangers-in-Charge (47%) and Senior Rangers (59%).

▪ Senior Rangers (65%) and District Managers (63%) more likely believed the key outcome '*Greater community involvement in conserving Queensland's national parks, other protected areas, marine parks and native wildlife*' had achieved 'very little or varying success' compared to the opinions held by most Rangers-in-Charge (45%).

▪ Senior Rangers (72%) and District Managers (44%) more likely believed the key outcome '*Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service*' had achieved 'very little or varying success' success compared to the opinions held by most Rangers-in-Charge (47%).

The divergent opinions expressed by the three groups of park managers were also most notable for the key outcome, '*Best practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education in the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service*'. While most park managers believed this key outcome had achieved 'varying success', 31 percent believed that 'very little success' (19%) or 'no observable success' (12%) had been achieved (Figure 5.10). Only 14 percent of park managers (excluding District Managers) believed this key outcome had achieved a 'fairly successful' rate of success. No park manager held the opinion that this key outcome had achieved a 'quite successful' success rate.
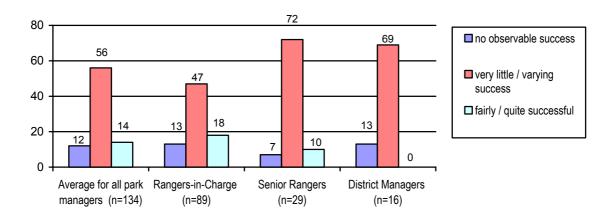

Figure 5.10: Park managers' level of opinion to the success of the Key Outcome, "Best Practice in park and wildlife interpretation and education"

5.6 Key factors affecting the preferred state-wide approach to the co-ordination and delivery of QPWS visitor education activities

Data presented in this Chapter suggests a number of factors affecting the preferred state-wide approach to the co-ordination and delivery of QPWS visitor education activities espoused by the *I & E Strategy*. These factors include:

▪ The poor communication and dissemination of the *I & E Strategy*, especially among new interpretive staff and park managers. This situation had resulted in a lack of awareness of the document among some interpreters and nearly all park managers. As a consequence, some interpreters and most park managers were unaware of the preferred state-wide approach to the co-ordination and delivery of QPWS visitor education initiatives.

▪ A lack of ownership of the *I & E Strategy* and poor use of the 'Guidelines for On-park Interpretation' among interpreters. This situation had most likely contributed to the 'ad hoc' and 'scattergun' approach to the organisation and conduct of visitor education activities across the State. This situation may have also contributed to the failure of a preferred state-wide approach to the co-ordination and delivery of QPWS visitor education initiatives.

▪ A document structure that was insufficient in its ability to provide an effective 'framework' to guide the development, implementation and evaluation of visitor education initiatives in light of existing funding and resourcing arrangements. As a consequence, the value of the document to provide the framework for the visitor education work performed by interpreters was diminished. This situation may have also contributed to the lack of ownership of the document and the failure of a preferred state-wide approach to the co-ordination and delivery of QPWS visitor education initiatives.

These factors affect the ability of the document to provide an effective framework for the visitor education work performed by interpreters and park managers on behalf of the Service. They are further explored in Chapter 7 to provide the basis for identifying ways in which QPWS visitor education services may be enhanced.

5.7 Summary

This chapter identified the intent of the *I & E Strategy* to provide the framework for the development and implementation of regional/district/park interpretive strategies and actions by interpreters across Queensland. It also identified the overall purpose of the

Strategy to facilitate a co-ordinated state-wide approach to the Interpretation and Community Relation Unit's mission of '*inspiring people to appreciate and enjoy Queensland's parks and wildlife and share responsibility for their protection*' during the planning and delivery of visitor education activities on behalf of the Service.

A key factor in the achievement of Interpretation and Community Relation Unit's mission was the awareness, ownership and desire of interpreters, park rangers and other park staff to use the *I & E Strategy* as a framework for the range of visitor education activities they delivered and/or duties performed. However as this Chapter detailed, not all interpreters were aware of the *I & E Strategy*. Park managers were less likely to be aware of this document than interpreters. Poor communication of the *I & E Strategy* and its contents among interpreters and park managers may have contributed to the failure of this document to receive widespread acceptance among these groups of people.

This chapter has also provided evidence that interpreter ownership of the Strategy and subsequent use of it to guide regional, district and park visitor education strategies actions was lacking. The accompanying *Guidelines for On-park Interpretation* were also poorly utilised. This situation may have been responsible for the unco-ordinated planning and delivery of visitor education activities in many areas of the State reported in the literature. This situation may also affected the level of success of the *I & E Strategy* Key Outcomes, with most interpreters and park managers suggesting that they had only been partially achieved. This was contrary to the preferred state-wide approach espoused by the *I & E Strategy*.

Most interpreters agreed that the *I & E Strategy* provided a framework for the visitor education activities they performed on behalf of the department. However, there was also agreement that the structure of the document may have contributed to the reasons why a co-ordinated state-wide approach to the delivery of visitor education services and activities had not been achieved. The needs of each protected area, district and region were different, as were the views and priorities of interpreters and park managers who planned and delivered visitor education services on behalf of the department.

Interpreter opinions about key messages and the use of statements about interpretation were positive; however, some disagreement was evident. Statements about interpretation provided a philosophical basis for the conduct of visitor education

activities, while key messages provided a foci for the content and theme of individual presentations. The use of either in a document such as the *I & E Strategy* should be consistent with the intent of the document. The provision of a broad range of key messages, while useful, may work against the need for interpreters to develop key interpretive messages for their park, district or region within a logical, coherent state-wide visitor education framework.

Most interpreters believed that the performance measures ascribed to each key outcome were appropriate indicators of 'best practice' for QPWS visitor education activities. However, as this Chapter also detailed, many of the performance measures were actually inappropriate because they did not measure the success of the key outcome ascribed to. They measured other achievements. Consequently, a valid measure of key outcome performance was unlikely to be achieved. This means that any assumption pointing to visitor education 'best practice' being achieved was likely to be false. The varied response provided by interpreters and park managers as to the success of the 'best practice' key outcome reinforced the assumption that the structure of the *I & E Strategy* had contributed to the issues identified in this Chapter. These issues are further explored in Chapter 7 and provide the basis of determining how the acceptance and use of visitor education can be enhanced as a park management tool.