

**~ Chapter 4 ~**

Organisational structures and  
frameworks influencing the role and  
value of visitor education in the  
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

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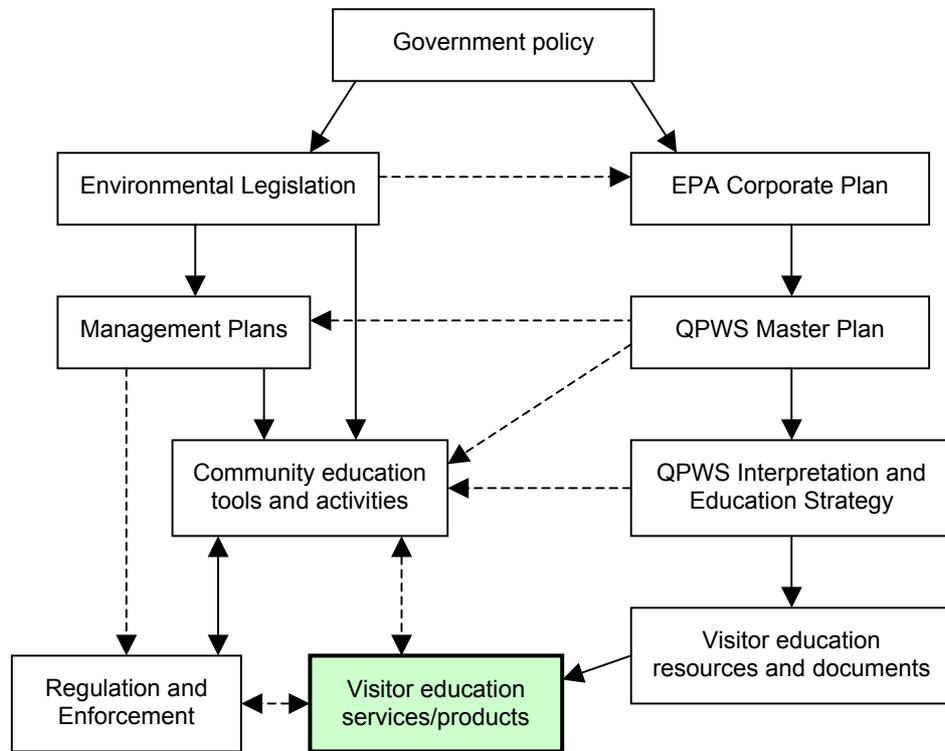
### 4.0 Introduction

Australian public sector protected area agencies are structured in a variety of ways (Worboys, Lockwood & De Lacy 2001). While each agency has a Minister as the responsible head to the government of the day, the legislation, policies, and strategic and operational plans differ, but reflect each State's role in the protection of their natural and cultural heritage. These systems also represent each State's approach to achieving accountability and consistency across their organisation.

This chapter outlines the structures and frameworks central to the role and value of visitor education as a park management tool in the QPWS. It provides a critique of the issues investigated by the research objective: ["To identify the ways in which existing organisational policies and processes established the role and value of visitor education as an integral aspect of protected area management in Queensland"](#). Key areas investigated in this chapter include the formation of the EPA and QPWS, the EPA Corporate Plan and QPWS Master Plan. QPWS Interpretation and Community Relations team resources and internal reports are also examined to determine the context in which visitor education operates. This is done to provide the link between government policy and the delivery of visitor education at an operational level (Figure 4.1). There are several layers of policy that guide the development and implementation of visitor education initiatives at an operational level, each of which is central to understanding the complexity of the government's intention to revitalise the visitor education capacity of the QPWS.

This chapter is divided into six sections. Section 4.1 details the key environmental legislation administered by the EPA and QPWS. In particular, it outlines the (Queensland) *Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NCAct)*, the principal piece of legislation that guides the administration and management of protected areas in Queensland. This is to determine the function of visitor education within the legislative framework of government and the management of Queensland's protected area estate. Section 4.2 identifies the structure and role of the EPA and QPWS as the end result of the 1998

merger of all Queensland government agencies involved in environmental management into one government organisation.



**Figure 4.1: EPA/QPWS visitor education framework from policy to product**

Section 4.3 provides a synopsis of the principle policies that guide the strategic direction of the EPA and QPWS. It also identifies the priority the EPA and QPWS place on information and education as a means to assist in the achievement of organisation's environmental protection obligations. This is done to determine the role and value of visitor education at a strategic level.

Section 4.4 describes the range of documents and resources used by interpreters to guide their visitor education practice. This section also summarises interpreters' awareness and use of these materials in their planning and delivery of visitor education activities across the State. This critique is important as it allows the connection between visitor education at a strategic level to be compared with the documents and resources developed for the operational delivery of the Government's visitor education initiatives.

Section 4.5 provides an analysis of key internal Interpretation and Community Relations team reports and submissions to determine the factors affecting the acceptance and use of visitor education as a park management tool. This section is important as it provides the inquiry on which this study is based. It reveals the issues that formed the basis of the interpreter's and park manager's questionnaires to determine the effect of policy and organisational culture on the achievement of visitor education outcomes. Section 4.6 provides a conclusion to the main issues identified in this chapter.

## **4.1 Queensland environmental legislation**

### *4.1.1 Environmental legislation administered by the EPA / QPWS*

Queensland first enacted general environmental legislation (*The State Forests and National Parks Act*) in 1906 to provide for the establishment and management of National Parks (Black & Breckwoldt 1977). This Act remained in force until the enactment of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1975 (NPWAct)* in 1975. Following the election of the Goss Labor Government in late 1989, legislation about conserving and managing native animals and plants and declaring and managing protected areas such as national parks was revised and rewritten (Qld Govt 2005). In addition, the Queensland Government's establishment of the EPA in December 1998 to administer and manage all aspects of Queensland's environmental wellbeing brought together all legislation, and government policies relating to environmental protection under one government department.

As a result of the government's initiative to amalgamate its environmental obligations under one organisation, the EPA administers the key Queensland environmental legislation of the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*, the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, the *Marine Parks Act 1982*, the *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995* and the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992* (Qld Govt 2005). The EPA is also responsible for the administration, or administration in part, of a further 14 statutes, including the *Forestry Act 1959* and *Recreation Areas Management Act 1988* (Refer Figure 4.2 for a full list of the primary legislation administered by the EPA/QPWS).

In addition, the EPA also has obligations under and direct involvement and interest in numerous other Commonwealth and Queensland legislation including the *Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Conservation Act 1994 (Cmwlth)*, *Great Barrier*

*Reef Marine Park Act 1975 (Cmwlth), Integrated Planning Act 1997, and various city and town council local laws established in relation to the Local Government, Environment and Planning Act 1994.*

- *Aboriginal Land Act 1991 (s83 [2–11], s134)*
- *Brisbane Forest Park Act 1977*
- *Coastal Protection and Management Act 1995*
- *Cultural Record (Landscapes Queensland and Queensland Estate) Act 1987*
- *Currumbin Bird Sanctuary Act 1976*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1994*
- *Forestry Act 1959*
- *Gurulmundi Secure Landfill Agreement Act 1992*
- *Marine Parks Act 2004*
- *Meaker Trust (Raine Island Research) Act 1981*
- *National Environment Protection Council (Queensland) Act 1994*
- *National Trust of Queensland Act 1963*
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Newstead House Trust Act 1939*
- *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*
- *Recreation Areas Management Act 1988*
- *Torres Strait Islander Land Act 1991 (s80 [2–11], s131)*
- *Tweed River Entrance Sand Bypassing Project Agreement Act 1998*
- *Wet Tropics World Heritage Protection and Management Act 1993*

**Figure 4.2: Primary legislation administered by the EPA/QPWS**

(Source: [http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/about\\_the\\_epa/legislation/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/about_the_epa/legislation/), accessed 22/02/2005)

The EPA and QPWS also have responsibilities to observe numerous national and international conventions, agreements, protocols and memorandums of understanding relating to the conservation of this State's nature (Qld Govt 2005). These include: Ramsar, JAMBA, CAMBA and the Bonn Convention, to name just a few. The overall aim of the legislation and treaties is to establish and provide the framework and structure by which the Queensland Government supports the community, industry and the rest of government in working towards improved environmental management and the sustainable use of natural resources.

#### 4.1.2 (Queensland) Nature Conservation Act 1992

While planning and management decisions for Queensland protected areas must take into account relevant legislation, statutory duties, permits and agreements of all relevant parties with jurisdictions over land included in the planning area, the key environmental statute that guides the conservation of nature and the management of protected areas in Queensland is the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and associated regulations (Figure 4.3).

- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Nature Conservation Regulation 1994*
- *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994*
- *Nature Conservation (Protected Areas) Regulation 1994*
- *Nature Conservation (Macropod Harvesting) Conservation Plan 1994*
- *Nature Conservation (Macropod Harvest Period) Notice 1999*
- *Nature Conservation (Duck and Quail) Conservation Plan 1995*
- *Nature Conservation (Duck and Quail Harvest Period) Notice*
- *Nature Conservation (Eulo Lizard Races) Conservation Plan 1995*
- *Nature Conservation (Protected Plants in Trade) Conservation Plan*
- *Nature Conservation (Problem Crocodiles) Conservation Plan 1995*
- *Nature Conservation (Whales and Dolphins) Conservation Plan 1997*

**Figure 4.3: (Queensland) Nature Conservation Act 1992 and Regulations**

(Source: [http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/about\\_the\\_epa/legislation/nature\\_conservation/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/about_the_epa/legislation/nature_conservation/), accessed 22/02/2005)

The *Nature Conservation Act 1992 (NCAct)* and nature conservation regulations consolidate all legislation on nature conservation in Queensland. For example, the *NCAct* replaced the *Fauna Conservation Act (1974)* and associated *Amendment Acts*, the environmental parks components of the *Lands Act (1994)* and the *Native Plants Protection Act (1933)*. This Act, its regulations, by-laws, orders, plans and notices primarily provide for the conservation of Queensland's outstanding nature across the State, in particular areas (Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, Raine Island) and in particular ways (providing opportunities for public recreation in natural environments and facilitating appreciation, enjoyment and protection of resources) (Qld Govt 2005).

The Act is based on principles to conserve biological diversity, ecologically sustainable use of wildlife, ecologically sustainable development and international criteria developed by the World Conservation Union (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) for establishing and managing protected areas (Qld Govt 2005). It provides for 11 classes of protected areas ranging from national parks (scientific), World Heritage management and international agreement areas to national parks (Aboriginal land) and nature refuges and co-ordinated conservation areas involving private property; and six classes of wildlife – presumed extinct, endangered, vulnerable (collectively known as threatened wildlife), rare, common (these classes are collectively prescribed as protected wildlife), international and prohibited wildlife (these classes relating to non-native species). The Regulations provide detailed authority for functions required by the Act.

The Act's object is the conservation of nature. This is to be achieved by an integrated and comprehensive conservation strategy for the whole of Queensland involving matters including:

- gathering, researching and disseminating information on nature, identifying critical habitats and areas of major interest, and encouraging the conservation of nature by education and co-operative involvement of the community
- dedication and declaration of areas representative of the biological diversity, natural features and wilderness of Queensland as protected areas
- managing protected areas
- protecting native wildlife and its habitat
- ecologically sustainable use of protected wildlife and areas
- recognition of the interest of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in nature and their co-operative involvement in its conservation, and
- cooperative involvement of landholders (Qld Govt 2005, p12).

The object of the Act also establishes goals and objectives that necessitate the treatment of visitor education as an integral aspect of protected area management. For example, Section 5 of the Act details that “the conservation of nature is to be achieved by an integrated and comprehensive conservation strategy for the whole of Queensland that involves, among other things ... disseminating information on nature ... [and] the education and cooperative involvement of the community” (p10), thus creating the role and value of visitor education as a park management tool (Figure 4.4).

5. *The conservation of nature is to be achieved by an integrated and comprehensive conservation strategy for the whole of Queensland that involves, among other things, the following –*

(a) **Gathering of information\* and community education\***, etc.

- *gathering, researching, analysing, monitoring and **disseminating information\*** on nature;*
- *identifying critical habitats and areas of major interest;*
- *encouraging the conservation of nature **by the education\*** and cooperative involvement of the community, particularly land-holders;*

\* Emphasis added

**Figure 4.4: Section 5(a) of the (Queensland) Nature Conservation Act 1992**  
(Source: *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, p10-11,)

The education of visitors to Queensland's protected areas is also a stated priority identified in the organisation's Corporate Plan (EPA 1999) and the *Master Plan for Queensland's Park System* (Qld Govt 2001). The priority placed on visitor education in these documents is explored later in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

## 4.2 EPA / QPWS organisational structure

### 4.2.1 EPA and QPWS formation and structure

The EPA and QPWS were formed in December 1998 as a result of a change of government following the Queensland State election in that year<sup>11</sup>. The EPA builds on the foundation that was the (Queensland) Department of Environment and Heritage to secure Queensland's role as a leader in environmental protection and conservation management by effectively integrating environmental and economic decision-making on a state-wide basis (EPA 1999). It draws together previous government agencies with environmental protection obligations and includes agencies with a specific environmental focus such as the environment (e.g. air, water, soil), parks and wildlife, and the wet tropics world heritage area.

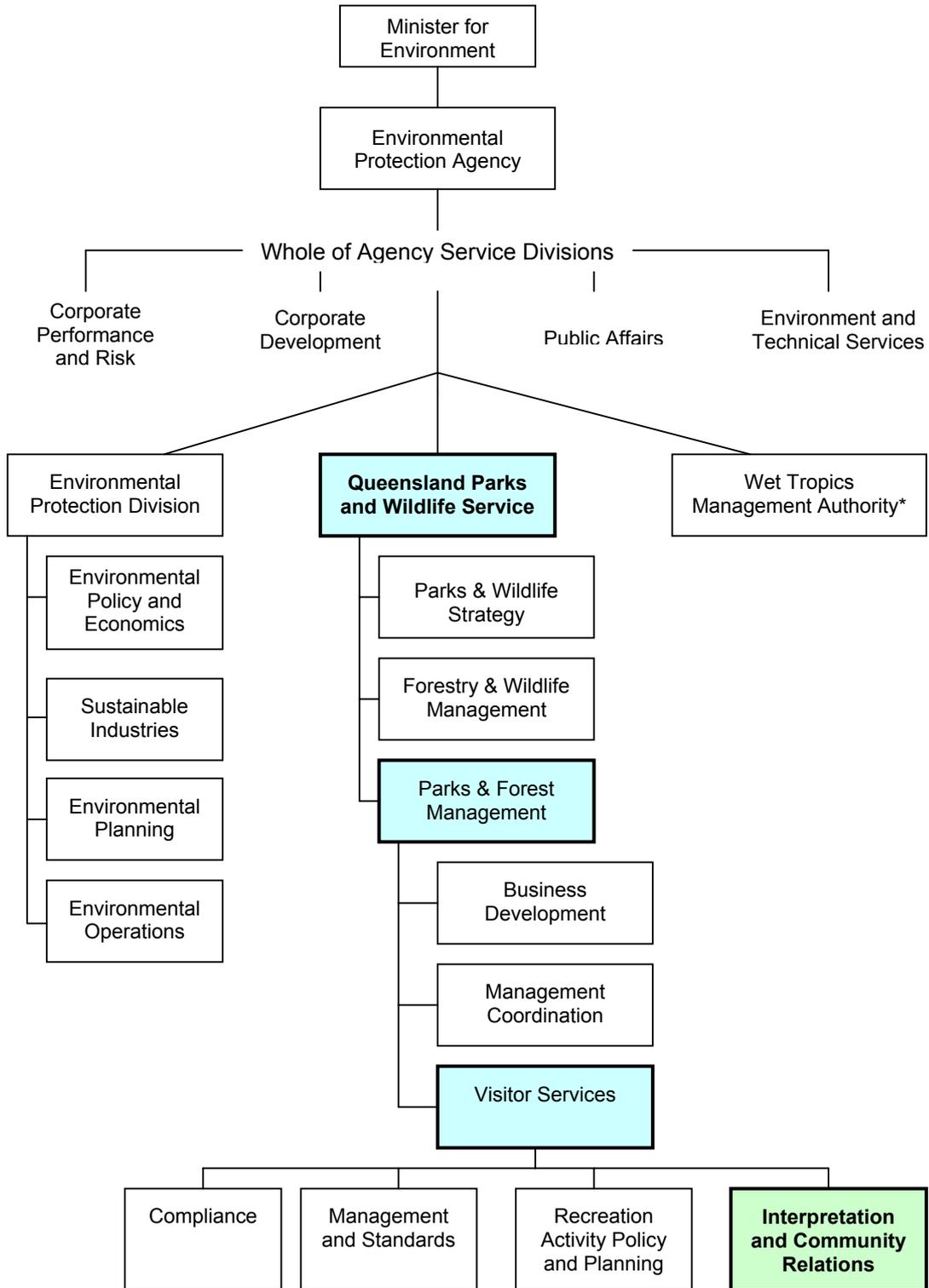
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11 The existing Coalition (Liberal/National) Government was replaced by a Labor Government in a landslide decision.

The EPA, like most government departments in each Australian State and territory, is headed by a Minister. However, while the Minister is accountable to parliament for the operation and good governance of the department, it is the role of the Director General (or in some cases the Chief Executive Officer) to direct and manage the business of the department (Corbett 1992). Typically, the structure of a government department will reflect the business of government in a particular area (Figure 4.5). Thus, the EPA is divided into a number of divisions, each division representing a particular aspect of the government's work in the operation or business of the department. In addition, a responsible officer accountable to the Director General for effective and efficient operation of that division/sub-division heads each division and subdivision, the end result being a hierarchical structure of accountability from subordinates to the Director General, thence to the Minister.

Generally, the role of the EPA is to deal with the broad scope of environmental considerations, including protection of air, water and soil quality, protection of amenity from unwanted noise and other nuisance issues, and protection of biodiversity, coastal waters, heritage and the promotion of sustainable industry (EPA 1999). These core environmental management functions are exercised through the EPA's Environmental Protection Division and regional offices located in Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville. EPA Environmental Protection Division functions also include licensing of environmentally relevant activities, providing public information and promoting environmental responsibility, conducting licence audits, complaints/investigations/enforcement, and advising and supporting local government (EPA 1999). EPA regional centres are serviced by 13 districts, the boundaries of which reflect the needs of local communities (EPA 1999).

The EPA's QPWS division manages the State's parks, forests and reserves, and wildlife. The purpose of this division is to foster ecological sustainability in the use of Queensland's natural resources, and to work in partnership with communities to establish strong values in conservation management (EPA 1999). QPWS regional offices are located in Brisbane (Southern), Rockhampton (Central) and Cairns (Northern). QPWS Regions are also responsible for a variety of services, including natural resource management, park interpretation, and visitor management. QPWS regional centres are serviced by 17 districts, the boundaries of which reflect the needs of local communities (EPA 1999).



**Figure 4.5: EPA Corporate Structure and location of the Interpretation and Community Relations team within the QPWS (as at 14 September 2001)**

\* The Wet Tropics Management Authority, while part of the EPA structure with specific responsibilities for managing the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, is a stand-alone agency with its own Corporate Plan.

Four whole-of-agency divisions support the EPA and QPWS: Corporate Performance and Risk, Corporate Development, Public Affairs, and Environment and Technical Services (EPA 1999). The *Corporate Performance and Risk* division is responsible for monitoring client and stakeholder expectations, for executive services, and for ensuring that the EPA is able to assist external organisations to capitalise on commercial opportunities, whereas the *Corporate Development* division provides high-quality support services, including strategic planning, financial management, human resource management, information management, facilities management, corporate learning and ministerial liaison. The *Public Affairs* division provides high-calibre communication and information services to help achieve good environmental outcomes, while the *Environment and Technical Services* division supports the business functions of the EPA and QPWS, ensuring improved client services (EPA 1999).

The prime function of the EPA is to service the Government's obligation towards traditional environmental protection matters concerning water, air, noise, waste, contaminated sites, and greenhouse gases, along with aspects of environmental planning and research matters such as biodiversity planning, coastal management and waterways, conservation science, protection of cultural heritage, protection and management of wildlife and Queensland's protected area estate and World Heritage Areas (EPA 1999, p9). Many of its activities are dictated by statute. Consequently, the overall structure of the EPA is designed to encourage a 'whole-of-agency' approach to environmental protection (EPA 1999).

### **4.3 EPA / QPWS strategic policies**

#### *4.3.1 EPA Corporate Plan*

The EPA's Corporate Plan provides the platform on which the EPA and the QPWS develop their co-operative partnerships with the Queensland community. The Plan outlines that the overall aim of the EPA is to:

- assert the Agency's place in Government as a leader in environmental protection
- deliver a real service to the community; and
- secure sustainable environmental and social outcomes for Queensland (EPA 1999, p2).

The Corporate Plan<sup>12</sup> details that the EPA and QPWS were created and designed to improve biodiversity protection and environmental management service delivery in a deliberate move to harness the growing level of community energy for modern environmental and conservation protection (EPA 1999). This emphasis is reflected in both the mission statement of the EPA:

*working with the Queensland community to achieve a healthy and sustainable environment as a foundation for economic security (p5)*

and the mission statement of the QPWS:

*presenting and protecting Queensland's natural heritage in an ecologically sustainable way to enhance our economic and social wellbeing (p5).*

The majority of the Agency's resources are committed to meeting its obligations outlined in the Corporate Plan. However, the Plan, in accord with the Government's priorities, identifies several areas where efforts are focused, including improved administration; the establishment of a Commission for Sustainable Development; the protection of Queensland's natural assets such as air, water, land, coasts and biodiversity; ensuring sustainable industries; and the enhancement of the Queensland community's environmental awareness (Figure 4.6), the Government's aim being the integration of environmental issues into the State's economic development, leading to long-term job opportunities, improved quality of life and economic security (EPA 1999).

- Improved Environmental Administration
- The establishment of a Commission for Sustainable Development
- Investing in our Natural Assets, including World Heritage
- Clean Air, Water and Land (including waste management)
- Biodiversity Conservation
- Protecting Our Coast
- Sustainable Industries
- **Enhanced Community Environmental Awareness\***

\* Emphasis added

**Figure 4.6: EPA / QPWS 1999 - 2001 Corporate Plan priorities**  
(Source: EPA 1999, p9)

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12 The 1999 - 2001 Corporate Plan is reviewed here, as it is central to the period that this thesis explores.

The Corporate Plan identifies the role of the QPWS to enhance, manage and promote the wildlife and protected areas of Queensland. Specifically, the QPWS will:

- maintain biodiversity on protected areas and develop policies and community partnerships to protect biodiversity on other lands
- ensure sustainable use of wildlife resources
- improve community awareness, appreciation and understanding of the environment
- promote community-based nature conservation, and
- implement a world-class system of protected areas including national parks, marine parks, world heritage areas and nature-based recreation areas (EPA 1999, p18).

The Corporate Plan also identifies a number of priorities for the QPWS (Figure 4.7). One is the revitalisation of the visitor education capacity of the Service. This is to foster improved community awareness, appreciation and understanding of the natural world in a move to further facilitate the protection and wise use of Queensland's environment.

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ prepare a Master Plan involving community/key stakeholder consultation to guide the management and infrastructure needs of national parks</li><li>▪ <b>revitalise the interpretation and education capacity of the service*</b></li><li>▪ develop accurate and reliable scientific information for maintenance of biodiversity</li><li>▪ develop partnerships, such as NatureSearch, with the community for a better understanding of Queensland's natural heritage</li><li>▪ plan and develop a continuous system of State marine parks from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Moreton Bay</li><li>▪ enhance, and maintain existing, visitor infrastructure on national parks which supports the recreational needs of Queensland's eco-tourism industry subject to the conservation and protection requirements of the protected area, and in balance with other park demands</li><li>▪ develop and implement policy options for Indigenous Joint Management of key Protected Areas</li><li>▪ enhance the management of Queensland's World Heritage Areas, consistent with our obligations under the World Heritage Convention</li><li>▪ provide for the better management of Queensland's threatened species</li><li>▪ develop a management information system for macropod harvest program</li><li>▪ establish the new biodiversity extension service to work with landholders, industry, local government and community groups to encourage conservation of nature on private land</li></ul> |
|--|

\* Emphasis added

**Figure 4.7: 1999 - 2001 Corporate Plan priorities for QPWS**  
(Source: EPA 1999, p19)

The Corporate Plan also identifies performance indicators for both the EPA and QPWS. The aim of the performance indicators is to provide a benchmark by which the achievement of organisational performance can be measured. QPWS performance indicators, in particular, reflect the agency's stated obligations towards community involvement in environmental protection and parks and wildlife management services detailed in Figure 4.7. However, while some performance indicators have clearly measurable outcomes, four out of ten performance indicators provide only vague indications of what is to be achieved (Figure 4.8). Terms such as 'increased opportunities' and 'increased participation', do not provide a clear indication of what is to be achieved. To be accountable, improvement needs to be tested against performance indicators that are easily measurable and/or quantifiable (DNRE 1999).

Performance can be measured by achievement of the following:

- a target of 70% biodiversity represented in the protected area estate
- a target of 160 protected areas and marine parks operating under approved management plans and zoning plans
- increased opportunities for nature-based tourism
- increased participation of land holders in workshops on conservation issues
- a target of 70% visitor satisfaction with our parks and park services
- permits and licences to be properly assessed and validly issued and meeting native title requirements
- assistance to trained unemployed people in gaining employment or continuing vocational training
- a target of 8 recovery plans for endangered species submitted
- **increased interpretation and education services by public contact rangers\***
- capital works to be completed within project guidelines

\* Emphasis added

**Figure 4.8: 1999 - 2001 Corporate Plan performance indicators for QPWS**  
(Source: EPA 1999, p20)

The Corporate Plan is the EPA/QPWS's 'contract' with Government. It provides strategic direction and a statement of intent with regards to organisational performance and the management of the Agency's financial and human resources. The EPA's enhanced community environmental awareness priority (Figure 4.6) identifies the use of environmental education and interpretive services to highlight the values of

Queensland's parks and other conservation areas, and the environment as a whole. It is considered an important priority in regards to the education of the public for the protection and wise use of Queensland's environment (EPA 1999), and as such, is recorded as a priority for the QPWS through the revitalisation of the Service's visitor education capacity (Figure 4.7). Yet, while *increased opportunities for nature-based tourism*, and a *target of 70% visitor satisfaction with our parks and park services* rely on visitor education to varying degrees, it is the performance indicator, *increase in interpretation and education services provided by public contact rangers* (Figure 4.8) that appears to be the main criteria on which the 'revitalisation' of the QPWS's visitor education capacity will be measured.

#### 4.3.2 QPWS Master Plan

A Discussion Paper outlining a Master Plan for Queensland's Parks System was developed and widely circulated by the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in October 2000 for public comment. The intent of the proposed QPWS Master Plan was to guide direction and strategies for the responsible management of Queensland's parks and reserves for the next twenty years. It was developed through a co-operative process that recognised a range of community needs, priorities of indigenous communities in co-management, and the conservation requirements of park ecosystems, species and generic diversity (Qld Govt 2000, pii).

The Master Plan Discussion Paper addresses four main dimensions of park management:

- conserving natural and cultural resources
- working with community partners
- sustaining recreational and tourism opportunities, and
- enhancing management capabilities (Qld Govt 2000, p28).

The use of visitor education as a park management tool is part of the "sustaining recreational and tourism opportunities" element. Visitor education is described as the method to encourage community awareness, appreciation and involvement in conservation (Qld Govt 2000). The Master Plan Discussion Paper also described visitor education as the method to enrich visitor experiences on-park while promoting behaviour that is safe and causes minimal impact to the natural environment.

The Master Plan Discussion Paper acknowledged that visitor education assists visitors, local communities and other interested people to better understand, explore, experience and care for the natural and cultural values of parks (p60). It recognises the importance of visitor education as a management tool to promote 'minimum impact' practices, assist visitor safety, and inform visitors of park rules and the reasons behind them. The Discussion paper also outlines that the provision of broad environmental protection messages on- and off-park can encourage people to conserve nature and protect cultural heritage in their everyday lives.

To maintain the support of the wider community and further encourage feelings of ownership, pride and protection towards parks requires accurate, informative and accessible information about the natural and cultural values of parks. While the provision of basic information is considered essential, interpretive programmes that stimulate a deeper level of connection between people and nature, and a better understanding and appreciation of the environment and cultural heritage, are required (Qld Govt 2000). However, the delivery of high-quality interpretive activities and programmes can only be achieved through a professional, skilled and well-resourced interpretive workforce. The Discussion Paper acknowledges this requisite and identifies the training and support of interpretive staff to achieve visitor education outcomes.

Interpreters, though, wanted a number of amendments to the interpretation sections of the proposed Parks Master Plan. These amendments included:

- A stronger emphasis on changing visitor behaviour by outlining that visitors need to take responsibility for their actions. (Visitors should be encouraged to minimise their impact and value conservation activities on- and off-park).
- Interpretation and information/public contact to be recognised as being equally important as park maintenance – interpretation as a management tool. (Organisation culture needs to recognise the importance of visitor education. All park staff should assume responsibility for informing and assisting visitors, not just interpretive staff).
- To distinguish between public contact duties and interpretive duties. (Interpretive work programs to be set by interpretive staff).

- The identification and fixing of a percentage of time for public contact rangers and field staff to be involved in interpretive activities as a proportion of normal/assigned work duties. (QPWS 1999b, p17).

### Postscript

The QPWS Master Plan was released in November 2001 after 12 months of community consultation. While some changes were made to the draft Master Plan the intent of the document remained the same. The amendments put forward by interpreters were not incorporated into the final document. This may be due to the specific nature of interpreters' requests into a document that aims to provide the direction of management for Queensland's protected areas over the next twenty years. The Master Plan is a strategic document, to be complemented by an Implementation Plan and specific management strategies that will provide staff and the community with the directions for protecting and conserving Queensland's natural and cultural values (Qld Govt 2001). Interpreters' requests are more likely to be considered at an operational level.

#### *4.3.3 QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy (2000–2002)*

The *Interpretation and Education Strategy (2000–2002) (I & E Strategy)* is the Service's strategic document for visitor education. It provides the framework, priorities and guiding principles for visitor education activities across the State. It includes key messages that should be conveyed through educative activities, guiding principles for 'best practice' and a description of what is considered core business for interpreters.

The *I & E Strategy* also identifies that visitor education services will be delivered professionally by a well-resourced, capable and motivated interpretive team that:

- is recognised as an essential component of high quality, effective conservation management
- includes well-paid professionals with worthwhile career paths
- experiments with new ideas and practices, and
- identifies and promotes priority nature conservation issues across the State (QPWS 2000, p9).

The *I & E Strategy* acknowledges the role of visitor education to assist personal experiences such as park visits and wildlife encounters to inspire healthy attitudes towards nature and encourage responsible actions towards environmental protection and sustainability (QPWS 2000). The underlying philosophy is to bring people and nature together to enrich lives and promote a shared responsibility and commitment to nature conservation on- and off-park. The *I & E Strategy* also identifies the difficulty interpreters face trying to change some people's attitudes and actions towards nature. It details that negative and indifferent environmental attitudes are well entrenched in some protected area visitors. When education does not work, the *I & E Strategy* concedes that enforcement is required to deter people from actions that threaten the integrity of the natural environment.

Interpreters' awareness and opinions on the appropriateness of this document to guide QPWS's visitor education priorities on behalf of the Government are explored further in Chapter 5.

#### **4.4 QPWS visitor education documents and resources**

Seven principal documents and resources underpin the EPA's Corporate Plan, QPWS Master Plan and QPWS *Interpretation and Education Strategy 2000–2002* to provide the means for the Government's strategic intent to be implemented and delivered at an operational level. These documents and resources are:

##### Documents

- *QDEH Policies and guidelines for interpretation and public contact (1994)*
- *QPWS Guidelines for On-park Interpretation (1999)*
- *ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education (1999)*

##### Resources

- *QNPWS Interpretation Manual (1984)*
- *QPWS Interpretive Planning Handbook (2001)*
- *Draft QPWS Sign Manual (2001)*
- *Draft QPWS Community and Education Manual (2001)*

The purpose of these documents and resources is to provide a whole-of-agency approach to the design, planning, organisation, implementation, conduct and/or evaluation of the visitor education activities and programs interpreters and other park staff deliver on behalf of the Service. They promote a co-ordinated and consistent approach to the interpretation of natural phenomena, the minimising of recreational impacts, the ensuring of personal safety and promotion of the role of the QPWS in the management of the State's protected areas and wildlife. Having documented procedures for key processes and tasks also makes it clearer for staff to know who is responsible for what and how the task needs to be completed (DNRE 1999). A brief overview of these documents and resources and interpreters' knowledge and use of them is provided below.

#### *4.4.1 QDEH Policies and guidelines for interpretation and public contact (1994)*

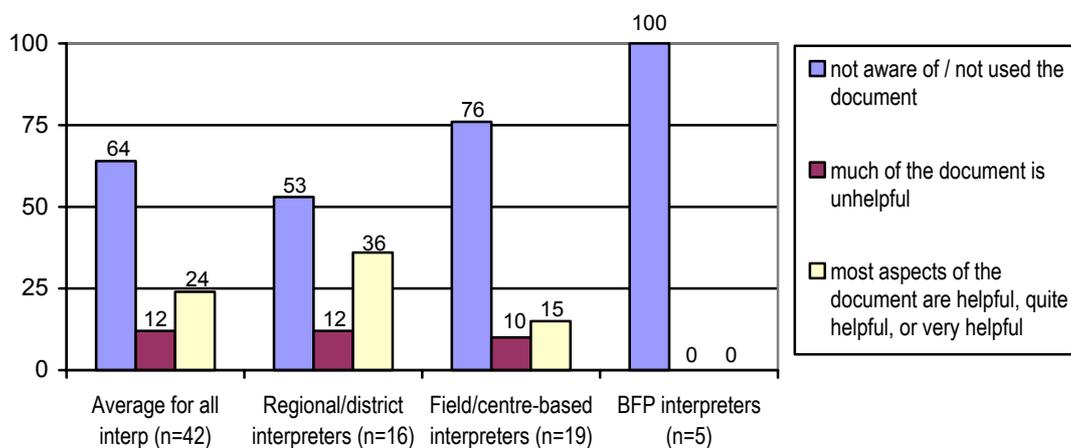
The QDEH *Policies and guidelines for interpretation and public contact*<sup>13</sup> document specifies the Service's policies and operational guidelines for interpretation and public contact. It includes formal policies endorsed by all regions and senior staff, visitor education strategies developed by interpreters at state-wide workshops, and suggested guidelines to provide a consistent framework for visitor education around the State (QDEH 1994).

The document is designed as a reference for all staff involved in public contact activities. It was developed to ensure staff turnover and decentralisation of Service functions did not destabilise the preferred consistent approach to visitor education delivery. The document acknowledges that some guidelines presented are fairly rigid, while others allow some flexibility in interpretation (QDEH 1994). It stipulates that no policy or guideline can be changed without consultation with all regions, Head Office and the Executive Director. Compliance with the policies and guidelines set down in the document should ensure a consistently high professional approach to visitor education in the Service (QDEH 1994).

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13 This document was incorrectly referred to as the QPWS [QDEH] *Interpretation and Education Policy Guidelines Report (1992)* in the interpreter survey (a precursor to the 1994 report detailed here). Consequently, this error may have affected the data obtained for this question in the survey (refer Appendix 2, q25b) and subsequent data interpretation presented in this study at Figure 4.9. The error while regrettable, is insignificant in terms of the data presented in this thesis.

Most interpreters said they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously (Figure 4.9). This includes more than half of all Regional/District interpreters (53%), 76 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters and all BFP (Brisbane Forest Park) interpreters. Of the interpreters who said that they were aware of his document, 36 percent of Regional/District interpreters and 15 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters reported that most aspects of the document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practice of visitor education. In contrast, 12 percent of Regional/District interpreters and 10 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters said that much of this document was unhelpful.



**Figure 4.9: Interpreters' knowledge and use of the QDEH Policies and guidelines for interpretation and public contact (1994)**

#### 4.4.2 QPWS Guidelines for On-park Interpretation (1999)

The QPWS *Guidelines for On-park Interpretation (1999)* document was the most recent version of policy standards originally developed for on-park interpretation in 1989.

These guidelines specify the number and type of interpretive facilities and services that the Service should aim to provide in each of its national and conservation parks across the State. The recommended level of visitor education service to be provided is based on categories. Parks are categorised in terms of park use and management. Staffing levels and visitor facilities have also been taken into consideration (QPWS 1999a).

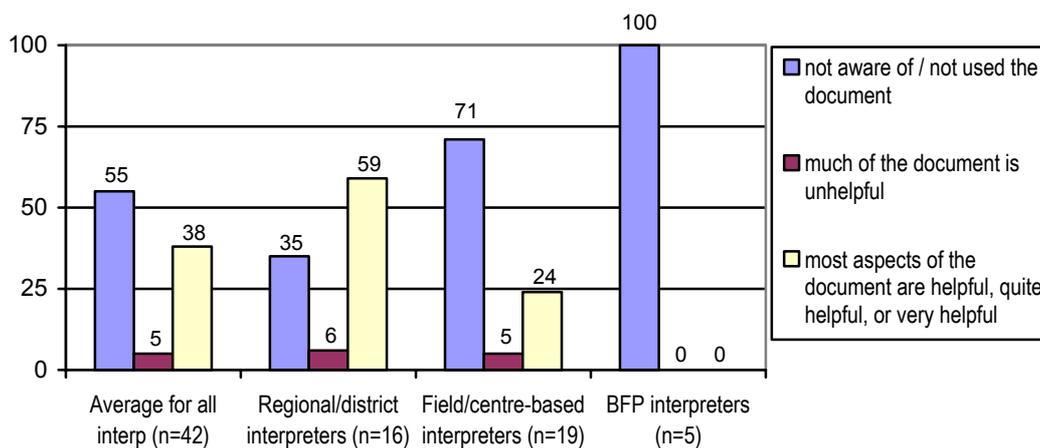
The criteria used include:

- annual visitor numbers/person visit days
- extent of recreational use

- special tourist character
- type of visitor use – overnight/extended or day use (QPWS 1999a).

The philosophy is that parks that attract higher levels of use and are popular recreation/tourism destinations should provide a higher level of visitor education service than those parks with low visitation and limited visitor facilities (picnic areas, walking tracks etc.). For each park category, a preferred level of interpretive activity and a number of non-personal interpretive facilities (e.g. brochures, signs, displays, etc.) are recommended. While not specifically stated, these guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the *Interpretation and Education Strategy (2000–2002)*.

Most Regional/District interpreters said they were aware of this document (Figure 4.10). While 59 percent of Regional/District interpreters said they found most aspects of the document helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practice of visitor education, 6 percent did not. In contrast, most Field/Centre-based interpreters and all BFP interpreters said they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously. Of the Field/Centre-based interpreters who said that they were aware of his document 24 percent reported that most aspects of the document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practise of visitor education, while 5 percent did not.



**Figure 4.10: Interpreters' knowledge and use of the QPWS Guidelines for On-park Interpretation (1999)**

#### 4.4.3 ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education Report (1999)

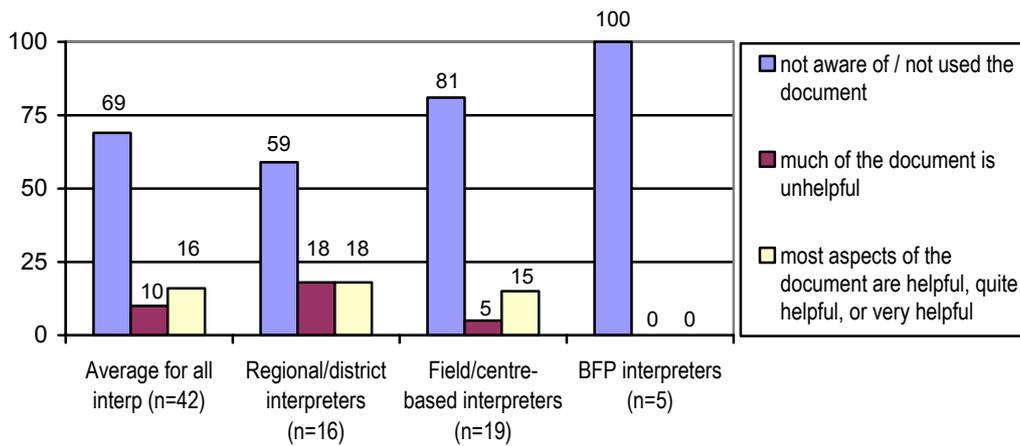
The *ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education Report* is the product of a best practice and benchmarking of park and cultural site visitor education services study undertaken by the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) Group of Agencies. While the study primarily focused on Australian and New Zealand organisations that provide significant levels of visitor education services, a selection of overseas park agencies was also included. All ANZECC members and some leading urban parks, museums, zoos and several private companies contributed to this study (DNRE 1999).

The report provides a summary of the study findings, and details a preferred model for park visitor education developed as part of the project. The study details that while most organisations reported a clear understanding of the benefits of visitor education and a core function, the translation of policy into action was often not systematic or integrated, nor was the percentage of budget allocated to this activity reasonable (DNRE 1999). The study also identifies several examples of visitor education best practice, including examples from the former Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage, but acknowledges that no organisation displayed mastery in this area (DNRE 1999).

Although QPWS interpreters used the *ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education* report in the development of the *QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy (2000–2002)* in 1999, most interpreters said they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously when surveyed in August 2001<sup>14</sup> (Figure 4.11). This includes more than half of all Regional/District interpreters (59%), 81 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters, and all BFP interpreters. Of the interpreters who said that they were aware of his document 18 percent of Regional/District interpreters and 15 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters reported that most aspects of the document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practise of visitor education. In contrast, 18 percent of Regional/District interpreters and 5 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters said that much of this document was unhelpful.

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14 Chapter 5.1 outlines interpreter use of the *ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education* report to develop the *QPWS Interpretation and Education Strategy 2000–2002*.

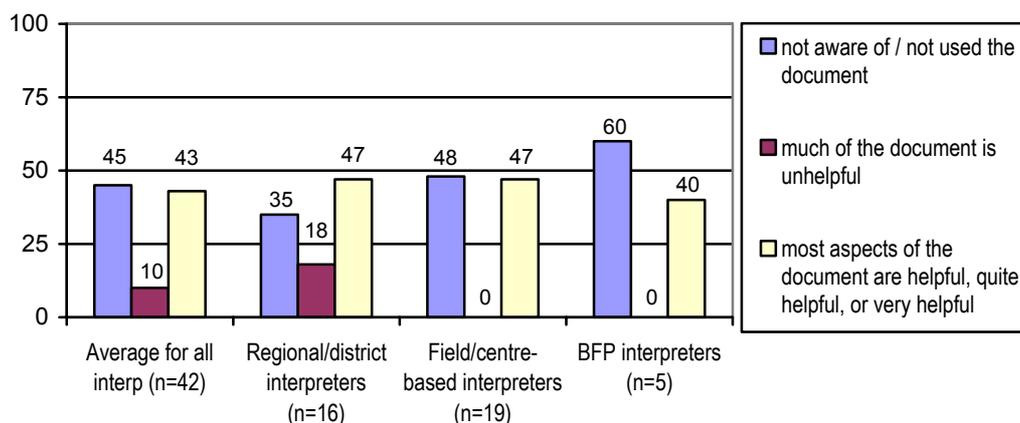


**Figure 4.11: Interpreters' knowledge and use of the ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education Study (1999)**

#### 4.4.4 QNPWS Interpretation Manual (1984)

The *QNPWS Interpretation Manual (1984)* was the first step towards documenting the Service's interpretation philosophy and activities (QDEH 1994). It was designed as a practical guide for people wanting to communicate about conservation whether on-park, at a school, to a community group or wider audience (QNPWS 1984). The Interpretation Manual includes a description of what interpretation is and the elements that constitute the process of interpretation. It also provides guidelines for the preparation, presentation and evaluation of interpretive activities for interpreters.

Most interpreters said they were aware of this document (Figure 4.12). Of the interpreters who said that they were aware of his document 47 percent of Regional/District interpreters, 47 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters and 40 percent of BFP interpreters reported that most aspects of this document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practice of visitor education. In contrast, only 18 percent of Regional/District interpreters said that much of this document was unhelpful. The remainder said that they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously.



**Figure 4.12: Interpreters' knowledge and use of the QPWS Interpretation Manual (1984)**

#### 4.4.5 QPWS Interpretive Planning Handbook (2001)

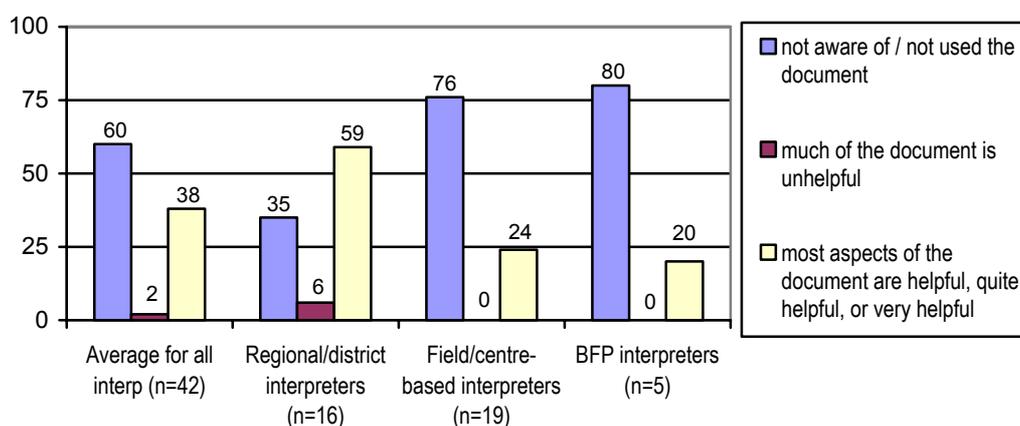
The *Interpretive Planning Handbook: Connecting people with nature through interpretation, extension and community education (2001)* provides a step-by-step guide to interpretive planning from individual site to state-wide strategic planning. It is designed to help interpreters and educators write and implement plans suitable for the needs of a particular area, community or resource or conservation issue.

The intent of the workbook is to facilitate effective communication with the public. It advocates community consultation as part of the planning process to develop public contact plans. Consequently, the workbook aims to assist interpreters to:

- understand where their public contact plan fits into the big picture
- follow an effective process for developing their plan
- organise their plan into a user-friendly format (QPWS 2001c).

Most interpreters said they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously (Figure 4.13). However, this is more to do with the negative responses provided by Field/Centre-based interpreters (76%) and BFP interpreters (80%) than the group as a whole. Most Regional/District interpreters (65%) indicated they had used this document previously. Of the interpreters who said that they were aware of his document 59 percent of Regional/District interpreters, 24 percent of Field/Centre-based

interpreters and 20 percent of BFP interpreters reported that most aspects of the document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practice of visitor education. In contrast, only 6 percent of Regional/District interpreters said that much of this document was unhelpful.



**Figure 4.13: Interpreters' knowledge and use of the QPWS Interpretive Planning Handbook (2001)**

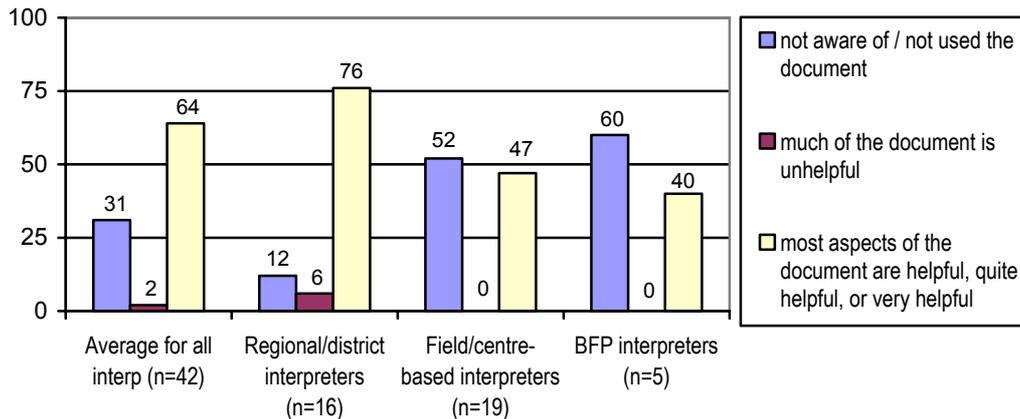
#### 4.4.6 (Draft) QPWS Sign Manual (2001)

The purpose of the (draft) QPWS Sign Manual is to assist QPWS staff to provide accurate, well-presented information to park visitors. In particular, it assists staff:

- to design a sign plan for a park or district
- to identify the right sign for the job
- by providing techniques for installing and maintaining signs
- by providing specifications for materials and infrastructure associated with signs
- by detailing the Service's writing style guidelines for parks
- by detailing the Australian and international standards for safety signs
- by detailing Queensland Government and QPWS corporate identity standards (QPWS 2001d).

Most interpreters said they were aware of this document (Figure 4.14). Of the interpreters who said that they were aware of his document 76 percent of Regional/District interpreters, 47 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters and 40

percent of BFP interpreters reported that most aspects of this document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practice of visitor education. In contrast, only 6 percent of Regional/District interpreters said that much of this document was unhelpful. However, most Field/Centre-based interpreters (52%) and BFP interpreters (60%) said that they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously.



**Figure 4.14: Interpreters' knowledge and use of the (Draft) QPWS Sign Manual (2001)**

#### 4.4.7 (Draft) QPWS Community and Education Manual (2001)

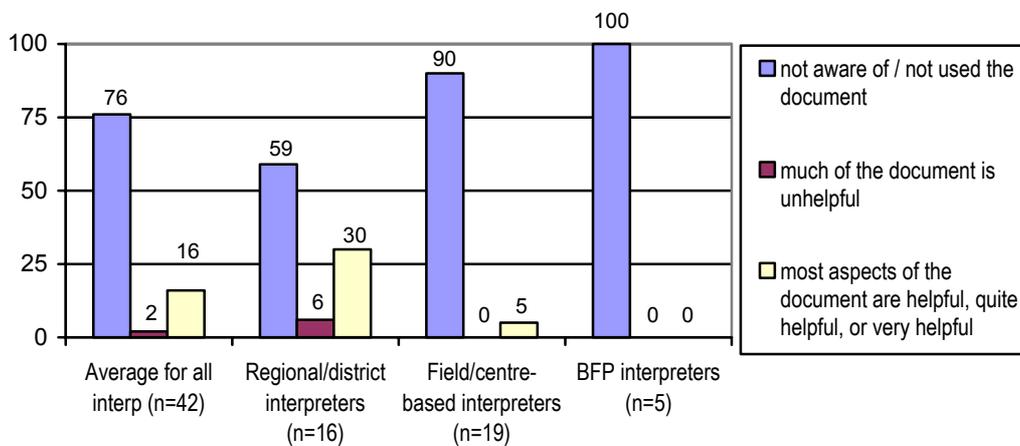
The *QPWS Community and Education Manual (2001)* provides a broad framework for effective public contact by officers of the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and its umbrella organisation, the Environmental Protection Agency. It details how public contact programs and activities can support the Agency and Service's missions and achieve worthwhile outcomes for Queensland and the environment, namely:

- community support for heritage conservation in Queensland;
- minimal impact visitor behaviour in national parks, marine parks and protected areas;
- sound community land and sea management practices;
- inspirational park visits, which lead to environmental protection;
- community involvement in protected area, coastal and marine park management;
- and

- excellence in public contact and interpretation (QPWS 2001e).

The manual is aimed primarily at Service staff involved in visitor education. It combines the experience and expertise of Service staff involved in public contact over many years to detail the techniques most commonly used to communicate with the public about environmental protection and heritage conservation: personal and non-personal techniques. The *QPWS Community and Education Manual* is to replace the *QNPWS Interpretation Manual*.

Most interpreters said they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously (Figure 4.15). This includes more than half of all Regional/District interpreters (59%), nearly all Field/Centre-based interpreters (90%) and all BFP interpreters. Of the interpreters who said that they were aware of his document 30 percent of Regional/District interpreters and 5 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters reported that most aspects of the document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practice of visitor education. In contrast, only 6 percent of Regional/District interpreters said that much of this document was helpful.



**Figure 4.15: Interpreters' knowledge and use of the (Draft) QPWS Community and Education Manual (2001)**

#### 4.4.8 QPWS Interpretation and Education Situation Report (1999 – 2001)

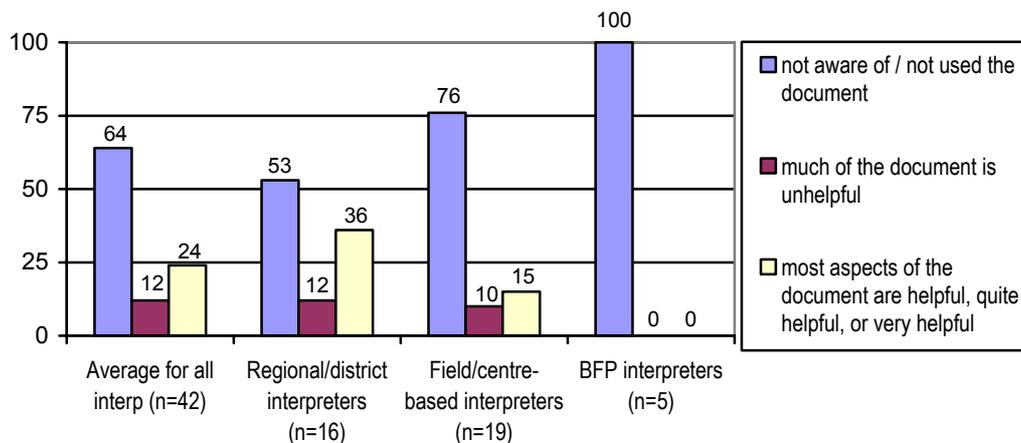
The *QPWS Interpretation and Education Situation Report* describes the progress made by interpreters in engaging the community in conservation since the formation of the QPWS two years previously. It acknowledges that visitor education was seen as

central to the new agenda of enlisting community support for nature conservation and encouraging people to help protect parks and wildlife, but admits that this planned revitalisation has yet to occur (QPWS 2001b).

The report addresses 22 areas concerning the delivery of visitor education services across Queensland. It notes the outcomes achieved, the issues that have affected the achievement of some outcomes, and provides recommendations for improvement. The report also acknowledges that the recognition visitor education enjoys outside the agency, is not matched by internal support. The report goes on to state that:

*the big picture of a community actively protecting parks and wildlife will not become a reality until the QPWS corporate culture changes to recognise and value the role of interpreters in engaging community support for nature conservation (QPWS 2001b, p1).*

Although the *QPWS Interpretation and Education Situation Report* was released in April 2001, most interpreters said they were 'not aware of/not used the document' previously when surveyed in August 2001 (Figure 4.16). This includes more than half of all Regional/District interpreters (53%), 76 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters and all BFP interpreters. Of the interpreters who said they were aware of this document 36 percent of Regional/District interpreters and 15 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters reported that most aspects of the document were helpful, quite helpful or very helpful in the development of their understanding and practice of visitor education. In contrast, 12 percent of Regional/District interpreters and 10 percent of Field/Centre-based interpreters said that much of this document was unhelpful.



**Figure 4.16: Interpreters' knowledge and use of QPWS Interpretation and Education Situation Report (1999–2001)**

#### **4.5 Factors affecting the achievement of QPWS visitor education outcomes**

When the QPWS was established in 1999, visitor education “was seen as central to the new agenda of enlisting community support for nature conservation and encouraging people to help protect parks and wildlife” (QPWS 2001b, p1). And while worthwhile outcomes had been achieved “the planned revitalisation has not happened” (ibid, p1). Most criticism of this failure blames a lack of funding and resourcing required for achieving stated organisational goals for community nature conservation engagement, and a perceived organisational culture that does not recognise and value the role of interpreters. Adequate staffing, including the high workloads, and dissatisfaction experienced by current staff were identified as other factors affecting the achievement of QPWS visitor education outcomes identified in select QPWS reports (QPWS 1999b; QPWS 2001a; QPWS 2001b).

An analysis of three internal reports produced by the Interpretation and Community Relations team between 1999 and 2001 identified 20 factors across nine groupings that were barriers to the acceptance and use of visitor education as a park management tool (Table 4.1). These nine groupings were:

- Disillusionment with interpretation as a career path
- High workloads and short project timeframes
- Limited organisational recognition for the role and value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation
- Poor resourcing and a lack of funding
- The lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation, causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes
- The lack of training and professional development opportunities for people working in interpretation
- The reluctance of senior management to accept visitor education as a legitimate park management tool
- Time consuming project and content approval processes (QPWS 1999b; QPWS 2001a; QPWS 2001b).

The significance of these nine groupings as barriers to the role and value of visitor education is explored in Chapter 6.2.1.

**Table 4.1: Issues of concern raised by interpreters  
in three QPWS internal reports between 1999 - 2001**

	'99 SIW Report	'01 SIW Report	'99 – '01 Sit. Report
<b><i>Disillusionment with interpretation as a career path</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ lack of support from senior staff/limited opportunity for visitor education as a career path</li> </ul>		✓	✓
<b><i>High workloads and short project timeframes</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ lack of control of work load volume and reactivity</li> <li>▪ limited opportunities to be proactive</li> </ul>	✓ ✓	✓	
<b><i>Limited organisational recognition for the role and value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ limited acknowledgement of visitor education in policies and strategies, such as Corporate Plan, public communication plans and Position Descriptions</li> <li>▪ culture of organisation does not support visitor education (need to change culture)</li> <li>▪ as an integral part of strategic management</li> </ul>	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓
<b><i>Poor resourcing and a lack of funding</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ to plan, develop and deliver appropriate interpretive activities</li> <li>▪ even though a high priority for Agency strategically</li> <li>▪ causing work overload and poor morale</li> </ul>	✓	✓ ✓	✓
<b><i>Poor understanding of each other's job roles resulting in antagonism between interpreters and other QPWS staff</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ antagonism between work colleagues</li> <li>▪ difficulty motivating/managing others</li> <li>▪ most operational staff not involved in visitor education even though part of their work duties</li> </ul>	✓	✓ ✓	
<b><i>The lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ causing confusion as to line of command (setting work tasks)</li> <li>▪ causing reactive work and/or a scattergun approach to particular issues</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
<b><i>The lack of training and professional development opportunities for people working in interpretation</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ limited access to training/professional development opportunities</li> <li>▪ to experience other operational duties</li> </ul>	✓ ✓	✓	✓
<b><i>The reluctance of senior management to accept visitor education as a legitimate park management tool</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ limited understanding of benefits/what it can achieve</li> <li>▪ to promote/achieve nature conservation outcomes</li> <li>▪ to be used as a management tool</li> </ul>	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓
<b><i>Time consuming project and content approval processes</i></b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ time consuming project/content approval processes</li> </ul>		✓	

'99 SIW Report: State-wide Interpretation Workshop (9 - 12 March 1999) Report (QPWS 1999)  
'01 SIW Report: State-wide Interpretation Workshop (5 - 8 March 2001) Report (QPWS 2001a)  
'99 – '01 Sit. Report: Interpretation and Community Education Situation Report (1999 - 2001) (QPWS 2001b)

The issues of funding and resourcing, organisational culture and staffing and workloads identified in internal documents are outlined further in the following sections.

#### 4.5.1 Funding and resourcing

The Interpretation and Community Relations team's 1999–2001 *Situation Report* suggests that:

*the planned revitalisation of interpretation has not really happened due to lack of funding. Too much energy has gone into chasing funds and reorganising regional delivery. The big picture of a community actively protecting parks and wildlife is still far from a reality (QPWS 2001b, p8).*

While this report also suggests that interpretive outcomes are constrained by inadequate funding, there is an acknowledgement that visitor education is better resourced than many other QPWS activities.

Interpreters believe that, as an agency, the QPWS can engage the community in conservation, and that, if it does, people will adopt environmentally responsible lifestyles and lobby for better resources for parks and wildlife management (QPWS 2001b). With current funding (and staffing levels) most activity is directed towards the immediate needs of providing basic visitor education services (e.g. brochures and visitor information sheets) and organisational staff expectations for information (QDE 1997, QPWS 2001b).

However, the lack of adequate funding and resourcing is not a recent issue nor a result of the priorities of a reconstituted QPWS. The Interpretation and Community Relations team's 1997 *Situation Report* (QDE 1997, p15) also detailed that:

*The greatest threat to effective interpretation in the Department is the lack of resourcing. Staff are trying to achieve too much and the current resources are very stretched. Even basic information services can no longer be provided and attempts to promote conservation ethics will be constrained by inadequate funding and staffing. The regions have chosen to forgo interpretive funding and staffing at a time when Departmental resources are declining. This means that some regions will not meet their commitments under the Corporate Plan.*

Similar issues were identified in the literature in relation to the funding and resourcing of visitor education in the US National Parks and Wildlife Service (Mackintosh 1986; DNRE 1999). Consequently, funding and resourcing (including adequate staffing) are

issues that also affect other protected area agencies in the delivery of visitor education services, and may be difficult to address in the short term.

#### *4.5.2 Staffing, workloads and other human resource issues*

The issue of staffing is also raised in internal QPWS reports as a factor that affects visitor education outcomes (QDE 1997, QPWS 2001b). Between 1990 and 1995, QPWS interpretive staffing almost doubled and then fell back to back to pre-1990 levels in some regions between 1995 and 1997 (QDE 1997). In 2001, interpretive staffing was 48 FTE (full-time equivalent) staff – a figure more-or-less equivalent to 1995 staffing levels (QPWS 2001b). While staffing levels appear to have remained static, several key positions have been lost or held vacant, while actual staff turnover has been high. Consequently, all regions have critical staffing shortfalls (QPWS 2001b). In addition, interpretive staff capable of co-ordinating visitor education in a strategic way are needed in each region (QPWS 2001b).

While staffing is a function of adequate funding and resourcing, interpretive staff shortages directly contribute to the increased workload of existing staff, leading to poor morale and/or a reactive approach to particular issues in some instances (QPWS 2001b, QPWS 2001siw). Interpretive staff were experiencing difficulty meeting demands from park staff and district managers across the region. As a result, interpreters were:

*frustrated by heavy workloads, unpaid extra working hours, poor career paths and a feeling that interpretive efforts are undervalued by senior managers (QPWS 2001b, p12).*

The separation of staff involved in 'on-park' (visitor) and 'off-park' (community) education activities into different work units has also caused resentment and disillusionment among some interpreters as to their worth and the role and value of visitor education within the QPWS (QPWS 2001b). This separation was partly brought about by change in government policy to better resource the planning and delivery of community wildlife education across the State to better manage an increase in human-wildlife interactions, some of which was detrimental to both human and wildlife health and well-being. While interpretive and extension staff are encouraged to work together to ensure effective community education across the State on- and off-park, this separation creates challenges as to the identification, funding and resourcing of separate and shared responsibilities (QPWS 2001b). This was because:

*wildlife education ... [will] require extra funding to enlist community support for wildlife conservation, ensure wildlife conservation plans and recovery plans can be implemented and promote community acceptance of the need to use native wildlife in a sustainable way (QPWS 2001b, p24).*

The most likely outcome was a decrease in available funding and resourcing for visitor education in favour of the Government's commitment to focus on community education initiatives for the foreseeable future (P. Harmon-Price, pers comm., 27 August 2002).

#### 4.5.3 Organisational culture

Visitor education is recognised as core QPWS business in both the EPA Corporate Plan and QPWS Master Plan; however, there is a perception among interpreters that the culture of the organisation regards visitor education as:

*something anyone can do and a luxury we can ill afford ... At the same time, some managers believe short-term publicity gains are more important than long-term community education (QPWS 2001b, p8).*

There is also a perception that some field-based interpreters are unable to deliver effective visitor education services because their supervisors do not allow them to spend time on preparation and delivery. This is because these managers regard visitor education as a:

*lower priority than other park management duties. [Or] believe no special skills are required to deliver quality interpretive programs and services (QPWS 2001b, p32).*

This view is in contrast to the high profile that QPWS visitor education services enjoy outside the organisation. Both the ANZECC *Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education* report (DNRE 1999) and a Tourism Queensland published report, *Innovative Interpretation*, cite several best practice examples employed by QPWS interpreters. In both reports, the QPWS received more mentions than any other agency (QPWS 2001b). This interpretive success is directly attributed to the dedication and innovation of key interpretive staff and the generous support of senior managers who are prepared to devote scarce resources to visitor education. Consequently, [many] interpreters believe that the culture of the organisation must change if they are to achieve the high expectations of community engagement outcomes (QPWS 2001b).

## 4.6 Summary

This chapter has identified the key environmental legislation administered by the EPA and QPWS. The *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, in particular, establishes the Queensland Government's obligation in regards to the conservation of nature. It advocates the use of information and education to inform and involve the community in conservation issues. This chapter has also outlined the structure and role of the EPA and its QPWS division. While the prime function of the EPA is to service the Government's responsibility towards traditional environmental protection matters concerning water, air, noise and waste, QPWS's role is the protection and management of Queensland's wildlife and protected area estate.

This chapter has also identified the strategic policies providing direction for the Queensland Government's EPA and QPWS. Both the EPA Corporate Plan and the QPWS Master Plan list visitor education as a priority in the achievement of the Government's community nature conservation agenda. The EPA's Corporate Plan, in particular, states that the QPWS will revitalise its visitor education capacity. However, little guidance is given in the Corporate Plan on how this priority will be achieved. While performance indicators are prescribed, the performance indicators for visitor education do not have clearly measurable criteria assigned to them. The ability of government to measure outcomes was an issue identified in the literature review. The QPWS's Interpretation and Education Strategy was also reviewed. This document provides the framework for the implementation of the Government's visitor education initiatives across the State. As such, the importance of this document to guide the visitor education mandate of the organisation is the focus of Chapter 5.

The key documents and resources that guide and provide the means for interpreters to implement the Government's key outcomes for nature conservation were also reviewed. This review included data on interpreter's awareness and use of these materials to guide their visitor education practice. Regional/district interpreters are more likely to use the range of organisation specific visitor education documents and resources than are their field/centre-based counterparts. This is because most field/centre-based interpreters said that they were 'not aware of/had not used' these documents or resources previously (refer Figures 4.3 to 4.10). Of the interpreters who said they use the range of documents and resources available to them, most indicated that these materials were beneficial to developing their visitor education practice. However, some exceptions were evident. For example, between 53 and 59 percent of

regional/district interpreters surveyed claimed that they were 'unaware of/had not used' the *QDEH Policies and guidelines for interpretation and public contact (1994)* document, the *ANZECC Best Practice in Park Interpretation and Education Study (DNRE 1999)* or the *Draft QPWS Community and Education Manual (2001)*. In addition, most BFP interpreters said they were largely unaware of the range of documents available to them as QPWS interpreters. While this is more likely to be a reflection of their recent integration into the QPWS than for any other reason, it indicates poor communication between senior management and those who work at an operational level. Well-managed communications were identified in the literature review as an instrument to achieve policy outcomes.

The acceptance of visitor education strategically, as a management tool and as a vehicle that promotes nature conservation outcomes by senior staff and some park managers is an issue raised by interpreters in various internal reports. In addition, issues such as lack of resourcing, high workloads, limited professional development opportunities and strained workplace relations were concerns also highlighted in the documents reviewed. These issues singly and in combination affect the ability of interpreters to engage park visitors and the community effectively, thus diminishing the role, value and effectiveness of visitor education to promote nature conservation ideals and practices. These issues were identified in the literature review and are investigated further in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7.