

Newspaws

For, of and by Q.NPWS staff

June 1983

Q.NPWS major review starts

A major review of the organisation, structure and operations of the Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service is under way.

This is the first review of its type since the Service was created in 1975 since when all aspects of the Service have changed markedly.

Managers from all sections of the Service attended a workshop at the Cherribah resort near Warwick from 23 May to 26 May.

The workshop was considered by the National Parks Minister, Mr Tony Elliott, and a Public Service Board team led by Mr Rob Skerman as the most practical way to tackle the initial stage of the review.

The workshop resulted in some key decisions being made about a proposed organisation structure for the Service and working papers were produced on the key roles of regional directors and branch directors.

Substantial work remains and the executive will bring further matters to several seminars involving many staff before the full development program is completed.

Newsletters will be issued from head office regularly to keep all Service staff informed.

This issue includes a brief account of almost 24 hours of deliberations by the 31 participants. Many hours of discussions occurred outside the convention room.

Opening the workshop, the National Parks Minister, Mr Elliott, said the Service not only was responsible for the preservation of those things spelt out in the Acts but was a very high profile area of government. It was one of the key government departments in the terms of public relations.

'How we do our job is one of those things that people look to,' he said.

'With many becoming acutely aware of conservation, if we are not performing then the government is seen to be falling down on the job, and I and all of you in the ranks are identified with that performance.'

Mr Elliott said the question had to be asked: 'Where are we going?' The Service could not go on acquiring land forever if it did not come to grips with what it already had.

It had to go that little bit better in management than the average landholder.

There were tremendous challenges ahead. A course should be set from the workshop to meet those challenges.

The Service director, Dr Graham Saunders, helped set the workshop theme by asking participants to forget their vested interests in sections and considered matters for the good of the Service.

He said many decisions would be made and not all were going to please everyone.

He confirmed he had given a guarantee to the Public Service Board that never again would he put technical, professional and clerical staff on wages positions.

Regionalization was Service policy and there had to be clear thinking about what was a region and what was a branch.

A major paper, Regionalisation, Program Management and Service Structure, by Dr Tom Kirkpatrick, was prepared for the workshop in consultation with many key staff and this initiated workshop discussion.

It presented the Service mandate and identified six programs, components of which were addressed by all branches: executive direction, administrative services, resource assessment and planning, mainland estate management, maritime estate, and the non-service estate conservation.

In discussing the paper, many matters were raised including the roles of director and deputy directors, communications up and down, technicians versus bureaucrats, budgets, records, information transfer function and location, acquisitions, rural nature conservation, park use management plans, defence of staff from criticism, research needs, weeds, feral animals, buildings, interpretation in parks, marine parks integration, wildlife and the non-service estate.

Such a range is indicative of the many hundreds of points made and argued during the workshop.

A suggestion to have an education and publicity program added was accepted generally by the workshop.

Further papers were produced by Hugh Lavery, Jim McEvoy, John Halliday, Trevor Vollbon, Joe Winterton, Syd Curtis, Bill Fisher and Clive Price on various aspects.

Some 47 issues were identified by groups as of major importance to the Service and these were summarised thus:

What Service functions can be regionalized and what must be centralised? How much autonomy should regions have? What are the criteria for selecting regional centres and definition of regional boundaries? How can Service functions be integrated? How far do we design the organisation around individuals? What criteria

'Valuable exercise'

should we use to define a branch? What branches should we have? Should the directorate have a specialist support group? How do we ensure the integration of program and administration authority? How do we ensure that the organisation structure is sufficiently flexible to accommodate new initiatives?

The workshop then addressed 10 particular issues given the following: that regionalization was in, that program format was in, policy fixing was under way, positioned descriptions of the executive were under way, a budgeting process would be established, a communications network would be established, the records system would be overhauled, the administration structure would be reviewed, and that career paths would be examined.

All participants contributed their views and summaries of the workshop recommendations on each issue were presented to the Directorate.

Dr Saunders subsequently delivered the following decisions:

Information services be a section of a new technical services branch centrally located reporting to the directorate; interpretation was the responsibility of all field officers with technical services branch to provide training and specialist backup; land use planning and resource assessment to remain in research and planning branch with acquisitions to remain in administration but possibly in technical services with special attention to co-ordinating these; park management planning to be developed as a function of mainland and marine parks; wildlife management to be a separate new branch with rural nature conservation as a major responsibility; marine parks to be a separate new branch; law enforcement to be a basic responsibility of all field officers, but with a specialist group around the Fauna Squad located centrally.

The Director said later that these decisions were subject to approval by the Minister and the Public Service Board.

How many regions and the identification of centres and sub-centres was the only matter not resolved clearly.

Workshop groups later produced many criteria for the fixing of regional boundaries to be considered further with final decision by the executive in consultation with the review steering committee and the Public Service Board.

Given the concept of regionalization and the delegation of day-to-day management powers to a regional head, the workshop was given the task of defining this role.

The collators of this exercise found the many responsibilities should be grouped under the following: routine administration matters, co-ordination, regional facilities and resources, financial administration and budget, staff, liaison and head office policy dissemination with reporting relationships to branch directors, to the Direc-

tor, and to the information and publicity officer. There was general, almost total consensus.

Given those responsibilities, participants were then asked to define the functions and responsibilities of a branch director's role.

The collators here listed policies, standards and guidelines, staffing, planning, performance, liaison, 'housekeeping', and advisory.

Syd Curtis added responsibility for ensuring conformity with legislative requirements.

Only a reading of these and all other documents before the workshop can give a full appreciation of the details.

Broom trick



Not even the agility demonstrated so ably by Peter Stanton was able to overcome a major problem of the Cherribah workshop. Only contortionist Robyn Kreis was able to prove one could do a 360 degree body turn without taking both hands off the broom.

Dr Saunders summarised the workshop in this way: 'This has been an enormously valuable exercise. Decisions can now be made in the light of a mass of information that has come in.'

He said it has pointed out the high level of responsibility and the magnitude of the task for each person.

All had a better appreciation of what the Service was as a whole, and where it was going. This could not have been achieved in 1975.

Dr Saunders drew a structure diagram of six branches. Marine parks, mainland parks and wildlife were an easily identifiable management group. Research and planning and technical services were another group.

Regionalization was simply having some sort of structure mirroring the executive and branches set-up. This would give branches strength in the regions, not take away from them.

The National Parks Minister, Mr Elliott, in closing the workshop said participants could be assured that the director and the review steering committee meant business.

Most participants left the workshop assured that change and improvements within the Service were inevitable.

News for you

This is Newspaws, the house journal for Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service staff.

Ringtail has gone on to better things. The name is so good in many ways it has been adopted for the Service newspaper for the public.

Publication in this form will be regular so fairly up to date.

We need your contributions and black and white pictures to help fill the pages.

A special attempt is being made to involve all staff no matter where they may be working.

Now is the best time to contribute.

Grahame's way has been non-stop

Stopping Grahame Walsh for a few minutes is hard enough as many Service staff have found.

Getting him to talk about himself and his work at anything but breakneck speed is an even harder task.

This basically is a part of his outlook on life — "I never want to waste a minute of my time, even at 3 o'clock in the morning," he said with a wry grin when trapped by this correspondent in Brisbane recently.

He explained: "In the early 1960s I suffered a broken back and for two months I was paralysed. I had a lot of time to think and make decisions about my life. Making the most of my time was one of them."

Grahame had been born in Roma in 1944, gone to Toowoomba Grammar and Harristown High and been a newspaper photographer and an auctioneer for a couple of years in Toowoomba at this stage.

His other decision at the time was to go west — west as close as he could to the Carnarvon Ranges.

Since he was five, he had an interest in the vast area and in the remains of the Aborigines' occupation there before the turn of the century. He had wanted to be an archaeologist but his school grades . . . well, that was that.

The family Croydon Station south of Injune was where he worked very hard trying all the time for spare time to get to art and other sites in the sandstone belt generally, roughly 84,000sq. km from Banana to Blackall, and Springsure to Injune.

Sheep got him down so in 1968 he formed Carnarvon Safaris offering conducted tours of the Carnarvons in four wheel drives out of Injune. Overseas people particularly from the United States and South Africa were enthralled at what he had to show them including of course the sites of Aborigines' occupation of the region.

Road tax and distances beat him and he was forced back to Injune where he built a service station!

The business grew and an ever-keen Grahame chose to expand to sell motorcycles to station people again to give him time to continue his explorations in some of the 24 ranges of the belt. This was in the early 1970s.

"I was accepted by the station people as I traded in anything even if it didn't mean I made a quid," he said. "I always waited to be invited onto a property and the older people were keen in what I was doing."

"They had ridden their horses over their hundreds of square miles and knew it."

"What the Aborigines might have done did not concern the milkman or the butcher who bought into some of the old places simply to sell out at a higher price."

Grahame made another major decision in his life when he leased out his service station in 1977 to get down to the job he really wanted to do — record all of the sites in the region for posterity.

He joined the Service as an \$8000 a year workman for the opportunity to be in the Robinson Gorge area and work on the nearby Glenhaughton holding.

To be allowed to work 50 percent on site recording was a break. To be asked to join the material culture advisory committee of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, was a real honour.

This led to a four-year jointly funded research program for the AIAS and QNPWS for a preliminary sampling survey of sites of the Sandstone Belt. For three years, this was the Institute's major research program.

Last year, Grahame moved into his 77ha Takarakka property near Carnarvon Gorge where 14 filing cabinets are stacked with the results of private and funded research — a rock art research centre with \$100,000 worth of materials.

The details of 476 sites of an estimated 10,000



are on paper instead of in Grahame's head, and discussions have been held on plans for a museum there.

The Carnarvon area has proved very rewarding for sites — "Sites keep getting in my way," Grahame says. (He used a helicopter in 1981.)

Grahame is concerned that much of the material will be lost over the years. Some paintings seen 25 years ago are gone.

Carnarvon sandstone is most fragile and will keep breaking away so

some of the sites he has recorded on film and paper may never be seen again.

While Grahame is a meticulous photographer in medium format, he realises even his colour film will fade so is planning to make large format copies of his most important shots.

The high standard of his pictures is proven in his book *The Roof of Queensland* and to anyone who has had the privilege of reading one of his reports for the Service.

What of the future? Grahame is not sure as his funded study ends. A survey has shown there are only four or five 'buffs' involved in such work for the whole of Australia, and only 30 odd people involved with associated work.

He feels he is only scratching the surface with his work on the Carnarvons, a large area in itself but a small part of Australia.

How the Service can effectively manage such a rich resource within its national park boundaries is another problem to be faced.

Psssssst. . .

Distraught telephone caller to head office sought a marsupial trap to enable her to remove a colony of mice from her house to the wild.

Ever helpful Damian McGreevy was sympathetic until he ascertained the lady was being troubled by a plague of common house mice.

Trevor Vollbon has been appointed POA councillor representing association members in QNPWS. Problems and requests should be directed to him.

All staff should be aware by now of a survey of architectural, engineering and other features of historical significance on the Service estate.

Warren Oxnam at head office has survey forms if you require more.

Hats off to the wives of Service officers whose job requires them to be away from home a lot. Take Cairns regional director Peter Stanton as a recent example. He had a 48 hour drive from Lawn Hill to reach home about 7pm on a Monday. Then he had to be up and away to Cherribah the very next morning at 4.45.

Bill Lavarack (Townsville) shot a birdie while at Cherribah but it wasn't an eastern roseolla. He had a two on the par three third hole of the resort golf course as one of the few workshop participants to make time to try the facilities. Partner Hugh Lavery was surprised for he thought the course was suitable only for first time golfers. After that, courses could only get better.

Reports of a rogue crocodile snapping at the leg of a man in the middle of Cairns did not surprise recent visitors to the Cairns NPWS headquarters including the National Parks Minister Tony Elliott. The afternoon before the 'attack' the rain was so heavy to make even the gutter in Moffatt Street deep enough to float a goodly sized croc., and wide enough to test a broad jumper.

Cherribah workshop participants were privileged to be the first public tasters of two 1983 vintage wines — a late pick Rhine Riesling and a late pick Sylvaner. They were a last minute addition to the range of wines offered at a tasting by Angelo Puglisi of Sundown Valley Wines, Ballandean.

The slightly sweet Rhine Riesling drew many favourable comments but the limited quantity made is likely to be snapped up privately. Angelo's is visited by many people going to the Rat's Castle end of Sundown National Park.

Artist Bronwyn Holm of head office had an argument with a steering wheel in a car accident recently and suffered severe facial cuts requiring 90 stitches.

She tells of having a very warm feeling about her leg when she was blinded and still in the car. She thought it must be blood and quickly felt all her limbs to make sure she was in one piece. Then she felt her companion and he was in one piece and uninjured. Then Bronwyn remembered the hot chicken she had bought and placed at her feet shortly before the accident.

Librarian Kathy Buckley spent two weeks' leave on a marine biology assignment working out of Dunwich, Stradbroke Island. Her task included measuring precisely no fewer than 351 specimens of a certain seashell.

Familiar faces of Dick Clarkson and Paul Sattler are missing from head office. Both are on long leave with Dick and family visiting relatives in a couple of continents.

Staffing increase pending

A massive increase is pending in Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service staffing.

More than murmur went around head office corridors and out to the regions and beyond when confirmation of 63 new Public Service positions was received.

This is a 37 percent increase in the permanent establishment, a jump unheard of in any government department in recent years.

PSB positions rise then from 171 to 234, the greatest single boost for the Service since its inception in 1975.

The rise comes in the face of years of government staffing limits yet after much effort by the Public Service Board chairman, his officers and the support of our Minister, Mr Tony Elliott.

The positions cover graduate, ranger and clerical classifications.

They will be advertised as soon as possible after details are worked out with the Public Service Board.

Copies of the advertisements will be sent to all staff in due course.

You must apply for positions (or consequentials) for which you consider yourself qualified and eligible.

If in doubt, ask your superior now.

Those who do not apply will definitely miss out as appointments will not be made to those who do not apply.

Every employee meeting the necessary qualifications for appoint-

ment to a position sought will be interviewed.

The interviewing process will be based on an objective assessment procedure supervised by a Public Service Board Department officer.

The good news is the 63 positions. The bad news is that there will be more applicants than positions so some people must miss out.

The Service Director, Dr Graham Saunders, and Mr Peter Forster of the PSB Department have put a case to Treasury for a substantial increase in wages staff also, and sought additional funding for park maintenance staffing for the 1983-84 year.

Watch for newsletters from head office for up-to-date information on these matters.

Those wage staff seeing advertised vacancies should make application in letter form quoting position XXX and vacancy reference number YYY.

The letter should include full particulars of name, address, telephone number, date of birth, marital status, qualifications, experience and present employment and furnish copies of testimonials and the names of two referees.

Applications should be forwarded to The Assistant Commissioner to the Public Service Board and Chief Executive Officer, Department of the Public Service Board, PO Box 59 Brisbane North Quay Qld 4000.



Despite tales to the contrary, there were times to relax at the Cherribah workshop. Take this happy group outside the conference room as an example. And they were drinking nothing but tea or coffee at 10.30 in the morning.