

# Operational policy

## Community Relations and Partnerships

### Memorials and Plaques

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

#### Policy issue

How will Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) respond to requests to erect a memorial or place a plaque in a QPWS managed area?

#### Background

Occasionally, plaques are placed in QPWS managed areas and on facilities to mark significant occasions.

Requests are also received for permission to place memorials or plaques in QPWS managed areas.

The placing of memorials or plaques in protected areas, (State land) or other QPWS managed areas would not usually be in keeping with the management principles for these areas and would distract from their natural setting.

Low-key recognition of a person with a significant, long-standing association with an area may be seen as part of the area's cultural heritage.

Plaques to recall bequests, donations, community contributions and long service to nature conservation or forestry activities or to commemorate significant events in the QPWS managed area's history may also be appropriate.

Native title and cultural heritage legislation may require a consent process before a memorial or plaque is put in place.

Under the Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Regulation 2006 section 107, it is an offence to erect or keep a structure, or carry out works, in a protected area without the chief executive's approval.

Similarly, the *Recreation Areas Management Act 2006* section 114 makes it an offence to erect or keep a structure, or carry out works in a recreation area without the chief executive's approval. However this does not apply to structures that are erected or works that are carried out in accordance with an authority issued under another Act.

It is also an offence under the *Forestry Act 1959* section 39 to interfere with forest products on any State forest, forest reserve, timber reserve or forest entitlement area except with authority.

#### Definitions

**Memorial** is an item erected in memory of a person or event.

**Plaque** is an inscribed tablet, fixed to a wall or other surface.

## **Policy statement**

As a general policy principle, QPWS does not permit the erection of memorials or plaques on the areas it manages. However, in certain circumstances, an application may be approved to erect a memorial or place a plaque in a QPWS managed area where the item:

- is unobtrusive and is of a form appropriate to the local setting,
- is a reminder of a person who, or group or organisation which, made a major contribution to conserving the area or its wildlife,
- reflects cultural associations with the area by individuals or groups,
- marks a significant event in the QPWS managed area's history, and
- the consent of all parties are obtained.

Where the application is to place a plaque at an approved burial site or in memory of a deceased person the application may only be approved if:

- the deceased had a strong, long-standing involvement with conserving the area or its wildlife, or
- the deceased was an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander with a traditional or long-standing affiliation with the area.

## **Guidelines**

### **Form**

A variety of forms may be considered appropriate depending on the setting and location. In the past these have included a rock wall with seats at a lookout, seats along walking tracks, trees and picnic tables, each bearing a plaque.

However, offers have been made for larger items such as an information centre, campground or picnic shelter.

### **Purpose**

Each memorial should have a purpose such as supporting management and/or visitor appreciation and education.

A plaque can be a key focus of cultural heritage presentation such as marking the site of a burial, reminding visitors of a bequest, donation, community contribution, service to nature conservation or forestry or a death in the area, and to recall a significant historic event.

Staff should ensure as far as possible that the purpose of a request directly relates to the QPWS managed area.

### **Location**

Staff need to consider all proposed locations carefully. A memorial should be erected according to its proposed purpose and be in accord with any approved management plan or strategy.

A plaque can be unobtrusive in the natural setting while not being so small as to be lost from view. A plaque may be more appropriate on a piece of equipment or in an information centre or on a park or forest office wall, rather than in a natural area.

### **Size**

The size of a plaque will be governed by the form of the memorial. The maximum size for a plaque is to be A3 (420mm by 297mm). The size should be checked against the description, drawing/diagram, material/s, colour/s, text, photographs and artwork.

## **Consent**

Consent must be sought from traditional owner/s or local indigenous groups.

Staff need to be alert to any disagreement between and among traditional owner/s and/or indigenous groups and families.

If consent is unlikely to be given or a decision about a request is unlikely to be made within a reasonable time, staff should advise the applicant of this and a possible decision date as soon as possible.

## **Bequests**

The bequest of land may be acknowledged by placing a plaque in a public location such as on a rock or other item in the donated land, beside a lookout, or in the area's information centre or office.

Refer to the *Operational policy: Bequests and bequeathed property*.

## **Trees**

A tree or a grove of trees might be an appropriate memorial, particularly in a QPWS managed area where revegetation of a denuded area is part of a management plan. The species and location are to be decided by the Ranger in Charge. The memorial planting may be marked by a small plaque on a post nearby.

## **Volunteers**

The major contributions and support by an individual or volunteer group may be recognised by a plaque erected in a public location or a framed photograph of the group hung in an information centre or park or forest office counter area.

## **Removal of memorials/plaques**

Many memorials and plaques lose their appearance, interest, usefulness and relevance over time. For example, a plaque marking the opening of a building might be seen as irrelevant if subsequently the building is altered substantially. However, staff should be alert to cultural heritage values and the sensitivities of the community before removing any memorial.

Staff considering the removal of a memorial or plaque should consult with DES cultural heritage staff and make enquiries in the region about its continuing importance. As a last resort, the proposal can be advertised and objections invited from any interested party. A plaque's cultural significance might continue to be recognised in a museum collection.

## **Restoration of memorials/plaques**

In the past, the Queensland Forest Service erected many distinctive stone, concrete and timber entrances to many major areas. These incorporated information signs and memorials to benefactors, hand-routed on planks of cedar and other timbers. Some have been maintained but others have been partly dismantled after the timber decayed. Restoration of these distinctive features including replacement signs may be considered a part of maintaining cultural heritage in park and forest management.

## **Procedure**

When a request for permission or information about erection of a memorial or placement of a plaque on a QPWS managed area is received, the request is to be treated with dignity, compassion and discretion.

If relevant, the *Operational policy: Bequests and bequeathed property* and any related files should also be consulted.

## **Requests/applications**

A person or group seeking to erect a memorial or place a plaque in a QPWS managed area should be advised of the above policy position and the criteria that must be satisfied for approval.

If they wish to proceed with an application, they should apply in writing to the relevant Regional Director and should include:

- the purpose of erecting the memorial or placing the plaque (such as to recall bequests, donations, community contributions and long service to nature conservation or forestry, to commemorate significant events in the area's history, or to mark a burial),
- the exact location proposed,
- a description, drawing and/or diagram of the proposal including materials, dimensions and colours,
- any text, photograph or artwork to be included, and
- proposals for maintenance including costs.

## **Assessment**

In considering an application, regional staff will assess the potential environmental and other impacts of the proposal.

Criteria to be considered include:

- confirmed purpose of the memorial or plaque including marking an approved or previous burial,
- observance of Native title work procedures and cultural heritage assessment procedures and, where necessary, written consent/s obtained,
- the item's unobtrusiveness in the environment generally and in the immediate surrounds,
- consistency with the management principles of the class of area or approved management plan for the area,
- factual explanatory and illustrative matter,
- satisfactory maintenance arrangements including costs, and
- a practical and acceptable alternative, if appropriate.

## **Approval**

The Regional Director will decide an application based on this policy and the criteria set out above, and approve it with conditions or reject it for reasons to be stated.

The decision will be in writing and sent by hand, e-mail, facsimile or post to the applicant.

## **Conditions**

Any approval will be subject to conditions based on matters raised in the application or the assessment criteria.

## **Follow-up**

Regional staff are to advise the Ranger in Charge of the area of an approval and its terms and conditions.

The Ranger in Charge must ensure activities are monitored to assess any unacceptable impact on the area and to check conditions are observed.

### **Other issues to consider**

The erection of a memorial or the placing of a plaque may be a consequence of a request for a burial or the scattering of cremation ashes on a QPWS managed area.

The *Operational policy: Burials and scattering of cremation ashes* and related area files should be consulted for any relevant agreement or conditions.

If a religious ceremony is to be held, a group activity permit may be required. Consult the *Operational policy: Group activity permits* for further information.

The *Operational policy: Bequests and bequeathed property* should also be consulted.

### **Legislation**

Nature Conservation (Protected Areas Management) Regulation 2006

*Recreation Areas Management Act 2006*

*Forestry Act 1959*

*Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*

Department's Native Title Work Procedures and other workplace policies

*Operational policy: Burials and scattering of cremation ashes*

*Operational policy: Group activity permits*

*Operational policy: Bequests and bequeathed property*

### **Disclaimer**

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### **Approved By**

Andrea Leverington

Signature

14 April 2011

Date

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