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| Chapter 7 – Management and business plans |
| This chapter looks at the committee’s planning processes and documentation. |

# 7.1 Introduction

Your committee must manage its reserve for the purpose for which the land is reserved. This involves planning how best to manage and develop the reserve in the public interest, that is, for the benefit of the whole community.

Example

Your committee will need to balance the public’s use and enjoyment of the reserve with protection of its natural features and assets.

# 7.2 Types of plans

The types of plans that your committee develops and implements will depend upon:

* the size of your committee
* the nature of the reserve it manages
* the opportunities and issues it faces.

The standard planning documents are:

* **management** **plan** (‘what we want to do’): this plan sets out your committee’s ‘strategic’ vision for the use and development of the reserve over the next few years. For details, see 7.6.
* **business** **plan** (‘how we will do it’): this plan sets out what your committee will do in the next twelve months, or other specified period, to implement its management plan, and the related budget. For details, see 7.8.

Subject to any legal and policy requirements (see 7.4), your committee can adapt the planning process to suit its needs and circumstances, deciding which plans to develop and the level of planning to be undertaken.

Example

* **Major committees** may decide to develop a **management plan** thatsets out their vision for the use and development of the reserve over the forthcoming period, usually three to five years. Depending on the complexities faced by the committee, this process may take some months. The committee may also decide to develop a **business plan** that details the strategies/actions it will take (usually during the next 12 months) to help achieve the goals in its management plan, and the related budget.
* **Local committees** may decide to amalgamate these plans into a single document. Planning might simply cover the 12 months ahead. This could be as simple as a ‘**plan on a page**’.

# 7.3 Planning for success – benefits of a management plan

A management plan helps your committee to decide and record the actions it will take to manage and develop the reserve, including planned expenditure and maintenance requirements. The benefits of having a management plan include:

* A management plan provides an **agreed process** for your committee to determine its future management of the reserve, based on suitable research and engagement with stakeholders.
* Best outcomes are achieved when your committee’s activities are planned and agreed rather than ad hoc.
* Planning helps your committee to consider and address the ‘big picture’.
* There is greater certainty about future projects.
* There is an evidentiary basis for grant applications.

A management plan is a **transparent and accountable record** that enables the committee, the community, and the department to be clear about what the committee has agreed to do to manage and develop the reserve during its term.

# 7.4 Specific management plan requirements for some committees

Some committees have legal and government policy requirements about what plans must be prepared, what they must be called, what they must contain, and related requirements.

## Coastal committees

Committees that manage coastal land have specific planning and management requirements under the *Marine and Coastal Management Act 2018*. Their management plans must accord with the requirements of the Act and with statewide government policy. DELWP provides guidelines for coastal and marine committees to prepare Coastal and Marine Management Plans. Guidance is available from the following pages of the DELWP website:

* [Marine and Coastal Act 2018](https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/marine-and-coastal-act)
* [Coastal management plans](https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/coastal-management/coastal-management-plans), in particular, see [Guidelines for the preparation of coastal management plans](https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0034/87829/DELWP-CMP-Guidelines-Final.pdf). Note that under the Marine and Coastal Act, Coastal Management Plans will be replaced by Coastal and Marine Management Plans.

Your committee can also contact the local DELWP [regional office](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/communities-and-regions/regions-and-locations) for advice.

## Crown land caravan and camping parks

Committees that manage Crown land caravan and camping parks have specific guidelines and policies that need to be considered when developing plans for the reserve.

Guidance is available from the [Crown land and caravan and camping parks](https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/land-management/managing-crown-land/crown-land-caravan-and-camping-parks?_ga=2.114042818.434190768.1567995061-1097963702.1566783325) page of the DELWP website, in particular, see [Best practice management guidelines](https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/29697/Policy_and_Best_Practice_Guidelines.pdf) (section 6: Management planning).

Your committee can also contact your local DELWP [regional office](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/communities-and-regions/regions-and-locations) for advice.

# 7.5 Management plans for other committees

For most other committees, what to include in the management plan will depend on factors such as:

* the nature and significance of the reserve
* the level of complexity, issues and opportunities the committee is facing in its management of the reserve.

Example

The planning documents of a major committee that manages a reserve of state-wide significance with complex management needs and high-risk levels will be more detailed than the plan prepared by a local committee which manages a local reserve with comparatively straight forward management needs.

Example

If a major development is part of your committee’s strategic vision, planning documents will be more detailed than if the committee’s long-term aim is to maintain the reserve as it currently is with only a few minor improvements.

# 7.6 Preparing the management plan

A management plan ensures that the use and development of the reserve will be consistent with the purpose for which it is reserved. It takes into account relevant factors, such as community aspirations for the reserve, the external operating environment, and budgeting and operational considerations.

To develop a management plan, it is useful to:

* Assess the current situation (‘what do we have?’).
* Consult (engage) with stakeholders. See 7.7.
* Take into account the external operating environment. See 7.7.
* Agree on your committee’s long-term strategic vision for the reserve (‘what do we want in the future?’).
* Set objectives (what are the goals?), for example, ‘increase usage of the reserve’.
* Decide on strategies/actions to achieve your objectives (‘what needs to be done?’), for example, ‘improve signage’.

Major committees that do not manage a coastal reserve or caravan and camping park may still find the [guidelines (coastal)](https://www.marineandcoasts.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0034/87829/DELWP-CMP-Guidelines-Final.pdf) and [guidelines (caravan)](https://www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0033/29697/Policy_and_Best_Practice_Guidelines.pdf) useful reading when developing their management plan. See 7.3.

## Templates

Specific management templates exist for coastal committees and caravan and camping committees (see 7.4).

For other committees, the following templates are available from the [committees of management](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/committees) page on the DELWP [website](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/). Your committee can use one or other of these templates.

* **standard template** for committees that are developing a management plan and an (annual) business plan
* **‘plan on a page’ template**, for simpler planning needs.

# 7.7 Tips for management planning

## Community engagement

Your committee should engage with key stakeholders when preparing a management plan. This will ensure that the management plan meets the community’s aspirations for the reserve and complements the development of other open space recreation areas in the area. Your committee should engage with:

### The department

Before starting the management planning process, contact your local DELWP [regional office](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/communities-and-regions/regions-and-locations). The department can provide information and assistance on matters, such as:

* any required approvals
* whether there is a suitable planning template your committee can use.

### User groups

User groups, such as:

* regular users of the reserve, including formal users, such as sporting and recreational clubs, and informal users
* any lease or licence holders.

### Local councils

Your local council can provide the committee with important information about planning requirements, council services, and the strategic direction of the council’s open space. The community benefits when council and committee plans are complementary.

### Other stakeholders

Examples of other stakeholders relevant to consult during the planning process include:

* adjoining landowners
* Traditional Owners (for further information see 9.7 ‘Aboriginal cultural heritage’ and 9.8 ‘Native title and Traditional Owner rights’)
* the general community, for example, prospective new users, formal and informal
* service clubs and volunteer groups that may be interested in providing assistance, such as Rotary, Landcare and other environmental groups
* where appropriate, other government departments and statutory agencies, such as Parks Victoria.

Community engagement should be consistent with the [DELWP community charter](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/communities-and-regions/community-charter) 2018.

Also see [Public participation in government decision-making: better practice guide](https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/public-participation-government-decision-making?section=) published by the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO).

## External operating environment

Your committee should consider the external operating environment when developing its management plan. This may include social, economic, environmental, technical, ‘political’ or other factors.

Example

Does the adjoining landowner or local council have plans for the land next to the reserve?

The local football club plans to increase membership by starting a women’s team. What effect would this have on the clubrooms it leases on the reserve?

### Council’s open space strategy

Most local councils have an open space strategy to guide their development of formal open space, such as sports grounds, and informal open space, such as wetlands. If your committee manages an open space reserve, it is a good idea for its planning to take into account, and link with, the council’s strategy.

* This approach enables a ‘big picture’ approach to municipal and Crown land reserves in the area.
* It avoids possible duplication of open space facilities.
* It may make it easier to access funding for the reserve’s maintenance and development.

## Planning for developments to the reserve

Avoid planning for any change or development to the reserve that is prohibited or will not receive the required approvals. If your committee is considering including developments in its management plan, check what approvals may be required. Your local council and local DELWP [regional office](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/communities-and-regions/regions-and-locations) can assist. For further information about what approvals may be required see chapter 9, ‘Developing the reserve’.

## Strategies/actions

While your committee will intend to implement all of the strategies/actions in its management plan, it is a good idea to document which are **core** and which are **aspirational**. Give the core ones priority. If necessary, one or more of the aspirational ones may be put on hold, for example, if a major safety hazard arises that must be addressed, which significantly affects the budget.

# 7.8 Business plan

To complement its management plan, your committee can develop a business plan that sets out:

* the **actions** it will take (usually during the next twelve months) to implement the management plan
* the related **budget**.

Other plans your committee makes to address specific issues are incorporated into its business plan, for example:

* risk management (see chapter 11 ‘Risk’)
* emergency management and fire prevention (see 8.6 ‘Bushfire management’).

Some committees also include information such as:

* longer term financial information, for example, the total income and expenditure required to achieve the management plan over its entire term
* timetable for planned actions
* ‘SWOT’ analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
* implementation details, for example about applying for grants, entering into leases/licences, employing staff.

Contact your local DELWP [regional office](https://www2.delwp.vic.gov.au/communities-and-regions/regions-and-locations) for further information and assistance.

# 7.9 Commencement of plans

Your committee’s plans and any updates do not start to operate until:

* the committee has received any **approvals** required from the department, and
* the committee has formally **endorsed** the plan and this is recorded in the minutes.

Note:

* If your committee’s management plan needs to comply with specific legal and government policy requirements (see 7.4), the plan cannot be finalised and commence until this occurs. For example, advertising and gazettal requirements apply to coastal committees.
* If your committee’s management plan includes development works, these works cannot start until the committee has received all necessary approvals, for example, a planning permit may be required. For details, see chapter 9 ‘Developing the reserve’.

# 7.10 Annual review of plans

Your committee should review its management plan at least annually and update the plan as needed.

The business plan should also be monitored and reviewed at least annually.

# 7.11 Summary diagram

Below is a summary diagram of the planning process, which your committee can adapt to suit its circumstances. For example, local committees often amalgamate their planning into a simple ‘plan on a page’.

**Management plan**

**(long-term)**

**‘what we want to do’**

* Your committee’s management plan sets out its:
  + strategic vision for the reserve
  + key objectives (goals)
  + strategies/actions for achieving its plan.
* Usually covers a three to five- year period.
* Contact the department at the start of the planning process.
* Engage with the community during the planning process.
* Strategies/actions are either:
  + core, for example, improve signage in the reserve
  + aspirational, for example, build an additional toilet block, subject to funding constraints
* Review plan at least annually to ensure it remains current.

**Business plan**

**(usually annual)**

**‘how we will do it’**

* Your committee’s business plan sets out:
* what it will do in the next 12 months (or other nominated period) to implement the management plan
* the related budget.
* It also incorporates your committee’s plans that address specific issues, for example:
  + risk management
  + emergency management and fire prevention.
* Your committee can choose to also include other information, such as:
  + implementation details
  + longer-term financial planning.

# 7.11 Further information

The [committees of management](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/committees) page on the DELWP [website](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/) also contains additional information, such as templates for management plans.

Also see ‘[strategic planning](https://vpsc.vic.gov.au/governance/board-operations/strategic-planning/)’ on the Victorian Public Sector Commission [website](http://www.vpsc.vic.gov.au).

# 7.12 Electronic copy

An electronic copy of this document is available from the DELWP website ([www.delwp.vic.gov.au/committees](http://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/committees)).