



Friends of Reserves Strategy

For community volunteers engaged in environmental biodiversity management activities in Shire of Denmark bushland, foreshore and coastal reserves.

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CONTENTS

A group of people, including children and adults, are walking away from the camera on a dirt path through a forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves and branches. The trees are tall and thin, with green foliage. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

1. INTRODUCTION & AIMS	3
2. PRINCIPLES FOR PARTNERSHIPS	3
3. ENVIRONMENTAL BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IN RESERVES	4
4. SETTING UP A FRIENDS OF RESERVE GROUP: A STEP BY STEP OUTLINE	7
5. PARTNERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES	8
6. INSURANCE & SAFETY	8

1 . INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The Denmark community has a long history of commitment to the ongoing care of our bushland reserves, including the Wilson Inlet foreshore and our coastal reserves. Of a total of 167 reserves vested with the Shire of Denmark, over 100 reserves have environmental management requirements to ensure the maintenance of biodiversity and environmental values. (The remaining reserves are for community oriented services such as drainage, emergency services sites, and communications). The Purpose of the bushland/coastal reserves ranges from Conservation, Public Recreation, Parkland Management, Foreshore Protection and resource extraction (gravel and sand). 13 of the Shire's reserves are classed as A Class Reserves which secures a higher level of protection of the natural and/or community values. An immeasurable amount of bush care management works such as hand weeding, removal of rubbish, flora and fauna surveys, and dieback control has been undertaken by the Shire in collaboration with the Denmark community in our reserves. This has involved volunteer in-kind works, or funded works carried out by the Shire in collaboration with members of the community and local environmental groups - people who dedicate numerous hours of work to protecting the natural quality of Shire of Denmark reserves.

The principle aims of this strategy are:

- To facilitate a clear process for the establishment of Friends of Reserve volunteer groups;
- To outline the responsibilities of the Shire of Denmark staff and Friends of Reserve members, so as to ensure good cooperation between the Shire of Denmark and its Friends of Reserve volunteer bush carers;
- To provide the principles under which environmental biodiversity management activities will be undertaken in reserves by Friends of Reserve groups or individuals, in partnership with the Shire of Denmark.

2. PRINCIPLES FOR PARTNERSHIPS

The Shire of Denmark greatly values the contributions of volunteers undertaking bushcare actions in bushland, coastal and foreshore reserves vested with the Shire of Denmark. The Denmark community is recognised as stakeholders in the ongoing care of the Reserves, and many members of the Denmark community have knowledge and expertise which can contribute greatly to the care of Denmark's bushland, coastal, and foreshore reserves.

This strategy aims to ensure that volunteer bush care activities are undertaken with consistent biodiversity objectives according to sound environmental principles; that activities are carried out safely by the volunteers concerned; and that the enthusiasm and efforts of the community are supported and appreciated by Shire of Denmark staff and Council.

The following overarching principles for undertaking volunteer environmental bushcare activities in Shire of Denmark reserves must be applied:

- All activities undertaken on Shire tenure must have prior approvals and consultation with the Shire of Denmark
- All activities must be implemented in accordance with the Activity Plan developed in consultation with the relevant Shire staff, which will be consistent with recommendations outlined within the relevant bushland, foreshore or coastal management plans for the reserves, as endorsed by the Shire of Denmark Council. A full comprehensive list, and copies of the Shire of Denmark adopted management plans can be found on the Shire of Denmark website located at: <https://www.denmark.wa.gov.au/residents/sustainability-and-biodiversity/reserves.aspx>

FRIENDS OF RESERVES STRATEGY

- In the case where an adopted management plan is not yet available, any works to be undertaken by Friends of Reserve groups must be in accordance with an Activity Plan works program developed in consultation with the relevant Shire of Denmark staff, prior to implementation.
- Formal training and accreditation is required for specialist skills activities including use of power tools and application of chemicals (eg. herbicides). It is also strongly recommended that at least one member of the group has good foundational knowledge and experience of bushland conservation and land management techniques, and of the Shire's environmental management objectives.
- Any volunteer activities in reserves which might result in the collection or removal of native seeds or plant material, or the planting of seedlings for revegetation, must have all the necessary prior approvals from Shire of Denmark staff, and must comply with any relevant formal licensing requirements and approvals by the appropriate government authority. Any plant material collected must also comply with standard procedures which outline percentage taken per plant, per population, and any seed or plant material brought in must be sourced from local provenance. Details of the species, plant material, quantity, date, participants involved, reserve site, and purpose must be provided to the Shire of Denmark and relevant approval obtained prior to any collecting activities taking place.
- Friends of Reserve group leaders need to inform the Shire of Denmark of proposed group activities and dates well in advance, in order to avoid any potential for unsafe conflicting reserve management activities, such as prescribed firebreak burns or chemical weed control spraying activities. The Shire will act as a conduit to facilitate and co-ordinate various activities occurring between Shire operations, community activities, and contractors to ensure that there is no conflict or duplication of works conducted on reserves. The Shire will inform Friends groups of activities by the Shire and other government agencies (e.g. DEC, Water Corp) within the relevant reserves where applicable.

3. NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES IN RESERVES

All environmental bushcare works in reserves (such as weeding, reserve maintenance or vegetation rehabilitation) must be undertaken in accordance with the appropriate reserve management plans and with approval of the relevant Shire of Denmark staff. Where such plans & strategies do not yet exist, the Shire of Denmark will work in partnership with the volunteers, in the development of an agreed Activity Plan for the Friends of Reserve group.

The environmental bushcare activities undertaken in reserves by Friends of Reserve groups will largely depend on the level of training and skills of the group and can range from basic to more specialised activities. Some more specialised activities may require a process of technical training of group members, and this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Shire of Denmark staff.

Training courses and workshops are offered by numerous independent organisations and government agencies for specialised activities such as field surveys of fauna and flora, dieback control, and seed collecting from native plants. The Shire of Denmark is supportive of specialised field events and training programs for Friends of Reserve members, either through courses organised by the Shire, by members of the Friends of Reserve groups, or by qualified independent organisations. Persons undertaking activities requiring specialist skills will require formal training and certification by recognised accreditors including but not limited to utilising power tools such as chainsaws, and use of chemicals such as herbicide spraying.

A Friends of Reserve group will, of their own concern for their members' safety, be responsible for applying appropriate Work Health and Safety (WHS) procedures and ensuring members' personal safety during any works undertaken in Shire reserves. Group leaders should encourage members to wear suitable protective clothing, apply sunscreen and wear a wide brimmed hat, and should ensure that members are made aware of risks of exposure to sun when working outdoors. No Friends of members are to undertake activities in isolation, and must at all times be accompanied by another responsible team member.



Dieback treatment being undertaken in Denmark's Peace Street Reserve under specialised guidance by members of the Denmark PC Working Group and the Dieback Working Group (Perth).

In addition to on-ground environmental works in reserves, there are further contributions that Friends of Reserves groups can make to the ongoing management of a reserve that they are caring for:

- Assist the Shire in management plans for reserves where management plans are lacking;
- Assist Shire personnel in community education;
- Report any inappropriate human activities in reserves;
- Report any natural damages or hazards in reserves, such as fallen trees, erosion on tracks, etc.

The following outline is provided as a guideline for Friends of Reserve group activities, and to assist in identifying:

- The relevant management plans or approvals which guide activities undertaken in reserves;
- The resources and technical support required to ensure the correct level of skills for the job;
- Training and accreditation requirements in regards appropriate certification when undertaking specialist skills on Shire tenure;
- Any additional support the Shire of Denmark can offer to facilitate Friends of Reserve group activities, if required.

Nature of environmental works	Required skills and Responsibilities	Required officer approval or technical and training support
Hand Weeding	Basic skills, some training in the Bradley method of bush regeneration preferred. Appropriate WHS when operating weeding tools including the wearing of appropriate protective clothing and gloves.	In accordance with the appropriate reserve management plan and Weeds Strategy and Action Plan. The Action Plan and information on weed species can be found on the Shire website under Invasive Species at: https://www.denmark.wa.gov.au/residents/sustainability-and-biodiversity/invasive-species.aspx Local resources and expertise may be provided by the local community action group South Coast Bushcare Services. Liaise with the Shire of Denmark Manager of Waste & Reserves to discuss disposal of any weeded material appropriately.
Rubbish Removal	Basic skills, application of standard personal hygiene, PPE, and safety precautions for dealing with potential health hazards.	Liaise with relevant Shire of Denmark Manager of Waste & Reserves to ensure the appropriate removal of any rubbish collected.
Fauna and flora sightings and monitoring	Moderate to specialised skills, requires good field observation and identification skills. No samples to be taken or removed. Preferably in support of ongoing survey programs (e.g. Birds Australia Black Cockatoo Count and DBCA's threatened fauna sightings) and under guidance of the appropriate authorities.	Any formal surveys and results should be noted with the Shire of Denmark Sustainability Officer. Surveys should be consistent with existing survey form and recording form templates. All data recorded should be passed on to the Shire of Denmark for future reference. Numerous volunteer fauna and flora training and monitoring programs are available through Birds Australia, the Western Australia Museum (FrogWatch), and Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions.
Minor bush slashing for path maintenance	Basic to moderate skills, appropriate WHS *precautions and protective clothing when lifting heavy objects or using sharp cutting tools or blades.	In accordance with the appropriate reserve management plan. Approval by Shire staff required for any works conducted and extent of works. All materials removed to be disposed of appropriately or liaise with the Shire of Denmark Manager of Waste and Reserves to ensure the removal of any cleared plant material.
Revegetation works/Seed collection	Moderate to specialised skills required. Seed collecting only under direct guidance the Shire Revegetation Officer. Appropriate WHS for use of planting tools.	Approval by Shire Sustainability Officer and Shire Revegetation officer required for any regeneration planting or seed collecting activities in reserves. Seed collection protocols should be adhered to (not more than 20%/plant and /population, local provenance seed only for revegetation works) and seed collection will require DBCA authorisation and licensing.
Dieback control works	Specialised skills required. Phosphite application only under direct guidance of the Denmark PC Working Group or other specialised dieback control contractors appointed by the Shire of Denmark.	In accordance with the appropriate reserve management plan and Shire of Denmark TPS Policy No.1 and Dieback Study on Peri-urban Reserves, and standardisations through Dieback Working Group Approval by Shire Sustainability Officer required for any dieback control works undertaken in reserves.
Feral animal control	Specialised skills required. Appropriate caution in dealing with any feral animals caught in traps. No poison baiting programs will be permitted by Friends of Reserve groups.	Liaise with relevant Shire of Denmark Shire Rangers and Sustainability Officer to ensure the recording of any feral animals sighted, and the appropriate method of removal is implemented. Handling techniques dependent upon animal trapped, plus conditions for animal ethics involved with trapping and eradication methods.

Please note: The Shire of Denmark has management responsibilities in bushland reserves which include safety to neighbouring property and people, and infrastructure, and retains the right to apply any other specific management works in any reserve vested with the Shire as required.

* NB Formal training and nationally recognised certification is required by all persons undertaking specialist skills on Shire tenure. This includes but is not limited to use of power tools (eg. chainsaws) and application of chemicals (eg. herbicide spraying).

4. SETTING UP A FRIENDS OF RESERVE GROUP:

A Friends of Reserve group can evolve from interested volunteers getting together and then sending a letter of request to the Shire Sustainability Officer. Alternatively, the Shire may advertise for interested volunteers to “adopt” a specific bushland, foreshore or coastal reserve.

The Friends of Reserve group, through consultation with the Shire of Denmark, will identify management objectives and suitable environmental bushcare activities for the relevant reserve. A Friends of Reserve group Activity Plan is to be developed by the Friends of Group, including communications for notification to Shire staff of proposed dates for planned activities, and keeping a record of the group’s activities. The Activity Plan is to be approved by relevant Shire staff and is to ensure that proposed activities are within the skills of the group, are safe, and are consistent with Council’s adopted management plan, and/or environmental biodiversity and conservation objectives.

A STEP BY STEP PROCESS:

- 4.1 Liaise with the Shire of Denmark, or respond to an advertisement for interested volunteers, to adopt a specified reserve as a Friends of Reserve group.
- 4.2 Consult with the Shire of Denmark to receive consent to proceed.
- 4.3 In consultation with the Shire, advertise your intent to form a Friends of Reserve group (eg. The Denmark Bulletin, Shire newsletter, community and Shire noticeboards and social media platforms), and inform neighbouring property owners adjacent to the reserve of your intention, so as to be as inclusive as possible in your membership drive.
- 4.4 Form a Friends of Reserve group.
- 4.5 Registration Process: Provide a register of your key members and their contact details to the Shire. Sign a written Memorandum of Understanding with Shire to form a Friends of Reserve group.
- 4.6 The Activity Plan: Develop an Activity Plan, in consultation with the Shire of Denmark staff, and a procedure to record the group’s activities.
- 4.7 Arrange training or obtain funding in partnership with the Shire of Denmark for any specialised activities, as necessary.
- 4.8 Utilise the local media and the Shire of Denmark website to inform the local community of your group’s activities, and invite further community participation.
- 4.9 Undertake activities in accordance with the Activity Plan.
- 4.10 Keep a good record of the group’s activities, and provide a copy to the Shire for their records.
- 4.11 Review activities annually with the Shire to ensure that objectives are being realised and that the group’s relationship with the Shire is mutually beneficial and rewarding.

5. PARTNERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Shire of Denmark's responsibilities

The Shire of Denmark will provide guidance and support to Friends of Reserve groups through a working relationship with the Sustainability Officer, Manager of Waste & Reserves, Parks & Gardens staff and the Revegetation Officer, who are trained in bushland management and regeneration techniques. The Shire staff competent in working with community volunteers, are available to group members for direct communication as required. The Shire staff will:

- Consult with each Friends of Reserve group initially, and adopt an agreed annual Activity Plan
- Provide appropriate guidance and resources (literature resources; access to expert advice; organise removal of weeded material) so that the group can undertake their Activity Plan efficiently;
- Provide assistance with small grant applications if requested;
- Provide information and feedback to the group regarding any proposed Shire works in reserves, or undertake to appropriately supervise any works undertaken by the Shire in reserves where Friends of Reserve groups have been doing volunteer bush care work;
- Provide personal injury insurance cover to volunteers undertaking Friends of Reserve group activities in Shire reserves, in accordance with the group's agreed Activity Plan.

5.2 The Friends of Reserve group's responsibilities

The Friends of Reserve group will implement the annual Activity Plan as agreed with the Shire staff. The group will liaise with the Shire staff to ensure that:

- The work is in accordance with the Activity Plan, and to a standard appropriate to the skills of the group;
- The activities performed by the group are recorded in a form that is accessible to the Shire and/or to the public on request ;
- The group will take responsibility for appropriate training if the Shire staff is concerned that an activity is not at an adequate standard, or that the actions of the group are being detrimental to the environmental values of the reserve;
- The group will take responsibility for their members' safety and sun sense when working outdoors in native karri/jarrah bushland, and inform members of the associated dangers of this kind of work (snakes, insects, sharp object hazards, trip hazards, falling tree limbs, sun exposure, dehydration, etc).

6. INSURANCE AND PERSONAL SAFETY

Volunteer workers undertaking bush care activities in Shire of Denmark reserves, in accordance with an Activity Plan as agreed upon by the Shire of Denmark, are eligible for personal injury insurance cover under Shire of Denmark's Personal Accident Insurance Policy. No Friends of member is to undertake work in isolation and must always be accompanied by another responsible registered member. Friends of Reserve groups may, for their own purposes, become incorporated groups (i.e. for funding purposes), and the group can then take out its own public liability insurance policy.

The majority of bush care activities undertaken by volunteers in Shire reserves should have a relatively low risk of personal injury (e.g. weeding, rubbish collection, minor track maintenance works, revegetation, etc). However, formally recognised accreditation along with strict safety precautions are necessary for the use of herbicides/chemicals and electrical/mechanical power equipment on Shire reserves. Where a hazardous activity has been approved in the Activity Plan, the operators undertaking the activity will need to register their details with the Shire, be appropriately skilled and/or licensed, and apply correct safety arrangements. Where possible, the operator should be undertaking the works as a contractor to the Shire of Denmark.

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