

30 August 2019

Re: Grampians Landscape Management Plan, Stakeholder Reference Group #1, Meeting Notes

Dear Stakeholder Reference Group members,

Thank you for contributing your time, and sharing your knowledge and experience at the Stakeholder Reference Group (Reference Group) on Wednesday 21 August 2019.

As was agreed at the meeting, we have prepared meeting notes that summarise the discussion for your records. These meeting notes will be published at <https://engage.vic.gov.au/grampians-management-plan>.

Our first meeting was largely focused on setting the scene for the work that Parks Victoria will do to develop the new Grampians Landscape Management Plan. It also allowed us to understand some of the issues that are important to members of the Reference Group.

Building on this foundation, our next meeting presents the opportunity to delve deeper into these issues and gather more information to inform the advice we may seek to provide to Parks Victoria.

The Meeting Notes record a number of 'requests for information' that I will draw upon to develop an agenda for our next meeting in November.

I welcome any other suggestions for discussion at our next meeting. Any correspondence you wish to submit to me can be provide through engage@parks.vic.gov.au.

The Parks Victoria team will be in touch to propose dates for our next meeting.

I look forward to meeting with Reference Group members in November and continuing our work with Parks Victoria to support their development of the Grampians Landscape Management Plan.

Yours sincerely



Mark Dingle
Independent Chair

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Meeting notes

Meeting: Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) Meeting 1

Date: Wednesday 21 August

Location: Halls Gap (277 Grampians Road, Halls Gap)

Independent Chair: Mark Dingle (Deloitte)

Parks Victoria staff: Rhonda McNeil (Area Chief Ranger), Stuart Hughes (Director Park Planning), Koel Wrigley (Stakeholder Engagement), Josh Chikuse (Manager Park Management Planning)

Participating organisations:

- Victorian National Parks Association
- Parks Victoria Board
- DELWP FFR Regional
- Aboriginal Victoria
- Outdoors Victoria
- Grampians Tourism
- Bushwalking Victoria
- Rock-climbing Founding Council
- 4W Driving VIC
- Friends of Grampians Gariwerd
- Grampians National Park Advisory Group
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Southern Grampians Shire Council

Apologies: Annette Vickery (Parks Victoria Board), Northern Grampians Shire Council, Ararat Rural City Council

The below meeting notes have been prepared to reflect the major themes of the discussion during the Stakeholder Reference Group for the Grampians Landscape Management Plan, and will be made publicly available from <https://engage.vic.gov.au/grampians-management-plan>. Organisations participating in the SRG are encouraged to share meeting notes with their community.

Welcome and introductions

- The group was welcomed by the Independent Chair, Mark Dingle, who confirmed his role was to act as an independent facilitator for the SRG through the duration of the management planning process. The Chair noted that confidentiality is critical to the process, to ensure participants feel comfortable expressing and debating different points of view.
- The group discussed the need for public meeting notes. It was agreed that where possible, Parks Victoria will arrange to have these made available from <https://engage.vic.gov.au/grampians-management-plan>.
- The role and purpose of the SRG was reiterated, that it has been created to advise Parks Victoria through the development of the plan but is not a decision-making body.
- Through introductions, SRG members shared and discussed the following views:

- SRG members want to work constructively with Parks Victoria and Traditional Owners through the development of the management plan.
- There was repeated emphasis on finding solutions to balancing the 'three pillars' of park management; recreation and the visitor economy, environmental conservation and protecting and conserving cultural heritage.
- Representatives of recreational groups want to see opportunities to ensure respectful use of the park to enable ongoing and sustainable access.
- The need to increase fire awareness and education as visitation grows, particularly from urban and overseas communities, was raised.
- The importance of managing the parks for the purpose of conservation and climate change mitigation was strongly emphasised by some members.
- There was interest in finding opportunities to increase the tourism yield (length and money spent by tourists) for surrounding communities.
- Commentary was made that without a healthy biodiverse landscape, none of the other 'pillars' would be possible. It is the basis of enjoying and experiencing benefits from the landscape.
- A SRG member emphasised that *'if we work together the outcomes of the plan will be the best outcomes for the landscape'*.

The story of the landscape

- A presentation by the Area Chief Ranger on the history of the Grampians landscape from pre-colonial occupation to current day was shared to support members to understand the history of the Grampians/Gariwerd landscape and its current uses and management.
- SRG members shared they would like to see the presentation used in broader community engagement activities, as well as being made publicly available. Members suggested including information about what the future could look like and therefore what we need to be prepared for. Some members also highlighted the importance of emphasising the requirements of the National Parks Act, which has specific legal obligations that must be met.
- Members highlighted the importance of the landscape for water catchment and management and queried whether a representative from this area is needed on the SRG. Parks Victoria advised that Catchment Management Authorities are being briefed by the project team throughout the development of the plan, rather than being involved through the SRG.

Overview of the plan development process

- A presentation by the Director of Park Planning outlining the process to develop the management plan, as well as key issues to be addressed, was shared with SRG members. The key message for this plan is that it will set a long-term agenda for the next 15 years, not just immediate issues.
- The planning team emphasised that the timeframe to develop the landscape plan is shorter than other processes, therefore it will be important to keep within the scope of the review.

- Parks Victoria confirmed that Traditional Owners are actively involved in the project in an overarching project control group.
- Parks Victoria confirmed a shift to landscape plans rather than park plans, in line with international best practice in park management. The landscape areas are designed to capture the whole biosphere. Clarification was provided that this planning process will review the existing plan and strategic directions, but the outcome will be a new plan that covers the whole landscape not just the Grampians National Park.
- SRG members expressed a need to clearly highlight how environmental conservation is being considered in the plan's strategic directions, also noting they would like to see the plan recognise the possible impacts of climate change and explain how management of the landscape will mitigate and adapt to these impacts.
- SRG members requested that they receive a copy of the strategic directions in the existing 2003 Grampians Park Management Plan and 1998 Black Rock Range Plan. Parks Victoria agreed this would be helpful and committed to arranging this.
- The group noted the importance of clearly showing the relationships between the landscape management plan, and other key plans and strategies in the area, including, for example, fire management plans.
- The group discussed the implementation of the management plan, and the resources that would be required. Parks Victoria confirmed that Board members would be participating in the SRG and would also receive regular updates, which will help build any supporting business case/s for any future investment in the landscape and its management.

A summary of key points from a group discussion around desired outcomes, process and concerns or considerations for the development of the Grampians Landscape Management Plan is provided below. These items will likely inform future presentations to the SRG and discussion topics for the SRG.

Desired outcomes	Process	Concerns/considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access - knowing where you should be accessing and where should not be accessing; the ability to be able to move around in the landscape. - The opportunity to be able to help maintain the landscape through volunteering. - Educational opportunities about how to do things the responsible way. For example, fire safety, how not to get lost, how to conserve the environment. Appropriate infrastructure so people can get to places where they ought to be, without 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aim high, do not start the process with a compromise. If we are clever we might not have to sacrifice one 'pillar' for another. - There is a good authorising environment to do this work (provides a rationale). - There are a wide range of tools available to help protect cultural heritage. It is important to consider all of them. - Should be open to see how experiences can be funded by other groups, not just the Victorian Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a huge amount not known around Aboriginal heritage in the landscape. To date, what has been assessed has been primarily through archaeology. There is still a lot to learn about knowledge and stories. - The timeframe for assessment is short, but time has been allocated to sitting with Elders to understand what cultural values exist, and what are the key threats to them. - We need to acknowledge that when encouraging more visitors to the park, different groups have different

Desired outcomes	Process	Concerns/considerations
<p>disturbing environmental and cultural values.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong relationships with Traditional Owners and knowledge holders to achieve recognition of cultural values. - Better visitor management and visitor dispersal. - A range of experiences for different segments of the community. Let's not define the plan by the status quo. - Improved relationships and perceptions of the Grampians as a contested space. - A reduction in threats, and increased biodiversity. - The plan needs to meet the statutory and moral requirements. - Want to see the plan reflect digital technology, and how good data supports decision making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is very important we make sure the plan meets the National Parks Act obligations, for example, to protect the park from harm from fire. It is also important to make sure the relevant fire plans are linked. - Important to consider how we are linking the management plan with the conservation action plan. - Want to see greater clarification around the Grampians Peak Trail – status, interaction with the management plan, managing impacts. - It will be important to have key messages that can be shared from the SRG meetings, so that members can share their involvement and key discussion points with their interest groups. - It would be helpful to have key messages to share with the broader community. 	<p>knowledge and needs and expect different experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are some environmental and safety concerns about the increased access to the landscape through the Grampians Peak Trail. Members would like further information on assessments. - People have expressed that there is a lack of trust between the community and land managers and people feel the land is contested.

Discussion of the community engagement program

- Parks Victoria shared that they are keen to make the engagement program open and accessible to community members and stakeholders.
- There will be two main points of consultation; one in late 2019 at the beginning of the plan development, a second in mid to late 2020 to seek feedback on the draft Plan.
- SRG members were encouraged to promote the workshops and other engagement opportunities with their interested communities.
- SRG members emphasised it will be important to provide clear messaging for all participants that workshops and other engagement activities will seek feedback on a wide range of issues, and be about managing the landscape as a whole, not solely to discuss specific issues such as rock climbing access.

Review of the Terms of Reference

- SRG members wanted to see wording changed from 'act as an advocate for the SRG' to 'sharing the purpose and process of the SRG'. This change was accepted by Parks Victoria.
- The SRG requested Term of Reference be made public. Parks Victoria advised they would clarify this with the Board.
- The group discussed the need for longer meetings throughout the process to workshop in detail specific aspects of the management planning process. It was agreed meeting length would reflect project need, to ensure SRG contributions were not restricted by time limitations.

Requests for information at future meetings

- An overview of the work done to date on the Grampians Peak Trail; relevant assessments, and the successes and lessons from the process to date.
- An overview of the scope of the cultural heritage assessments for the Grampians Landscape Management Plan.
- Learning more about cultural heritage and how to protect it, and hearing from Traditional Owners or Parks Victoria.