

1.26 Environment Integrity Policy

Policy adopted 10/12/91:
Council October
Adopted 25 October 2008

1.25.1 - 1.25.6 -for review July 2008 reviewed September to

Introduction

1.26.1 This policy deals with the necessity to protect biological diversity at its three levels; genetic, species and ecological diversity. All three are universal objectives of nature conservation programs, including the rehabilitation of sick, injured and orphaned native fauna.

1.26.2 It is appropriate to define biological diversity and other terms (source: Draft Biological Diversity Treaty, IUCN).

‘Biological diversity’ encompasses genetic diversity, species diversity and ecological diversity.

‘Genetic diversity’ is variability within a species as measured by the variation in genes (chemical units of hereditary information that can be passed from one generation to another) within a particular variety, subspecies or breed.

‘Species diversity’ is the variety of living organisms on earth.

‘Ecological diversity’ is the variety of habitats, biotic communities and ecological processes in the biosphere as well as the diversity within ecosystems in habitat differences and the variety of ecological processes.

1.26.3 The introduction of non-local organisms capable of contaminating genetic resources, for example by inter-breeding, can cause irreparable damage, ranging from subtle to dramatic, including local extinction. Similarly the introduction of non-local plant and animal species not capable of inter-breeding, (whether native or feral species), can also have an adverse impact on the ecology of an area.

1.26.4 It is recognised that to enhance the survival of a particular species it may be necessary to alter genetic diversity. This should, however, occur relatively infrequently and then only after appropriate research.

1.26.5 Similarly it may be appropriate to re-introduce species into their former habitats, to enhance survival prospects. This should only occur under strictly controlled conditions including research into habitat and ecological processes.

1.26.6 The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service recognises that its park and reserve system can comprise samples of once extensive continuous populations of species. Therefore the introduction of non-local specimens of native species, which occur in a reserve, may be acceptable if the genetic variability of the former is similar to the latter or, if dissimilar, provide a deliberate program to alter genetic diversity of a species is taking place.

1.26.7 NPWS has adopted a policy that strict surveillance of its parks and reserves should occur to ensure that the unplanned introduction of non-local plants and animals do not occur. Where such introductions have occurred, then documentation, monitoring and control or eradication programs should be planned.

1.26.8 NPWS policy is restricted to field management within its own estate.

There are legal requirements within the ‘National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1974. However, relating to the preservation of environmental integrity through the responsible relocation or release of captive fauna. These provisions in effect make the

Service's internal management policies, with respect to fauna management, applicable throughout the State.

- 1.26.9 The policy statements below are adapted from the NPWS policy "Protection of Environmental Integrity" to apply to all releases of rehabilitated and hand-raised fauna.
- 1.26.10 Releases of animal species will be limited to individuals derived from local populations of native species to ensure maintenance of genetic integrity of the species.
- 1.26.11 Locally extinct species may be reintroduced, provided appropriate research has been conducted into habitat requirements and ecological processes, but then only with the written consent of NPWS.
- 1.26.12 Populations of species with known variations in genetic diversity may be allowed to be released and inter-breed in areas controlled by the NPWS in order to enhance the survival of a species, provided this occurs under controlled conditions as part of a program approved by the Service.
- 1.26.13 Native animals which have been injured or orphaned will not be released into areas under the control of the NPWS, unless the animals originated from the general area into which they are to be released and then only with the prior approval of the local district office of the Service.