

LOCAL RECREATION PLANNING TEMPLATE

**RECREATION PLANNING FRAMEWORK
FOR
WEST NORTH WEST TASMANIA**

May 2001

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1. SUMMARY

Ideally, local recreation plans are prepared within the context of regional provision and policies outlined in the Recreation Planning Framework, local issues, and existing local and regional planning processes and constraints.

Each recreation plan must have specific objectives and outcomes to meet the needs of each individual Council, together with common elements, to enable comparison between Councils and compilation of data, including:

- inventory of facilities
- strategies and priorities for facility development
- pricing, leasing and management policies
- programming strategies and priorities
- funding policies

To ensure a consistent approach to recreation and sporting issues, there is a need to have an agreed understanding of terms such as leisure, recreation, tourism, sport, art, craft, physical fitness, cultural activities, outdoor recreation, and passive recreation. There is also a need to have an understanding of their relationship, which is diagrammatically shown in Table 1.

Local Government tends to have responsibility for many aspects of recreation, including passive recreation activities. Consequently, it is often appropriate to prepare a Recreation Plan that addresses recreation in its wider context, either in the form of a comprehensive plan or as separate plans addressing individual elements of recreation.

Recreation planning occurs at two levels (regional and local) and consists of two types (general and specific). Given the size and nature of the region, most specific issues, activities or facilities are affected by, and impacted upon, what happens in surrounding Council areas. Consequently, strong argument exists for undertaking strategies and feasibility studies on a regional basis. Cooperation will be required between Councils and the State Government to undertake regional, specific issue, projects.

Four local recreation plans have been prepared for West Coast, King Island, Circular Head and Central Coast which is in the process of updating its 1996 plan. Each plan was prepared to meet the specific needs of each Council, using different methodologies.

According to the Recreation Planning Framework Brief, APrinciples that underpin the government role in recreation and this project are; access and equity, lifelong involvement, enjoyment, diversity and choice, quality, safety, community benefit. Overlaying these general principles will be a set of recreation principles specific to each Council, responsive to the following factors:

- Nature of the community
- Homogeneity of the community
- Rate of change in the community
- Inherent level of conservatism and underlying anxiety about change within a community
- Degree of isolation of the community
- Range of recreation and sport facilities available.

Using the principles specified in the Study Brief and taking account of the factors listed above, a series of additional recreation and sport planning principles evolve relating to Open Space, Recreation and Sport Facilities, Sport and Recreation Development, Joint Initiatives, Equity, Environment, Tourism, and Community Benefit.

Community consultation is an integral aspect of a Recreation Plan, and must be considered in association with market research and project management. Market research here is defined as the process of obtaining information relating to the wants and needs of consumers, and to gain a better understanding of the market. Community consultation here is defined as the process of seeking the community's views and opinions on proposals and issues. Techniques that may be used in market research or community consultation include:

- surveys (telephone, mail, drop off and retrieve, personal interview etc)
- executive interviews
- group interviews (focus groups, workshops etc)
- competitor analysis
- comparative assessments
- review of secondary data (ABS data, previous reports etc)
- public meetings (open to all members of the public)
- media releases, seeking public comment and submissions
- public exhibition of proposals

An aspect of community consultation often ignored in the preparation of a Recreation Plan, is that of ownership. To increase the probability that a plan will be adopted and implemented by Council, major stakeholders must be included in the consultation process. Stakeholders will include some or all of the following:

- Elected members of Council
- Council officers
- State and federal Government Departments
- Community recreation and sport groups
- Users of Council facilities
- Commercial leisure facility operators
- Resident action groups (Progress Associations, Friends of ... groups etc)

Protocols must be established at the beginning of the planning process to ensure that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to have input into the Recreation Plan.

Selecting membership of the Project Management Group can be politically difficult, and will preferably only include individuals who are personally nominated by Council, rather than individuals selected by, and representing a particular group.

2. PLANNING CONTEXT

Ideally, local recreation plans are prepared within the context of regional provision and policies as outlined in the Recreation Planning Framework, local issues and existing local and regional planning processes and constraints.

2.1 EXISTING SITUATION

A starting point for the development of a local recreation plan is the Recreation Planning Framework and existing recreation plans.

1. *Recreation Planning Framework*

According to the Study Brief the purpose of preparing a Recreation Planning Framework is to enhance the quality of life of the north west community through improved planning for, and provision of facilities, services and opportunities for recreation, sport and physical activity. Important aspects of the Recreation Planning Framework will be the collection of credible participation data and other information to support planning, the development of systems to provide consistency and economy in implementation, and above all the application of a regional outlook.

2. *Local Recreation Plans*

King Island, West Coast, Circular Head and Central Coasts Councils all have recreation plans.

Central Coast is in the process of updating its plan and both Burnie and Devonport have provided funds in their budget for local plans in the forthcoming financial year.

Kentish, Latrobe and Waratah-Wynyard Councils have not indicated an intention to prepare local recreation plans.

2.2 PLANNING RESOURCES

Recreation planning is a relatively standard process and a number of government agencies in Australia and New Zealand have produced manuals and guidelines for local recreation plans, including:

- Getting it Right - A Guide to Planning and Developing Sport and Recreation Facilities (Hillary Commission and Sport and Recreation Queensland)
- Strategic Choices - A Series of Local Authority Leisure Planning Case Studies (Hillary Commission)
- Leisure Industry Information Bulletins (Sport and Recreation Victoria)
- Recreation and Leisure Planning in Local Government (Hillary Commission)
- Recreation Planning - A Guide for Local Government (Hillary Commission)
- Planning Guidelines for Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment and Development (Department of Tourism, Sport and Racing)

- Recreation Planning - A Manual for Local Government (South Australian Recreation Industry)
- Recreation and Sport Planning and Design Guidelines Manual (Department of Recreation and Sport, South Australia)

Most of these manuals and publications provide very similar information and detailed methodologies for undertaking recreation plans.

Each recreation plan must have specific objectives and outcomes to meet the needs of each individual Council. It is unrealistic to have a single approach that applies to all Councils within the West North West Tasmania Region. Rather, it is important that common elements exist in each local recreation plan to enable comparison between Councils and compilation of data, although each plan will have its own unique elements. Common elements can include:

- inventory of facilities
- strategies and priorities for facility development
- pricing, leasing and management policies
- programming strategies and priorities
- funding policies.

2.3 SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

A first step in preparing a Recreation Plan is to define some commonly used terms, and determine the scope of the plan.

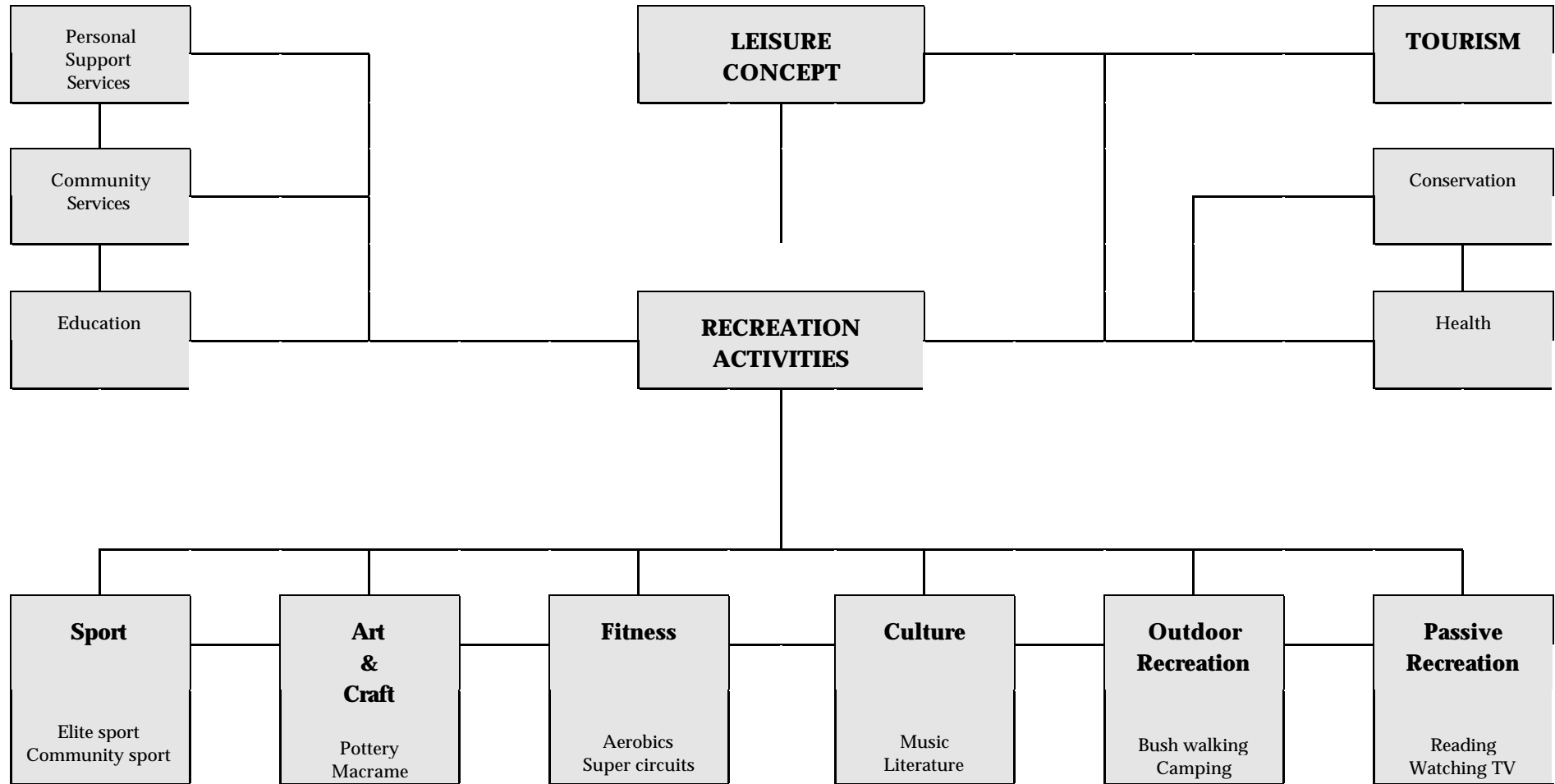
2.3.1 Definitions

The terms leisure, recreation, and sport have been subject to much discussion amongst academics, and are often used, interchangeably, by the general public. This creates difficulties when discussing concepts that have different meanings to different people.

To ensure a consistent approach to recreation and sporting issues, there is a need to have an agreed understanding of the various terms. The following definitions present a framework for understanding the relationship between the various terms, which is diagrammatically shown in Table 1.

- **Leisure** may be defined as the portion of time that remains, when time for work and basic requirements for existence have been satisfied. Alternatively, it may be defined as a state of mind and lifestyle that is free of work or time.
- **Recreation** may be defined as participation, in its broader sense, in any pursuit - other than those associated with work and necessary tasks of a personal and a social nature - which a person undertakes freely for purposes of relaxation or entertainment or for their own personal or social development.

TABLE 1: LEISURE AND RELATED ACTIVITIES



- **Tourism** is an activity which is undertaken during leisure time whilst away from home, and includes participation in a range of recreation activities.
- **Sport** may be defined as a structured, result focussed, competitive recreation activity involving physical activity. Sporting activities include both training and competition, and may be undertaken either individually or as a team. Sport can be broken down into different levels, such as professional/entertainment, elite and community.
- **Art, craft, physical fitness, cultural activities, outdoor recreation and passive recreation** are categories of recreation activities.

2.3.2 Scope of Recreation Planning

The Recreation Planning Framework focuses on active recreation, which refers to pursuits recognised as sport, associated with physical fitness or involving increased physical activity. However, Local Government tends to have responsibility for many aspects of recreation, including passive recreation activities. Consequently, it is often appropriate to prepare a Recreation Plan that addresses recreation in its wider context. Using this approach, either a comprehensive plan can be prepared addressing all aspects of recreation at the same time, or separate plans can be prepared for each element of recreation.

To fully appreciate the diverse nature of recreation activities, it must be appreciated that recreation may not be a discrete activity, and is often integrated with other aspects of everyday life such as conservation, community service, health, education and personal support services.

2.4 REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Recreation planning occurs at two levels (regional and local) and consists of two types (general and specific). Previous discussions relating to recreation planning, have focused on the distinction between regional and local recreation plans, and addressed comprehensive or general recreation and sport strategies across a region or local government authority area.

Complementing general strategies are studies commissioned to address specific issues, activities or facilities. For example, in West North West Tasmania an Indoor Recreation Facility Strategy and a Coastal Management Strategy have previously been completed. Similarly, Devonport City Council is contemplating preparation of a recreational fishing strategy and Central Coast Council are contemplating an equestrian centre feasibility study.

Given the size and nature of the region, most specific issues, activities or facilities are affected by, and impacted upon, what happens in surrounding Council areas. Consequently, strong argument exists for undertaking strategies and feasibility studies on a regional basis. Both the Recreational Fishing Strategy and the Equestrian Centre Feasibility Studies are good examples of projects that would benefit from a regional perspective.

Cooperation will be required between Councils and the State Government to undertake regional, specific issue projects. One option is to convene a Project Management Committee chaired by the main proponent of the strategy and comprising representatives of other funding stakeholders. An alternative approach is to provide specific funding through the Cradle Coast Authority to manage all specific issue projects on a regional basis.

3. LOCAL RECREATION PLANS

Four local recreation plans have been prepared, and Central Coast Council is in the process of updating its 1996 plan. Each plan was prepared to meet the specific needs of each Council, using different methodologies.

3.1 CENTRAL COAST RECREATION PLAN 1996 - 2001

This Recreation Plan outlines the principles, goals and strategy for the development of recreation ground facilities, open space and community recreation, and provides an overview of current issues relating to the provision of recreation services and facilities.

Major strategic recommendations contained in the report include:

- ongoing development of the Dial Recreation Complex, Ulverstone Showground and the Ulverstone Recreation Ground, to provide a focus for local and regional recreation in the area;
- rationalisation of halls, public amenities and grounds in rural areas, to free existing recreation dollars, and enable appropriate development of services in rural areas;
- recognition that the Council's most valuable natural recreation resource is the coastal zone and the river catchment areas, and that interest in these areas is growing significantly;
- a network of paths, tracks and cycle ways should be developed to provide quality and safe recreation experiences and the opportunity to develop major regional visitor attractions.

More specific recommendations included:

- redevelopment of the Ulverstone Showground for softball, junior soccer, junior sports, netball, emerging sports and training facilities;
- construction of a multipurpose amenities area including change rooms, toilets, function room and meeting rooms at the Ulverstone Recreation Centre;
- development of a recreation arena at the Dial Recreation Complex and the relocation of Penguin Football and Cricket Clubs to the Dial Recreation Complex by the year 2000;
- maintenance of the Ulverstone Recreation Ground as the Central Coast's major outdoor spectator recreation venue.

3.2 CENTRAL COAST COUNCIL SPORTS AND LEISURE STRATEGY - DRAFT (May 2000)

In 1999, Council decided to review its 1996 - 2001 Strategy. One of the first initiatives was to rename the Recreation Strategy as a Sports and Leisure Strategy, to reflect the active and passive nature of sport, leisure and recreation. The review recognised that the original Plan had set unrealistic outcomes, and was not fully supported by the elected arm of Council and Astrong lobby groups within the community were opposed to the tone of rationalisation and sharing.

The Sport and Recreation Policy within the Strategy identifies:

- a set of guiding principles; safe participation, equity and access, sharing of resources, facility development, linking recreation to community planning, recreational opportunities, partnerships and encouraging a healthy lifestyle, and
- two goals relating to optimum access to recreation and leisure opportunities and enhanced lifestyle.

At the next level, objectives and an action plan relating to each guiding principle is outlined for:

Recreation facilities
Open space
Programs and services
Partnerships
Implementation

Most actions are projected to cost \$10,000 or less (two actions are projected to cost \$20,000 and another three are projected to cost over \$20,000).

3.3 CIRCULAR HEAD RECREATION FACILITIES HEAD (APRIL 1999)

This report prepared by independent consulting engineers reviewed Council's strategic direction in relation to recreation facilities. In commissioning the report, Council acknowledged that its facilities were deteriorating and that considerable expenditure would be required to bring the facilities up to an appropriate standard. The final report provides both general and facility specific recommendations.

Key recommendations include:

- undertake a feasibility study into the development of centralised sporting facilities at the Smithton Recreation Ground Complex;
- consider redevelopment to the Smithton Swimming Pool using a removable boom to create a standard 25m pool and a learn to swim section;
- reform special committees as area management committees to handle day to day site management and maintenance of facilities in their area;
- establish a recreation facilities trust fund to provide a pool of funds for new or upgraded facilities based on a more equitable model;
- undertake detailed planning and design to construct a dedicated skateboard/roller blade facility in Smithton.

3.4 SPORT AND RECREATION PLAN FOR WEST COAST COUNCIL 1995 - 2005 (JANUARY 1995)

The aims of the Plan are to:

- identify existing sporting and recreational facilities, public and private, in the West Coast Council area and to establish their current level of use and managerial structures;
- develop a review process so that Council can be responsive to community needs;
- establish a regional strategy which provides the community with guidance and direction on, and access to, the planning process;
- advise on priority resource allocation in appropriate time scales;
- propose policies permitting more effective and efficient use of current and future sport and recreation resources.

The report recommends that Council adopt a series of objectives. A key element is that Council will have major responsibility for ensuring effective and efficient planning, development, maintenance and promotion of sport and recreation opportunities rather than only providing for them. However, the report notes that in some instances, where there is no other appropriate body, Council will need to be the provider as it has wide responsibilities for the well being of the West Coast community.

In terms of specific facilities the report recommends:

- provision of a baseline core of facilities, programs and services in each town, with each town also being a specialist centre for some form of recreation for the Council area as a whole;
- introduction of flexible management of public sports stadiums to ensure optimum use of facilities;
- investigation of the enclosure of at least one swimming pool in the Council area.

3.5 KING ISLAND RECREATION PLAN (MAY 1999)

The aims of the plan were to accurately and realistically identify the community's recreation needs now and into the future; identify gaps in service provision and barriers to access; and develop strategies to overcome these gaps and barriers.

The report found there were no significant gaps in facility or service provision with the exception of a skateboard/roller blade facility. The biggest issue confronting residents is the standard of many existing facilities, particularly the tennis courts in Currie, the racing track, hockey fields and the Currie Recreation Ground.

The report recommends:

- a skateboard/roller blade facility be developed;
- realistic forward maintenance and development plans be prepared for sports grounds;
- investigate the development of a series of low maintenance walking tracks which connect parks and existing tracks;
- appoint a Community Development Officer, possibly on a part time basis;
- a feasibility study be undertaken prior to reopening the Grassy Swimming Pool.

The report includes a number of other recommendations and a series of specific actions to implement each recommendation.

4. PLANNING PRINCIPLES

According to the Recreation Planning Framework Brief:

Principles that underpin the government role in recreation and this project are:

- access and equity
- lifelong involvement
- enjoyment
- diversity and choice
- quality
- safety
- community benefit

Overlaying these general principles will be a set of recreation principles specific to each Council, responsive to the following factors:

- Nature of the community. That is, population, size, existing recreation and sport facilities, history, and traditions of the community.
- Homogeneity of the community. Where a Local Government consists of a range of different communities or community groups, the recreation planning process is more complex and the strategies and actions required to meet the needs of that community are more difficult to develop and implement.
- Rate of change in the communities. For example, those with a high growth or rapid decline in population need to adopt strategies that are relevant now and in the future, after these changes have occurred.
- Inherent level of conservatism and underlying anxiety about change within a community, as these have a direct bearing on the introduction or adoption of new ideas and initiatives in recreation and sport facilities and programs.
- Degree of isolation of the community, as it affects its capacity to cooperate or share with other communities and Councils.
- Range of recreation and sport facilities available.

Using the principles specified in the Study Brief and taking account of the factors listed above, a series of additional recreation and sport planning principles evolve:

Open Space

Open space areas perform a number of functions including recreation, conservation, amenity and utility. The provision and maintenance of these areas requires consideration of its function and potential to satisfy community needs through:

development of safe open space settings in strategic locations which provide for a diversity of activity and cater for people regardless of age, sex, culture, ability or income.

Recreation and Sport Facilities

Recreation and sport facilities must be developed and managed to benefit local communities, and where practical, visitors. Development of facilities should provide economies of scale through multi purpose design and commitment to a integrated management, therefore:

design and encourage use of recreation and sport facilities which optimise flexibility and modern management practices, provide opportunities for shared and/or multi-use and, where practical, fulfil a regional and/or recreation and sports tourism role.

Sport and Recreation Development

For sport and recreation to develop in a non-metropolitan environment it requires the establishment of working relationships between Council, local clubs, state associations and State Government. Each Council should therefore:

increase communication and cooperation with providers of recreation and sport opportunities, including State and Local Government, commercial operators, clubs and their State associations; and where appropriate coordinate initiatives which increase participation in recreation and sport.

Joint Initiatives

Developed open space areas and recreation facilities are important community assets. It is therefore important to identify facilities that have potential for increased community access. Schools and other government owned land provide opportunities for public use; therefore:

identify strategically located, non-local government land which can be developed to enhance community provision of recreation and sport and establish joint use agreements with owners and/or lessees.

Equity

This is a broad concept covering disadvantaged community members, provision of traditional versus non traditional recreation and sports activities, and facility location in rural versus town environments, hence Councils should:

develop recreation and sport facilities and programs based on their capacity to provide a unique opportunity (i.e. not otherwise accessible) for youth, children, women, older people, people with a disability, low income families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and residents in rural areas.

Environment

North West Tasmania has sensitive environments including riverine, coastal and bush settings. In order to retain/improve the integrity of these areas, Council should:

develop recreation and sport facilities and open space areas in an environmentally sustainable way.

Tourism

Active recreation able to be undertaken in quality facilities is recognised as a key component in any tourism product. North West Tasmania can capitalise on this opportunity through:

identifying, developing, supporting and promoting recreation and sport initiatives (including commercial activities) which have tourism linkages and potential.

Community Benefit

Expenditure of public funds must be directed to projects which offer benefit to local communities. Projects must be financially viable and sustainable in the long term, recognising the ongoing management and maintenance costs. Therefore, Councils should:

support the development of recreation facilities, programs and services which deliver community benefits and are financially viable and sustainable.

5. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Community consultation is an integral aspect of a Recreation Plan, and must be considered in association with market research and project management.

5.1 MARKET RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Although the distinction between market research and community consultation is blurred, a practical way of viewing the two concepts is to consider:

Market research as the process of obtaining information relating to the wants and needs of consumers, and to gain a better understanding of the market. Market research involves data gathering techniques such as:

- surveys (telephone, mail, drop off and retrieve, personal interview etc)
- executive interviews
- group interviews (focus groups, workshops etc)
- competitor analysis
- comparative assessments
- review of secondary data (ABS data, previous reports etc)

Community consultation is the process of seeking the community's views and opinions on proposals and issues. Generally, community consultation is necessary when changes of policy or major developments are proposed. The most popular community consultation techniques are:

- public meetings (open to all members of the public)
- group interviews (selective invitations to focus groups, workshops etc)
- stakeholder interviews
- surveys (telephone, mail, drop off and retrieve, personal interviews etc)
- media releases, seeking public comment and submissions
- public exhibition of proposals

Usually, community consultation will occur during the initial stages, when a proposal is first mooted, and towards the end of the process when firm proposals or recommendations are being considered. Whilst community consultation uses similar techniques to market research, the focus is very different and tends to be more exploratory and subjective, whereas market research seeks definitive and objective data.

5.2 STAKEHOLDERS

An aspect of community consultation often ignored in the preparation of a Recreation Plan, is Aownership. To increase the probability that a Plan will be adopted and implemented by Council, major stakeholders must be included in the consultation process.

Stakeholders are individuals or organisations potentially affected by recommendations contained in the Recreation Plan. Stakeholders will include some or all of the following:

- Elected members of Council
- Council officers
- State and federal Government Departments
- Community recreation and sport groups
- Users of Council facilities
- Commercial leisure facility operators
- Resident action groups (Progress Associations, Friends of ... groups etc)

Protocols must be established at the beginning of the planning process to ensure that all stakeholders are given the opportunity to have input into the Recreation Plan. In addition, it is often beneficial to involve a small group of Akey stakeholders in a Project Management Group, which oversees the development of the Plan.

Selecting membership of the Project Management Group can be politically difficult, and will preferably only include individuals who are personally nominated by Council, rather than individuals selected by, and representing a particular group. In selecting a Project Management Group, the following criteria can be used:

- members should be readily available to attend project meetings, often during normal working hours, and have the time to review written material (such as draft reports) as it is presented;
- members should have a role to play in implementing the recommendations of the Plan;
- members should have the expertise, skills and knowledge to assess and review information;
- members should represent a broad cross section of stakeholders;
- members should have the capacity to think outside the square, and not be constrained by tradition and precedent.