

NOVEMBER 2014



# Reserve Activity Assessment

## System Overview for External Proponents



## 1. What is a Reserve Activity Assessment?

The Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) process is the Environmental Impact Assessment system the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) uses to assess whether activities proposed on PWS managed land are environmentally, socially and economically acceptable.

Carrying out a RAA assists PWS to assess and document:

- the activity's compliance with relevant statutes, policies and plans;
- the activity's environmental, social and economic benefits and impacts;
- the actions to be taken to maximise benefits and minimise impacts;
- whether a proposal is approved, approved with conditions or not approved; and
- whether the activity, when completed, achieved its stated objectives.

## 2. Why is a Reserve Activity Assessment needed?

PWS manages 37% of Tasmania's land area in trust on behalf of all Tasmanians. In addition PWS manages national heritage listed areas on behalf of all Australians and Tasmania's listed World Heritage properties (which cover over 20% of Tasmania), on behalf of the world.

Much of this reserved land has significant values that are protected under the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* (NPRM) and other Acts. These values include biological diversity, geological diversity, water quality, sites / areas of cultural significance and areas of high wilderness quality. The PWS must also protect reserves from threats such as fire, introduced species, introduced diseases and soil erosion.

In tandem with maintaining the above values, PWS is also charged under the NPRM Act with encouraging certain forms of use of reserves. These include research, education, tourism, recreational use and enjoyment (consistent with the conservation of the reserve's natural and cultural values). The use of reserves, particularly for recreation, is highly valued by the community. In some classes of reserves, other activities such as grazing, apiculture, marine farming and hunting may also occur under certain conditions.

The RAA process tests whether proposed activities meet the requirements of legislation, plans and policies. The process weighs the risks and benefits of a proposed activity and assists in deciding whether an activity should proceed, proceed with conditions or not proceed.

## 3. When is a Reserve Activity Assessment required?

Activities that require a RAA are new or recurrent works / activities that over a period of time have the potential for adverse environmental, social or economic impacts. The RAA Checklist form is used to assess whether a RAA is required. It also records the scope of the assessment.

Activities that *do not* require a RAA are usually routine or general maintenance activities that are often done on a day-to-day basis. They have low potential environmental, social or economic impacts even if they are conducted over a long period of time.

## 4. Who carries out a Reserve Activity Assessment?

The RAA process applies to both PWS and external proponent's activities on PWS managed land.

For activities proposed by external proponents, a PWS contact officer will explain the RAA requirements, complete a RAA checklist (this assesses whether a RAA is required and the scope of the RAA) and supply relevant reports and materials. If a RAA is required, the proponent fills out key parts of the RAA documentation (fields marked 'proponent' on the RAA form). PWS will then complete the remainder of the form and assess the activity.

The initial contact for *commercial operators* wishing to commence a tourism or visitor services activity on PWS managed reserved land is the Manager Commercial Visitor Services (ph: 03 6165 4245). Commercial visitor services include: accommodation, standing camps, cafes/restaurants, cruise boats, chairlifts, filming, special events and licensed adventure tour activities (such as bushwalking, rafting, abseiling, kayaking, cycling, horseriding, 4Wd'ing etc). The Manager Commercial Visitor Services will refer you to the relevant PWS Regional officer who will assist you with the RAA if one is required.

For other activities or purposes that involve occupation of reserved land (but not for commercial tourism or visitor services) contact the Reserve Land Leases and Licences (RLLL) Unit Manager Chris Price (Ph 03 6233 9235 or email: [chris.price@parks.tas.gov.au](mailto:chris.price@parks.tas.gov.au)). These sorts of activities involve marine structures (jetties, boat ramps, slipways, boat sheds) marine farms, communication facilities, windpower facilities, lighthouses and navigation aids, helipads, dam sites, access and easements, shacks, walking/skiing club huts, grazing leases, apiary sites and recreation facilities (e.g. archery, motorcycle racing, sailing club, pony club etc).

For all other activities contact the relevant Regional PWS office direct (North West (03 6429 8719), North (03 6336 5312), South (03 6233 8532).

## 5. What is the scope of the RAA? Who decides?

The RAA process has four different levels of assessment depending on the activity and the level of risk involved. A RAA Level Guide has been developed to assist in deciding which level of assessment is appropriate considering the issues and risk level. Due to the variety and range of factors to be considered it is a guide only, the final decision rests with the Regional Manager (for level 1- 3 RAAs) or the General Manager (for level 4 RAAs).

### **LEVEL 1: RAA**

This lowest level of RAA documentation involves filling out the level 1 RAA form. A level 1 RAA is used to assess whether activities meet basic environmental, social, legislative and policy requirements of the PWS. It is used for activities with relatively low impact, where over 90% of the potential impacts are known. At this level, specialist, advisory committee and public comment is not formally sought.

### **LEVEL 2: RAA**

A level 2 RAA involves a desktop study with advice from specialists leading to an activity plan that specifies how key elements of the activity will be undertaken. It requires no additional studies. Formal public consultation is not required - though stakeholders should be consulted where this is beneficial. The level 2-4 RAA form is filled out. For most PWS

activities with a moderate environmental impact this is the usual type of RAA.

### *LEVEL 3: RAA*

In some cases additional assessments or studies may be required to address specific values or impacts of concern beyond the desktop studies done for a level 2 RAA. Where this occurs the additional assessments or studies are noted in the decision on scope and are added to the RAA documentation. The level 2-4 RAA form is used, with the additional studies appended.

### *LEVEL 4: RAA (DPEMP)*

In a limited number of cases, for major activities, the development of a more detailed Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan (DPEMP) will be required. Level four RAAs are usually large in scale and have high public interest and / or substantial potential for impact on values.

A DPEMP involves onsite natural and cultural surveys and impact assessments of all key values. An environmental management plan that details all major aspects of how the activity will proceed is developed. Formal public consultation is required along with stakeholder consultation and Advisory committee input. For a DPEMP Steps 4 to 6 of the RAA process are completed in much greater detail than for level 2 or 3 RAAs. A DPEMP document is produced in addition to completion of the level 2-4 RAA form.

Depending on the scope and scale of the project a Site or Zone Plan may also be required. This is more likely with a DPEMP.

Whichever level of RAA is used the RAA process also integrates with other internal (PWS) and external assessment processes, these will be explained by the contact officer.

### **WHO DECIDES?**

The Regional Manager decides the scope of the assessment, with advice, in particular from the Parks and Reserves Manager. The decision to undertake a DPEMP (Level 4 RAA) requires approval of the General Manager.

## *6. Who pays for a Reserve Activity Assessment?*

For external proponents, any expenses associated with the preparation of the RAA and associated documentation will be borne by the proponent. The proponent may be required to conduct surveys and studies and prepare plans to ensure there is sufficient information to properly assess the activity. The contact officer will assist the proponent and make clear the approval process, the information requirements and fees applicable.

## 7. How long will the RAA process take?

The time from initial contact with PWS to final determination on a RAA depends on: the scale of the proposal; the importance of the values affected; the speed with which the proponent can provide the information required; and the complexity of the control actions needed. All these issues are considered when determining the level of RAA.

The times given below should be considered a guide only and are the fastest likely processing times, from when a RAA form is submitted to PWS.

*Level 1 RAAs* – should take approximately 2 weeks to a month\*.

*Level 2 RAAs* – should take three to four months\* (including one month for specialist comment)

*Level 3 RAAs* – should be similar to level 2 RAAs, plus the time taken to conduct and assess the required study / survey, which will vary depending on the nature of the work involved, level three's RAAs are likely to take from 4 - 6 months\*.

*Level 4 RAAs* – These include multiple studies and the development of a Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan by the proponent, all of which take considerable time. Level 4 RAAs are also likely to include onsite visits with specialists, as well as public consultation and presentation to an Advisory committee. Because of the extensive nature of these RAAs, and the complexity of consultation for some areas (e.g. the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area), the time taken can be long, the usual is between 9 - 18 months\*. Note however that delays, beyond 12 months, with level 4 RAAs are usually due to the proponent working to provide the necessary information required.

PWS undertakes to provide a decision on the following matters (areas within its control in the RAA process) in the timeframes noted below:

- Whether a RAA is required, if yes, the level of RAA (using the RAA Checklist and RAA Level Guide) – 2 weeks
- Review of concept and assessment of scope (for level 2-4 RAAs) – 4 weeks
- Specialist comment on the RAA (for level 2-4 RAAs) – 4 weeks
- Final Determination once all assessments are complete – 2 weeks

The PWS contact officer will be able to provide a reasonable estimate of the time involved once the RAA checklist is filled out. For level 2 – 4 RAAs greater clarity on the time involved is provided once the scope of the assessment has been determined.

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\* These times assume:

1. all information is made available by the proponent as and when required;
2. this information is at an appropriate standard;
3. all relevant background information / reports are available;
4. any required studies have been done at the proponent's expense within the above timeframes; and
5. there are no major changes to the proposal by the proponent as it proceeds through the assessment process.

## 8. The RAA Process and other Planning and Assessment

### 8.1 MANAGEMENT PLANS AND THE RAA PROCESS

There are a number of reserve management plans that currently prescribe impact assessment processes, particularly for major activities (the equivalent of the preparation of a DPMP). In these cases the contact officer will discuss the appropriate assessment process with the PWS Planning Services Section, prior to providing advice to proponents.

Activities proposed that are contrary to any management plan will usually be rejected as the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002* requires that PWS manage in a way that is consistent with any approved plan.

### 8.2 EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

The RAA process also complements other external planning assessment processes.

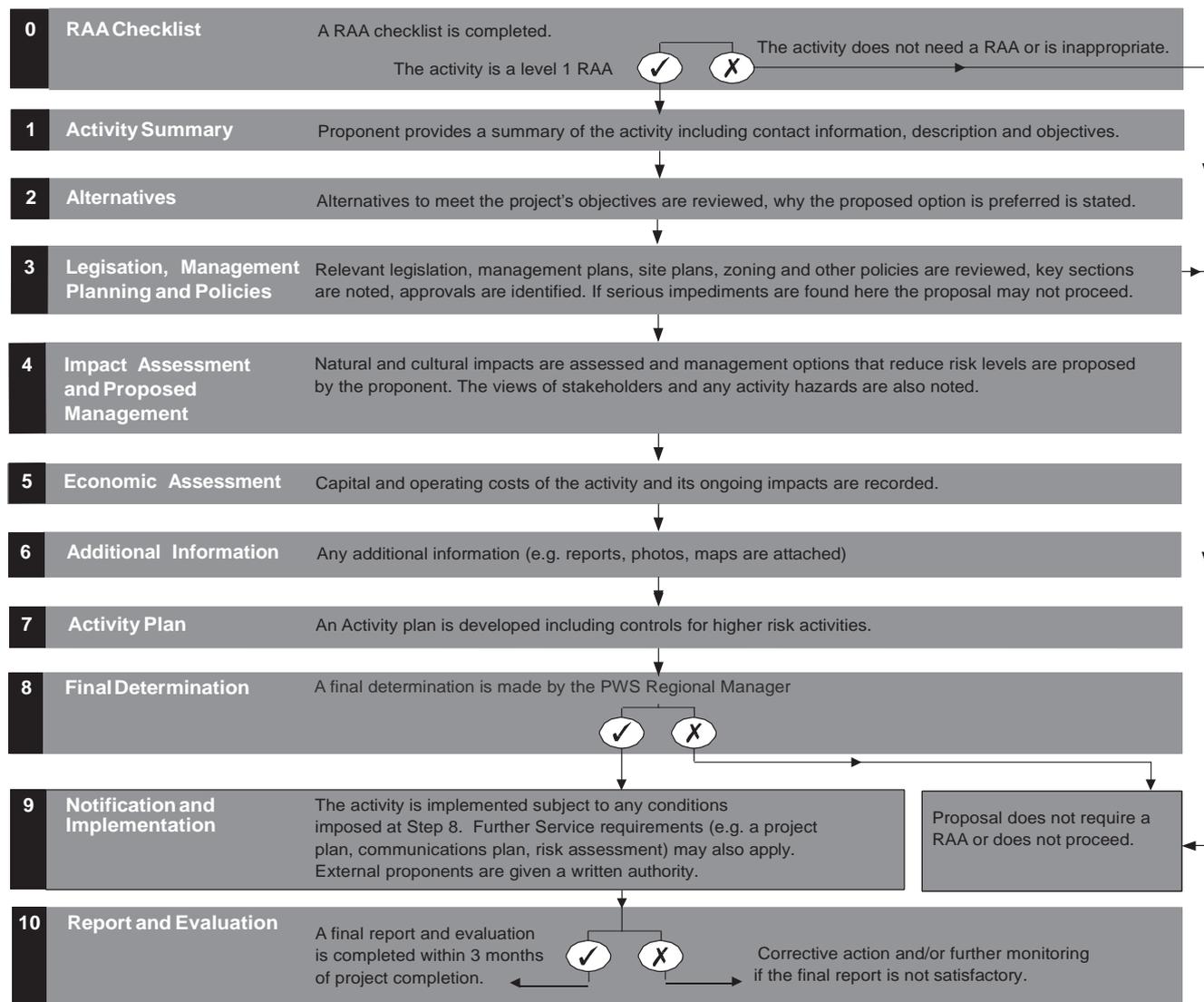
The two most common external processes that need to be considered are the Land Use Planning and Approvals process run by local council under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* and the Australian Government's assessment process under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1995*. Whether or not these processes, or any other external assessment processes apply is identified when the scope of the assessment is determined.

In a very few cases, usually for large scale developments, the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* administered by the Environment Division of DPIWWE may also be triggered.

## 9. RAA Process flowchart

All activities that may require a RAA are assessed against the RAA Checklist to determine whether a RAA is required or not. If a RAA is required the appropriate RAA level will be determined and either a level 1 or level 2-4 RAA form is then filled out. The following flowcharts summarise the key steps for both these types of RAA form.

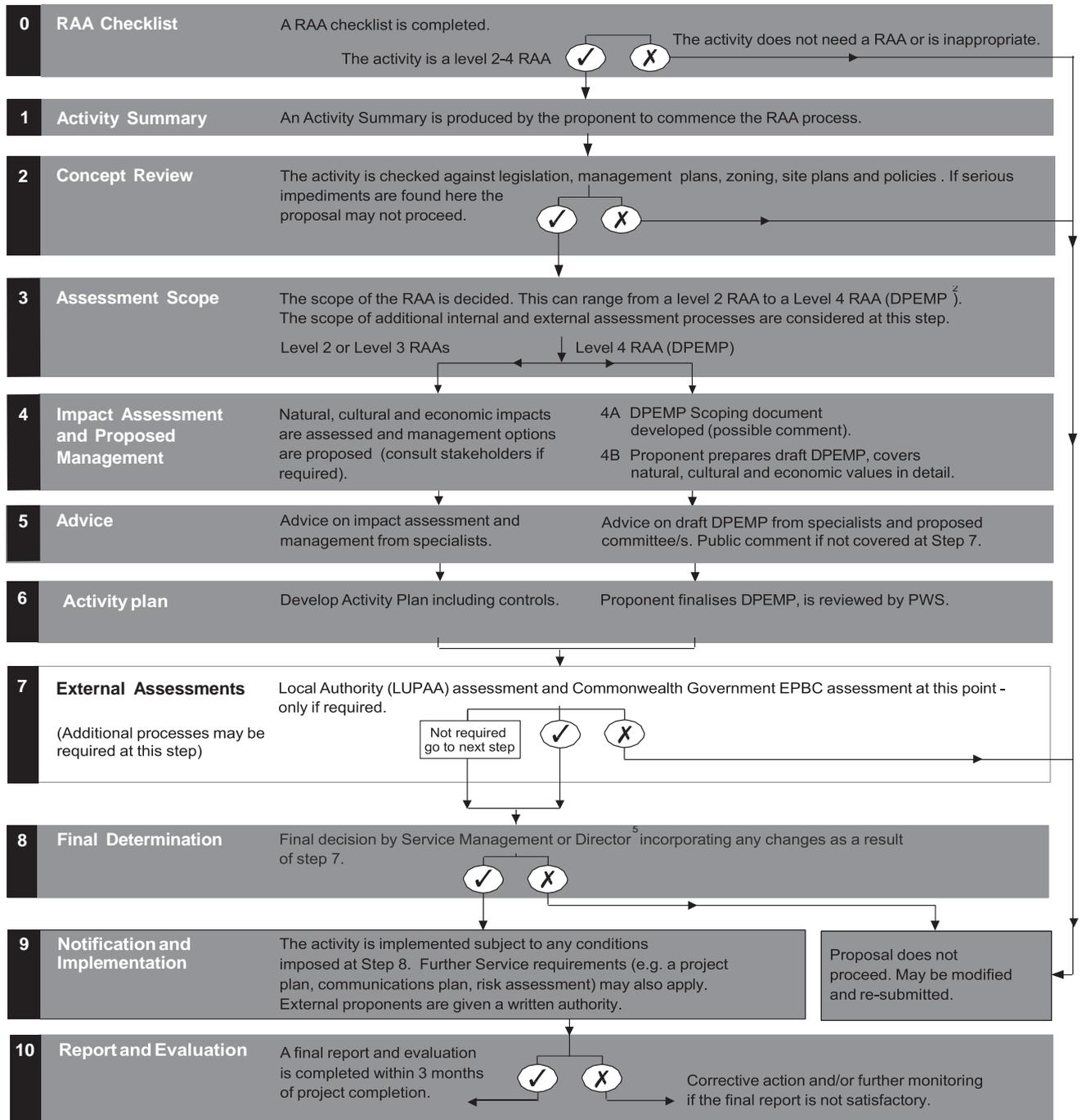
# Level 1 - RAA Flowchart



**Legend**

Yes - Proceed     No - Do not proceed

## Level 2 to 4 – RAA Flowchart



### Legend

1 DPEMP – Development Proposal and Environmental Management Plan (includes site specific information, natural, cultural & social values, impact mitigation, limits or conditions, monitoring and remedial action if required)

3 EPBC – Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999

4 Director – Director, National Parks and Wildlife or delegate



2 LUPAA – Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993



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