

# Western Australian Trails Strategy Development (the “Strategy”)

Submission by The Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc.

31 March 2008

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## THE FEDERATION’S INTEREST

- **The Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc. is a key community stakeholder in the development of a trails strategy for W.A.** - The Federation is the peak body representing the nine incorporated bushwalking clubs in W.A. and their 900 members.
- While speaking primarily for our members, we believe the Federation also informally represents the interests of a much larger and broader-based walking group within the community:
  - The aspirations of the Federation’s members for walking and for trails are also likely to be shared by the broader community of bushwalkers in W.A., including a large majority who do not belong to formal clubs. Total bushwalking numbers for 2006 have been estimated at 63,500 ([Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey \(“ERASS”\) 2006 Annual Report](#)), which incidentally was a very encouraging increase in number of 26% over the [previous year’s survey](#) of 50,200.
  - Many of W.A.’s ‘walkers’ (in the broader sense), estimated at 617,000 (ERASS Annual Report 2006) do not identify themselves primarily as ‘bushwalkers’, but nevertheless would spend significant walking time on trails in the bush. Indeed the ERASS statistics show that 42% of Western Australians participated in walking and bushwalking in 2006, by far the highest participation in any recreation. The next highest recreation activity was aerobics/fitness with 22%, followed by swimming with 16%. “Bushwalking” specifically is ranked eighth out of the 40 categories collected.
  - ‘Bushwalkers’ themselves most often also double as very keen urban ‘walkers’, who walk locally for exercise during their working week and throughout the ‘off-season’, and ‘bushwalk’ more remotely within the State during their weekends and holidays in the cooler seasons. Consequently ‘bushwalkers’ are generally highly supportive also of increasing opportunities for urban and urban-fringe walking.

## GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

1. **The Federation strongly supports the need for a W.A. Trails Strategy.**
2. **A key element of the Strategy vision must be to encourage all West Australians to walk more and develop environments in which the decision to walk is easier.**
3. **The Federation offers the following proposed simple and realistic Strategy Vision statement :**

***“Western Australia will achieve a world class system of diverse and sustainable recreational trails that are frequently used and enjoyed by the public”.***

Such a statement is less ambitious than the Tasmanian statement of Dec. 2007 (“Tasmania will be recognised for its diverse and sustainable recreational trails that are **among the best in the world**.”) and focuses more on the core objective of meeting user expectations i.e. that the trails are “frequently used and enjoyed by the public”. Similar words are included in the draft South Australian Strategy of Jan. 2007.

4. **Walking is good for people.** Existing strategies such as [Walk WA](#) and programs such as W.A.’s [“Walk There Today”](#) rightly reinforce the view that by far the best value for money in ‘health’ can be derived from ensuring people walk more. The proposed Strategy should also be consistent with that theme.

5. **Impediments to walking more should be identified and removed.** Challenges that must be effectively addressed include: Trail infrastructure (e.g. vehicle parking, paths, gates and styles, foot bridges, pedestrian tunnels, trail-head signage, trail markers etc); remoteness; accessibility; lack of public transport to trail-heads; unnecessary or over-zealous regulatory barriers; under-development of trails; environmental impacts; trail maintenance; public liability issues; liability insurance costs; rights-of-access; public awareness, etc. (See [Note 1](#) below on the specific issue of **Access to Drinking water catchments**).
6. **A particular issue for bushwalkers - yet one of the simplest issues to solve - is the lack of suitable off-road parking facilities at the 'trail-heads' for many popular bushwalk routes.** A well known example is the difficult access for the Stirling Ridge Walk where walkers are forced to add about 5 kms of uninteresting walking to reach the primary start point for the walk. (Legislation for legal rights-of-way could help address problems of access across private property. Reasonable use of firebreaks and park boundary roads to access trail-heads should also be considered in the light of the Government preparedness of to adjust '*protection of wilderness*' values to approve bitumen roads through national parks to deliver tourists to the heart of scenic attractions.)
7. **Trails must meet users' reasonable expectations.** Trails must not simply be trails for trails' sake. This may ultimately mean fewer formed trails overall but a diverse range of high quality, fit-for-purpose trails – in the right places for the right reasons. (ref. also Section 5 of draft S.A. Trails Strategy, Jan. 2007). A reactive approach with poor planning may lead to poor quality trails that do not meet user needs and the missing of better opportunities. Generally walkers are seeking natural experiences. Bush trails need to meet that need and not for example just follow existing firebreaks and forestry tracks placed for entirely different objectives and having limited suitability to meet walkers' expectations.
8. **Development of *new* trails should not be at the expense of reviewing, and where appropriate improving and maintaining, the state of *existing* trails.**
9. **There needs to be a particular focus on optimizing the potential of existing trails or scrapping them where appropriate. i.e. prioritization and rationalization.** Many existing trails have been long neglected (e.g. Kattamordo Heritage Trail) and could attract much greater use if properly upgraded, maintained and promoted. In the past many trails have been developed and announced with much fanfare by local government councils and other groups (often with glossy brochures) and from then on largely neglected. Such initiatives are inevitably short-lived and inefficient and result in walker frustration and disillusionment.
10. **Existing and future trails must be sustainable** (in terms of existing and projected resourcing and environmental and social impact).
11. **A "Recreation Trails Planning Toolkit" should be included in the W.A. Strategy** (with the version in the Tasmanian Trails Strategy of 2007 providing a possible reference model). It would provide stakeholders with considerable comfort and assistance in the future planning, design, assessment and development of trails. It would also ensure that priorities are analysed and assessed on a transparent and objective basis, especially with regard to the demands and sustainability of existing trails versus new trails and/or other competing priorities.
12. **The definition of "Trails" in the Strategy must be sufficiently broad to capture the full spectrum of opportunities.** (The Federation offers a suggested Trails definition. - See [Note 2](#) below).
13. **Undeveloped, unmarked trails (i.e. Australian Standards Class 5 and 6 walking routes) are an easily overlooked, valid category of trails in mainly remote areas that need to be recognized.** These trails meet the demand of many trails users for risk and adventure, and/or for solitude and a wilderness experience. (See [Notes 3 & 4](#) below).
14. **Not all trails require and intensive development and "considerable ongoing community support" to remain sustainable in the face of significant usage.** e.g. Undeveloped, unmarked trails can be sustainable and attract substantial usage despite minimal resourcing. Key requirements for such trails may simply be a) accessibility (e.g. the provision of suitable vehicle access and parking at the trail-head); b) water availability; and c) walker information/education on trail etiquette and safety. In many cases 'over-development' of the more primitive trails may destroy the very essence of the experience they previously offered to walkers (See also [Note 3](#) below).
15. **A clear and unambiguous trails classification scheme should be adopted (or adapted) to help ensure intending users are unambiguously informed, and stay within their competency level and enjoy the trail experience, rather than becoming the cause of an ambulance call-out or search-and-rescue operation.** (See also [Note 4](#) below). 'Over-promoting' of trail experiences (such as

undeveloped, unmarked trails) which may be unsuitable for many walkers (though preferred by others) should be avoided.

16. **Western Australians (and visitors) should be encouraged to explore the State and to connect with the range of landscapes and environments through access to suitable trails. The Strategy should identify the particular attributes that can differentiate the broad trails experiences within W.A. from what is available elsewhere.** e.g. The positive (as well as the negative) implications of the more remote and primitive trails must be considered.(See [Note 4](#) below).
17. **There may be a need for more ‘iconic’ trails, taking some pressure off the Bibbulmun Track in particular, and providing other distance walking opportunities.** However, new “iconic trails’ should not divert resources away from the task of improving access to existing trails.
18. **‘Networks’ of trails should be a key objective, especially in urban and urban-fringe areas and within forested areas within easy reach of Perth. However, the concept of trails linkages may be less practicable in the case of many of W.A.’s more widely-spaced remote walking areas. In the latter cases, trails opportunities should not be ignored simply because they do not fit into a broader ‘network’.**
19. **Escalating fuel prices, coupled with climate change and social responsibility, will in future likely increasingly limit conventional vehicle and air travel to remote trail-heads. On one hand this will increase the focus (and pressure) on trails close to Perth. On the other hand however, it will reduce accessibility of the large number of W.A.’s more remote trail opportunities. A larger proportion of our trail opportunities are more remote from urban centre/s than in most other States and countries. The Strategy therefore has a particular need to encourage alternative, more sustainable means of future access for walkers to such remote trail opportunities** (e.g. Where practicable, encourage availability of public transport (or tour operator buses) to near trail-heads on reasonable timetables. Round trips need to become possible by using public transport where possible and leaving the car at home).
20. **The Water & Rivers Commission [Statewide Policy #13](#) (“Policy Guidelines for Recreation within Public Drinking Water Source Areas on Crown Land”, 2003) is due for review during 2008-2009. Review of that document will be a key opportunity to ensure that policy guidelines are sympathetic to the vision and objectives of the Trails Strategy.** Drinking water catchments encompass the major portion of forested walk areas close to Perth. The Strategy’s ‘Lead Agency’ must be closely involved in coordinating that review. There can be little benefit to the community of pure and near-sterile water if it comes at the cost of a generally unfit and unhealthy populace lacking access to sufficient enjoyable recreational activities(see [Note 1](#) below).
21. **The Strategy must retain flexibility and adaptability to meet changing user expectations.** Community awareness and expectations of trails opportunities, actual (and forecast) trails usage and demand (local and international) should be rigorously monitored (including regular public awareness and usage monitoring; survey; review; and by careful examination of any shifting local and/or international trends). Inferences must not be drawn from loose generalizations or assumptions based on experiences elsewhere. (See [Note 5](#) below on Trails usage).
22. **The Strategy should not exclude consideration of currently low usage trails.** Some trails (or unmarked routes in particular) may have relatively low use but should be maintained in a trails network for particular values or maintaining diversity of opportunities.
23. **The Strategy must address in detail the structure and mechanisms through which the Strategy is to be successfully implemented.** There will be a need for inter-agency champions, visionary leadership, and effective coordination, efficiency, responsibility, accountability, good communication, and consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders, etc to ensure positive action versus bureaucracy. (The Federation offers some views below on the structure. - See [Note 6](#) below).
24. **The Strategy must include provision for specific annual review milestones to monitor and publicly report progress during the initial five-year period of the Strategy.**

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

### **NOTE 1: Access to Drinking water catchments**

- **Trails opportunities** - Most (around 80%) of the total traditional forest walking opportunities close to Perth lie within the drinking water catchments covering around 4500 sq km of forested area, including State Forests and National Parks. Ongoing access to the water catchments is therefore hugely important to maintaining and increasing the number and diversity of trails opportunities for the community and is a key consideration for the Strategy. The already high value to the community of these areas will increase further as the impacts of escalating fuel costs make these walking opportunities within 90 minutes drive of Perth city more attractive than more remote options. For most walks in these areas walkers can leave Perth at 8.00am and be back well before 5.00pm, having completed a fulfilling, but not exhausting day walk.
- **Unmarked/undeveloped trails** - Many of the popular walking opportunities in the Perth region's drinking water catchments involve 'off-track' walking on unmarked and/or undeveloped trails (i.e. AS Class 5 or 6 routes). Such walking opportunities require minimal resourcing to be sustainable, the key requirement simply being provision of suitable, discrete vehicle parking areas at trail-heads.
- **Land management approaches** - Enlightened wilderness and park managements in many areas around the world recognize that off-track walking has a low impact on the environment, is sustainable and has high recreational value. They provide for it in their park management policies. Some also recognise that walkers in remote areas of water catchments seldom visited by 'rangers' can act in a voluntary and discrete 'eyes and ears' role, observing and reporting any activities that could harm the catchment and water quality. In less enlightened cases of park or land management, community access to such healthy recreational amenities may be barred as a result of over-regulation, bureaucracy and misconceptions. **To be effective the Strategy must address the need to overcome obstacles to trails access caused by inappropriate regulation and policies.** The Federation accepts that not all existing uses will be compatible with the community's future needs and other priority uses of water catchments. However, the nature of traditional bushwalking activities is such that they are not incompatible with other uses of the catchments, particularly as drinking water source areas.
- **Department of Water plans** - The challenges with regard to maintaining access were highlighted by Plans recently published by the Department of Water (DoW). The DoW adopted an extreme regulatory position on access, poorly aligned with community attitudes and expectations. The DoW recommended extending the prohibition on all traditional off-track bushwalking opportunities to cover the entire 4500 sq km of forested water catchment areas, far beyond the limits of existing and proposed 2km-wide Reservoir Protection Zones ("RPZs"). The DoW intention has been to restrict bushwalking to "**designated trails**". Such trails are currently non-existent for bushwalking over most of the catchments, apart from the Bibbulmun Track and shared Munda Biddi Bike Trail. The DoW evidently considered walking "off marked trails" to be synonymous with walking in "undisturbed environments". Such environments presumably do not include that majority of areas of the catchment where other 'off-track' human and animal activities are ongoing and often intensive e.g. forestry and surface mining operations, and animal movements (kangaroos, emus and feral pigs).
- **The community response** - The community has shown a consistently and justifiably outraged response since 2007 to the DoW's published Plans. The community recognises the obvious need to protect drinking water quality, but also expects its State regulators to show objectivity and balance. Desired levels of 'protection' should be rational, not totally disproportionate to actual or perceived risks to water quality. The 'precautionary principle', while very relevant to the issues of climate change, has been increasingly cited by regulators such as DoW to justify excessive control policies. Internationally-respected applications of that principle recognise that a zero risk objective is unrealistic and unsustainable. On the other hand, sensible access to traditional walking areas is sustainable under suitable guidelines. Community interest, objectivity and balance, must prevail over regulatory zealotry.
- **The DoW 'revisits' its Plans** - More recently, following extensive submissions and presentations by The Federation and other community groups and individuals to various Government agencies and to the relevant Minister, the DoW has 'softened' its published position. The DoW verbally advised The Federation on 19 March 2008 that (contrary to its earlier published Plans) it would now be allowing walkers 'free-to-roam' access to the forested water catchment areas outside of the RPZs.

- **RPZs and overnight stays** - The DoW has so far not reversed its position prohibiting traditional walker access within RPZs and prohibiting backpacking with overnight stays within the catchments (other than at “designated campsites” which are limited to the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Bike Trail). Note: Prior to 1994 these traditional bushwalking activities were tacitly allowed in all parts of drinking water catchments. In the period 1994-1999, walking access to the RPZs continued under a written agreement. Post-2000, further restrictions were placed, initially prohibiting all activity in RPZs. These were subsequently expanded (under Statewide Policy 13 and Drinking Water Source Protection Plans), to prohibition (or recommended prohibition) of walking and overnight stays across the entire water catchments excepting designated trails and designated campsites.
- **Review of Statewide Policy #13 (“Policy Guidelines for Recreation within Public Drinking Water Source Areas on Crown Land”, 2003)** – This review during 2008-2009 is very relevant to the Strategy. It is a key opportunity to ensure that walker access to RPZs and overnight stays within the catchments are properly considered and that improved mechanisms for securing reasonable access into the future are put in place. As noted under General Comments item #20 above, the Strategy’s ‘Lead Agency’ must be closely involved in coordinating that review and ensure committed representation and active input from at least DSR, DEC, DoH and industry stakeholders.
- **Future legislation** – The Strategy’s ‘Lead Agency’ will also need to ensure that any new legislation in relation to drinking water catchment management and protection is not prejudicial to the broader community interests. The Department of Water and the Water Corporation are reportedly working toward the presentation of a bill to Parliament that would amalgamate, correct and revise anomalies in various management and protection acts covering W.A.’s catchments. The drafting of any new Act must take account of the other legitimate community uses of catchments, and not needlessly exclude healthy recreational opportunities for the community in the manner that Statewide Policy 13 and recent DoW recommendations seemingly intended.

**NOTE 2:** Trails Definition (See also General Comments item #2 above)

- The Strategy definition of Trails must remain broad enough to encompass the full mix, diversity and quality of ‘trails’, including the full spectrum of trail types that bushwalking offers.
- Factors to be considered in establishing a relevant definition include the following:
  - Walking trail opportunities range from short walks on well-formed surfaces at the least challenging end of the spectrum, to longer (including multi-day) walks across varied terrain, on unformed surfaces, following lightly marked or unmarked ‘routes’.
  - In the case of unmarked ‘routes’, the routes will most often lie within general walking ‘corridors’. These ‘off-track’ or informal routes are described in Australian Standard for Walking Track Classification 2156.1-2001 as **Class 5 and Class 6 routes**. An example in W.A. is the very popular Stirling Ridge Walk which does not follow a specific marked or prescribed trail or formed track over much of its length, but relies on bushwalkers picking their own route along the general walking corridor. Much of the ‘traditional’ bushwalking in the State occurs in this form and generally requires self-reliance, including good bushcraft skills, especially navigation.
  - Walking in ‘wilderness’ (or near-wilderness) environments is an attractive and preferred form of recreation for an increasing number of local bushwalkers and overseas hikers. A significant proportion of that group most value the greater adventure experience afforded by unmarked ‘routes’ and minimal or less developed infrastructure.
  - It is important that the definition is not unduly constrained. “Trails” should not be limited only to those that are (or will be) well marked and have a distinguishing and suitable surface or pathway. It must be recognized that ‘routes’ that are unmarked and unformed may be equally fit for their intended purpose and can fulfil a strong community need.
  - Trails may traverse areas that have **other primary land usages** such as State Forests and drinking water catchments.

- The Federation therefore proposes the following Trails definition for the purposes of the Strategy, to reasonably capture the full range of Bushwalking (and other recreational) opportunities:

**“A trail is any corridor, route or pathway which has one of (or combination of) its primary land usages as walking, bushwalking, jogging, cycling, mountain biking, horse riding and/or canoeing [other?], for recreational purposes, and which passes through or has a strong connection to the natural environment”.**

**NOTE 3: The significance of Unmarked, Undeveloped Trails** (Aus. Standards Class 5 or 6 routes)

- *Unmarked and/or undeveloped “trails” (including ‘off-track’ walking) in often-remote areas represent one important and unique category of walking opportunities. They have a particular set of issues to be considered (primarily access and sustainability). This is not unique to W.A. Some other States and countries (e.g. Victoria, Tasmania, N.Z.) recognize such walking as a legitimate activity in appropriate environments. However, many of W.A.’s trails are at a much earlier stage of ‘development’ than other States and countries, so this type of walking opportunity has particular importance.*
- *A key attraction of an unmarked trail or walking corridor may be the very fact that it is unmarked and therefore enhances the sense of freedom, exploration, adventure, risk and/or challenge that many walkers are seeking. Others may simply be seeking greater solitude and a heightened appreciation of wilderness away from more intensely frequented formed trails.*
- *Under W.A. conditions, including the Perth region’s open jarrah forests and wandoo woodlands, the varying routes chosen by walkers along the walking ‘corridor’ of an unmarked/undeveloped trail typically has minimal cumulative environmental impact. Worn tracks seldom “develop” nor need developing. The walkers’ activities are much more sustainable than might otherwise be assumed. One good example is again the popular Stirling Ridge walk which still provides walkers with the great walking experience it did over a decade ago.*
- *Ironically the low impact of walkers along such trails, and the lack of published ‘route’ maps for most of such walk areas can be mistakenly taken to suggest they are seldom visited and have no special recreational amenity value to the community.*
- *In recognising these particular trail opportunities, the guiding principles of the Strategy should recognise that **“Some users deliberately seek out risk and adventure as a life experience”** (as per Slide 9 of the consultant’s Strategy Development Guide) and also that **‘some also seek solitude and a wilderness experience’**. Unmarked/Undeveloped Trails are most likely to meet those users’ expectations. In such cases over-development of trails (much beyond providing access to the trail-heads) can destroy the users’ experience rather than enhancing it.*
- *Recognising such trail opportunities is consistent with the principle of **“A diversity of trails opportunities for different users”**.*

**NOTE 4: Differentiation of the W.A. trails experience** (See also Gen. Comments item #16 above)

- **Existing Trails Strategy models & W.A.** - *Other existing Trails Strategies from other States and overseas provide generally useful overall generic Strategy models. Careful review of those existing documents can help minimize unnecessary ‘re-inventing of the wheel’ during the strategy development. However the Strategy needs to be tailored to W.A.’s particular attributes, to recognize what we need to do differently, and to differentiate the particular attractions that W.A.’s trails (present and future) can offer the community and visitors compared to what they can obtain interstate and overseas.*
- **The state of W.A.’s trails** - *W.A.’s existing walk trails beyond suburbia (with a few exceptions such as the Bibbulmun Track, Munda Biddi Bike Trail and The Cape To Cape Track) are generally at a much earlier stage of ‘development’ than other States and countries with recent new Trail Strategies (e.g. Tasmania, Queensland, Victoria, S.A., Ireland, Ontario). Some of W.A.’s best locally and internationally known walk areas such as the Stirling Ridge, the Murchison*

Gorge, and Karijini National Park, are undeveloped but very popular, largely for that very reason, and for the heightened and challenging adventure experiences they can therefore provide. They offer unique and memorable walk experiences that would rival many trail opportunities available interstate and overseas.

- **The attraction of 'under-developed' trails?** - The current 'undeveloped' state of many of W.A.'s trails may itself be a valuable attribute rather than a disadvantage, whereby W.A. can benefit by differentiating itself, by preserving, protecting and promoting (where practicable and sustainable) this more raw '**wild West**' experience rather than over-developing and destroying it. The relatively raw, wilderness nature of W.A.'s 'trails' is already the attraction for many local and overseas walkers. They are increasingly in pursuit of different experiences and greater adventure than they can obtain from the much more established and much-trodden trails in other more densely inhabited states and countries. Many trails should therefore be left in a more primitive state (AS Class 5 or 6) to maintain the wilderness experience and to remain 'true escapes'. There are obvious sustainability, expectation and safety risks in 'over-promoting' under-developed and/or under-maintained trail experiences (as in parts of Tasmania), but provided the experience on offer is realistically described and appropriately monitored those risks can be minimized and user expectations can be met.
- **Remoteness and accessibility** - The Strategy will need to recognize the relative remoteness from urban areas of some of our best longer distance walking opportunities compared to most of the other states and other countries. That poses special accessibility challenges and emphasizes a need to optimize whatever opportunities we do have to improve access to trails that are within practical distance of urban centres. On the other hand, the very remoteness of our more distant trails is undoubtedly one of the attractions for many walkers seeking a different experience that they can't obtain in more densely populated states and countries.

**NOTE 5:** **Trails Usage** (See also General Comments item #21 above)

- The consultant (in Barrington, Slide 14 of 'Concepts Underpinning...' paper) comments that "**Overall, trails are used by relatively few of the population (4.6% of the WA population participates in bushwalking)**". For similar reasons as discussed above (see 'The Federation's Interest' section) that assumption is likely to be flawed. It is probably more useful for the Strategy to focus on the more relevant broader category of 'walking' when discussing overall activity levels. Many Perth walkers who participate in walking in natural environments would label themselves as 'walkers' rather than 'bushwalkers' irrespective of where they walk.
- More importantly the consultant notes (also in Slide 14) that "**Trails are unstructured activity (becoming increasingly popular)**".
- The consultant (in Slide 16) asks the question "**Will trails usage change significantly in the future?**". From the previous point, the answer would appear to be "Yes", but a more useful question for the Strategy development purposes would be as follows:  
**"If there is a greater range of more accessible and fit-for-purpose trails available for walkers to choose from, will that in itself encourage greater trails usage?"**  
The likely answer to that question is also undoubtedly 'Yes!'
- The consultant (in Slide 20 -Australian Trends) notes there is "**Little change to bushwalking participation rates**". Assuming the data and trends on "bushwalking" (as distinct from 'walking') are reliable, this is not a case for 'No need for more trails'. The Strategy needs to establish actual reasons for possible low participation rates and trends (e.g. community disinterest or lack of awareness, or poor access?) then ensure that all barriers that are inhibiting participation are identified and where possible removed, and that all other feasible ways are pursued to stimulate more participation in walking of any kind, including provision of more and varied trails.
- The consultant also (Slide 20-Australian Trends) notes that trails networks are "**Increasingly impacted by water catchment issues**". In W.A. that comes as no surprise (see Note 1 above). Drinking water catchments encompass the major portion of forested walk areas close to Perth. The Strategy's 'Lead Agency' will need to be closely involved in overcoming obstacles to trails access caused by inappropriate regulation and policies such as those associated with drinking water catchments.

**NOTE 6: Strategy implementation** (See also General Comments item #23 above)

To enhance the prospects for successful Strategy implementation the Federation suggests the following as essentials at Government levels:

- **Guaranteed high-level Government support** (including interaction with the Premier's [Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce](#));
- **Whole-of-Government approach** - Without a significant injection of funding, a strong commitment of resources, and a willingness of all the relevant agencies to 'buy-in' to the Strategy and a common vision, nothing will be achieved;
- **Lead Government agency (or better, an 'interagency')**, with a **'Trails Authority'** as a dedicated unit within the lead agency.
- **'Champions'** – Highly committed and motivated **trails 'champions'** will be needed at senior levels within Government, the Lead Agency, and within other key agencies such as DEC and DPI;
- **DSR is the logical candidate to be the Lead Agency** - It has the existing links to enable it to coordinate inter-agency support and has existing associations with the community and local government. With additional resources and support it should be well positioned to ensure the Strategy is effective and able to be widely implemented.
- **DEC's trails role** - The valuable role and experience of DEC in trails management in its own area (particularly National Parks, Nature Reserves, etc) needs to be maintained, but under the broader Strategy umbrella of the Lead Agency.
- **DPI's trails role** – The DPI's very active role in increasing the community's awareness of urban walking opportunities and the benefits of walking, and in promoting urban trails also needs to be maintained. The DPI's key role on the [Physical Activity Taskforce](#), and more particularly its involvement in the [Walk WA](#) walking strategy, on the ["Walk there Today"](#) program and on the [Walking WA Committee](#) all attests to the value it can bring to the Strategy under the umbrella of the Lead Agency.
- **Involvement of other Government Departments** – Consistent with a 'whole-of-Government' approach, the **Department of Water (DoW)** and **Department of Health (DoH)** in particular must be involved and 'buy in' to the Strategy. Some recent past DoW and DoH positions on recreational opportunities affecting trails opportunities have shocked the community for their tunnel vision and transparent lack of objectivity and balance. Without a real commitment from those Departments, the Strategy will not succeed.
- **Local Government** also has an obvious ongoing major role to play. We note that the Cities of Swan and Armadale, and various Shires of Mundaring, Kalamunda and Serpentine-Jarrahdale, to name a few, have already made significant contributions to the promotion of walking trails on Perth's doorstep.

The "Lead Agency" will need to accept overall coordinating responsibility and ultimate responsibility for the implementation of the strategy.

The lead agency must be empowered and have 'teeth'. Bureaucratic processes must not become an excuse for inaction and lack of results.

The big challenge for the 'lead agency' will be to ensure that all stakeholders (including land managers, the community, and trail users) work together in partnership, overcoming communication 'road-blocks' between the various agencies, bringing together the multi-disciplinary skills base required for the task, and being able to make decisions.

A partnership approach among Government at all levels (departments and statutory agencies), the community and trail users will be essential for success.