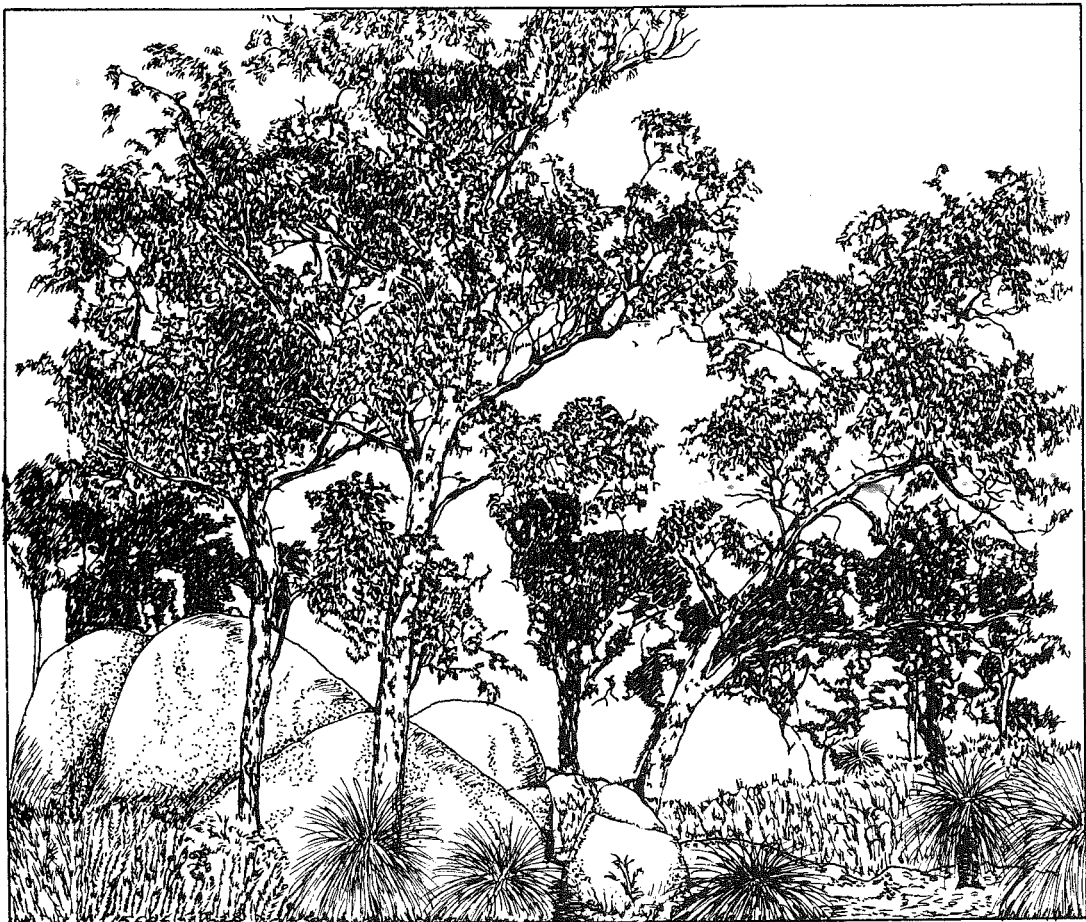




Department of Conservation and Land Management, W.A.

Nature Reserves of the Shires of York and Northam



Summary of Public Submissions
MAY 1987

Management Plan No. 4

NATURE RESERVES OF THE SHIRES OF

YORK AND NORTHAM

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS

MAY 1987

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PREFACE

This document summarises and discusses submissions to the draft management plan (DMP) for nature reserves of the Shires of York and Northam. The submissions have been considered and detailed in this document according to the part of the plan to which they refer. The associated discussion and proposed changes to the draft are similarly structured. For the sake of brevity, every detail has not been included. For the above reasons this document should be read in conjunction with the amended plan.

Further data on the flora of the York-Northam nature reserves have been collected over the period the DMP was available for comment. These data have been included in the final plan.

INTRODUCTION

The DMP for nature reserves of the Shires of York and Northam was available for public comment for three months, from 26 April to 1 August 1986.

Plans were distributed to Commonwealth, State and local government; tertiary institutions; conservation groups; and individuals who had expressed an interest in management plans for conservation areas. Plans, plus a questionnaire, were sent to reserve neighbours in the two Shires. Copies of the plan were available for inspection at the Northam and York Shire Council offices.

Twenty six submissions were received (Table 1).

Table 1. Total Submissions received.

Individuals	14*
Conservation groups	3
Government organisations	5
Shire Councils	3
Industry	<u>1</u>
TOTAL	<u>26</u>

*9 of these were reserve neighbours.

Most submissions (64%) were highly supportive of the DMP, with aspects such as the thoroughness of coverage and the principles guiding management receiving favourable comment.

Of particular interest was the high percentage (68%) of suggested additions to the DMP. As many of the submissions were from reserve neighbours, this indicates a high degree of commitment to, and interest in, local nature reserves.

Of the six nature reserves covered by the DMP Clackline received the most attention (Table 2). For all the reserves, except Mokine, the majority of submissions agreed with the strategies given in the DMP.

Table 2. Submissions for each reserve.

	Agree with Strategies	Disagree with Strategies	Total
Clackline	6	2	8
St. Ronans	3	1	4
Wambyn	4	1	5
Mokine	2	2	4
Throssell	5	0	5
Meenaar	4	0	4

Fire protection and public use were the two issues of greatest concern. Fire protection, primarily minimising the occurrence of fire on the reserves, and allowing and encouraging public uses (such as birdwatching, wildflower study, bushwalking and picnicking) while discouraging inappropriate forms of use (such as trail-bike riding) were the main issues discussed in a number of submissions (Table 3). Again, the majority of submissions agreed with the strategies given in the DMP.

Table 3. Submissions on the main issues.

	Agree with Strategies	Disagree with Strategies	Total
Fire protection	8	4	12
Public use	5	0	5

From a compilation of reserve and issue information (Table 4) it is apparent that fire protection for Clackline was the area of greatest interest (8 submissions) with fire protection for St Ronans and Mokine also of interest (4 submissions each). Submissions also discussed mining (particularly the need to include management guidelines covering mining in the final plan) and the importance of providing adequate funding for plan implementation. The need to rationalise the boundary of Clackline Nature Reserve was also discussed.

The remainder of this document discusses the submissions received and changes made to the DMP.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAFT

PART 1. INTRODUCTION - THE SHIRES OF YORK AND NORTHAM

Two submissions referring to this part were received - one regarding the geology and mineral prospectivity of the reserves and the other regarding the history of land use.

3. GEOLOGY AND GEOMORPHOLOGY

In their submission AMEC (Association of Mining and Exploration Companies) questioned whether St Ronans, Wambyn and Mokine lie within or adjacent to the minerally rich greenstone belt.

It appears that the three reserves lie some distance from this belt (Geological Survey of Western Australia 1975). Because of the emphasis placed on the geologic significance of the York-Northam area, more detailed information on the geology of the area and particularly Clackline Nature Reserve has been included in the final plan.

7. LAND USE

The Shire of Northam in their submission noted that Ensign Dale did not, as stated in the management plan, 'continue his explorations down the Avon Valley, passing through the future site of Northam'. (Reference taken from Parker, C. (n.d.), *The History of Northam, 1831-1929*, manuscript held by the Batty Library, Perth). Dale passed near rather than through the town of Northam. Also, Parker stated that the town of Northam was established in 1833 while Garden (1979) states that the town was gazetted in 1836. The gazetted date is accepted as more accurate.

The Shire of Northam also drew attention to inconsistencies in the areas of State forest in each Shire - the DMP gave the area of State forest in each Shire as being exactly the same, whereas the Shire of Northam understood the area of State forest in the Shire of York to be far greater than in their own Shire. These figures were re-checked with the Department of Land Administration and adjusted accordingly. The area of

4. FAUNA

Several submissions added further details regarding fauna. One of particular interest was the record of pigmy-possums on a property to the east, and presumably originating from the Reserve, and records for 1984, 1985 and 1986 of a pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles nesting on the Reserve.

Several submissions noted sightings of euros on the Reserve.

5. PAST USES, MANAGEMENT AND FIRE HISTORY

The Department of Mines updated the mineral tenement status of Clackline by noting that the Pacminex Agreement Area has been cancelled. Although there are no tenements in the area, the ground is considered prospective. The DMP has been updated.

One submission noted that 'past management and uses seem to have been very uncoordinated'. One of the main aims of the management planning process is to develop coordinated management.

The Shire of Northam noted that parts of the Reserve have been burnt on frequent occasions under cool conditions. These burns appear to have been patchy and very limited in extent. This detail has been added to the final plan.

Another submission noted small amounts of rubbish on the eastern boundary of the Reserve. This detail has also been added.

6. NATURE CONSERVATION VALUES

The nature conservation values of Clackline Nature Reserve were emphasised in most submissions. One submission recommended dedication of the area as a national park, however, the values of the area are best protected by the area's current status, as a nature reserve. This status emphasises the natural values of the area, with public use being of secondary importance.

B. PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT

The main areas of concern were fire protection, rehabilitation, rationalisation of reserve boundaries and prevention of inappropriate forms of public use.

2. PROTECTION FROM FIRE

Several submissions expressed concern regarding high fuel levels on the Reserve posing a fire risk to adjacent properties. The risk of an uncontrolled wildfire moving through the Reserve is minimised by the extensive areas of surrounding cleared land, particularly the cleared blocks in the centre of the Reserve. Although the closest dwellings are within 100 m of the eastern boundary, their location, at the foot of a steep north-south trending ridge running through the eastern part of the Reserve, minimises the risk of fire spreading from the Reserve to these dwellings and associated properties.

The importance of an integrated approach to fire protection was recognised. The Shire of Northam and Bush Fires Board, while supporting an approach based on a reserve advisory committee, suggested that the committee be chaired by a representative from the Shire of Northam, rather than an officer from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM). The DMP has been amended accordingly.

The Bush Fires Board opposed any track closure until the advisory committee has met and studied fire protection for the whole area. Rationalisation of the firebreak system will be the responsibility of the advisory committee, and the track closures detailed in the DMP will provide a guideline for initial decision-making. This change in emphasis has been made in the final plan.

Some confusion was apparent regarding the extent of the buffer strip. The extent has been clarified in the final plan.

One submission expressed doubts regarding the need for a buffer 200 m wide given that the area is steep with an open tree canopy and little leaf litter. Although the area is steep, the shrub/heath understorey is

dense and in many places is dominated by *Dryandra sessilis*. Thus, a buffer of at least 100 m is essential for adequate fire protection.

3. REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

One submission noted that rehabilitation or closure of sand pits, fox holes and quarries should be authorised. In most cases these areas have rehabilitated naturally and are covered in natural vegetation. Rehabilitation or revegetation work is therefore unnecessary.

4. RATIONALISATION OF BOUNDARIES

A number of submissions emphasised the importance of rationalising the Reserve boundaries, primarily by implementing the System Six recommendations. One submission stated that if ever blocks 15435 and 16016 become available for purchase they should be acquired, incorporated into the Reserve and rehabilitated if necessary. This suggestion has been detailed in the final plan.

5. PUBLIC USE

All submissions regarding public use supported the strategies given in the DMP. Concern was expressed in several submissions regarding the increased frequency of use of the Reserve by trail-bike riders, particularly over the last 18 months. The strategies given in the plan should minimise this problem.

The continued availability of access to the Reserve was strongly supported in a number of submissions.

PART 3. ST. RONANS NATURE RESERVE (NO. 30591)

The major area of concern was fire protection, although interest was also expressed in several other issues.

A. THE RESERVE

4. FAUNA

One reserve neighbour noted up to 30 kangaroos at the one time in the area during summer. A pair of brush wallabies has also been occasionally sighted.

B. PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT

2. PROTECTION FROM FIRE

A number of submissions supported the fire protection measures outlined in the DMP.

In several other submissions the construction of an internal firebreak was advocated. There are two disadvantages associated with, or resulting from, such an action. First, as the Reserve is very small (118 ha) any further firebreak construction would significantly reduce the vegetated area. Second, an internal firebreak would encourage trail-bike and horse-riders to further explore the centre of the Reserve.

One submission referred to the need to conduct a mild burn on part of the Reserve so that colonisation from unburnt patches can be assured and the likelihood of a severe burn-out by a wildfire less likely. First, the use of mild burns on St Ronans is inappropriate as the Reserve has an important reference function, as it has not been burnt for several decades at least. Second, the close proximity of most of the Reserve to agricultural land makes it highly susceptible to weed invasion.

The above rationale has been included in the final plan.

4. PUBLIC USE

A submission from a Reserve neighbour highlighted a problem experienced on many wheatbelt nature reserves, that of kangaroo shooters using reserve firebreaks for access. This problem will only be alleviated by an increased enforcement presence.

This strategy has been detailed in the final plan.

PART 4. WAMBYN NATURE RESERVE (NO. 21981)

Three submissions were made regarding Wambyn Nature Reserve. These referred to fire protection, rehabilitation and public use.

PART B. PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT

2. PROTECTION FROM FIRE

Concern was expressed regarding fire control, with one submission suggesting that cool burns should be used as a management tool.

There are two further reasons in addition to those given in the DMP why fires, including cool burns, should be excluded from Wambyn over the currency of this plan. First, removal of the understorey by burning would further increase access to this Reserve. Second, areas which will be rehabilitated (mainly by re-planting) will be particularly susceptible to fire.

These additional reasons have been included in the final plan.

3. REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Main Roads Department (Northam Division) formally agreed to meet the costs of weed control and re-planting on the central stockpile area on Wambyn. This agreement was made on the understanding that such actions would conclude responsibility by the Main Roads Department for rehabilitation on Wambyn and that use of the Reserve by the Main Roads Department would cease.

4. PUBLIC USE

The York Shire Council gave its support to the continued public use of Wambyn, as advocated in the DMP.

PART 5. MOKINE NATURE RESERVE (NO. 31211)

The primary concern in submissions regarding Mokine Nature Reserve was fire protection. Ongoing research was an area of secondary concern.

B. PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT

2. PROTECTION FROM FIRE

The W.A. Wildflower Society stressed the importance of preventing further fires from occurring on this Reserve. Others, however, expressed concern regarding total fire exclusion (as advocated in the DMP). One submission recommended prescribed burning (60% cover) the section of the Reserve north of the internal powerline. This area would then act as a buffer to fires originating from the north and provide a source of colonisation in the event of an all-consuming wildfire.

The last wildfire which escaped into the Reserve began as a clearing burn on private property to the north. As all the surrounding land is now cleared it is unlikely that further wildfires in the area will originate from this source. In addition, much of the Reserve carries low fuel levels, particularly the extensive areas of wandoo woodland (with its sparse understorey) which occupies 30-40% of the Reserve area.

Most importantly, three plant species - *Acacia aphylla* (gazetted rare), a previously unrecorded variant of *Oxylobium parviflorum*, and a broad-leaved form of *Gastrolobium calycinum* - occur on the Reserve. It is vitally important that fire is excluded from the Reserve until more is known about the ecology, and particularly the response to fire, of these species.

The above rationale has been included in the final plan.

The Shire of Northam recommended establishing a reserves' advisory committee as well as reviewing fire management for the area in five to six years time. Given the importance of excluding fire from the Reserve until more is known about the ecology of the above three species and the proviso within the plan for any individual or group to contact the CALM

Mundaring District Office regarding fire protection concerns, the above recommendations are suitably covered in the DMP.

5. RESEARCH

One submission suggested involving the W.A. Naturalists' Club in ongoing monitoring of the fauna on Mokine Nature Reserve. This suggestion for involvement was based on the recognition that CALM did not have adequate resources to carry out the necessary field work.

PART 6. THROSSELL NATURE RESERVE (NO. 7220)

A number of details regarding the resources and history of this Nature Reserve were contributed by a reserve neighbour, Angus Cooke. Those details which have been included in the final plan are outlined below.

A. THE RESERVE

2. HISTORY

The block immediately to the north of the Reserve (Avon Location 27370), and originally part of the Reserve, was purchased and cleared in approximately 1955. Stock were grazed on the Reserve until 1962-63.

The Reserve has changed very little over the last 40 years, the only exception being a decrease in the number of trees due to timber removal for firewood.

3. SOILS AND VEGETATION

Two spider orchids, the white spider orchid (*Caladenia patersonii*) and the red spider orchid (*C. filamentosa*), have been noted on the Reserve.

4. FAUNA

Dunnarts have been noted on the Reserve, but they have not been seen for a number of years.

Six bird species have been recorded breeding on the Reserve - the Australian Shelduck, Maned Duck, Butcherbird (grey or pied), Galah, Port Lincoln Ringneck and Long-billed Corella. Other birds recorded include the Stubble Quail, Budgerigar, Elegant Parrot, White-winged Triller, Golden Whistler, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike and the Black-faced Woodswallow.

5. PAST USES, MANAGEMENT AND FIRE HISTORY

No fire has occurred on the Reserve in at least the last 40 years.

Stock grazing has not destroyed the understorey, as stated in the DMP, as the understorey has been non-existent for many years. The reasons for this lack of understorey are uncertain.

Rubbish has been dumped on the Reserve on occasions. Intervention by Reserve neighbours has helped to minimise this misuse.

B. PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT

Comments were made regarding fire protection and public use.

2. PROTECTION FROM FIRE

The one submission received supported the fire protection strategies given in the plan.

4. PUBLIC USE

This submission emphasised the sentiments expressed in many other submissions; that people should be allowed to use nature reserves and that people could not and should not be 'shut-out'. It was equally as strongly emphasised, however, that any use must be compatible with nature conservation.

PART 7. MEENAAR NATURE RESERVE (NO. A29977)

Two submissions were received regarding this Reserve. The major area of concern was gravel pit rehabilitation.

PART B. PLAN FOR MANAGEMENT

3. REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Main Roads Department (Northam Division) emphasised that they had not removed material or dumped spoil on the Reserve. In the other submission, concern was expressed regarding rehabilitation of the old gravel pit to the west of Meenaar South Road. The walls of this pit have been used for many years as a nesting site by Red-backed Kingfishers and White-backed Swallows. These birds nest and roost in tunnels in the banks. The Red-backed Kingfisher breeding at Meenaar is particularly important as this nesting site is at the extreme south-west of this species' known range (J. Masters, pers. comm., 1986). Both species appear to favour traditional nesting sites.

The rehabilitation strategies given in the DMP have been amended to protect the known nesting sites of these species.

PART 8. GENERAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Comments were received regarding fire protection, protection from pests, mining and research.

1. PROTECTION FROM FIRE

Two submissions noted that the definition of Notifiable Authority was not correct as the responsibility for notification of burning on lands adjacent to CALM reserves lies with the permit holder, not the Shire as stated in the DMP. The DMP has been amended accordingly.

The submission from the Bush Fires Board stated that the Board is planning to develop District Fire Protection Plans for the Shires of York and Northam. Reserves and their protection have been included in the planning considerations.

2. PROTECTION FROM PESTS: ANIMAL AND WEED CONTROL

Several submissions mentioned that rabbits were occasionally a problem on parts of their properties adjacent to Clackline Nature Reserve. Another submission noted that rabbit numbers had declined over the last 10 years.

Another submission expressed concern regarding the number of foxes on and around St Ronans Nature Reserve. The CALM Mundaring District Office has been alerted to these concerns.

6. MINING

The need to detail conditions regarding exploration and mining was emphasised in several submissions. Strategies detailing these conditions have been included in the final plan.

Exploration and mining are currently under review by the Bailey Committee on Exploration and Mining in National Parks and Nature Reserves.

7. PUBLIC USE

The W.A. Wildflower Society expressed the hope that an active relationship could be developed between the CALM Mundaring District Office and the York Wildflower Society. The provision for such developments was included in the DMP.

APPENDICES

Brief comments were made regarding Appendices 1, 2 and 3.

APPENDIX 1. FLORA OF THE NATURE RESERVES IN THE SHIRES OF YORK AND NORTHAM

Numerous additions to the final plan have been made by Greg Keighery and Jeni Alford (W.A. Wildlife Research Centre, CALM).

APPENDIX 2. FAUNA (EXCLUDING BIRDS) RECORDED ON NATURE RESERVES IN THE SHIRES OF YORK AND NORTHAM

Minor spelling and typographic errors were noted in the DMP by the W.A. Museum. These have been corrected in the final plan.

APPENDIX 3. BIRDS RECORDED ON NATURE RESERVES IN THE SHIRES OF YORK AND NORTHAM

Jim Masters of the Toodyay Naturalists' Club added several new records to this Appendix.

OTHER COMMENTS

1. CONSERVATION VALUES OF THE YORK-NORTHAM NATURE RESERVES

One submission expressed doubt regarding the value of these reserves. This group of reserves contain a great diversity of plants and animals, as well as being generally representative of the State's flora and fauna. In addition, several of the reserves contain gazetted rare flora.

Part of this doubt was attributed to the lack of water on these reserves. Two of the six, however, contain streams. Although these may not flow in summer, they do provide a moist habitat for animals throughout the year.

The general lack of water on nature reserves is a product of history. Before conservation was considered an important alternative land use by the general community, most of the lower parts of the landscape had been cleared for agriculture. The only uncleared areas remaining were higher in the landscape, on the sides of the valleys and ridge tops. Thus, many of the State's parks and reserves, including most of the York-Northam nature reserves, occupy this upper part of the landscape.

The majority of Australian plants and animals are adapted to arid conditions. In south-western Australia, the Mediterranean climate with its hot, dry summers supports plants and animals which are particularly well adapted to survive with little or no water.

In one submission reference was made to the similarity between the flora and fauna on St Ronans, Wambyn and Mokine, and the large block of State forest to the west. Although some superficial similarities may exist, very different management practices, primarily the frequency of burning, are used in the two areas. This would be expected to produce very different understoreys, floristically as well as structurally, providing very different habitats for fauna.

2. PROPOSED RESERVES

Two submissions suggested the addition of further reserves to the York-Northam system of nature reserves. The Shire of Northam recommended the addition of Reserve No. 34772 (gravel, Shire of Northam, 29.6 ha) which lies immediately to the north of Meenaar Nature Reserve. The other submission emphasised the value of Reserve No. 3203 (sand and gravel quarry, Shire of Northam, 31 ha) on Jennapullin Road in the eastern part of the Shire of Northam.

In response to these submissions officers from CALM are currently evaluating these areas to determine their value for nature conservation.

3. RESERVE CLASSIFICATION

One submission expressed concern regarding the status of nature reserves in the Shires of York and Northam, emphasising that no change in status, that is from Class C to Class A, should occur. No changes in status were recommended in the DMP.

4. VALUE OF MANAGEMENT PLANS

One submission questioned the value of management plans.

One of the main values of management plans is that they clearly outline the actions necessary to protect conservation values (for example, which firebreaks require maintenance and where signs are needed). A written record in the form of a management plan also provides a sound basis for the allocation of resources, particularly money. This allows the Government to plan ahead.

Management plans are also an important means of informing people about the conservation values of these areas and how they can best be managed to protect these values.

5. ADEQUATE FUNDING

Several submissions emphasised the importance of providing adequate funds to ensure the effective implementation of management plans. Such a provision is fundamental to a successful planning process.

6. INCONSISTENCIES IN DATA

One submission referred to variations between the York and Northam nature reserves 'on-the-ground' and the descriptions given in the management plans.

Although the variations were not given, it is likely that some variation has occurred as a result of continuing misuse of the areas. A recent inspection of these reserves confirmed that misuse was increasing. This included continued gravel and timber removal, rubbish dumping, trail-bike riding and construction of 'humpies'. Such misuse continues to significantly affect the reserve environment and will only be minimised by planned and active management.

7. TREE PLANTING

Greening Australia reviewed the management plan with the intention of identifying opportunities for their organisation to become involved in encouraging community groups to participate in some of the rehabilitation programs suggested. They identified tree planting as their main opportunity. The more support and encouragement received from organisations such as Greening Australia, the more efficiently and effectively areas, such as the York-Northam nature reserves, can be managed.

8. WILDFLOWER PICKING

One submission indicated that seeds and wildflowers were being collected from nature reserves by a local resident. The Wildlife Conservation Regulations expressly forbid anyone from taking or collecting flora from nature reserves. This prohibition applies irrespective of whether the person holds a licence to take flora.

In addition, all licences (commercial purposes licence) contain an endorsement cautioning licence-holders against picking in nature reserves, national parks, Shire reserves, road reserves, State forests, timber reserves, and water catchment areas unless they have firstly obtained written authorisation from the controlling authority. Thus, licences freely permit the taking of flora only from vacant Crown land.

It would be extremely unlikely that an individual or organisation would be given approval to collect flora from nature reserves, as these areas are set aside specifically for the protection and conservation of flora and fauna.