

HOW TO ESTABLISH REGIONAL PLANNING GROUPS - GUIDE

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Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing

Contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

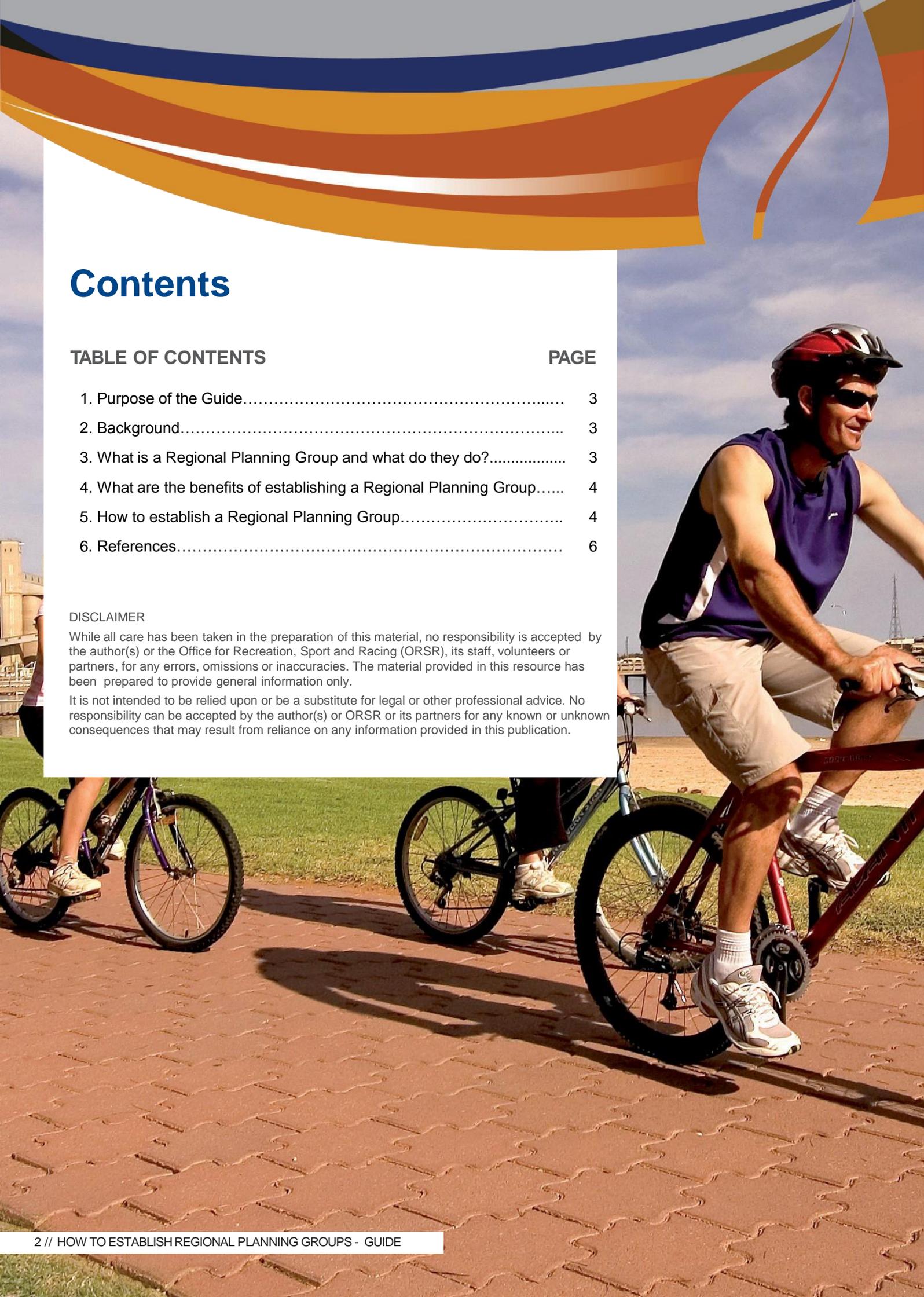
PAGE

1. Purpose of the Guide.....	3
2. Background.....	3
3. What is a Regional Planning Group and what do they do?.....	3
4. What are the benefits of establishing a Regional Planning Group.....	4
5. How to establish a Regional Planning Group.....	4
6. References.....	6

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1. PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Designed to supplement the South Australian Regional Level Recreation and Sport Facilities Planning Guidelines this resource has been developed to assist local government officers and others responsible for the planning, development and operation of recreation and sport facilities understand how to establish a Regional Planning Group.

2. BACKGROUND

Sport and recreation provides a stage to connect communities, contributes to economic growth, tourism, and improve participant's health and well-being. As an integral part of the Australian way of life it is important that South Australia continues to provide quality recreation and sport facilities that encourage the community to participate.

Local Government is the major provider of recreation and sport facilities in South Australia. For the most part councils plan for and manage facilities on an individual council-by-council basis.

However, councils are facing a number of significant challenges including:

- **FACILITIES ARE AGEING** - and in need of major redevelopment or in some cases replacement to remain fit-for-purpose, affordable and sustainable to operate and maintain.
- **INEFFICIENT PROVISION AND DUPLICATION** – traditionally councils and communities have focused on providing facilities within their respective council areas which has been a contributing factor to the duplication of facilities and services within regions.
- **INCREASING EXPECTATIONS** - increasing pressure from sporting bodies and the general community on councils to provide higher-standard facilities.
- **PRESSURE ON OPEN SPACE** - increasing pressure on open space due to an ever increasing demand for housing supply close to population and activity centres.

- **INCREASING BUDGET PRESSURES** – It's becoming increasingly more competitive and difficult to raise the capital required to deliver new infrastructure.

Given challenges such as these to create infrastructure of the future we need to look beyond municipal boundaries and find better ways to collaboratively plan, deliver and manage a strategic spread of recreation and sport facilities. One method of achieving is through the establishment of Regional Planning Groups.

3. WHAT IS A REGIONAL PLANNING GROUP AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

A Regional Planning Group (RPG) is a committee or a working group of partner councils established from within a designated geographical region and/or for a common purpose to address a specific issue or need.

From a recreation and sport perspective RPG's can be established for a range of reasons, including:

- Collaborating on the development and delivery of Regional Recreation and Sport Plans.
- Resource sharing on the procurement of goods to achieve cost effective outcomes for the councils and their respective communities (e.g. joint purchase of floodlights, synthetic surfaces and/or solar panels for sporting facilities).
- Collaborating on the planning, delivery and management of regional level recreation and sport facilities such as trails.



4. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL PLANNING GROUP?

There are a number of benefits to councils in establishing a RPG, including:

- Using a regional approach to facility planning and provision provides councils with a collective and standardised methodology to determine local and regional priorities to service the sport and recreation needs of their communities.
- Provides a mechanism for councils and other funding partners such as Federal and State Governments to strategically target resources into priority projects that generate the greatest local and regional impact.
- Opportunity for resource sharing with the objective of achieving cost effective outcomes for the councils and their respective communities (e.g. floodlighting, court upgrades).
- Sharing of ideas and resources that seek to reduce (or not further increase) costs of providing, maintaining and managing sporting and recreation infrastructure.

5. HOW TO ESTABLISH A REGIONAL PLANNING GROUP

RPG's do not have to be on-going, they can be established as a 'sunset' committee tasked with a specific outcome (e.g. group council purchasing of equipment and infrastructure). What is essential is that RPG's are established with a defined and agreed strategic intent and governance structure. One way of facilitating this is by following these 3 steps:

STEP 1 - Committing to Action



STEP 2 - Determining the Terms of Reference for the Group



STEP 3 - Determining the Project Scope & Action Plan

5. HOW TO ESTABLISH A REGIONAL PLANNING GROUP *cont.*

STEP 1 – COMMITTING TO ACTION

It is essential from the onset that RPG's are established with a clearly defined purpose and that the RPG has the support, particularly at the elected member and senior leadership levels, to do the job it's tasked to do.

Once a commitment has been made it is important to formalise the RPG governance structure through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or similar document this will help give clarity to the purpose, roles and responsibilities of the group.

Key things to consider:

- ✓ **Hold an annual or biennial regional recreation and sport forum with councils (officers and elected members) in your Region to explore and identify opportunities for collaboration (e.g. develop a Regional Recreation and Sport Plan).**
- ✓ **Identify a champion from within your council (e.g. an elected member and/or a senior executive) who can advocate at the highest level for the establishment of a RPG.**
- ✓ **Remember - before progressing with the a RPG ensure that there is a clearly defined purpose for the group which has been signed off on by senior management.**

STEP 2 – DETERMINING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE GROUP

The RPG should have a Terms of Reference document (ToR) that, at a minimum, describes the purpose, scope and authority of the group. Typically the ToR is a written road map for the group and contains clear and specific information on how the group is organised, what the group is trying to achieve, who the members are, and when and where they meet. A clear and understandable ToR is the first step to a successful RPG.

Key things to consider:

- ✓ **Consider keeping your RPG small, preferably between 5 and 8 participants - In a larger group it can be more difficult to reach a consensus and it requires more human resources.**
- ✓ **Take time to determine who should be on the RPG - It is important that the group has a sufficient blend of expertise, skills and diversity necessary to effectively carry out its role.**
- ✓ **Consider external appointments onto the RPG to provide expert advice about matters being considered by the group. For example, representatives from relevant State agencies (e.g. Office for Recreation, Sport and Racing) and/or State Recreation or Sport Peak Bodies.**
- ✓ **The RPG's activities should be reviewed against the ToR periodically to ensure compliance.**
- ✓ **It is important to determine a communication strategy to keep the 'key decision makers' within each council informed of the group's progress (e.g. regular project bulletins).**

STEP 3 – DETERMINING THE PROJECT SCOPE & ACTION PLAN

A critical first task of the RPG is to develop the project plan. At its core a project plan defines the approach and process the group will use to manage and evaluate the project. The action plan breaks down the project plan further and identifies which group members will be responsible for individual tasks and when they are to be completed.

Key things to consider:

- ✓ **Before you start the process of developing the plan ensure you clearly understand what the project is aiming to achieve (what is the final product that stakeholders are after). Don't be afraid to set time aside to meet with executives from constituent councils to clarify the project purpose and as importantly their expectations. Don't forget to document the key discussion points.**
- ✓ **Hold a "kickoff" meeting/s of the RPG to discuss the project and develop the project and action plan. It's a great way for the group to clearly understand the project and ensure that everyone's ideas are taken into account.**

7. REFERENCES

South Australian Regional Level Recreation and Sport Facilities Planning Guidelines, Local Government Recreation and Sport Forum, Local Government Association SA, Office for Recreation and Sport, South Australia.

Decision-Making Guide, Sport and Recreation Facilities, Department of Sport and Recreation, Western Australia.

Embedding Community Priorities into Council Planning Guidelines for the Integration of Community and Council Planning, Local Government, Professionals Corporate Planner's Network, Victoria.



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