

21 years of seed conservation in the WA Department of Environment and Conservation: achievements and future directions

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In 1991 the Australian National Botanic Gardens hosted a conference "Protective Custody? Ex Situ Plant Conservation in Australasia". At this conference a proposal to establish a national coordinating group for plant conservation (Australian Network for Plant Conservation) was accepted. Here also the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management acknowledged the importance of germplasm conservation and the need to secure funding for the establishment of a well resourced ex situ germplasm conservation facility. The following year Western Australia secured Commonwealth government funding and the Threatened Flora Seed Centre was established. From the outset, the aim of the Centre was to collect and conserve, to international standards, the genetic diversity of the State's rare, threatened and poorly known flora. The initial focus was on species threatened by *Phytophthora* dieback disease and aerial canker. By 1998 collections from the Seed Centre were being actively used in the recovery of threatened species through translocation. Under the international Millennium Seed Bank Project (2001-2010) the focus shifted to a broadening of the number of species targeted for conservation, in a bid to capture species new to seed banking. Here we relate the achievements of the Centre over the past two decades and discuss how linking ex situ conservation with conserving and re-establishing populations in their natural habitats has been a key to its success. Finally we discuss the many challenges for the future, including how collections, to be most effective for conservation, must meet the needs of end users.



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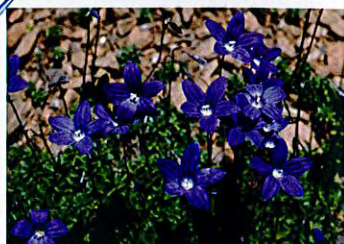
**Plant Conservation in Australia:
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