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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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Department of Parks and Wildlife

The Department of Parks and Wildlife, created on 1 July 2013, brings a new focus to conservation and promoting our parks. The state's most precious natural assets have been entrusted to the care of the department.

Our conservation focus is to ensure those lands, waters and species are actively managed and protected, particularly from pest animals, weeds, disease and damaging bushfires.

Location

The Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre is located at DPaW's Kensington site at 17 Dick Perry Avenue.

Reception for the Kensington site is located within the centre. Visit reception to find brochures on departmental programs and initiatives, and information about national and marine parks and other protected areas. National park passes can also be purchased at reception.

Facilities

In addition to housing DPaW's integrated botanical research programs, the centre provides multi-use facilities for the department including meeting rooms, a science library, seminar space, a central conference and display area, and a café.

WA Naturally publications

A wide range of WA Naturally publications are available to purchase from reception, including the department's popular Bush Books and Discovering Book series, subscriptions to *LANDSCOPE* magazine, *LANDSCOPE* calendars and Cape to Cape and Munda Biddi maps and guides. Alternatively, visit DPaW's online shop at shop.dpaw.wa.gov.au.

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Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre



PAM03752



Department of
Parks and Wildlife



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Parks and Wildlife



The Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre is a state-of-the-art facility housing the Department of Parks and Wildlife's (DPaW's) Western Australian Herbarium, laboratories, Threatened Flora Seed Centre and botanical component of the Biological Survey Program.

It is the largest integrated botanical research facility in Western Australia and plays a vital role in supporting developmental decision making by the Western Australian Government, and helps the community better understand and appreciate WA's unique plants.

The centre also provides multi-user facilities including meeting rooms and conference spaces, a science library, Kensington site reception and a café.

The centre was named in honour of the late Keiran McNamara, Director General of the former Department of Conservation and Land Management (2001-06) and Department of Environment and Conservation (2006-13). The building was officially opened on 5 November 2013 by the Premier of Western Australia Hon Colin Barnett MLA and the Minister for Environment Hon Albert Jacob MLA.

"Science enables our community to improve the way we run businesses, the way we protect the environment and the way we educate our children. The naming of this centre is a fitting tribute to an eminent public servant who was at the forefront of our state's scientific and conservation achievements."

Hon Colin Barnett MLA
Premier of Western Australia

"The work carried out in this centre will help ensure Western Australia's natural values are protected and conserved, thereby enriching the community's interactions with our outstanding network of parks and other reserves."

Hon Albert Jacob MLA
Minister for Environment



Western Australian Herbarium

The Western Australian Herbarium houses the state's collection of scientific research specimens of plants, algae and fungi.

The earliest specimens date from the Vancouver expedition in 1791, where botanists collected specimens at Albany on the way to search for the Northwest Passage, and the Flinders circumnavigation of Australia in 1801-02.

By 2013 the collection had grown to almost 750,000 specimens, with on average 10,000 new specimens added each year from throughout the state.

Staff at the Herbarium:

- document, describe, name and help understand the diversity of WA's flora
- maintain the collection and keep it safe and well maintained
- help the community, industry and researchers identify plants, algae and fungi, and
- contribute to taxonomic research undertaken by scientific specialists in Australia and around the world.

Research conducted on the Herbarium collection results in the discovery and naming of up to 100 new species of WA plants per year. This is amongst the highest rate of species discovery anywhere in the world

An important collection in the Herbarium is the Western Australian Plant Reference Collection, a public-access collection of typical specimens of all known plant species in the state. The reference collection is used widely by consultants, researchers, students, teachers and the public to identify wildflowers and other plants.

Florabase

The Herbarium also maintains *FloraBase* (florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au), an easy-to-use and popular website that provides information on all known species in the state, with distribution maps, photographs, short descriptions, identification keys and other information.

Cochlospermum macnamarae, a Pilbara shrub named in honour of the late Keiran McNamara.



Sid James Genetics Laboratory

The new molecular genetics and plant ecology laboratories provide state-of-the-art facilities for a range of key research programs investigating the conservation and management of WA's flora. The molecular genetics laboratory is named after Professor Sid James, the founder of conservation genetics research in WA.

Major areas of plant conservation research undertaken through the laboratory include:

- ecology, reproductive biology and molecular genetics of threatened plant species, and to assess their conservation status and develop strategies for their recovery
- experimental reintroduction of threatened plant species to establish new viable populations
- developing ecological restoration strategies that consider patterns of genetic diversity, evolutionary potential, connectivity of remnants and climate change impacts
- using molecular genetic and DNA barcoding techniques to assist in the identification and delimitation of new plant species
- phylogeographic analysis to understand the influence of evolutionary history on the current distribution of species, and identify refugia that may be critical for conservation under climate change, and
- using new genomics techniques that can revolutionise our ability to understand the basis of plant diversity.

Threatened Flora Seed Centre

The Threatened Flora Seed Centre was established in 1992 as WA's principal long-term seed bank for conservation significant native plant species.

The Threatened Flora Seed Centre is involved in national and international seed conservation projects that contribute towards meeting Australia's obligations to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation.

In addition to banking seeds and actively using these seeds for reintroduction of threatened plants into the wild, staff at the seed centre also undertake research on:

- germination biology of conservation-listed flora
- longevity of seeds under seed bank storage conditions
- impact of climate change on seeds to germinate, and
- field ecology that supports species survival in the wild.

In 2013, the Threatened Flora Seed Centre housed nearly 4,000 seed collections, including samples from more than 75 per cent of WA's threatened species, representing the diversity of species across their geographic range. All seeds are sourced from the wild and fully documented.



Sculpture installations

The artwork in the Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre by Western Australian artist Andrew Stumpf reflects the knowledge and work carried out in the building. The pieces are diverse and based on a section of a stylised phylogeny (a chart that maps the relationships of plants) inlaid in the marri floor. A mist sculpture in the courtyard broadens the 'biodiversity' of the individual pieces.

The works are inspired from the Greek God Proteus, after whom the iconic Australian flowering plant family Proteaceae is named. Proteus had the power of knowledge but would assume different forms to remain elusive.

The objects encourage investigation and a feeling of discovery as the interrelationships between them are revealed. For the scientists and others who use the building, the artwork places Proteus in residence—a presence which reminds us the known is within the unknown and that discovery is everywhere and expected.



Herbarium volunteers

The Herbarium has been supported for nearly 25 years by a large group of enthusiastic volunteers who contribute a wide range of skills and expertise. Volunteers support staff and the Herbarium by carefully mounting specimens, assisting with day-to-day curation of the collection, and helping manage the Herbarium's large collection of plant photographs.

Research Associates at the Herbarium also provide more specialist skills including taxonomic research. In addition, the Herbarium has strong links with community groups such as the Wildflower Society of WA.



Landscaping

The landscaping around the building uses predominantly native plants in thematic plantings.

The theme of the west (entrance) side of the building is the Pilbara. It features *Eucalyptus vitrix*, a smooth-barked coolibah, with *Triodia* (spinifex) understorey. The theme of the east side of the building is Goldfields woodlands—*Eucalyptus forrestiana* with *Eremophila*, bluebush and saltbushes in the understorey.

Native planter boxes around the building showcase the state's unique and remarkable flora, with more than 200 WA plants on display.

