

Attractions and facilities

PREMIER OPENS \$4 MILLION VISITORS' CENTRE IN KARIJINI NATIONAL PARK

Traditional owners joined Premier Geoff Gallop to open a \$4 million visitors' centre at Karijini National Park in June.

Representatives of the Banyjima, Kurrama and Yinhawangka people gave a traditional welcome to Dr Gallop and other visitors to the State's second biggest national park.

Dr Gallop and Wobby Parker, a Banyjima Elder, together officially opened the centre - a joint project of the Karijini Park Council, the Pilbara Development Commission and the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

The Premier said the Karijini Visitors' Centre was an example of involving the State's indigenous people in the management of one of the State's major natural attractions. It also was an example of the new direction his Government would be taking in respect of Aboriginal involvement in management of the State's conservation estate.

'The Government will be further strengthening this direction through amending the Conservation and Land Management Act to

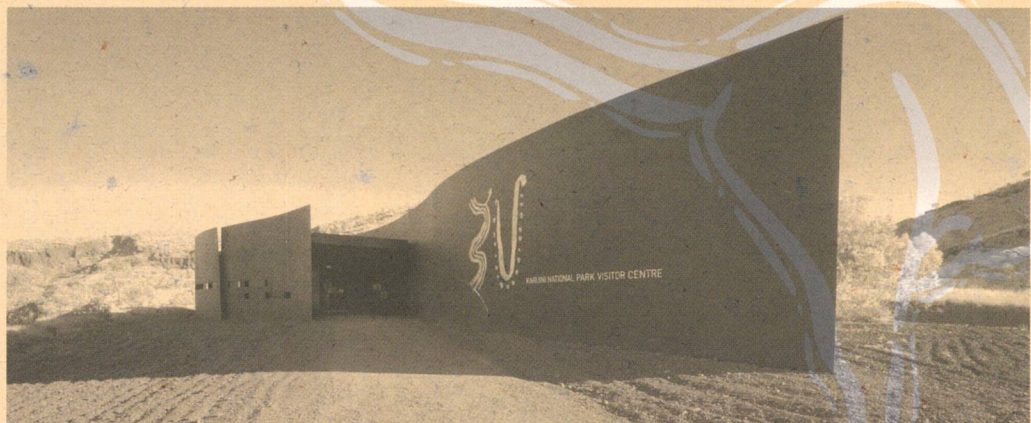
include a specific reference to indigenous people and joint management of conservation lands and waters,' he said.

'We are committed to implementing meaningful joint management strategies for conservation reserves in full consultation with indigenous people. This includes joint decision-making and providing employment and training opportunities.

'Hamersley Range National Park was renamed Karijini National Park in 1991 following the then Labor Government's decision to recognise Aboriginal traditional owners and enable joint management of the park between the Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Karijini Aboriginal Corporation.'

Dr Gallop said the development of a permanent visitors' centre was first mooted in 1992 and set as one of the highest priorities for tourism development in the Pilbara.

'Now that it has become a reality, it will become the focal point for the establishment of Aboriginal cultural tourism enterprises while tourists will have the opportunity to learn about the park's natural, cultural and historical values,' he said.



The Karijini Visitor's Centre. Photograph courtesy of Woodhead International BDH.

'Its official opening today celebrates the joining of cultures to promote the environment in a way which is relevant to people from all walks of life.'

Dr Gallop said the centre was staffed by local Aboriginal people who were being encouraged and assisted to create Aboriginal cultural tours throughout the park.

'Karijini - an Aboriginal name depicting the mountain range that runs through the park - beckons tourists and explorers alike, attracting 55,000 visitors each year,' he said.

'A bitumen road has been built through the park to link the mining town of Tom Price to the Great Northern Highway. This road also improves access for visitors to the park and park visitor numbers are increasing.'

The park is characterised by red rocks, spinifex, gorges, mystical pools, Western Australia's two highest mountain peaks - Mt Meharry and Mt Bruce (Bunurrunha) - and plunging waterfalls softened by lush ferns in a harsh landscape of gorges and arid country.

Dr Gallop said the design of the new centre was distinctive. The building suggested a goanna on the ground seeking shade from the hot sun, while curved walls represented rocky escarpments created by geological forces and weathering over time.

Built from deliberately rusted steel, the building was constructed by Pilbara company Wylie and Skene Pty Ltd.

Designed by Perth architectural firm Woodhead International BDH, it has already been earmarked by industry peers, winning this year's Royal Institute of Architects' BHP Colorbond Steel Award for the innovative use of steel in architecture, and the use of steel products.

Half the centre is devoted to interpretive displays depicting Aboriginal culture and the park's native flora and fauna. A theatre, shop, library, ablutions and offices complete the building.

Funds for construction came from the Pilbara Development Commission (\$3 million), the Department of Conservation and Land Management (\$200,000), the Department of Commerce and Trade's Wittenoom-Karijini Fund (\$200,000) and the Federal Department of Industry, Science and Resources (\$500,000).

Dr Gallop said Karijini National Park was recognised as an outstanding natural attraction of international significance and was listed by the Australian Heritage Commission on the Register of the National Estate.

For further information, please contact Christy Mahoney on (08) 9189 8121.



The interior of the Monkey Mia Visitors' Centre.

VALUE ADDING THE SHARK BAY WORLD HERITAGE AREA

A million-dollar visitor centre with million-dollar views opened at Monkey Mia, Shark Bay in June.

Positioned at the edge of the beach overlooking the dolphins, the new Monkey Mia Visitor Centre will service 100,000 visitors a year as increasing numbers of people make the trek to the World Heritage Listed Shark Bay area.

Environment and Heritage Minister Dr Judy Edwards said the visitor centre was a working example of tourism and the environment living side by side under sensitive management.

The plywood panel and treated pine building was designed by Perth architect James Edwardes, formerly of Cox Howlett and Bailey, and follows a sailing theme with energy efficiency in mind.

Built less than 20 metres from the beach, the centre includes a 200-seat amphitheatre with shadecloth sails, a fish preparation room for the dolphins' strict feeding program and a beach office for Departmental staff.

'This beautiful setting will show off our bottlenose dolphins in a way that lets visitors enjoy nature with minimal ecological impacts,' she said.

'It is managed so that staff can provide information to enrich the Monkey Mia experience and further the visitors understanding and appreciation for Western Australia's wildlife and supporting ecosystems.'

The Department of Conservation and Land Management took over the day-to-day management of the beach and marine park from the Shire of Shark Bay in 1995 and began planning the new visitors centre soon after.

'Numbers of visitors were growing and the old centre had become too small for the increasing numbers of visitors, about 70 per cent of them from Australia and 30 per cent from overseas,' Dr Edwards said.

She said the centre incorporated interactive and static colourful displays to capture the interest and imagination of visitors by providing an insight into the fascinating bottlenose dolphins and the world around them.

It was built with funds from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (\$400,000), the Federal Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (\$400,000), the Monkey Mia Trust Fund

(\$100,000) and the Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business (\$41,000). It will be open seven days a week from 7.30am to 4.30pm.

A DolphinCam, the department's first web camera will feed live coverage of visiting dolphins to the department's Naturebase website (<http://www.naturebase.net>). It operates from 6am to 6pm. The best time for seeing dolphins is between 7.30am and 11am.

AROUND THE REGIONS

SWAN REGION

Yanchep National Park

A landing with a number of small jetties on Loch McNess is nearly complete and will provide visitors with a safe method of entering the park's rowboats. Signs interpreting birdlife, Aboriginal culture, European history and flora will provide visitors with an understanding and appreciation for **Perth's Natural and Cultural Meeting Place — Yanchep National Park**.

Visitor Services Manager, Phil Smeeton said that the park's activities and services are now based on Best Practice and follow principles set out by the Eco-tourism Association of Australia. Staff are trained in professional communication, emphasising quality of delivery and visitor satisfaction.

Management are planning a waste management and recycling program—being green keeps you out of the red—with the philosophy of conservation and the benefit of cutting costs. Ground staff will replace deteriorated metal bins with newly designed recycling stations. Grounds and Facilities Manager Gerald Drummond says the savings from setting up recycling stations can be reinvested into improving the park.

A leading tour operator from the Eastern States has endorsed Yanchep's Aboriginal cultural activities as one of the best Aboriginal tourism products in Australia and will promote the park as the place to go for Aboriginal culture in Western Australia. It will be a part of most of the operators' schedules in 2002.

For more information, contact Phil Smeeton on (08) 9561 1004, or philism@calm.wa.gov.au

PILBARA

Thanks to a touch of winter rain, the waterways of Millstream Chichester National Park and Karijini National Park are flowing and the wildflowers are looking great! Many of the plants that were burnt by fires in previous years have recovered, and glossy new foliage is abundant.

Karijini National Park

The Department would like to remind people who plan to enter the park that flash floods can occur. If it is raining in the area, do not enter the gorges. If it rains while you are in the gorges, please leave as quickly as possible.

Millstream Chichester National Park

The park's concrete fire places have been removed, and fires are no longer permitted within the park.

For further information, contact Judymae Napier on (08) 9143 1488, or email judymaen@calm.wa.gov.au

MID WEST

The recent upgrades and resheeting of deteriorated sections of the gravel road into **Nambung National Park** allow visitors to enjoy a smoother, more comfortable ride from Cervantes to the eerie Pinnacles desert.

Several improvements to visitor facilities in **Kalbarri National Park** are happening. They include the construction of a new lookout at Hawks Head, and a new lookout including steps at the Loop. Staff will also create and upgrade numerous walktrails throughout the park. Visitors and operators are advised that access may be restricted by construction work.

For further information, contact the Department's Geraldton Office on (08) 9921 5955.

SOUTH WEST

Listed by the National Trust, the Department now manages the historic Ellensbrook Homestead. Rich in Aboriginal history, this scenic site is nestled in a peppermint grove 600 metres from the ocean and 15 kilometres from the town of Margaret River. Visitors are encouraged to walk to the magical Meekadarabee falls and visit the homestead for an insight into the life of the first settlers.

Special entrance fees apply, and subject to bookings, group tours can be arranged.

For further information, contact Mark Pittavino on (08) 9752 1677 or email markp@calm.wa.gov.au

LONGER TERM LICENCES

Currently, all non-restricted (T type) tour operators are licensed by the Department for a period of one year, with renewals occurring annually.

As of 1 January 2002, the Department is proposing to introduce longer-term T type licenses as an incentive for tour operators that become accredited with either ecotourism and/or business accreditation programs. This will be one of the first initiatives to celebrate the International Year of Ecotourism IYE (2002).

Tour operators will now be able to apply for an annual, three or five-yearly licence, depending on the number of tourism industry accreditation programs they have achieved. The following will apply:

One year licence = No accreditation = (current situation); Three year licence = accreditation with either an appropriate ecotourism (Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program) or business tourism industry program; Five year licence = accreditation with both ecotourism (NEAP) or business (e.g. National Tourism Accreditation Program) tourism industry programs.

Accreditation is not compulsory. If you do not wish to be accredited you do not need to be, however you will not be able to apply for a longer-term licence. A one-year licence will still apply.

Accreditation Programs that you may wish to obtain further information on are:

Business Accreditation Programs such as National Tourism Accreditation Programs - eg Tourism Council of Western Australia (TCWA) on email: tcawa@iinet.net.au or (08) 9472 0000; or the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) that is run by the Ecotourism Association of Australia, see <http://www.ecotourism.org.au> and follow the NEAP icons or email or phone mail@ecotourism.org.au . (07) 3229 5550.

Get in quick with the accreditation programs. If you are an accredited tour operator (not just registered) with an appropriate tourism accreditation program, before 1 January 2002 you will be automatically eligible for a longer-term licence.

Stay tuned. The department will provide further information to all commercial tour operators regarding the longer-term licences when final approvals are obtained.

QUENCHING THE THIRST FOR INFORMATION

The Nature-based Tourism Research Reference Group was established to co-ordinate and identify projects for students interested in gaining industry experience.

Formed through a partnership between the Department of Conservation and Land Management and all five Western Australia Universities, the group identifies, coordinates, categorises and places appropriate nature-based research projects on the Department's Naturebase website (www.naturebase.net/tourism/nbtrp_splash.html).

The group also encourages tour operators and other groups to forward nature-based tourism or recreation research projects or offer 'in-kind' support such as time and expertise, equipment or transport.

The Western Australian Charter Boat Operator's Association is an example of how this concept can become reality. With the group's assistance, the Association has organised a number of whale watching tour operators to work with a student conducting research on visitor characteristics and motivations for WA's whale watching industry. This research will enable whale watching operators to refine their marketing efforts, and increase their visitors' satisfaction.

If you have a project that you would like to submit, contact Daryl Moncrieff on (08) 9334 0406 or email darylm@calm.wa.gov.au

COMING EVENTS

Sustainable Wildlife Tourism Convention
Wrest Point Convention Centre, Hobart
28 - 30 October 2001
Contact: Daryl Moncrieff (08) 9334 0406 or darylm@calm.wa.gov.au

Ecotourism Association of Australia 9th National Conference
Rottneest Island, Western Australia
23-36 October 2001
Contact: Aus Unique International
(03) 9699 8355 or diana@ausunique.com.au

FACET August Forum - Who's Who in Tourism
Mounts Bay Sailing Club
29 August 2001
Contact: Pauline McMullan (08) 9448 8150 or facetinc@iinet.net.au

YOU WERE WONDERING?

Touring Western Australia is a newsletter produced by the Department of Conservation and Land Management to keep the tourism industry informed about developments that affect the industry. If you have a query regarding any of the Department's tourism policies, activities or developments, we would be pleased to answer these in future editions of the newsletter. Enquiries can be sent to *Touring Western Australia*. Fax: (08) 9334 0253 or email (kieronw@calm.wa.gov.au).