

Yarning Time



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

Issue 20: November 2023



Welcome to the twentieth issue of *Yarning Time* for the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

Yarning is a term used by Aboriginal peoples that means talking and sharing stories.

We are pleased to bring you news and information that showcases the important work that has been undertaken in partnership between DBCA and Traditional Owners. *Yarning Time* informs the community, our partners and staff of developments in Aboriginal engagement cross the State.

Aboriginal engagement involves almost every aspect of the department's work including reserve creation, science, recreation, tourism operations, conservation land management, fire management, wildlife management and heritage protection, much of which is being enabled through formal and informal joint management and partnership initiatives.

Please have a read and enjoy.

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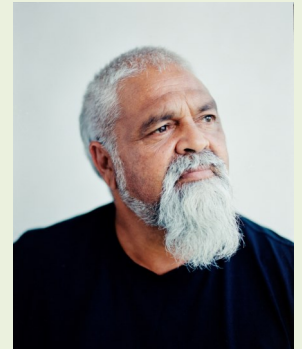
Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions respectfully acknowledges all Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters it manages, and recognises their continuing connection to land, water and community.

Farewell Karim Khan – 28 years of service with DBCA

Earlier this year Karim Khan (aka Khany) left the department after 28 years in the public service, to work with Gnaala Karla Booja Aboriginal Corporation.

Karim’s career began on the back of a fire truck as a forest workman for the Department of Conservation and Land Management in 1995, and he held a number of positions during his tenure. These included conservation employee, south west Aboriginal training officer, coordinator trainee and cadet programs, South West Native Title (SWNT) culture heritage and liaison officer, SWNT senior project officer, coordinator Aboriginal Heritage Unit, finishing his career as a senior project officer south west joint management.



Karim has a long list of achievements developing and delivering the department’s customary activities policy and DBCA’s Aboriginal cultural awareness training. Karim has been instrumental in progressing the SWNT settlement and will continue to work on the settlement in his new role.

Karim’s knowledge, guidance and leadership will be sorely missed, and we extend thanks for his commitment and dedication over the years. Karim has a long list of achievements, making an impressive contribution to the department, and is most notably known for his efforts in:

- ✦ mentoring the Aboriginal trainees in the MATES program
- ✦ developing and delivering the department’s customary activities policy and Aboriginal cultural awareness training.
- ✦ progressing the SWNT settlement
- ✦ providing knowledge, guidance and leadership to fellow colleagues and the Aboriginal community.

During Karim's career, he made an impressive contribution to the management of Western Australia’s natural environment and demonstrated outstanding loyalty and expertise in his field of endeavor. We wish Karim all the best in his new position.



Karim Khan working in fire management. Photo by DBCA.



L-R Rhonda Murphy and Karim Khan presenting their last Aboriginal cultural awareness session. Photo by DBCA.



Karim presenting customary activities training (Photo by DBCA)



Karim being presented the Eugene Winmar Award. Photo by DBCA.

Article by Tina Bowers, Policy and Project Officer Joint Management

Aboriginal Ranger Program regional support officer staff profiles

The Aboriginal Ranger Program (ARP) regional support officers undertake the following as part of their roles:

- support groups to build capacity to deliver Aboriginal ranger programs
- facilitate access to experts and other funding opportunities
- encourage and support business planning and development
- provide information and advice to Aboriginal organisations on implementing ranger operations
- promote cooperation between Aboriginal organisations and the ARP
- help to coordinate communication between ranger groups and stakeholders
- engage in regional networks to identify opportunities for ranger groups.

Megan Boddington – Pilbara region

Hi, my name is Megan Boddington and I am the ARP Support Officer for the Pilbara region. I am so excited to start this role and to begin my new journey with the ARP program.

Some information on myself is that I am a proud Yamatji and Noongar woman who has grown up with a passion for working and caring for Country.

I have 10 years' experience working in natural resource management on Noongar boodja and joint management experience working on Yamatji Baarna, and in those roles I felt the connection and have seen the importance of having Aboriginal peoples caring for their Country, which is what the ARP supports.

All of my past experiences have led me to this new role, and I can't wait to learn more about the Pilbara region, the rich cultural histories and connection and to meet and support the Aboriginal corporations and their rangers to see the outcomes they produce.



Rob Main – Midwest region

My name is Rob Main and I am a Support Officer for the ARP in the Midwest region.

I was attracted to this role as I have seen the difference a ranger program can make to people's lives and I have a diverse skill set that can add to the program.

The groups I work with are awesome, generous with their time, and passionate about their work, and my team and branch are the same.

The work environment is great. The work itself is very meaningful, it's very rewarding to contribute to the success of ranger groups and support the program overall.

Ranger programs are diverse, and the role touches upon every area of government and overlaps with every area DBCA engages in. It's a great learning opportunity. It has been challenging to remain focused during a few long stints of labor-intensive GIS tasks.



Aboriginal Ranger Program Regional Support Officer Staff Profiles

Daniel Balint – South West region

My name is Daniel Balint, and I am a Support Officer for the ARP in the South West region. I previously worked in joint management as Yawuru parks coordinator and wished to continue working with Aboriginal peoples and corporations.

In this role, I enjoy building trust with our partners and meeting people on Country. Recently, I attended a cultural burn with the Undalup rangers in Balingup. The Binnalup rangers from Albany also attended to learn from Undalup so there was a fantastic amount of cultural sharing. This was a great experience and the rangers conducted the burn with a high amount of professionalism whilst looking after Country. So far I have been met with minimal challenges in this role.

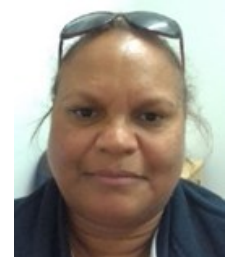


Daniel Balint with the Winjan ranger team.

Tania Lewis – Goldfields region

My name is Tania Lewis and I am currently employed in the position of ARP Regional Support Officer for the Goldfields region.

I am very passionate about Aboriginal community development and can see the positive impacts that the ARP can have on Aboriginal peoples and their communities. I enjoy getting to meet the different ARP groups and the anticipation of achieving the best outcomes for their community, as well as ensuring and understanding cultural protocols when on Country. The most challenging part of my role is delegating time between family and work commitments with the amount of travel required in this job.



Marta Espinheira – Kimberley region

My name is Marta Espinheira and I am the ARP Support Officer for the Kimberley region. Working with Aboriginal rangers is attractive due to their invaluable traditional ecological knowledge, strong cultural connection to the land, local expertise, and commitment to environmental stewardship.

In supporting the rangers I see collaborative partnerships and promotion of long-term sustainability through holistic land management and conservation practices.

Sharing knowledge and being able to contribute to capacity-building is a core belief of mine. I firmly believe that through training, we can empower rangers to develop their skills and capabilities. As someone with a marine background, it was particularly gratifying to have the opportunity to provide training to a specific women rangers group.

Witnessing the enthusiasm and competence of these young women, who were more than capable of captaining vessels, was a true highlight. Breaking gender stereotypes and opening doors to traditionally male dominated roles was a rewarding experience.

Prioritising my support for all groups is crucial to me. Although I would love to be present everywhere and engage face to face with each group more often, learning and listening to their unique stories, I am grateful that I can contribute to the best of my abilities.

The assistance provided by the ARP is made possible through the collective efforts of our supportive and collaborative working group. We share the same passion, positive energy, and innovative ideas and they are directed towards a common goal of empowering ranger groups and strengthening them continuously.



Aboriginal engagement coordinator profiles

As a result of the [South West Native Title Settlement](#) (SWNTS), new Aboriginal engagement coordinator positions were created in the Swan, South West, Warren, South Coast, Midwest and Wheatbelt regions.

The coordinators will liaise between DBCA and the six regional [corporations](#). These are important roles, which will help facilitate the successful implementation of the cooperative and joint management agreements under the SWNTS.

Jen Steadman – Midwest region

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself; my name is Jen Steadman, Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator for the Yued agreement area based in the Turquoise Coast district. I have worked for the department for over four years in various positions. I have enjoyed working and learning with DBCA staff and external stakeholders for the conservation of flora and fauna, fire operations, public engagement, community education and promoting tourist attractions and places of Aboriginal history and cultural importance.

I have always been interested in Indigenous Australian history and this position can provide firsthand knowledge and experiences with Traditional Owners. Going forward with cooperative management and joint management, I look forward to working with Traditional Owners to promote and preserve Indigenous values, cultures and histories.

I envision working and learning together to achieve successful cooperative management outcomes for the conservation, protection and promotion of cultural and environmental values across DBCA-managed land. I see a lot happening in this space over the coming years and I feel privileged to be involved.

I have enjoyed learning and discussing Indigenous histories, cultures, and languages, networking and building respectful, positive relationships with Traditional Owners and groups, DBCA staff and other various stakeholders.

I understand we are all learning in this new space and I have found it challenging on occasion to provide answers and advice to DBCA staff when I am still learning myself.



Melissa Evans – Swan region

My name is Melissa Evans and I am currently acting in the Aboriginal Engagement Officer role for Whadjuk, based in the Swan region office in Crawley. I've worked for DBCA for 10 years in a variety of roles primarily in marine park management, marine operations, policy and planning.

Prior to commencing this role I was involved in the on-ground management of Perth's marine parks, including Marmion Marine Park.

One of the things I am most looking forward to in this role is creating and fostering a working partnership with the Whadjuk people as we embark on joint management of the extended Marmion Marine Park area.

I am very much looking forward to broadening my understanding of cultural heritage on Noongar boodja and learning from the Traditional custodians of the land on which we work. I am also looking forward to getting out on Country, viewing it from a different perspective and connecting with a wide variety of people.



Aboriginal engagement coordinator profiles

Michelle Slater – Wheatbelt region

My name is Michelle Slater and I began working as Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator with DBCA (Wheatbelt) in April this year. I have lived and worked in Noongar Country for many years. Before working here I worked for the South West Aboriginal Land & Sea Council (SWALSC) and established the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation (BAC) under the South West Native Title Settlement.



Today I work with the BAC on the Ballardong Cooperative Management Committee, holding our inaugural meeting in September 2023. We are due to meet again in November and look forward to jointly managing lands in the region.

I enjoy my job and we get to go out on Country engaging with the Noongar peoples in the region, who also look forward to the partnership. We have a big job to do over the next few years and I am excited about the potential opportunities for our peoples.

Jessica Chapman – Warren region

Hello, Jessica Chapman here, the Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator for Warren region associated with the South West Boojarah ILUA area (Karri Karrak Aboriginal Corporation).

I'm a first generation Australian and grew up in Darwin, where my love for Country was fostered. I fell into community engagement, advocacy and land management career paths. I've worked a lot with Indigenous ranger groups and I'm passionate about the benefits of these programs done right.



South West WA is now home and I feel very lucky to be working in this role. It's an exciting and busy time for the Noongar Nation with the recent settlement and the establishment of the corporations taking on these opportunities. I hope to help facilitate positive cooperative and collaborative ways of working throughout the conservation estate with community and pave the way for joint management. I feel it's important to listen well and go steady as we make our way.

Jasmine Gentle – South West region

Kaya my name is Jasmin Gentle, I am a proud Whadjuk Yok with cultural ties to the Ballardong, Yued, Gnaala Karla Booja and Yamatji Clans.

I am the Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator for Gnaala Karla Booja Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) area, based in the South West office of Bunbury and currently covering all of the Wellington district and parts of Blackwood, Perth Hills, Swan Coastal and a small section of the Ballardong area.

I have previously worked in education, health and justice with a great passion and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and development through all areas.

I started with the department in June 2023, so very new to the biodiversity, conservation and attractions industries, however, I have been learning so much as I go along and looking forward to learning more through positive engagement with the community and the extensive knowledge and commitment from my peers.



Yanchep National Park volunteers attend Aboriginal cultural awareness workshop – Swan region

Members of the Yanchep National Park Volunteer Association were invited to attend an Aboriginal cultural awareness training workshop. This was the first time the full day training workshop has been offered to volunteers, and it was a great success.

The workshop was held at the recently renovated Gloucester Lodge and supported by funding provided through DBCA volunteer recognition funding. The workshop was attended by 18 volunteers who all appreciated the opportunity to learn from and engage with presenters Rhonda Murphy and Karim Khan.

"I really appreciated being able to attend the Aboriginal cultural awareness training. It was very informative about Western Australian history and Aboriginal cultures. It highlighted the important role that Aboriginal culture and knowledge has to play today in Western Australian life, and it's heartening to see proof of this in increased use of Aboriginal language and knowledge and personnel within DBCA. The course presenters were fantastic, demonstrating extensive knowledge, and presenting the material with humour and grace."

Volunteer Wendy Nalder

*"Thanks for the opportunity, hearing the Aboriginal histories and stories from Aboriginal people was truly unique. I learned many things, they gave me the opportunity to understand more about their histories and their traditions. I won't go into the bad pages of past histories, which are common to many other ethnic groups in the world. I liked hearing the story of their families, of the importance of dreams **"dreaming is our religion, then the dream became a star, or tree or land, all the things we can see ..."**. I learned useful things such as the use of the Balga/grass tree plant, how to understand from the stars what season we are in. I learned that Aboriginal people live in close contact with nature, they learn from it, they feed on it and they take care of it. Finally I learned to look, to see beyond the image. In the same way, to learn to see Aboriginal people beyond appearances. I think that in the end we have all learned a lot, beyond the stories, we have learned to have respect for nature and for people."*

Volunteer Anna Disenga

Hopefully more of our volunteers will have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of Aboriginal cultures through this educational and engaging workshop. Many thanks to Karim and Rhonda for sharing their stories and knowledge of their cultures.

Article by Ciara McIluff, A/Operations Officer

Shire of Narrogin rallies neighbours to show support for DBCA and Gnaala Karla Booja management of Dryandra National Park – Wheatbelt region

A positive news story was published on 7 July by Daniel Rooney in *The West Australian/Narrogin Observer*, showcasing the Shire of Narrogin's formal support of the joint management partnership between Gnaala Karla Booja and DBCA for the Dryandra Woodland National Park.

If you are subscribed to *The West Australian* newspaper, you can [read the article](#).



DBCA volunteers attending the Aboriginal cultural awareness training workshop. Photo by DBCA.



Dryandra Woodland National Park. Photo by DBCA.

Gnow or Never – Midwest region

Midwest Yamatji rangers, Parks and Wildlife staff, Anditi Pty Ltd, staff from the Northern Agriculture Catchment Council (NACC) Natural Resource Management (NRM) and the National Malleefowl Recovery Team partnered for a training workshop and field trip, for the malleefowl project ‘Gnow or Never’. The project was supported by NACC NRM through funding from the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program.

LiDAR remote imagery technology provided by Anditi was employed at Watheroo National Park, and identified approximately 40 potential malleefowl mounds. After the data was analysed, the subsequent ground truthing field trip conducted by the group discovered that 12 of the points highlighted by LiDAR were indeed malleefowl nests. These exciting new discoveries have now been added to the national malleefowl monitoring database.

Midwest Yamatji Rangers Tom McPhee and Josh Narrier and Kwelena Mambakort Aboriginal Corporation Ranger Kane Shaw were all smiles with their encounter on Country in search of the elusive malleefowl, that are masters of disguise in their natural environment.

Josh Narrier said: “During my recent malleefowl mound monitoring expedition, I had the privilege of studying these remarkable birds indirectly through their elaborate nests. The intricate architecture of the mounds was awe-inspiring, with layers of leaves, twigs and soil forming a sturdy structure. This experience deepened my appreciation for the delicate balance of nature, and reinforced the importance of preserving these unique ecosystems for future generations.”



Josh Narrier. Photo by DBCA.



Kane Shaw and Josh Narrier. Photo by DBCA.



Malleefowl mound. Photo by DBCA.



Tom McPhee. Photo by DBCA.

Article by Christine Drayton, A/Operations Officer

Unique Noongar artwork for *Forest Management Plan 2024–2033*

The Noongar peoples are formally recognised through the *Noongar (Koorah, Nitja, Boordahwan) (Past, Present, Future) Recognition Act 2016* as the Traditional Owners of the South West region of Western Australia, which includes the Forest Management Plan planning area.

In a new approach, the *Forest Management Plan 2024–2033* has an increased focus on valuing and protecting Noongar cultural heritage and facilitates cooperative and joint management of the south west forests.

New partnerships will offer the potential for improved understanding of Noongar traditional knowledge and customary practices and opportunities to integrate traditional knowledge with contemporary science to inform forest management outcomes.



Artist Linda Loo with Noongar Seasons. Acrylic on canvas 70cm x 60cm. © Linda Loo/Copyright Agency, 2022

The *Forest Management Plan 2024–2033* features a unique artwork by Noongar artist Linda Lee Loo (Linlelu Arts) commissioned by the DBCA specifically for use in the plan.

Linda is a Noongar woman born in Corrigin and is connected to the Ballardong and Whadjuk clans of the Noongar Nation. Linda describes her art as contemporary, based on her life experience and Aboriginal icons. She is a self-taught artist and began painting at the age of 37 as part of a journey to self-healing.

The artwork, titled 'Noongar Seasons', is layered with rich meaning and symbolism reflecting Noongar cultures and connection to south west forests. The U shapes at the centre of the painting represent people, our leaders and our community at a gathering or meeting place at the beginning of each new season. The U shape with a line (spear) represent our warriors who protect our land, animals and people. The two U shapes together represent our Elders, and the circles with three lines are ant hills. The blue lines with white represent the water supply to the forest and Noongar Boodja (Country). The green U shape represents hills which many people and animals travel. Yellow represents the sun and the earth for new life and healthy growth. The white and yellow circles, and lines with dots and U shapes, represent people gathering and the campsites (home) travelling through Noongar Boodja.

The numbat (noombat) and Carnaby's (ngoolark) and red-tailed (kaarak) black-cockatoos are our endangered species that are protected. The kangaroo (yonga) and goanna (karda) represent strength, and the fish, the water and kangaroo paw represent Noongar season djilba, when the flowers start to bloom. It's also a season of good luck.

Noongar seasons are the connection to our land and cultures. The seasons indicate what is happening and changing around us and provide time for travel reconnecting to celebrate on Country. With each season we travel and always return home safely.

A full version of the original artwork is included in the plan, and elements of the artwork have been incorporated into the overall design of the plan. The original acrylic on canvas hangs near reception in the Atrium of the DBCA building in Kensington.

Article by Lyn Marshall, A/Policy and Project Officer

Plain English training

Creating opportunities for two-way learning, and delivering on Country conservation, starts with good communication skills.

Recently the Operational Training Unit (OTU) engaged the services of Geoff Pearson from Agenda Communications to seek improvement opportunities to better support Aboriginal trainees within MATES (Work Readiness Report).

Following a fact-finding trip to Broome and Fitzroy Crossing in May 2022, looking into the complex issue of work readiness for MATES trainees, Geoff produced an initial report which recommended a fundamental rethink of the way current training courses are presented. As part of this rethink, he also recommended that the language used in all course resources (PowerPoints, learning manuals and assessment tasks) be reviewed and revised to reflect the use of plain English principles.

This recommendation also aligns with the 2019 joint management review which highlighted the need for the department to offer a training and assessment service that better suited our Aboriginal trainees.

Committing to the journey to improve its service, the OTU accepted the recommendation and asked Geoff to develop and then present a series of two plain English workshops to all of the OTU's staff. The second series of two workshops was completed in May this year. Geoff tailored the workshops to the specific needs of the participants, drawing on examples of language from various courses, including FFCM and Basic Chainsaw. Each series explored 12 key principles, including Think about your reader, Use everyday words, Avoid passive structures, and Change headings into direct questions.

The full day workshops were very demanding as they required all participants to learn quite a few unfamiliar grammar concepts, so that they could then identify these in their own writing and make changes. But, although the climb was undoubtedly steep, the feedback was generally very positive, with comments such as *"Totally enjoyed the course. I have come away with useful knowledge to use within my job"*, *"Clear presentation and great examples"*, *"Engaging and fun"*, *"Very relevant to my work"*, *"I feel ready to go and work what I've learned into training materials"*, *"Great learning and an opportunity to have a closer look at what we are giving our students as learning resources"* and *"Can see this being useful for evaluating a lot of documents, training and recruitment processes across the department"*.

The OTU will continue to work towards improving its service in developing training and assessment which utilises plain English and provides a more practical hands on environment for learning.

Please contact the OTU if you would like further information on actions being worked on, to meet recommendations from the Work Readiness Report and the 2019 Joint Management Review.

Article by Chery Ehlers, Coordinator MATES



Nathan Hunter, Dane Johnson and Tony Turner installing signage at Eighty Mile Beach. Photo by DBCA.



Rangers and trainees from the Kimberley region, Austine Badel, Preston Manado, Nathan Hunter and Jeffery Brown. Photo by DBCA.



Dane Johnson, Paul Bin Busu, Karl Bin Busu, Lionel Marr, Kristen Andrews. Photo by DBCA.



Chery Ehlers, Dane Johnson, Paul Bin Busu, Karl Bin Busu, Lionel Marr & Kristen Andrews. Photo by DBCA.



Dane Johnson, Paul Bin Busu, Karl Bin Busy, Lionel Marr, Kristen Andrews. Photo by DBCA.

Traditional Owner trip to Adele Island – Kimberley region

On 14 May, the Bunuba rangers departed Gnylmarung, after being welcomed by one of the Traditional Owners. The trip to Adele Island took 10 hours onboard the DBCA vessel PV Worndoom. The group consisted of Mike, Cal, Chloe, Jutta and Cary and the Bunuba rangers team of Paul, Kristen, Lionel, Karl and Cooksey.



Bunuba rangers and DBCA staff. Photos by DBCA.

Adele Island is located approximately 100km north-east of Cape Leveque on the Dampier Peninsula and is a significant seabird breeding area in the Kimberley region.

The purpose of the trip was to follow up on some buffel grass and passion vine weed control and mapping, to carry out sign maintenance and opportunistic marine debris removal.

Upon arrival the vessel anchored under the shelter of Adele Island for the night. The next day was long, hot and physically demanding, working with the tide to get all of the weed spraying gear on site. The island is covered in dense grass about one metre tall, with thousands of nesting brown booby birds with chicks.



The buffel grass area was mapped, measured and photographed whilst an unofficial study was conducted into how grass seeds stick to the different material of DBCA uniforms. That evening was a complete glass off with a spectacular sunset.



The team had an early start the next day to finish the weed spraying without disturbing too many nesting chicks. Lionel managed to save a little booby chick from getting attacked and killed by a flock of scavenging sea gulls by building a teepee for it, made of sticks and vegetation. The chick was called Billy and all team members checked on him on a regular basis to make sure he was okay. All the gear was then lugged back onboard Worndoom for the night.



The next day the team travelled a few hours further north-west to map Beagle and Mavis reefs with a drone, before returning to Adele Island.

The morning of 18 May was an early start to catch the high tide to clean and paint the sign on the island, conduct a foreshore cleanup and to check for the presence or absence of passion vine weed. Luckily there was none. The group then anchored for the night at Cape Leveque.



The team departed from Cygnet Bay and returned to Broome while the vessel crew headed to Koolan Island.

It was a great trip, with lots of laughs, great food, good fun and hundreds of push-ups thanks to Chloe's game. The team are all looking forward to returning to Adele Island next year to monitor the success of the weeding program.



Article by Aimee Gomm, Project Officer, Joint Management Bunuba and Gooniyandi

Bunuba Ranger Lionel Marr awarded MATES Trainee Ranger of the Year – Kimberley region

The future of WA’s national parks is in safe hands.

Meet Lionel Marr, a proud Bunuba man, who always felt a calling to return from the city back to his childhood home of Fitzroy Crossing.

He wanted to know more about his Country, his people and his culture and became a trainee ranger with the Parks and Wildlife Service, earning a coxswain skippers ticket.

Lionel’s efforts during the Kimberley floods of January 2023, despite losing his family home, and his commitment to his job, earned him special recognition.

At a recent ceremony in Perth, Lionel was presented with a trainee ranger graduate of the year award by Environment Minister Reece Whitby and DBCA Director General Stuart Smith.

Lionel has featured in a news article by Rhiannon Clarke for the [National Indigenous Times](#). He is also [featured in a video](#) on the Parks and Wildlife’s YouTube channel.

“Winning the award this year, MATES trainee of the year, it was really exciting.”

“A lot of hard work went into most of the training and stuff and a lot of dedication, a lot of time away from family. And it was really good to see that being recognised.”

“Sometimes I just sit by myself and just look back and say to myself I reckon I’ve got the best job.”

“The old people would be proud of us with the work we do. We’re adapting to new ways, but also with one common goal, and that’s looking after our Country.”



Bunuba Ranger Lionel Marr at the DBCA Graduation Ceremony and on Bunuba Country. Photos by Samille Mitchell/DBCA.

Article by AEHU and PICA

Creation of Bunuba National Park – Kimberley region

In August 2023, a new national park was created in the Kimberley that is larger than the size of London, marking the halfway milestone of the Plan for Our Parks initiative.

Bunuba National Park covers more than 220,000 hectares. It extends the existing Danggu Geikie Gorge National Park along the Fitzroy River, north to Dimond Gorge.

The addition means 2.5 million hectares has now been added to Western Australia's conservation estate under the Plan for Our Parks initiative.

Five million hectares of national and marine parks and reserves are being created, increasing the State's conservation estate by 20 per cent. This is on target for completion next year.

The Fitzroy River is a sacred place for Bunuba Traditional Owners and holds spiritual ties to their ancestral histories.

Along with the establishment of Warlibirri National Park last year, this new reserve delivers on a 2017 election commitment to create a national park along the Fitzroy and Margaret rivers.

Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation and the DBCA will jointly manage Bunuba National Park.

During the consultation process, neighbouring pastoralists were given the chance to discuss boundaries, access to water, bores, fencing and opportunities for diversification.

A big congratulations to everyone involved!

You can also [watch the Bunuba event](#), in a video created and made available by the Government of Western Australia.



Bunuba Traditional Owners and DBCA staff celebrating the creation of Bunuba National Park. Photos by Sjana Sandalova/DBCA.

Article by AEHU

Pilbara Conservation in Partnership Forum – Pilbara region

From 29–31 May, the Pilbara Cultural Land Management Program (PCLMP) partnered with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) to deliver a Conservation in Partnerships Forum. The forum was targeted at Pilbara Country and Aboriginal ranger groups and held on Kariyarra Country in Port Hedland.

Participants included rangers, ranger coordinators, land management staff and directors from 10 Native Title groups: these were Nyamal, Yindjibarndi, Murujuga, Yinhawangka, Kariyarra, Wirrawandi, Nyiyaparli, Thalanji, Ngarlawangga, and Puntu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura (PKKP). These groups involved in the forum have varying levels of engagement with DBCA (existing and prospective joint management partners, supported through Aboriginal Ranger Program funding, and others that are not currently engaged or funded).

A number of staff from Aboriginal Engagement, Planning and Lands branch, Fire Management Services branch, Species and Communities Program and the Pilbara region represented the department. DBCA was involved in the forum planning process, having attended two co-design workshops with the PCLMP working group (PCLMP staff and representatives from Aboriginal corporations). The working group agreed on themes that were important, specific and relevant to Pilbara land management groups and their existing or aspirational partnerships with DBCA. Key themes included fire, threatened species, weeds and feral animals, the Aboriginal Ranger Program, joint management and partnerships outside of parks, and training and development.

Many common themes and issues were identified through this forum, and pathways forward (regionally and DBCA wide) were workshoped and discussed to strengthen existing and developing relationships and partnerships. Overall, the forum facilitated a fantastic opportunity for DBCA staff to meet, listen to and converse with Pilbara ranger groups to better understand their histories, capacities, current work, aspirations and challenges. Without taking the time to listen respectfully and understand our partners, DBCA cannot effectively or efficiently engage with or collaborate and work alongside Native Title holders.

The foundations of joint management and successful partnerships are set in the relationships formed by mutual respect and trust, and require regular check-ins and, at times, robust and uncomfortable conversations. In a landscape that is so sparse, with finite funding and resources, the region recognises the strength that genuine partnerships can bring to managing the Pilbara at a landscape scale to better protect flora, fauna, ecosystems, culture and its people.



Luke Bentley (Manager Aboriginal Engagement, Planning and Lands branch) presenting at the PCLMP. Photo by DBCA.



Participants at the PCLMP. Photo by DBCA.

Article by Abbey Ernst, Operations Officer – Joint Management Murujuga National Park

Historic ILUA signed with Yinggarda Traditional Owners – Midwest region

DBCA has added more than a quarter of a million hectares to Western Australia’s conservation estate, with the expansion of Kennedy Range National Park and the newly created Pimbee National Park.

The parks will be jointly managed by the Yinggarda Aboriginal Corporation and DBCA.

Yinggarda Traditional Owners and State Government representatives met on the banks of the Gascoyne River in February for the historic signing of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA).

The ILUA marks the culmination of 18 months of negotiation between Yinggarda Traditional Owners and the State Government and paves the way for both parties to jointly vest and jointly manage conservation estate on Yinggarda Country in the Midwest region.

The historic milestone paves the way for greater employment and training opportunities on Country as well as the potential to expand cultural tourism in the region. [Watch the signing video.](#)



Yinggarda Traditional Owners and DBCA staff attending the ILUA signing on Country. Photo by DBCA.

ILUA benefits

- The agreement results in a 270,000 hectare addition to the conservation estate, with the extension of Kennedy Range National Park and the creation of the new Pimbee National Park east of Carnarvon.
- Under the agreement, Yinggarda Traditional Owners will also jointly vest and manage One Tree Point and Chinamans Pool nature reserves in Carnarvon.
- The State Government has committed to employing four full-time Yinggarda rangers, two of whom have already been employed for 14 months, and provide housing for the employees.
- The State Government will fund an office and depot in Gascoyne Junction, enabling the rangers to work on Country and in close proximity to the conservation estate they will help to manage.
- The ILUA enables Traditional Owners to return to Country to look after the land of their Elders and participate in cultural activities, while also enabling the expansion of cultural tourism.
- It also earmarks funding to help build the capacity of Yinggarda people to help manage the national parks and reserves.

Historic ILUA signed with Yinggarda Traditional Owners – Midwest Region

Welcoming the Agreement

Speaking after the event, Yinggarda Elder Kath Ryan welcomed the historic agreement. *“We’ve always been told what to do and now we have the opportunity to join in a government organisation and they are wanting to listen to us and find out what we want,”* Ms Ryan said. *“It’s very important so we can keep the stories rolling. This is a significant place so it’s about letting the younger generation and others know what is really special to us.”*

Speaking at the event, DBCA Midwest Regional Manager Allison Donovan paid tribute to the work of everyone involved in the creation of the ILUA and the goodwill behind its creation. *“I’ve formed some really good friendships through this process and got to know new people, and I think that what joint management brings is that we actually become friends not just partners,”* she said.

DBCA Senior Project Officer Sara Burke also acknowledged the role the Traditional Owner Negotiation Committee played in the ILUA negotiation process. *“The commitment and enthusiasm of the Yinggarda negotiating team to continue the momentum is evident in their request to hold the first joint management body meeting the very day after the ILUA signing,”* she said.

What’s Next?

The ILUA has now been lodged with the National Native Title Tribunal for registration, and the new and existing jointly managed conservation reserves will be named by agreement with Yinggarda people.

Joint management meetings have already begun, with a management plan for the areas expected within two years.

Planner Veronica Newbury will continue to work with Yinggarda Traditional Owners and staff from the Midwest region to develop the joint management plan for the Yinggarda conservation estate.



Yinggarda historic ILUA signing. Photos by Kendall O'Connor/DBCA.

Article by DBCA staff

Indigenous Ranger Inspires Colleagues – Goldfields Region

DBCA Assistant Operations Officer James Tucker has earned his dream job fighting fires in the Goldfields – despite having been born with a hearing disability.

James has won the admiration of his colleagues for never letting his disability get in the way of his dreams. After taking on a job as a ranger with the department, James set his sights on furthering his career.

He shared his dream with bosses and colleagues, and the Goldfields Parks and Wildlife Service team devised a communication system to make it work.

They use a vibrating radio, hand signals and cards to communicate on the fireground. Operations Officer Chris Curtis works with James in the field.

“Working with James, it’s been amazing,” Chris said.

“It’s very inspiring to see someone with a disability, with the hearing impediment, and him not letting it get him down.”

“The work ethic is amazing. And it’s just really great to work with him and to call him a colleague, but also a friend.”

Joint Management Coordinator Peter Batt is similarly impressed.

“First and foremost we’ve got a good worker, he’s got a good work ethic,” he said.

“I think he shows the way for local Aboriginal people in that there’s a career for local people in the department working out on Country, doing really good work.”

You can see James’s inspirational story [here](#).



James Tucker. Photo by Samille Mitchell/DBCA.



James Tucker (Right) working alongside DBCA staff in fire emergency services. Photo by Samille Mitchell/DBCA.

Article by Samille Mitchell, DBCA Communications Officer

Aboriginal Ranger Program Round 6 Innovation Fund

The Cook Government is investing \$11 million into 12 Aboriginal organisations across Western Australia through Round 6 of the Aboriginal Ranger Program (ARP). Round 6, the Innovation Fund, was created to fund special projects that explore creative approaches to ranger work, and provide learnings that will benefit the ranger sector. This fund was open in early 2023.

The Round 6 grants have been awarded to 12 projects that explore innovative methods and ideas, that will build on the knowledge and skills that Aboriginal ranger groups have developed since the ARP began in 2017. The successful projects under the Innovation Fund include a native seed facility, cultural–contemporary burning, fauna sanctuary planning and wetland management.

The ARP has created more than 650 ranger jobs on Country since 2017. It has also supported the management of nearly 500 significant cultural sites, 2,000 kilometres of tracks and weed management across 2,000 hectares of land.

Following an initial \$20 million investment, a further \$83 million has now been allocated to support the development, expansion and innovation of Aboriginal ranger groups across the State.



Article by Sonya Stewart, Coordinator, Aboriginal Ranger Program

Wiluna Martu Rangers – Matuwa On Country Trip – Goldfields Region

In early August 2023, DBCA staff member Nicole Porteous along with Wiluna Martu Rangers Jennifer Morgan, Verna Morgan, Bernadette Morgan, Debbie Wongawol, Adena Williams, Trish Williams, Tina Williams and invited guest Lorraine Potts visited rock holes in the Matuwa Kurrara Kurrara National Park.



Aim of the on Country Trip

The trip focused on cleaning of rock holes and connecting women on Country.

Results

- Approximately 15 rock holes were cleaned to ensure good water catchment for supply to animals over the coming months.
- Respect was paid in traditional ways to various sites across Matuwa.
- Traditional foods were cooked and eaten together.
- Sharing of knowledge on various weed species and bush tucker.
- Sharing and teaching traditional Wiluna Martu language.
- Building relationships by developing a connection and a sisterhood within the group.
- Respect was shown towards the accommodation and clean up requirements of the Homestead.
- The Wiluna Martu Rangers were always open with sharing past, present and future cultural information.
- Respect was held to a high standard towards women's sacred sites, including no photography.

Nicole's Lessons Learned

- Connection with Elders is important for understanding and planning of trips.
- As my first time as Trip Leader, I learnt further how to engage with Wiluna Martu women and exchange two-way cultural knowledge and understanding in a respectful way.
- I will have a greater insight on how to oversee a field trip from the learnings I gained from this trip.



DBCA staff Nicole Porteous and Wiluna Martu Rangers. Photo by Nicole Porteous/DBCA.

Article by Nicole Porteous, Assistant Operations Officer (Matuwa Kurrara Kurrara National Park)

Kaartdijin Boodja

Fiona Westenhaver (Manager of Information and Records, Office of Information Management) sought an Aboriginal word for the new departmental spatial data catalogue and publishing system. The name would ideally reflect the theme of knowledge of land.

Former Senior Project Officer South West Joint Management Karim Kahn, a Noongar man, worked with Fiona to develop the name 'Kaartdijin Boodja'.

This name is derived from the Noongar language group. It suits the new system particularly well as primary responsibility lies with State Headquarters staff, who are situated on Whadjuk Noongar Country.

'Kaartdijin Boodja', meaning 'Knowledge (of) Country', is pronounced 'Kaart-di-jin Bood-ja'.

Fiona said "We wanted an Aboriginal name to describe the purpose of the System in the department and we also wanted to respectfully acknowledge the importance of the WA Aboriginal people's language and cultures. The gifted name will always remind us that our spatial data future is connected to WA's Traditional Owners. I think it reflects the department's commitment to acknowledging the importance of Aboriginal heritage."



The name "Kaartdijin Boodja" is derived from the Noongar language group, meaning "Knowledge (of) Country".

Kaartdijin Boodja provides a departmental GIS Catalogue and Publishing web application that enables spatial data to be shared and consumed by department personnel and business systems. Creating a single point of truth for metadata, attribute descriptions and symbology/styling for the department's Corporate Data Delivery Program and external spatial web services consumed by the department systems and users.

Number	Name	Spatial Type	Custodian	Status	Last Updated	Assigned To	Action
CE1	CPT_DBCA_DISTRICTS	Spatial File	Geoff Banks, Geospatial Library	Draft	2023-08-17T13:04:00.514183+08:00	Patrick Maslen	View History
CE2	air_temperature_stn	Spatial File	Geoff Banks, Geospatial Library	Locked	2023-08-31T14:46:09.323695+08:00	Patrick Maslen	View History
CE3	auto_weather_stn	Spatial File		Locked	2023-08-30T14:46:51.876993+08:00	Patrick Maslen	View History

Article by Fiona Westenhaver, Manager of Information and Records

Parks and Visitor Services Conference ‘Working Together’



PVS Conference participants.
Photos by DBCA.

Staff from Perth and across the State recently attended (either in person or virtually) the Parks and Visitor Services (PVS) Conference ‘Working Together’. The conference included close to 50 speakers on 37 topics, including Traditional Owners and DBCA Aboriginal staff.

This important event brings many benefits including professional development, networking, collaborating and learning about all things PVS. The themes of the conference included:

- protecting Aboriginal culture and heritage with Aboriginal people
- embracing partnerships to share the load
- planning and managing visitors to ensure great experiences and protect natural and cultural values.

Over three days, staff participated in talks, Q+A sessions, displays and activities, along with a late afternoon mingle and presentation of the **Wayne Schmidt Award**. This award honours the career of Wayne Schmidt, who began with the then Forests Department in 1971 and completed his career with the Department of Environment and Conservation in 2008.

The award is designed to encourage, support and facilitate staff who have strong involvement with Parks and Visitor Services, to enhance and develop their careers and increase their contribution to the department's mission. Furthermore, it assists in developing, rewarding and retaining knowledgeable and competent staff who have shown outstanding achievement and performance.

This year's winner is Sue Hancock (Regional Leader PVS). Sue's remarkable career has seen her play a crucial role, from planning right through to development of major visitor facilities across the Midwest, while also growing and developing other extremely capable Capital Project Officers, like Rory Chapple.

All talks were live streamed for those unable to attend in person. Each session was also recorded and made available for staff to access after the event.

Conference Welcome and Opening



The conference began with a Welcome to Country by Traditional Owner Olman Walley of the Whadjuk Noongar region, who has dedicated his career to sharing and promoting Noongar culture locally and internationally through performance, tourism and education. As a small business owner, educator and performing artist, Olman is passionate about improving the awareness, revival and maintenance of Noongar culture here in the South West.

Director General Stuart Smith followed with an opening address on where DBCA sees the agency in terms of parks; including acknowledging the outstanding quality of existing national parks, the importance of creating new parks to protect the values of the land, the need to maintain DBCA managed parks, the need to ensure people are accessing parks, and acknowledging how much of a transformation the parks are going through with the move into joint management of national parks in partnership with Traditional Owners.



Tracy Churchill (Visitor and Regional Services Coordinator) – PVS Conference Coordinator.
Photos by DBCA.



L-R Wayne Schmidt, Sue Hancock (Regional Leader PVS) – 2023 Award Recipient and Peter Sharp (Executive Director PVS).
Photo by DBCA.



Parks and Visitor Services Conference ‘Working Together’

Throughout the conference, staff participated in an online word cloud activity representative of each of the conference’s three themes. The purpose of this activity was to gain an understanding of participants’ thoughts on the three key themes.

◁ In one word, describe what protecting Aboriginal Culture and heritage with Aboriginal peoples means to you?

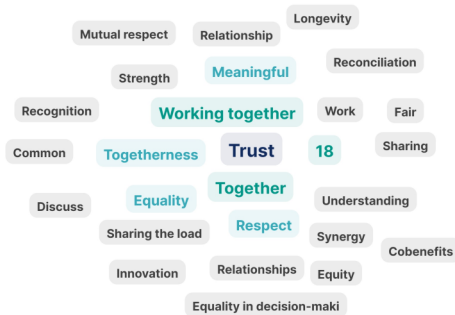
Wordcloud Poll 85 responses 70 participants



slido

◁ What does partnership mean to you?

Wordcloud Poll 50 responses 30 participants



slido

◁ What's the most important aspect of providing a great visitor experience?

Wordcloud Poll 44 responses 32 participants



slido



“I joined DBCA/PVS as a new employee on the same week as the conference and it was very useful to listen in to get a feel for the division and what people do.”
– Conference Participant

Parks and Visitor Services Conference 'Working Together'

Keynote Speakers



Carolyn Turnbull (Managing Director, Tourism WA) is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the agency including the promotion of WA as an incredible tourism destination, working with industry and government to improve access, accommodation and tourism experiences and delivering a world-class events calendar.

Carolyn has more than 20 years of international leadership experience in the tourism, hospitality and aviation industries, and spearheaded the development of the western gateway as Chief Aviation Development Officer at Perth Airport. Carolyn is a graduate of the Cornell School of Hotel Administration Advanced Management Program and holds an Executive MBA in Hospitality Management through Nanyang Business School, Singapore. She is also a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Joe Ross is a Bunuba Elder from Fitzroy Crossing. He is currently the CEO of the not-for-profit Bunuba Cultural Conservation Institute which acts in the interests of the Bunuba community preserving and advancing their traditions, laws, language and customs. They conduct projects that address the wellbeing, economic, social and cultural aspirations of Bunuba people. Joe spearheaded the development of economic capacity of Bunuba people through the preservation of culture and history and community connection.



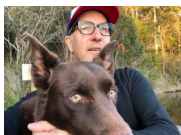
Dr Kelsie Prabawa-Sear (CEO, Nature Play WA) has enjoyed a varied and rich working and academic experience in both Australia and Indonesia prior to joining Nature Play WA, having worked in State government, consulting roles and conservation work with not-for-profit organisations.

Kelsie's focus and passion has always been for nature, kids and communities. Kelsie advocates for nature, as it is her view that we all have a responsibility to ensure that our kids not only get time in nature as little ones, but also get a future with nature. Kelsie is a firm believer that the health of the environment cannot be separated from our own health.



Deborah Taylor (Director, Visitor Services, Rottnest Island) has enjoyed a career in hospitality spanning three decades. Having started in hotels in Perth, she has managed a wide range of properties including corporate, leisure, casino, and remote resorts across Australia.

This is Deborah's second engagement with the Rottnest Island Authority (RIA), previously as the Rooms & Guest Services Manager between 2005-2008, and returning a decade later as the Director Visitor Services. Deborah has a Master of Business Administration from the Curtin Graduate School of Business.



Rod Annear (Assistant Director, PVS) has been in protected area management for more than 35 years. Before commencing his current role, he worked as a National Park Ranger, natural area interpreter and has overseen the planning and implementation of capital works developments in parks across Western Australia (WA). Balancing community expectations for facilities and services in parks with available resources and protecting the nature and culture of parks is an ongoing challenge.

Rod uses his knowledge and passion for technology to attract, inform and direct park visitors. He works with a team of creative designers, interpreters, architects and community partners to deliver high quality, innovative experiences and facilities to Western Australian national parks.

Parks and Visitor Services Conference ‘Working Together’

Conference Program

Working Together

Photos

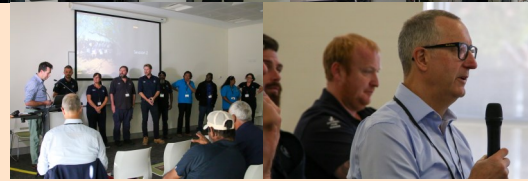
MC Jacinta Overman (Coordinator, Tourism and Concessions)

- Welcome to Country
- Director General Address
- Keynote Speakers
- Why we are here



MC Sarah Mullineux (Regional Leader PVS)

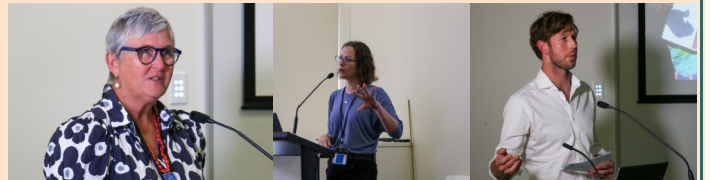
- Where we’re going, where we’ve been by Luke Bentley (Manager Aboriginal Engagement, Planning and Lands).
- Goldfields joint management journey by John Abbott (Regional Leader PVS) and team.
- Story of our marine parks co-design by Gina Lincoln (Regional Leader Joint Management) and Kimberley Traditional Owners.
- Midwest joint management journey by Josh Woods (Joint Management Coordinator) and Jen Steadman (Aboriginal Engagement Officer).
- Q+A on Joint Management with Matt Fossey.



Many participants stated that it was rewarding and inspiring to hear the personal stories of DBCA’s Aboriginal Rangers and Traditional Owner partners in their joint management journeys.

MC Barb Green (Senior Project Officer – Wedge and Grey Reserve)

- Protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in DBCA by Ben Ansell (A/Senior Policy Officer) and Jess Lindsay (Policy and Project Officer).
- Q+A Session



MC Karina Day (PVS Coordinator)

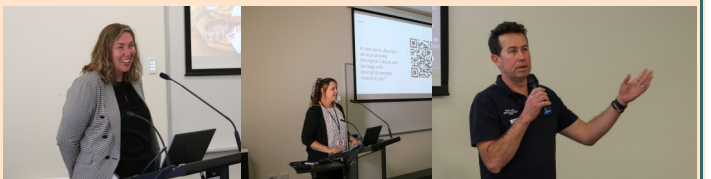
- South West Native Title Settlement and cooperative management by Jess Lindsay (Policy and Project Officer).
- Aboriginal Ranger Program by Sonya Stewart (A/Coordinator Aboriginal Ranger Program).
- Plan for Our Parks implementation by Simon Choo (Coordinator Native Title Unit).



“Insightful knowledge from the Myala group in the Kimberley. Particularly Rowena’s (Kimberley Region Traditional Owner partner) experience and feedback on joint management planning suggesting more ‘co-design involvement for any future projects.’” – Conference Participant

MC Katie McWilliams (A/Coordinator Management Planning and Policy)

- Engaging Aboriginal people including customary activities and cultural learning program by Tina Bowers (Policy and Project Officer Joint Management).
- Central support for joint management by Matt Fossey (Coordinator Joint Management Central Support) and Karis Erceg (Policy and Project Officer Joint Management).
- Review and Reform of management plans by Jess Lindsay (Policy and Project Officer).
- Q+A session.



Parks and Visitor Services Conference ‘Working Together’

Sharing the Load

Photos

MC Mike Wood (Communication and Engagement Officer)

- Keynote Speaker – Getting our kids outdoors by Kelsie Prabawa-Sear (CEO Nature Play WA).
- Volunteer Management – Working together by Sallie Hoypoy (A/Volunteer Program Officer).
- What’s happening in trails by Alison Pritchard (Coordinator Recreation and Trails Unit).
- Governance and sustainability of trails by Rod Annear (Assistant Director PVS).

“It is helpful to see the bigger picture across divisions, connect with staff across the state and learn insights into what and how projects are being implemented differently to achieve success.” – Conference Participant

“I enjoyed hearing updates across joint management and specific capital projects. It is helpful to see the bigger picture across divisions, connect with staff across the state and learn insights into what and how projects are being implemented differently to achieve success.” – Conference Participant

“Listening to the stories of the Aboriginal Rangers working on country was a highlight of the conference for me.” – Conference Participant

MC Matt King (Commercial Business Coordinator)

- Trails maintenance training by Brett Pengelley (Project Manager Trails for Outdoors Great Southern).
- Aboriginal cultural tours and experiences by Robert Taylor (CEO WAITOC).
- Environmental education by Marnie Giroud (Programs Manager, Environmental Education) and John Anderson (Project Officer, Eco-Education).
- Q+A session.

“The highlight of the conference was seeing the passion in the room and the opportunity to see what’s happening in various units and around the state.” – Conference Participant

MC Nathan Greenhill (Recreation Planning and Design Coordinator)

- Keynote Speaker – Focusing on visitor experience by Deb Taylor (Rottneest Island).
- The visitor journey by Jacki Baxter (Visitor Communications Coordinator).
- New online systems by Danielle Ayres (Coordinator, Visitor Communications and Marketing).
- Q+A session.

“The talks about joint management, especially the Kimberley Elders, and also the Aboriginal rangers from Kalgoorlie.” – Conference Participant



Parks and Visitor Services Conference ‘Working Together’

Visitor Experiences

Photos

MC Clint Hull (A/Capital Works & Road Coordinator)

- Visitor experience project updates by Nathan Greenhill (Recreation Planning and Design Coordinator).
- What is required to attract funding by Michael Keeler Co Director Keston Technologies).
- Collaboration in visitor planning and design by Bel Foster (Principal Landscape Architect) and Lauren O’Brien (Senior Architectural Draftsperson).
- Working with Aboriginal people on the South Coast park improvements by Mike Shephard (Regional Leader PVS) and Jade Malanczak (Aboriginal Engagement Coordinator).
- Visitor planning in remote marine settings by Darren Stevens (A/Project Officer Marine Visitor Planning) and Jeremy Flynn (Principal Landscape Architect).

“I felt relief and optimism that the agency may finally be starting to head in the right direction with regards to joint management.” – Conference Participant

MC Kerstin Stender (Regional Leader PVS)

- Update on Visitor Risk Management by Michael Philips (Visitor Risk Management Coordinator).
- Benefits of social research in managing parks and visitors by Amanda Smith (Social Science Coordinator).
- New technology in visitor planning and design by Nathan Greenhill (Recreation Planning and Design Coordinator) and Brook Shields (Research Scientist).
- Kalgulup Regional Park – Enriching the visitor experience by Lorna Charlton (Interpretation Officer).
- Closing Address Peter Sharp (Executive Director PVS).

Article by AEHU



“It was inspirational to watch the Traditional Owners presentations and talking from first hand experience on the development and progression of joint management.” – Conference Participant



“I enjoyed seeing the passion of the people who work for Parks and Wildlife.” – Conference Participant

We hope you have enjoyed reading *Yarning Time*.



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

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