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Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions

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Connection to country

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) recognises that Aboriginal people are the traditional custodians of the lands and waters that it manages, and supports Aboriginal people connecting with country. The ability to carry out cultural activities on country is an important part of Aboriginal culture and connection to the land.

Customary purpose

Activities are considered to be done for an Aboriginal customary purpose if they involve traditional practices to do with:

- · collecting and eating food
- · making and using medicine
- practising artistic, ceremonial or other cultural activities
- doing other things involved with any of the above; for example, using water and other natural resources such as ochre, stones and soil for ceremonies.

No activity is considered customary if it is done for financial gain or reward.

Customary activities

Recent changes to the law have extended the opportunities for Aboriginal people to access DEC-managed lands and waters for customary activities. These opportunities include:

- camping outside of designated camp sites for 28 days, or up to three months for ceremonial events
- lighting small fires for camping, cooking or smoking ceremonies
- undertaking ceremonial activities, including taking ochre and water, creating or maintaining rock art, moving natural features and disturbing the ground and plants
- · hunting and gathering food and medicine
- entering restricted caves
- · accessing additional areas with vehicles
- · bringing dogs into additional areas.

None of the changes to the law affect native title rights and interests.

Some requirements for written permission

There are some circumstances and places where customary activities could have significant impacts on environmentally sensitive areas or on public safety. To manage these impacts, written permission from the local DEC office is needed for some activities in some places, including:

Kimberley Region

- Taking dogs out of vehicles in Geikie Gorge National Park, or at Marlgu Billabong and Telegraph Hill in Parry Lagoons Nature Reserve.
- · Camping or taking dogs in to Tunnel Creek National Park.

South West Region

 Hunting, camping, off-road driving, lighting fires and taking dogs out of vehicles in DEC-managed lands in the City of Bunbury.

Swan Region

- Hunting, camping, off-road driving and lighting fires on DEC-managed lands in the Perth and Peel metropolitan areas (including Mandurah, Boddington, Murray and Waroona).
- Camping or driving a vehicle in Boonanarring Nature Reserve and Drummond Nature Reserve.
- Camping, lighting fires or driving a vehicle in Moore River Nature Reserve.

Other situations where written permission is necessary are summarised on the fold-out poster on the back of this brochure. DEC may give permission with certain conditions, or negotiate alternative arrangements for safety or environmental reasons.

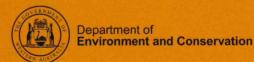
For more information on customary activities, see DEC's Guide to Aboriginal customary activities on DEC-managed lands and waters, available as a downloadable PDF at www.dec.wa.gov.au/aca or ask for the document at any DEC office.

Aboriginal customary activities on DEC-managed lands and waters

This publication is available in alternative formats on request.

Information current at December 2012.

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Contact details

Goldfields Region

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Kimberley Region

Kununurra (regional headquarters) Lot 248 Ivanhoe Road Kununurra Phone (08) 9168 4200 Fax (08) 9168 2179

Midwest Region

Geraldton (regional headquarters)
1st Floor, The Foreshore Centre,
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Shark Bay District 61–63 Knight Terrace Denham Phone (08) 9948 1208 Fax (08) 9948 1024

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Pilbara Region

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Exmouth District

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South Coast Region

Albany (regional headquarters) 120 Albany Highway Albany Phone (08) 9842 4500 Fax (08) 9841 3329 and (08) 9841 7105

Esperance District

92 Dempster Street Esperance Phone (08) 9083 2100 Fax (08) 9071 3657

South West Region

Bunbury (regional headquarters) South West Highway Bunbury Phone (08) 9725 4300 Fax (08) 9725 4351

Busselton (Blackwood District)

14 Queen Street Busselton Phone (08) 9752 5555 Fax (08) 9752 1432

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Swan Region

Kensington

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7 Turner Ave. Technology Park Phone (08) 9368 4399 Fax (08) 9423 2901

Perth Hills Distric

51 Mundaring Weir Road Mundaring Phone (08) 9290 6100 Fax (08) 9290 6101

Swan Coastal District

5 Dundebar Road Wanneroo Phone (08) 9303 7700 Fax (08) 9307 7777

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Frankland District

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Wheatbelt Region

Narrogin (regional headquarters)

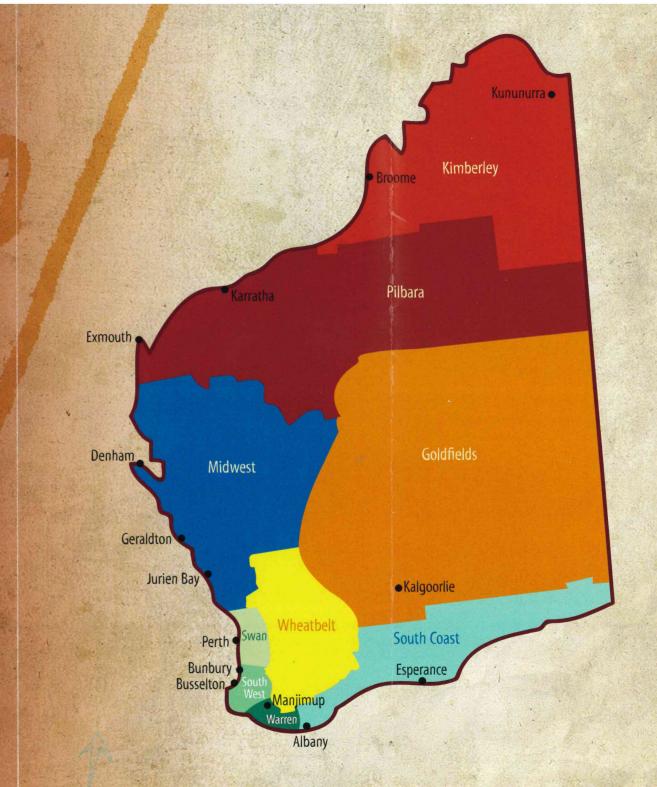
7 Wald Street Narrogin Phone (08) 9881 9222 Fax (08) 9881 3297

Great Southern District

Hough Street Narrogin Phone (08) 9881 9200 Fax (08) 9881 1645

Central Wheatbelt District (Merredin)

33 Bates Street Merredin Phone (08) 9041 2488 Fax (08) 9041 2454



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Aboriginal people can access most areas with vehicles

Be aware that other people can use any new tracks that are created and consider the damage to the environment before driving off-road. Contact your local DEC office for help if a site is difficult to reach, or you want to take your car into these areas:

Recreational areas – within 500 metres of car parks, designated camping sites, sealed roads, and visitor areas

Gates and barriers — to get access to locked areas

Disease risk areas – areas where vehicles are restricted to minimise the spread of forest diseases which can kill the bush

Wilderness areas or limited access areas

In emergencies — where parks are closed for emergencies, such as a flood or a fire, please follow the instructions of DEC staff

Aboriginal people can light small fires for camping, cooking or smoking ceremonies

Please follow these guidelines:

Fire bans and restrictions still apply.

Recreational areas – discuss with DEC if lighting fire within 500 metres of car parks, designated camping sites, sealed roads, and visitor areas

Setting up — keep a three-metre clearing around the fire, free from bush, logs, stumps, twigs and leaves. Never leave a fire unattended

Smoking ceremonies – keep fires for ceremonies to less than one metre by one metre

Put out – always put the fire out with water or dirt before leaving

Firewood – can be collected for a customary purpose, but can only be taken home when collected from designated firewood collection points

Cleaning country or hunting — talk to your local DEC office before using fire for cleaning country or hunting

Before setting out

Who can do these activities? — only Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal family/friends accompanied by an Aboriginal person Recreational areas — cultural activities should generally not be done without permission within 500 metres of any car parks, designated camping sites, sealed roads, and visitor areas. Hunting cannot be done within one kilometre of these sites

Reserves in urban areas — cultural activities should not be done without permission on reserves within the metropolitan regions of Perth, Peel and Bunbury, or within any townsite boundary

Dogs – dogs need to stay in vehicles in recreational and urban areas. Check with the local DEC office before taking dogs into poison risk areas

Aboriginal people can do the following for customary purposes:

- camp almost anywhere for 28 days, or up to three months for ceremonial events
- · light small fires for camping, cooking or smoking ceremonies
- undertake ceremonial activities, including taking ochre and water, creating or maintaining rock art, moving natural features and disturbing the ground and plants
 - hunt and gather food and medicine
 - bring dogs on most DEC-managed land
 - access most areas with vehicles
 - enter restricted caves.

Aboriginal people can camp almost anywhere

Up to 28 days, or three months for ceremonial events outside designated camp sites. Discuss with DEC if you want to camp in the following places:

Recreational areas — within 500 metres of car parks, designated camping sites, sealed roads, and visitor areas

Urban areas – reserves within metropolitan areas of Perth,
Peel and Bunbury

Other laws to be aware of

Firearms — it is a legal requirement to have a firearms licence and to carry the licence at all times when taking a firearm on DEC-managed land. Contact the WA Police for information on how to get a firearms licence. You are responsible for shooting safely in public areas

Fire danger — before lighting a fire, call DFES on 1300 657 209 or your local DEC office to check the fire danger level and any other local government restrictions. Fires must be for cooking and camping only, and cannot be lit when there is a total fire ban in place

Lease areas — you will need the permission of the lessee to enter these areas

Vater catchment areas — check with the Department of Water before doing activity

Water catchment areas — check with the Department of Water before doing activities such as camping or hunting

Fishing — normal rules and bag limits still apply. Contact the Department of Fisheries for more information

Aboriginal people can hunt and gather

Written permission will be needed to take certain things in some places:

Animals — if within one kilometre of car parks, designated camping sites, sealed roads, and visitor areas

Urban areas — reserves within metropolitan areas of Perth, Peel and Bunbury

Commercial — if any items, plants or animals are taken to be sold or to be made into products to be sold

Threatened plants/animals — if the species is threatened or in need of special protection.

Exemptions exist for dugong, turtle and crocodile. See your local DEC office for a list of species

Sanctuary areas — if you wish to hunt in a sanctuary area in a marine park