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Managing and protecting culture and country

Partnerships between Aboriginal traditional owners and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



Aboriginal engagement

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the lands and waters it manages.

In recent years Aboriginal engagement has expanded and developed to involve almost every aspect of DBCA's work including reserve creation, science, recreation, tourism operations, conservation and land management, fire management, wildlife management and heritage protection. This is being enabled through formal and informal joint management arrangements and partnership initiatives.

DBCA is responsible for administering the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act). One of the primary objectives of the CALM Act is to protect and conserve the value of the land to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons. In addition, the Act allows for customary activities and joint management arrangements on land to which the CALM Act applies.



Working together

Joint management

Joint management is a partnership between the State Government and traditional owners to manage lands or waters in Western Australia. These partnerships are with Aboriginal people who have a cultural connection with a park or reserve, and based on recognition, trust, mutual respect and shared goals. DBCA will continue to work with traditional owners to create and jointly manage additions to the conservation estate.



Aboriginal Ranger Program

DBCA's Aboriginal Ranger Program is helping Aboriginal organisations manage country and protect the environment in partnership with the public and private sectors. The program provides funds to Aboriginal organisations for training and employment of Aboriginal rangers and to assist community development. The program has been co-designed with support from various Aboriginal organisations and communities.

Science

Aboriginal rangers and community members undertake research and monitoring activities on country with DBCA staff. Through two-way learning, traditional knowledge of country is combined with contemporary science to deliver conservation outcomes.

Aboriginal cultural heritage

The value of the land to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons is dynamic, physical, temporal, spiritual and social. DBCA is committed to ensuring it meets its responsibilities to manage CALM Act land and waters, and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage values.



Fire management practices

DBCA acknowledges that fire has been, and continues to be, an important part of the physical and spiritual wellbeing of Aboriginal people. While contemporary burning practices may differ from cultural burning practices, increasing engagement between traditional owners and other land managers is building an understanding of the differences, and is providing opportunities to improve fire management practices through a partnership approach.



Cultural tourism

Cultural tourism allows visitors to gain an understanding of Aboriginal cultural heritage and is a way for Aboriginal people to preserve culture, work on country and create economic opportunities. DBCA supports Aboriginal people running tourism experiences, events and businesses in parks, and assists in gaining a tourism licence.

Aboriginal Engagement, Planning and Lands Branch (AEPL)

The branch comprises the Native Title Unit, Planning Unit, Aboriginal Ranger Program, Land Services Unit and the Aboriginal Engagement and Heritage Unit (AEHU). The AEHU leads the development of Aboriginal programs and strategies and provides support and advice to staff about Aboriginal cultural heritage and joint management.

Cultural development

DBCA provides a cultural learning program to staff which includes training in Aboriginal cultural awareness, native title, joint management, heritage matters, customary activities, and to assist staff working with Aboriginal people. In addition, staff across the regions are involved in various on-country trips that contribute to cultural development.



Publications

Yarning Time is a newsletter produced throughout the year to provide staff and subscribers with updates regarding Aboriginal engagement in the department. The department also has various publications on customary activities and Aboriginal involvement. Contact yarning.time@dbca.wa.gov.au for more information or to subscribe.

Strategies

DBCA is committed to meeting requirements of national and state strategies that seek to build meaningful partnerships and meet the aspirations of Aboriginal people. These strategies include *Closing the Gap*, the *Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy*, *Reconciliation Action Plan*, the *Tjina: Western Australian Aboriginal Tourism Action Plan*, and the *Aboriginal Ranger Program*, along with others in development. DBCA is committed to the *State Government Aboriginal Procurement Strategy* which seeks to increase the involvement of Aboriginal business in the delivery of government services and projects, and fee-for-service and tendered contracts.

More information

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