

Working together to protect nature

by Sue McKenna

A **LIFELONG** love of nature had evolved to a desire to protect WA's biodiversity and natural areas for future generations, said the Department's Acting Executive Director, Keiran McNamara.

Keiran has been at the helm for 13 months and is confident that staff and the general community will join him in his vision to "get it right."

He said biodiversity and nature conservation across vast deserts, rangelands, forests and the coast didn't stop at the borders of the 24 million hectares of conservation estate managed by the Department.

"Everyone—staff, volunteers, the community and indigenous people—has a part to play," he said.

"WA really offers the most diverse opportunities in conservation in Australia, from the Kimberleys to the southern coast.

"This is the only place in the country where you deal with everything from crocodiles to seals."

He praised the Department's staff, saying the level of dedication and enthusiasm was unmatched.

"People here are passionate about their work . . . There's an outstanding commitment and belief in what they do for a living. We all feel we're



Acting Executive Director Keiran McNamara and Environment and Heritage Minister Judy Edwards at the training awards recently.

Photo by Ernie McLintock.

doing something good for society at large and for the future," he said.

He added delivering conservation as a government agency would not be confined to reserve boundaries.

"We manage on behalf of the community at large; we don't own the plants and the animals and we know that ecological and hydrological processes don't stop at the boundaries between State-vested conserva-

tion lands and other areas," he said.

For that reason, the Department has moved to embrace wide groups of volunteers and local communities by forming partnerships through programs such as Land for Wildlife.

"In the next 12 months there'll be an increasing focus on a range of natural resource management and biodiversity policies as part of the bigger picture," he said.

"As a consequence, we'll see an increasing engagement with other land owners, indigenous people and the community."

Keiran said WA offered the opportunity to establish a truly world-class system of parks and reserves, building on spectacular areas such as Ningaloo, Shark Bay, Purnululu, Karijini, the south-west forests, deserts and rangelands "which are outstanding by any international measures."

Keiran moved to WA and the Department from Canberra in 1985 after seven years at the National Parks and Wildlife Service in Canberra.

He was a scientific advisor until 1989 before managing the Wildlife Branch until 1992, when he became Director of Nature Conservation. He took on the role of Acting Director of Sustainable Forest Management in 2000 and assumed his current position when Dr Wally Cox retired from the Public Service in July last year.

He said he had always loved nature and that the new job was satisfying and enormously varied, demanding and challenging.

"It's rewarding to see what can be achieved, particularly with the support we receive from the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Judy Edwards," he said.

