

# Prisoners' program beautifies Bibbulmun

ONE of Western Australia's biggest nature-based tourism attractions is being upgraded through an unusual mix of justice and conservation.

Prisoners from Ministry of Justice prisons, working with CALM, are undertaking much of the work to realign and lengthen the Bibbulmun Track.

The new track will be an 830-km walk trail between the Hills area on the outskirts of Perth and Albany on the south coast.

As well as realigning much of the track, the work involves installing campsites, sleeping shelters, toilets, picnic tables, barbecues, route markers and other facilities made in prison workshops.

Premier and Tourism Minister Richard Court, Environment Minister Kevin Minson and Attorney General Cheryl Edwardes earlier this month inspected the first major redevelopment on the track, a remote walk-in campsite in the forest beyond Mundaring Weir.

Mr Court said the camp, called Waalegh — a

Nyoongar word for the wedge tail eagles that often are seen circling the skies above the forest — was the type of discrete development that would occur along the track as part of the State Government's initiative to foster greater international recognition of the walktrail.

"The Bibbulmun Track, with its upgrading, realignment and extension to Albany, is going to be one of the great long distance wilderness walks of the world," Mr Court said.

"When the work along the track is complete, the Bibbulmun will be an icon for the State's rapidly-growing nature-based tourism industry."

Mr Court said the Waalegh campsite heralded a new dimension in prisoner employment programs run by the Ministry of Justice.

The Ministry saw the project as an opportunity to employ prisoners in a meaningful community project which would enhance their self-esteem, work skills and personal development.

Over the past few

weeks, seven prisoners from Wooroloo Prison Farm and Bandyup Women's Prison have been working on the track to build the backpacker's campsite and 3.5 km of new trail.

The walk-in campsite includes an overnight shelter, toilet, water tank, fire place and picnic tables, and has spectacular views across the Helena Valley. The development blends in with the surrounding environment and will greatly enhance visitors' experience of the Bibbulmun.

Mr Court said the attitude of the prisoners involved in the project had been highly enthusiastic and there had been a noticeable increase in their confidence and self-esteem.

"It is an outstanding venture that has a significant role in the Ministry's prisoner work and development programs and will result in a much improved facility for the State and our tourism industry," he said.

The Bibbulmun Track project is being funded by the State Government through CALM, the Ministry of Justice and regional development commissions with private sector support from Alcoa of Australia.

Stage 1 of the project involves the section from Mundaring to the Blackwood River near Greenbushes and is due to be finished by September next year.

Stage 2 will see the extension to Albany completed by September, 1996.



Premier Richard Court (centre) and Environment Minister Kevin Minson with Bibbulmun Track project co-ordinator Jesse Brampton at the naming ceremony for the Waalegh campsite in the Helena Forest beyond Mundaring Weir.



Former forester Peter Hewitt (left) was a driving force behind the creation of the Bibbulmun Track in the 1970s. Peter was a guest at the ceremony to mark the naming of the Waalegh campsite. He is with CALM's Swan Region Manager Alan Walker and Kim Maisey of Alcoa of Australia which is supporting the project through the CALM-Alcoa Forest Enhancement Program

## *A thank-you to you all*

Brian and Judy Fitzgerald and family sincerely wish to thank Executive Director Dr Syd Shea and staff for the kind tributes - verbal, written and floral - sent to us after the passing of our son Craig, who was so special to us.

Brian, a former CALM administrative assistant at Kirup, retired in May this year.





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