

# Dad drops in for hot cuppa

**CALM**Dwellingup forest ranger Ian Freeman had a surprise visit recently when his father, a regular user of the Bibbulmun track, recently passed through Dwellingup.

Jim Freeman was into his 20th day after setting out from Walpole to walk the Bibbulmun, when he caught up with son Ian for morning tea on the hillside of the Murray Valley.

This is the eighth time Jim has walked a long section of the track and the third time from start to finish.

Jim claims he's clocked up more than 2000 km on the Bibbulmun alone, which is Australia's second oldest, long-distance walking track, and stretches

by Tammie Reid

from Kalamunda to Walpole - a total of 650 km.

"Back in 1976, I was walking down the street with my son and we saw the route of the Bibbulmun Track advertised in the window of a shop, so we thought we'd gear up and give it a go," Jim said.

On this trip he reported that the track was getting a bit difficult to follow in places because of missing markers.

He called in at the Dwellingup office to report on the condition of the track and learnt CALM had plans to revitalise the track.

The proposed alignment will retain only 17 per cent of the current route and will

be freshly marked.

The new route will have a greater 'wilderness' experience, away from trafficable roads, and will cover a wider variety of scenery and terrain.

Also, a proposed extension to Albany will make it 830 km long ... further for Jim to walk next time.

Some CALM districts have erected signs along sections of the track, explaining the interim situation and Jim recommends that bushwalkers contact local CALM offices before attempting to walk the track.

"I've not seen many people along the way this time, although a mountain bike crew stopped for a chat the other day," he said.

"They'll have a bit of a battle along some sections because it's definitely a walking track, so I guess they'll just have to carry the bikes; my 20 kg pack is quite enough for me to carry."

A word of advice to would-be walkers is 'prepare'.

"I practiced a bit for a couple of months, walking a couple of hours each day and building up the weight on my back," Jim said.

"Before setting out on the trip, my wife Mavis and I drove along the track, carefully burying food packs at strategic spots.

"I planned to camp next to fresh-water creeks, so organised my



*Jim Freeman discusses with his forest ranger son Ian, and Mike Tagliaferri, the Bibbulmun track route he intends to follow. Photo by Tammie Reid*

route around them."

Jim is a farmer out Merredin way, and this is his holiday for the year.

"I lived in Dwellingup for 20 years and walking

the Bibbulmun is a good excuse to come back for a visit," he said.

CALM's Bibbulmun Track co-ordinator Jesse Brampton said Jim's ex-

perience and that of other regular users would be taken into account in the revitalisation of the route.

Jesse can be contacted on (09) 364 0777.



Jim Freeman

Ian Freeman

Mike Tagliaferri

in the Dup office  
discuss the location  
of the Biddy Track

Tanner

took this

