

A CALM wife looks back

JO Low was working as an administration officer for Protection Branch at Como Forests Department headquarters when CALM came into existence.

by Tammie Reid

with forestry — somehow, comment on conservation and land management makes people's eyes glaze over - but mention national parks, wildlife or forestry and they readily nod.

"There are also more spirited responses when forest management is attacked, which, I feel, is a good thing, and more people now understand what CALM is all about.

"Sometimes there's a feeling of timelessness about living in Dwellingup; there's still a strong forestry tradition and close ties with the community.

"I work as a relief teacher and regular parent volunteer at the school, and I'm a scripture teacher, so I get to see CALM through the eyes of different sections of the community.

"Changes over the past 10 years seem to affect all CALM people; I sense there are more specialised areas

to cover, less people and resources available, and basically more pressures on the individual.

"I've learnt to be flexible and to share Keith's time with other staff and the community; as he attends more after-hours meetings than in the past.

"I've seen Keith's role as manager concentrate more on supporting and encouraging staff in times of change.

"It seems to be an increasingly difficult balancing act, trying to meet people's expectations with ever-diminishing physical resources and finances.

"Keith is a phlegmatic character and has a calmness about him that keeps him positive about his work and able to turn off after hours.

"We try hard to live a balanced life and do everything as a family; for example, we have adopted golf as our family sport, something we can do after work and together, which helps us all to relax

and enjoy being together.

"Children have always been a part of things socially at CALM, and they enjoy visiting the office to see how radios, maps, computers and the office in general works.

"Our son Evan, who is growing up all too quickly, has always been proud of his father's work, but just lately, with Keith out in the field and away over night controlling wild-fires, the gravity and risks of firefighting are hitting home.

"When asked at school what his most frightening memory was, Evan said 'fires.'

"As CALM functions become rationalised and staff elect to live further afield, I foresee a loss of tradition and belonging.

"This leaves me with mixed feelings, but I believe gaining satisfaction from where you live and work is pretty much like life in general — it depends on what, and how much, you put into it.



Jo and Keith Low relax at home with their son, Evan. Photo by Tammie Reid

... while Di anticipates a challenging future



Dianne Watts at her 'ancient' typewriter reflects on the past ten years.

DIANNE Watts sits in front of an ancient manual typewriter at CALM's Dwellingup district office. The typewriter is not unlike the one she used daily 18 years ago when she fronted up for work as a clerical officer with the then Forests Department.

Back then, her duties entailed the usual general office tasks of typing, filing and, heaven help us, making the tea and coffee for all the officers. She also took weather readings and operated the radio and internal party-line phones, with their complicated ringing codes.

The office was tiny and felt more like a converted timber worker's house, with warren-like rooms crammed into every space.

Instead of a front counter there was a small peephole in a panelled wall. It was also freezing in winter and boiling in summer.

Di is the acting administrative assistant at Dwell-

Story and photo by Tammie Reid

ingup, and her duties since the formation of CALM have diversified, with more responsibility for office management, far more public enquiries to handle and an increasing supervisory/training role of other administration staff.

The office design has changed a lot, too, with open spaces and ergonomically designed furniture contributing to an infinitely more comfortable and friendly atmosphere.

"Computers have changed things quite a bit, although there seem to be more paper records than ever. I think one of the biggest challenges for district staff is to become comfortable with using computers in all aspects of work," Di says.

"There's now a heck of a lot more work. With the formation of the Lane Poole Reserve, we attend to a large

volume of tourist front counter enquiries. There's also more business to attend to with permits, licences and contractors."

Born, bred, married and happily ensconced in Dwellingup, forests are in her blood. Her husband Eddy is a log-truck driver with Bunnings, her father John Postans is a district forest workman, and her mother Maxine worked at the Dwellingup office until the 1961 bushfires.

Di sums up her feelings for her work during the past 10 years:

"Well, I enjoy it; the variety of work is great and there's always a chance to get out in the bush even now and then. Besides, I've always had a soft spot for forestry people and enjoy being part of the whole forestry culture.

"Looking to the future, I'm happy to continue working in the administration area, being a part of something bigger — being a part of CALM."



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Jo and Keith Low relax at home
with their son, Evan.



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