

New Bibbulmun a gold ribboned affair

THE new Bibbulmun Track is destined to become one of the great long distance walking trails of the world.

Premier Richard Court said the new 950-km track, from Kalamunda to Albany, would be one of the few long trails that offered walkers a virtually unbroken stretch of natural environment and spectacular scenery, and as a result it would quickly become a major tourist drawcard for visitors from interstate and overseas.

Major tourist icon

"The track should be regarded as one of the State's major tourist icons, attracting thousands of new users and giving people an opportunity to experience and learn about the natural wonders of the South-west," he said.

Mr Court was speaking at the official opening of the northern half of the new track between Kalamunda and the Brockman Highway. This 453-km section of the track winds through a wide variety of jarrah and wandoo forest and passes through or near the communities of Kalamunda, Mundaring, North Bannister, Dwellingup, Collie, Mumballup, Balingup and Greenbushes.

He said the new track provided those communities with a variety of opportunities to service walkers and create new nature-based tourism activities.

It also opened up a wide range of educational opportunities through the involvement of schools in track construction and maintenance as well as for expeditions and nature-based learning experiences.

Extensive consultation

The Building a Better Bibbulmun Project, a CALM initiative, has involved extensive community consultation, a process that is still under way as the track alignment is finalised for the extension from Walpole to Albany.

The project has involved a wide range of Government agencies, corporate sponsors and local community organisations.

For example, the Ministry of Justice has seen it as an opportunity to employ prisoners in a meaningful community project that will enhance their self-esteem, work skills and personal development. In this regard, the track has provided an opportunity for prisoners to give something back to the community.



Above: Premier Richard Court, flanked by children from Amaroo Primary School, cuts the gold ribbon to mark the official opening of the northern half of the new Bibbulmun Track at a ceremony held at the Harris River dam recreation site in August. Track Co-ordinator Jesse Brampton (behind Mr Court) looks on with satisfaction. Below: The Friends of the Bibbulmun received a Lotteries Commission grant of \$136,500 for a range of initiatives associated with the track. Environment Minister Cheryl Edwards presented the cheque to Friends' chairman Mike Wood. Also at the presentation were Lotteries Commissioner Anne Griffiths and CALM Executive Director Dr Syd Shea. Photo by Craig Stewart

The work has involved major improvements to facilities, built by CALM staff, prisoners, people engaged in employment and training programs, and local community groups. Twenty-six new campsites—with sleeping shelters, toilets, rainwater tanks, discreet tent areas, tables and barbecue rings—have been created, and three major foot bridges have been built across the Canning River, Balingup Brook and at the Harris River.

Funding for the project has come from almost \$2 million in sponsorship and grant funds and approximately \$3 million of 'in kind' contributions from CALM, the Ministry of Justice, Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) Programs, bush walking clubs, volunteer groups, service clubs, the Army Reserve and individuals.

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Above: CALM's Bibbulmun Track staffers Raelene Hick and Annie Keating with CALM Mornington District Manager Drew Griffiths and Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes admire the plaque that was unveiled to celebrate the opening of the northern half of the new Bibbulmun Track.

Bibbulmun gold ribboned affair (cont'd)

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Major sponsors of the project include the Ministry of Justice, Alcoa of Australia, Regional Development Commissions, DEET, Worsley Alumina, Griffin Coal, Hedges Gold, Scotch College, Random Access, CSBP and Farmers, Mountain Designs, Cullity Timbers and the Gordon Reid Foundation (Lotteries Commission).

The Federal Government's Regional Development Program is contributing \$1.38 million over two years for the project through the Southern Province Projects Group.

Mr Court welcomed this commitment by the Federal Government as the track would gain world-wide recognition for Australia as a whole and would generate significant economic opportunities for regional areas through which it passed.

The Lotteries Commission also had granted \$136,500 to the Friends

of the Bibbulmun Track for a range of maintenance, management and marketing initiatives. This funding will give the Friends of the Track a flying start and will aid significantly in ensuring the new track is quickly recognised as a world class long-distance walk.

Nature-based tourism

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes said the track was part of an overall program by CALM to create greater opportunities for nature-based tourism experiences throughout the forests.

Other initiatives under this program include the Tree Tops Walk in the Valley of the Giants, the Forest Heritage Centre at Dwellingup, a 44-km self-guided radio tour through some of the finest old growth forest in the Shannon National Park, the opening of the 'trilogy of trees'—the

three soaring karris that serve as fire lookouts in the southern forests, and the Perup Wilderness Lodge east of Manjimup.

As well, there has been a significant upgrading of facilities in various areas throughout the forests, such as Wellington Mill near Collie, at Lewana near the southern end of the northern half of the Bibbulmun, and at numerous camping grounds.

As part of the Bibbulmun Track project, CALM has produced a new series of coloured maps that are now available to the public. These maps, along with other CALM publications such as its *BushBooks* field guides, would help walkers interpret the many different aspects of the forest they would discover along the way, and should be used instead of the 1988 *Guide to the Bibbulmun Track* for the track north of the Brockman Highway.

Staff Movements

Contract

Rachel Oddie, to Plantations Group, as Technical Assistant; Robert Troeth, to Walpole, as Forest Ranger; Mark Sellenies to Fire Management Branch, Kelmscott, as GIS Operator; Juanita Ciampini, to Plantations Group, Como, as Tech Assist; Tania Jackson, to Tourism Branch, as Planning Officer; Carissa Bathgate to Fire Management Branch, Bunbury, as Field Officer; Keith Claymore, to Wildlife Branch, Como, as Save The Bush Co-ordinator; Michael Hislop, to the Herbarium, as Technical Officer; Michael Power, to Plantations Group, as Albany Farm Forestry Facilitator; Robert Davis, to the Herbarium, as Technical Officer.

Permanent staff

Laura Beck to South Coast Region, as Finance and Administration Manager; Linda Sheehan to Plantations Group, as Administrative Assistant; Roderick Hillman to Walpole District, as Site Manager; Marilyn Mawkes, to Herbarium, as Clerical Officer; Laura Beck, to Albany, as Finance and Administration Manager;

Promotions

Nessie McIlhatton to Accounts Payable Supervisor, L 2, at Finance; Deanne Burton, to Conveyancing Officer, L 4 at South Coast Share Farms; Clive Coshan, to Financial Systems Officer, L 2 at Financial Services Branch; Rick Althuisen, to

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