



*Local Government Minister and Warren MLA Paul Omodei unveils the sign at CALM's new Styles Tower in the Blackwood Valley while CALM Executive Director Syd Shea and Gordon look on. Photo by Paul Webster.*



*Mr Omodei and Gordon Styles inspect the new fire lookout tower. Photo by Paul Webster.*

## New Blackwood tower honours Gordon Styles

**FIRE** protection in the Blackwood Valley has been stepped up with the introduction of a new CALM fire lookout tower in the Ellis Creek forest block between Balingup and Nannup.

Local Government Minister and Warren MLA Paul Omodei, who officially commissioned the new tower today, said it was a welcome addition to CALM's fire detection and management strategy for the area.

Originally part of the lighting system for the Leighton Beach marshalling yards at Fremantle, the tower is 46 metres high, with a three-metre square cabin on top. The structure is embedded in an 80-tonne concrete foundation.

Mr Omodei said the tower replaced three lookouts in the valley—Carlotta, Milward and Stewart—but extended the overall surveillance area to around 280,000 ha.

This provided fire detection for forests, parks, reserves, private property, community assets such as the Blackwood Valley and Sunklands pine plantations, and coverage into the Scott River area.

It was the third new tower CALM had built in the past three years. The lookout network now stretched from Mundaring in the north to Mt Frankland in the south, providing constant surveillance of more than 3,000,000 ha of the South West.

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Mr Omodei said CALM operated an integrated fire detection system, with the towers enabling rapid detection and spotter aircraft providing the intelligence.

"The advantage of the tower system is that it provides continuous detection, whereas an aircraft has limitations when refuelling and when flying in a set direction," he said.

Towers also had the advantage in high wind conditions to continue to provide intelligence when

aircraft were grounded because of cross winds preventing landing and take off.

The new tower is named after Gordon Styles whose career with the Forests Department and CALM spanned 44 years. Mr Styles, now retired, was associated with many aspects of fire management in WA including:

- The development of aerial burning;
- The development of standard heavy-duty fire tankers and other fire appliances, some

of which are still in use today;

- The development of fire training programs; and—
- The preparation of comprehensive fire plans that are widely regarded as being the foremost example of integrated long-term fire management plans in Australia.

Mr Styles was recognised as one of the leading fire control officers in WA when he was awarded the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal in 1995.



