

Letter to the Editor

The Editor receives numerous communications, both by mail and email, concerning issues raised in Western Wildlife. Many are followed up to form articles or short notes in future issues but sometimes, like the example below, the topic is complete in itself.

Dryandras don't have to be Banksias!

Dear Penny

Re article by Kevin Thiele in *Western Wildlife* 12 (3): 6–7.

In the interests of scientific balance may I suggest that you point out to your readers that Kevin is mistaken in his interpretation of the two cladistic 'trees' on page six. The left-hand one (his figure 1) shows *Banksia* and *Dryandra* arising (evolving) from the same point and is said by Kevin to be the 'traditional understanding'. The other (figure 2) shows *Dryandra* arising from within *Banksia*, and is said to give a 'new understanding' that justifies having to place *Dryandra* in *Banksia*. In fact, the latter 'tree', not the first, confirms what systematic botanists have done since Robert Brown published the name of the genus *Dryandra* in 1810—place it at the end of an assumed developmental or evolutionary line within Australian Proteaceae with the implication that it probably evolved out of *Banksia* and is the most highly advanced genus. In other words, it is the right-hand tree that confirms the traditional view. To recognise them as separate genera is a perfectly acceptable scientific conclusion. It can be argued that placing *Dryandra* in *Banksia* actually obscures the distinctiveness of the two groups.

Readers could also be advised that *there is no obligation to follow the change simply because it is the latest word, or because herbaria have adopted it.* Under the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature*, scientific names of plants are available for use if they meet certain criteria, and no further direction is given on how to choose if a plant has more than one available name. In this case, the names of all species of *Dryandra* meet the criteria, and the user can choose whichever generic name they prefer. A statement in a copy of Kevin's article on the Department of Environment and Conservation's website that a name in *Dryandra* is 'not current' refers only to the usage by the Western Australian Herbarium.

Regards,

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(For a detailed exposition of Alex's position on this, see the Wildflower Society of WA's Newsletter, Vol 47 No 3, August 2008, pp 7-9.)