



Paul's bravery recognised with national honour

NATIONAL park ranger Paul Udinga's actions in saving a British tourist, Michelle Suri, from drowning during a deluge in Karijini National Park in 2004 have been nationally recognised with the announcement on 10 August that he has received an Australian Bravery Medal.

The citation, released by the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC, reads:

'During a series of rescue events, beginning in the early hours of 2 April 2004, Mr Udinga was involved in the rescue of an injured woman from the flooded Hancock Gorge in the remote Karijini National Park, Western Australia.

In the darkness of early morning and in light rain, Mr Udinga was one of a group of rescuers preparing to winch an injured female tourist from a natural water pool. The woman was strapped into a stretcher and immobilised for her safety. As the crew were checking the rope lines on the stretcher a torrent of flood waters thundered into the confined space of the gorge forcing them into the pool.

A member of the team swam across the water hole to

assist but he was swept away. Although his other colleagues became separated Mr Udinga was able to hold on to the victim as the surge sucked the stretcher through a narrow rock chute, overturning it repeatedly.

Ignoring his own safety, Mr Udinga remained with the victim to right the stretcher, struggling with its weight against the force of the current. He braced it against an embankment but was reluctant to unharness the victim for fear the stretcher would be washed away.

Although exhausted himself, Mr Udinga continued to reassure the woman, keeping the stretcher upright as the water surged around him. Some 12 hours after the incident occurred, in a fresh rescue attempt, the victim was able to be winched to safety.

By his actions, Mr Udinga displayed considerable bravery.'

DEC Director General Keiran McNamara said the department was extremely proud Paul had been recognised with a national bravery honour.

"Saving someone's life in such a manner is the pinnacle of human endeavour," he said.

"However, we also must remember that the incident resulted in the tragic death of James Regan, a local State Emergency Service member, who was part of the team attempting to rescue the visitor."

'Ignoring his own safety, Mr Udinga remained with the victim to right the stretcher, struggling with its weight against the force of the current.'



Paul Udinga and Michelle Suri pictured in April 2004.

Waste lives on: Keep Australia Beautiful

KEEP Australia Beautiful (KAB) Week is in full swing, providing an ideal opportunity to set yourself the challenge to reduce your household's waste to save money and the environment.

Western Australians are doing their bit to clean-up the environment as part of the national KAB campaign with dozens of community clean-ups scheduled to take place this week.

The theme this year, Waste Lives On, aims to draw attention to the volume of waste produced by Australians and encourages people to challenge themselves to reduce waste.

The Keep Australia Beautiful Council recently joined up with West Coast Eagles players Brent Staker and Quinten Lynch in the first of the State's many clean-ups taking place.

The football players put their ball-gathering skills to good use at North Balga Primary School earlier this month.

Quinten said it was really encouraging to see the North Balga students chipping in and making a difference.

"It's not hard to cut down the amount of stuff you throw out, and when you consider that some materials, like plastics, take millions of years to break down, recycling

is the least we can do for the environment," he said.

Up to 80 per cent of what we regularly discard can instead be reused or recycled, with many items and packaging made out glass, plastic, paper, cardboard, aluminium and steel providing the resources to create new products.

Keep Australia Beautiful Council WA chair Mel Hay said



West Coast Eagles players Brent Staker (left) and Quinten Lynch (right) lend a hand to clean-up.

the recently released 2009 National Litter Index Report showed that Western Australians were the worst litter bugs in the country.

"Not only did WA have the most litter items in the survey sites, but the number of litter items had also increased," he said.

"We are going the wrong way, it really is time to reverse that trend and there is no better time than Keep Australia Beautiful Week.

"I urge all Western Australians to join KAB and the West Coast Eagles and clean-up your neighbourhood and any special spots you may visit, such as parks, rivers, or beaches.

"KAB Week is also a good time to make a commitment and sign up to become a litter report or join the Adopt-a-Spot program."

KAB volunteers will be handing out car litter bags at Subiaco Oval at the Eagles v Richmond game this Friday to remind football fans of the importance of disposing of waste properly.

To download information on how to run a community clean-up during KAB Week and find out more about the national campaign visit www.kab.org.au.

To find out more about anti-litter programs in WA, to sign up as a litter reporter or for Adopt-a-Spot visit www.kabc.wa.gov.au.

New technology to test Kwinana air

DEC staff will use a new device that uses the latest in air monitoring technology to test air quality in Perth's southern suburbs as part of the Kwinana Airshed Study.

The \$170,000 Fourier Transform Infra Red spectrometer (FTIR) will provide additional measurements to those taken at existing monitoring sites and two new sites that have been set up as part of the study.

The study, developed in consultation with stakeholders and community members of the Kwinana Airshed Study Advisory Group, was designed to complement and provide data for a separate health study by researchers at The University of Western Australia.

It aims to detect the presence of fine particulates, nitrous oxides and 30 other chemical compounds, including sulphur dioxide and ozone in the ambient air.

DEC Air Quality Branch Manager John Sutton said the FTIR used an optical technique that could monitor multiple compounds simultaneously.

"The FTIR will be used at a number of locations across the Kwinana area to monitor for a range of compounds including volatile organic compounds and ammonia," John said.

"This is the first time we have used this innovative technology in WA and we are excited about the potential that it has to assist us with this important work."

DEC has monitored air quality in Kwinana – the State's largest and most diverse industrial centre – since the 1990s with some earlier studies dating back to the 1970s.

The existing long-term monitoring sites at North Rockingham and Wattleup are operated by DEC and an additional three in the area are run by the Kwinana Industries Council (KIC). DEC has been operating the two new sites at Calista Primary School and in the Rockingham suburb of Hillman since May 2009.

KIC Director Chris Oughton said he welcomed this new phase of the study.

"Industry has been a strong supporter of the Kwinana Airshed Study because it will give everyone definitive results that all parties will accept," he said.

DEC farewells colleagues and friends

DEC has farewelled colleagues and friends as 18 staff retire or move to other careers taking with them more than 400 years of corporate knowledge.

Ten others are expected to leave the department in the coming weeks.

Director Corporate Services John Byrne said DEC had undergone a budget reduction of 1.5 per cent last year and three per cent this year.

"I am pleased to say that we achieved the budget target last year and are on track this year," he said.

"The budget reductions have provided an opportunity for some of us to choose to retire or seek other careers.

"Those leaving us have given DEC and its predecessors many years of service, and all have made valuable contributions through their work."

John said people in DEC were not just colleagues but friends – a sentiment echoed by outgoing *LANDSCOPE* Expeditions Coordinator Kevin Kenneally.

"At the end of the day it's the people who make the difference to any job," he said.

"You often hear criticism of public servants but people in this department give a lot. They come in and they're passionate about the environment.

"I'd like to say thank you to



(Left to right) LANDSCOPE Expeditions Coordinator Kevin Kenneally, Project Officer Cheryl Tonts, Sustainable Forest Management Division Output Coordinator Bruce Harvey and Compliance Officer Brendon Hewson.

all those who I've worked with along the way, who have made it a pleasurable 37 years."

Outgoing Operations and Contracts Officer John Kruger said after 42 years he left the department with "many good memories and many good friends".

"The department has an enviable record of career-long employees and the highlight of my career has been the caliber of people I have worked with," he said.

John said that during his time with the Forests Department, CALM and DEC he observed that the only constant was change.

"I have spent the past 27 years

in one position and the evolution of the role and the department has been staggering," he said.

"There have been some very challenging times but I have worked by the philosophy that you don't focus so much on what you're doing, but just do it for the best possible outcome."

John Byrne said DEC's People Services Branch had played a key role in the voluntary severance process.

"It has been three months of hard work of putting together cases and persuading the Public Sector Commission of their merit relative to other agencies," he said.

Letters from Lillooet

FIVE DEC and one Forest Products Commission (FPC) staff member have set up camp and are fighting fires in Lillooet, British Columbia, after a long dry summer pushed Canada's fire fighting resources to the limit.

Busselton District Manager Greg Mair, Fleet Supervisor Allan Jones, Regional Planning Officer Aminya Ennis, Regional Fire Coordinator Ed Hatherley, Regional Leader Nature Conservation Anthony Desmond and FPC officer Keith Low made up the WA part of the 30-strong Australian and New Zealand (ANZ) contingent.

In mid-August about 670 fires were burning in British Columbia with approximately 3,500 people, 188 helicopters and 467 large machines (dozers, excavators and skidders) used to suppress them.

The ANZ team received a warm welcome on their arrival, with Canadian media outlets keen to meet and interview the crew.

DEC staff have pitched their tents at the Lillooet fire camp, located five hours' drive east of Vancouver, which could be their home for the next month as they are deployed to fires in the area.

Aminya said DEC and FPC members had been assigned to two fires, called Big Dog and Tyaughton, which resulted in some amusing radio call signs which start with Big Dog followed by their position – Big Dog command, Big Dog operations, Big Dog logistics.

The WA contingent has been awed by the surrounding landscape near the fire camp, with black bears, waterfalls, glacial lakes and snow all set alongside bushfires in mountainous terrain.

Aminya said she was impressed with how well the contingent had assimilated with the Canadians and had enjoyed talking with the locals, discovering their similarities and small quirky differences.

While DEC and FPC fire experts have assisted United States teams on five occasions since 2000, this is the first time staff have travelled to Canada.

Greg Mair said the team was working two-week stints with two days off in between and were due to return to WA in mid-September.

"It's great to be able to help out other departments that need assistance and it will also provide an excellent learning opportunity for our staff," Greg said.

Snake smugglers feel the squeeze

An international smuggling operation has been foiled and two Solomon Island boa constrictors have been seized thanks to the work of DEC wildlife officers and Australian Customs and Border Protection.

DEC wildlife officers contacted Customs and Border Protection on 19 July after receiving a tip-off from a member of the public.

An investigation ensued with Customs and Border Protection staff, assisted by DEC wildlife officers and the WA Police, seizing two boas, two knob-tailed geckos and two bearded dragons from a house in Quinns Rocks.

Further investigations found that the boas had been posted from an address in Queensland and may have originated from the Solomon Islands.

As a result of the investigation, Customs and Border Protection investigators, assisted by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service officers, executed search warrants on two residences and a business in Cairns on 7 August. During the search,

two corn snakes were seized at one of the residences.

Animals are the second most smuggled good worldwide, with drugs being the first and weapons the third.

Customs and Border Protection National Manager Investigations Richard Janeczko said wildlife smuggling was a serious crime and this successful operation should send a warning to all would-be smugglers.

"Customs and Border Protection continues to prevent, investigate and prosecute wildlife smuggling attempts into and out of Australia in a bid to end this cruel practice," he said.

DEC Wildlife Officer Matt Swan said wildlife smuggling was a very cruel trade.

"Often the animals are sent by airmail and not declared, so they are kept at freezing temperatures. How an animal is supposed to survive that I don't know," he said.

"We are doing everything we can to find a home for the boas and it is hoped that an approved facility such as the Perth



(Left to right) Rick Dawson, Allan Madgwick and Customs and Border protection Officer Malcolm Plant hold 'Billy' the boa constrictor.

Zoo can take them. However, given the extreme disease risk, euthanasia may be the only option left to the department."

Matt said boas could bear many live young at a time and presented an extreme establishment risk to WA's environment, similar to cane toads and rabbits.

Investigations are continuing and

it is expected that one person in WA and three people in Queensland will face charges for offences under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The maximum penalty for illegally importing or exporting wildlife under the Act is \$110,000 and/or 10 years jail.

Cockatoo crack down

DEC's wildlife officers are continuing to crack down on the illegal possession of animals, with a Morawa man the latest to be charged.

The man was fined more than \$4,500 after DEC wildlife officers discovered three Carnaby's black-cockatoo chicks and 11 red-tailed black-cockatoo (*samueli* sub-species) chicks and adults at the man's home.

The wildlife officers discovered the cockatoos while undertaking targeted inspections in the Wheatbelt.

Under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, it is illegal to possess protected fauna, including black-cockatoos, without authority.

DEC Parks and Conservation Prosecutions Coordinator Gail Ritchie said the conviction sent a strong message to people involved with the unlawful possession of black-cockatoos.

"We take the unlawful possession of protected fauna very seriously and will investigate and prosecute those who capture and possess wildlife in WA in a bid to end this practice," Gail said.

"Anyone who has information about the illegal possession of black-cockatoos or notices any suspicious activity suggesting that black cockatoos are being illegally removed should call DEC's Wildcare hotline on 9474 9055."

Published by the Department of Environment and Conservation's Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Division, Cygnet Hall, (cnr) Mounts Bay Road and Hackett Drive, CRAWLEY, Western Australia, 6009

Managing Editor: Ron Kawalilak

Editor: Rhianna King

Contributing Editors: Catherine Jack, Samille Mitchell

Design and Production: Peter Nicholas

Telephone: (08) 9389 8644

Email: ecn@dec.wa.gov.au