



New bushfire warning system

AFTER the disastrous losses during Black Saturday in Victoria, a new national community advice and emergency warning system was adopted by agencies, including DEC, for this summer's bushfire season.

Also, the advice used in previous years – *Stay and Defend* or *Go Early* – was replaced with *Prepare, Act, Survive*.

Prepare

- Whether you choose to leave for a safer place or to shelter in a well prepared and defensible home, preparation is the key for survival. Being prepared will often mean having already made the decision to leave your home when a catastrophic fire danger rating is received.

Act

- Bushfires can start suddenly so you need to be prepared to act even if you do not receive a warning.

Survive

- The most important task when faced with a bushfire is to protect your life – put your safety first. Any decision you make should be based on your survival, homes can be rebuilt. The safest place to be is away from the fire.

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) prepared a *Prepare, Act, Survive* booklet with more information and suggestions to help people prepare for the

bushfire season. It can be downloaded at www.fesa.wa.gov.au.

The new national community advice and emergency warning system includes three levels of advice and one warning – Advice, Watch and Act, and Emergency Warning. The level of warning changes to reflect the increasing risk to life and the decreasing amount of time people have until the fire arrives.

1. An ADVICE provides information on a bushfire that is not threatening lives or property but may be causing smoke near homes.

2. A WATCH AND ACT message will be issued when there is the potential for lives and property to be threatened. These messages update you on the changing conditions and tell you to start taking action to protect yourself and your family.

3. An EMERGENCY WARNING means you need to take immediate action to survive. This message may or may not start with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS).

During bushfires, agencies will provide as much information as possible through a number of different channels. DEC is one of the agencies providing these warnings, which are broadcast on the DEC website and on radio stations.



Corporate Services Director John Byrne with Helen Ferguson and her husband Ray.

Farewell Helen Ferguson

IN a relationship that has spanned longer than many marriages, Corporate Services Director John Byrne and his Executive Assistant Helen Ferguson parted ways last week as Helen begins a new phase of her life.

After 22 years with the department and 18 years working with John, Helen said she was looking forward to the change retirement would bring, but would miss the people she worked with.

"I will certainly miss the interaction with people," she said.

"I highly value the friendships I have made and they are a major reason why I've enjoyed coming to work."

"In particular, it has been a pleasure to work with John."

"I admire his intellect and our close working relationship has meant I have been able to travel to many places in WA and met some amazing people around the department."

John said Helen was one of a team of executive assistants who played a crucial but often undervalued role in the department.

"Helen has made a significant contribution to me, to the department's Corporate Executive and the department as a whole," he said.

"I thank her for this contribution."

"Helen and I have worked so closely together that many people in the department would not have seen me without her!"



Funding available for low emissions technology

BUSINESSES, universities, government and not-for-profit organisations are encouraged to apply for grants through the State Government's \$30 million Low Emissions Energy Development (LEED) Fund.

DEC LEED Program Manager Anthony Stuart said the fund was designed to help develop sustainable, low emission technologies to reduce Western Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

"We're looking for projects that have the potential to create practical climate change solutions through low emission technologies, which have the potential to create new jobs and open up important export markets," he said.

"These might include projects for cleaner fossil fuel, energy generation and renewable energy sources such as bio-energy, solar, wave, tidal and geothermal.

"A total of \$10 million is being offered for this round of the LEED Fund.

"Successful applicants will need to match every \$1 invested by the State Government with \$3 from elsewhere."

Previous LEED funding has included \$12.5 million to support the construction of a low-emissions wave energy power station off Garden Island.

The five megawatt power station will use submerged pumping units on the seafloor to collect wave energy in the form of pressurised sea water, which will generate electricity from a hydroelectric turbine onshore.

LEED funding of \$1.5 million has also been invested in designing, building and testing an oil mallee harvesting machine. Oil mallees are recognised for their potential to provide a bioenergy source which can be grown in combination with conventional cereal cropping.

Applications must be received by close of business on Wednesday 24 March 2010 and submitted on the LEED Fund Application Form, which is available from DEC's website at www.dec.wa.gov.au or by contacting lead@dec.wa.gov.au.

EcoEducation hosts workshop and IYB launch

IN partnership with the Science Teachers Association of WA, DEC's *EcoEducation* program marked the 2010 International Year of Biodiversity with an event on Friday 12 February.

As part of the launch, Kathryn Cameron from the USA led a workshop about her team's work in shark and ecosystem research in Shark Bay and resources being developed for teachers. It was a chance for *EcoEducation* and science teachers to provide feedback on the education resources which aim to get students excited and engaged in learning science.

The Shark Bay Ecosystem Research Project is an international research collaboration which aims to understand the dynamics of one of the world's most pristine seagrass ecosystems.

Kathryn said in order to protect and restore the Shark Bay ecosystem, it was necessary to understand the ecological role of species such as sharks and turtles and determine how coastal ecosystems functioned before people intervened.

"Only with this information can we predict how human uses of the oceans will change them and how we can begin to restore already damaged systems," Kathryn said.

Kathryn said a major part of her team's work was disseminating their findings to a wide audience through documentary films, a website and curriculum and teacher resources for secondary schools.

"This workshop is a chance for us to share our electronic resource with Australian teachers and get their



EcoEducation Senior Project Officer Elaine Horne with researcher Kathryn Cameron.

suggestions and feedback," Kathryn said. "We want students to learn that science is not just memorisation and tests but can be hands-on and real world.

"We hope the electronic resource we are presenting today—which provides information to teachers and also enables them to post and share information and comments—along with our fact sheets, student activity book, photos and video are useful tools to help teachers make science integrative."

Kathryn thanked DEC's *EcoEducation* program for its support and for making the workshop possible.

EcoEducation Senior Project Officer Elaine Horne, who chaired the workshop, said it enabled delegates to gain an insight into a unique and innovative electronic educational resource.

"*EcoEducation* is about connecting

researchers and science teachers and creating opportunities for meaningful science to be accessed by students," Elaine said.

"It's great to be a part of the Shark Bay Ecosystem Research Project and to have access and input into their educational resources."

Following the workshop, Curtin University representatives joined *EcoEducation* for the launch of the United Nation's International Year of Biodiversity with a speech by Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Jane den Hollander. The official part of the proceedings included a Welcome to Country by DEC officer Trevor Walley, a video from the United Nations and WA Chief Scientist Professor Lyn Beazley and Professor den Hollander launching the International Year of Biodiversity.

Wildcare Helpline calls for volunteers

VOLUNTEERS are sought for DEC's Wildcare Helpline which provides support and service to the public for all matters relating to sick, injured or orphaned wildlife in the State.

The helpline is staffed by volunteers at DEC's Kensington office or diverted to rostered home telephones after hours and at weekends.

Wildcare Helpline operators are the first point of contact for people who have found injured animals. They can provide immediate advice and refer callers to one of DEC's registered wildlife rehabilitators who care for and rehabilitate the animal before releasing it back into its native habitat.

Most of the calls are from people who have found sick or injured animals on the sides of roads or in parks, suburbs and forests.

Josey Stewart is an after hours helpline volunteer who studies Environmental Biology at Curtin University.

She says volunteering is a great, practical accompaniment to her studies.

"I've learnt so much about wildlife through being involved in the helpline," Josey said.

"With the support of the helpline, I've also completed several of the courses offered by DEC, such as the basic

course in wildlife rehabilitation and advanced wildlife courses on specialist topics."

Josey said working on the helpline was a great way to meet other people with similar interests in conservation and environmental issues but who work across a range of fields.

"You never know what door may open for you through volunteering and it's also a great way to shape your career aims," she said.

DEC Community Involvement Coordinator Judith Holmes said that though the Wildcare Helpline had received great support from volunteers since it began in 2000, more volunteers were needed to staff the phones.

Volunteers do not need to have experience in wildlife caring or staffing helplines as training and support is provided.

Daytime volunteers are needed to fill four-hour shifts between 9am and 1pm and 1pm and 5pm from Monday to Friday. DEC is also seeking volunteers who are happy to operate the phones after hours following initial training in the DEC office in Kensington.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in volunteering on the Wildcare Helpline, please contact DEC's Community Involvement Unit on 9334 0279.



Josey Stewart says working on the helpline is a great learning opportunity and one which supports her studies.

Rise in illegal wildlife imports from South Australia into WA

DEC has issued a caution that importing reptiles, mammals, birds and insects into WA is illegal without DEC's prior consent after a recent spike in illegal reptile imports over the New Year holiday period.

Quarantine WA has recently intercepted freshwater Murray River turtles at the SA-WA border and the Perth Airport. The turtles are considered an environmental risk to Western Australia.

The WA *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* prohibits the unlicensed importation of a range of animals, particularly Australian and exotic reptiles, amphibians and birds.

However, not all wildlife is illegally imported intentionally. According to DEC Regional Compliance Coordinator Peter Lambert most illegal reptile imports occur accidentally, with people holidaying or relocating to WA unaware that import licenses are required and that only those approved categories of

WA species of reptiles and amphibians may be kept in WA under license.

"WA's laws are designed to protect the State's unique native flora, fauna and landscapes, with penalties of up to \$4,000 for the illegal importation and keeping of some native animals," Peter said.

"When we detect the illegal importation of reptiles, mammals, insects or birds into WA, the importer is given the options of surrendering them to the department or sending back to the eastern states at considerable expense to the animals' owners.

"To avoid this, all travellers planning on entering WA with native or exotic animals other than stock or domestic pets need to contact DEC well before they travel."

For more information about importing animals into WA contact DEC on (08) 9334 0292 or email info@dec.wa.gov.au.

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New bridge a success

DEC crews from the Jarrahdale Work Centre have recently rebuilt a 30-metre bridge in Serpentine. The bridge plays a major role in providing strategic access for land management activities and wildfire suppression.

The new bridge maintains heavy vehicle access to Scarp Road after the old bridge was downgraded due to poor condition and a two-tonne load limit was put in place, meaning heavy vehicles were no longer legally allowed to cross it.

The Scarp Road bridge provides important fire access between Jarrahdale and Waroona and was originally built as a result of an inquest into the 1961 Dwellingup fires.

An engineer was engaged to prepare plans for replacing the bridge superstructure to make sure it met with current Main Roads requirements and Australian standards.

Perth Hills District Fire Operations Officer Greg Standing said the design brief specifically requested no component weighed more than three tonnes so DEC could use its own crews and machinery to rebuild it.

"One of our aims during this project was to keep bridge-building in house, rather than taking the easy option of letting the work go to contractors," Greg said.

Jarrahdale Work Centre Overseer Geoff Styles won an occupational safety and

health award for designing a system that safely held the six-metre, 500-kilogram stringers in place for detailing without using a crane to rotate them. All steel work was fabricated in the Jarrahdale workshop by DEC staff before being hot dip galvanised.

"This type of work provides an excellent opportunity for crew members to develop their skills in using materials other than jarrah logs," Greg said.

"The new bridge also has railings on either side, providing a safer crossing for riders on the Munda Biddi Cycle Trail.

"It is hoped the project will stand as an example of how effectively we can use our own people to undertake such projects."

The new bridge was put to the test recently as it enabled heavy vehicles to respond more rapidly when fire hit Scarp Road.



Overseers Geoff Styles and Phil Griffiths put the finishing touches on the Scarp Road bridge.

Kununurra Bush Rangers face cycle challenge again



Those that took part in last year's ride included (from left) cadets Robert Banks, Dean McGinty and Eugene Park, volunteer Daniel Ferns and KDHS teacher Peter Barnett.

DEC's Bush Ranger cadets from Kununurra District High School are preparing to take part in the Gibb River Road Mountain Bike Challenge, a grueling journey that sees participants starting at Derby in the West Kimberley and reaching their destination El Questro Station five days later.

In 2009 a group of students from the school's Clontarf Academy Life Skills (CALs) class took on the challenge and, through dirt and dust and hundreds of bone crunching kilometres, they prevailed and triumphed in the 700 kilometre ride.

Organised by teacher Peter Barnett, last year's participation was a first for the school as well as being the first time representatives of the Mirriwung and Gajerrong peoples took part in the event.

This year a joint initiative between Kununurra District High School, East Kimberley Clontarf Football Academy, DEC's Bush Ranger cadets and the Save the Children organisation will support 14 Indigenous students prepare for and take part in the epic event once again.

DEC Ranger and Bush Ranger unit leader Tracey Robins said tangible learning opportunities such as riding the Gibb River Road engaged students in education and could

help them change some of the negative patterns in their lives.

"Activities such as these help students learn to work towards their goals as well as fostering greater capacity for personal endurance and resilience," Tracey said.

"They also help the cadets improve their skills in planning, first aid and safety, camping and remote area survival, and foster team work and cooperation.

"The students also increase their confidence in communication, both verbal and written, and build an appreciation of the environment and the need to conserve it."

DEC staff at Kununurra are helping to fundraise for the event by selling bandannas from the cancer support organisation Canteen.

During 2009 the CALs class also became part of another first – an in-school pilot Bush Ranger cadet unit.

Bush Ranger cadet units are usually an after school activity facilitated through DEC with support from the Department of Youth.

"Through holding the unit during school hours, we hope to provide the students with learning opportunities not necessarily available to them via the regular school curriculum," Tracey said.

