



# DEC celebrates culture of ongoing learning

**DEC's annual Graduation and Awards Ceremony was held in late May, recognising and rewarding the commitment to continuous learning of people throughout the department.**

Several programs were recognised for the first time this year, in addition to those usually acknowledged. The ceremony marked the achievements of participants in the department's Graduate Development Program, Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES), Indigenous Cadetship Program, Government Investigation Program and the Conservation Employee Career Development Pathways Program.

A number of scholarships and awards were also presented at the ceremony, which was attended by Environment Minister Donna Faragher, Deputy Director General – Parks and Conservation Jim Sharp, DEC staff and other special guests. Respected Nyoongar Elders Doolann (Leisha) and Walter Eattes provided a Welcome to Country.

## Graduate Development Program

2010 saw 20 people complete their training through DEC's Graduate Development Program, which is now in its sixteenth year. During the two-year program, these 10 men and 10 women carried out 10 weeks of formal training on a range of topics, and developed networks and friendships which



*DEC's 2010 Graduate Recruits with Environment Minister Donna Faragher (centre left) and Deputy Director General – Parks and Conservation Jim Sharp (centre right).*

will help them throughout their careers.

This year's graduates were Ben Ansell, Lenny Bloomfield, Bel Catchside, Lynnda Church, Brett Crabtree, Rebecca Hayes, Michael Higgins, Helen Holzheuer, Clinton Hull, Kyle Hulls, Rowan Inglis, Renee Leaver, Bridgitte Long, Rebecca MacDonald, Michael Pasotti, Emma Richardson, Tracy Sonneman, Clarissa Van Schie, Michael Whitelaw and Kyle Wilson.

Two awards were presented to Graduate Development Program graduates—the Keynes Memorial Award and the Director General's Merit Award. Walpole Marine Park Ranger Rebecca MacDonald received the Keynes Memorial Award and Office of Climate Change Policy Officer Brett Crabtree was the recipient of the Director General's Merit Award.

## MATES

MATES is an important part of the department's aim to increase the number of Indigenous people working within DEC and, so far, more than 70 trainees have gone through the program. Three employees graduated from Certificate III and Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management in 2010 and were recognised at the ceremony. They were Lawrence Harris, Shannon Dixon and Nigel Johnston.

Nigel Johnston received the Aboriginal Trainee of the Year Award. Community Development Manager from the Fremantle Football Club Wade Spilcker presented the award, which recognises Nigel's outstanding work as a trainee in the Esperance District.

'Kwabalitch' means 'excellent' or 'good' in Nyoongar language and the award by this name recognises a MATES trainee with dedication, perseverance and a commitment to personal and professional development. Lawrence Harris was chosen as this year's recipient of the Kwabalitch Award for his love for Country and the dedication he shows DEC, his co-workers and his fellow MATES.

The important role of DEC supervisors in the MATES program is recognised through the Aboriginal Trainee Supervisor of the Year Award which this year went to Mark Virgo. Based in Walpole, Mark supervises MATES trainee Naomi Dunn.

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# Licensing milestone



*Peter Skitmore and Alesha Hayward analyse approvals results.*

## **DEC's Industry Regulation Business has achieved 15 consecutive months of issuing works approval applications for major resource projects within a Cabinet-endorsed 60 working day target timeframe.**

Since January 2009, Industry Regulation licensing staff across the State have assessed and approved 65 works approval applications for Western Australia's major mining and industrial projects (State Development Portfolio projects), with nearly two thirds of these approvals being issued in the past six months alone.

DEC's Licensing and Permitting Branch Manager Peter Skitmore said this was a major achievement and a credit to the efforts of all DEC staff involved.

"DEC is very much aware of the need

for timely approvals and decision-making for major projects and other proposals and has instituted systems to ensure that timelines are achieved," he said.

"This is particularly important given that both certainty of the approvals process and timeliness are critical factors for DEC's customers."

The Environmental Regulation Division is developing further policies and officer's guides to ensure proponents are aware of DEC's requirements for works approval and licence applications and that this information is contained in applications lodged with DEC before being accepted into the licensing system.

"This and other process reforms should build on the achievements made thus far and assist in meeting customer needs

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### **Indigenous Cadetship Program**

The Indigenous Cadetship Program, which supports Aboriginal students studying at tertiary level, is another important aspect to the department's diversity aims. Three people graduated from the cadetship program this year: Emma-Jane Hunt, Melissa Passarelli and Julie Ward.

### **Government Investigation Program**

There were 17 officers in the inaugural group of DEC staff to be recognised at a DEC Graduation and Awards Ceremony for their completion of Certificate IV in Government (Investigation), a nationally recognised qualification in regulatory activities.

Graduates in 2010 were Luke Bentley, James Best, Alex Bite, Alex Bowlay, Mathew Broadbent, Chris Goodsell, Arthur Jones, Allan Madgwick, Wayne Moroney, Craig Olejnik, Anna Oxford, Cameron Oxford, Tony Panicciari, Julie Print, Adam Rayner, Matt Swan and James Windenbar.

### **Pathways Program**

The first conservation employee to graduate from the Pathways Program, Ron Perry, was also recognised at the ceremony. The program aims to

and target timelines in the face of an increasing number of applications," Peter said.

A/Director of the Environmental Regulation Division Kerry Laszig said regional and centrally based industry regulation officers had made considerable process improvements to achieve target timelines.

"I believe not only that this performance can be sustained, but that the mechanisms used to achieve these outcomes can progressively be applied to other project

recognise the skills and knowledge of conservation employees and expand their professional experience and expertise. Another 15 workers are in the program and will be recognised next year.

### **Scholarships**

Each year, the department awards a number of scholarships to encourage DEC staff to expand their skills and qualifications through higher education. This year the Science Scholarship in Memory of Dr George Malajczuk was awarded to Renee Hartley, Meghan Porter and Lilia Tysoe.

The Leadership Scholarship in Memory of Seamus Mulholland was received by Anne Mathews, Richard McAlinden and Fiona Westcott, while the Women's Scholarship in Memory of June Craig was awarded to Zoe Clarke, Judy Dunlop, Jennifer Jackson, Champa Kulasekera, Ana Negreiros and Robyn Weir.

The Director General's Career Development and Study Assistance Scholarship provides support for undergraduate and postgraduate study and was received by Amanda Fairs, Lauren Fox, Jelena May, Mark Neilson, Gail Ritchie and Alan Wright.

approvals in the Industry Regulation Business," she said.

The Major Projects Regional Support section of DEC is responsible for tracking and reporting on State Development Portfolio Project approvals and in providing assistance to the regions. Approvals reports are published on DEC's website at [www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/5234/2196/](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/5234/2196/).

For more information on project approvals please contact Environmental Officer Alesha Hayward on 6467 5296.



# DEC trails make their mark at home and abroad

**THE 135-kilometre Cape to Cape Track which runs from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin in WA's south-west has been named among the top 10 Australian walks by *Australian Geographic*.**

Managed by DEC, the track was opened in April 2001 and was designed to bring people closer to the environment while creating as little disturbance to the surrounding areas as possible.

The prestigious list of top 10 walks was compiled by a panel of guidebook authors including John Chapman, John and Lyn Daly, Glenn Tempest, John Siseman and Quentin Chester.

Blackwood District Parks and Visitor Services Coordinator Brian O'Hehir said that the announcement was a coup for the growing regional area.

"The top 10 walks announcement

is fantastic acknowledgment of the significant contributions made by volunteers, especially the Friends of the Cape to Cape Walk Track, who assist in track maintenance to ensure the Cape to Cape Track remains a quality attraction for international tourists," he said.

"The track provides challenging educational experiences for school and adventure groups and, at the same time, a wonderful coastal experience for people with disabilities through its 'access for more' section between Cape Naturaliste and Sugarloaf Rock.

"The facility is a focal point for long trail walks within a spectacular coastal environment and attracts significant funds to the developing region."

Highlights of the track include 600-million-year-old granite ridges, sand dunes, limestone sea cliffs and stunning beachscapes. There is also an inland section

which trails into the Boranup karri forest.

In another boost for DEC's major trails, earlier this year the Munda Biddi trail was listed by *National Geographic* in the top 10 best cycle routes in the world.

The highly regarded society lists the kilometres of jarrah forest, encounters with western brush wallabies, western grey kangaroos and brushtail possums as major drawcards of the 332-kilometre trail.

Munda Biddi surpassed exotic French,

Italian and South African locations to be named the fourth most spectacular trail ride in *National Geographic's* top 10 ultimate traveller's guide.

For more information on the trails, visit [www.capetocapetrack.com.au](http://www.capetocapetrack.com.au) and [www.mundabiddi.org.au](http://www.mundabiddi.org.au).

DEC has developed two high-quality maps for the northern and southern halves of the Cape to Cape Track. The maps are available from [www.dec.wa.gov.au/shop](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/shop).

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## DECcrease policy formally endorsed

**DEC has formally endorsed the DECcrease project; Policy Statement number 64.**

Director General Keiran McNamara said he was pleased to announce the release of the *DECcrease* project Policy Statement and an associated schedule of goals which will provide the impetus and initial focus for the rollout of the *DECcrease* project across DEC.

The announcement is a formal acknowledgment of the agency's commitment to ensuring that DEC leads by example through incorporating sustainability principles into its diverse range of activities, operations and decision-making processes across Western Australia.

The enthusiasm and commitment of



**DECcrease Senior Project Coordinator James Milne with the signed policy.**

all staff to the vision of a healthy, diverse and well-managed Western Australian

environment has led to many examples of improved environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and land management through the department's work.

*DECcrease* Senior Project Coordinator James Milne said the new policy aimed to consolidate the positive work of the agency with an equally positive focus on the sustainability of DEC's work practices.

"To help coordinate the agency-wide rollout of the *DECcrease* project, the new policy requires each DEC workplace to have at least one 'DECcrease Champion'," James said.

"We'll soon be calling for nominations from staff to join the *DECcrease* team

to help drive initiatives in workplaces across DEC. I encourage those with an interest and enthusiasm to talk with their managers about taking on this important role."

*DECcrease* Champions will be formally appointed from within the existing workforce. Further information relating to the appointment of Champions will be made available soon.

"I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the *DECcrease* project to date and look forward to the next exciting phase of the project, as we really get under way."

For more information, contact James on 6467 5454.



# Bore water screening for Perth suburb

**DEC has been providing free bore water screening for residents in parts of Dianella and Mirrabooka after a local bore tested positive for metals and chemicals including ammonia, chloride and hydrocarbons.**

The groundwater contamination is suspected to have come from a nearby Mirrabooka landfill which until 1997, accepted mixed household and industrial waste.

DEC Acting Deputy Director General Environment Alan Sands said DEC had provided information to 800 potentially affected households including a copy of the Department of Health's (DoH) *Using bore water safely* brochure and a guide showing people how to collect a bore

water sample.

"It was a huge effort involving several different branches of DEC working together to get information out to the public as quickly as possible," he said.

"This initiative also involved collaboration with the City of Stirling which is acting as the collection point for bore water samples."

The screening offer involves testing garden bore water samples for ammonia, a reliable indicator of contamination from former landfill sites.

To date just 10 residents have taken up the offer to have their bore water screened and DEC has advised them of their results in writing.

Three residents whose bores recorded

ammonia levels above 0.5mg/L were advised to switch their bores off and the department has recommended they have their bore water tested by a commercial analytical laboratory before resuming use.

Alan said DEC had been working with DoH, the City of Stirling and the landfill owner who was conducting an ongoing investigation into the extent of the contamination.

He stressed that all chemicals detected to date were well below levels of public health concern.

"This is an issue that concerns only residents with garden bores and not people who use scheme water to water their gardens," he said.

"It is timely to reinforce the message that bore users maintain ongoing monitoring of bore water, especially at the beginning of summer.

"And that untested, untreated bore water should not be used for drinking, food preparation or filling swimming pools.

"Children should not play under bore water sprinklers and home grown fruit or vegetables irrigated with bore water should always be washed before they are eaten."

For more information about the bore water screening, visit <http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/communityupdates> or phone the Contaminated Sites Hotline on 1300 762 982.

## DEC staff take stock as fire season comes to a close

**THE 2009–10 bushfire season saw DEC staff attend approximately 600 fires across the state.**

DEC teams also assisted the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) with a number of large bushfires in the Toodyay, Badgingarra, Eneabba, Southern Goldfields and Great Western Woodland areas.

The only full deployment of a pre-formed team occurred during the Moore River National Park fire in January.

Pre-formed teams consist of about 65 people who work together to manage the challenging demands of suppressing wildfires.

They are structured in line with a nation-wide incident control system called the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System, enabling DEC to help firefighting agencies in other states and territories and also in the USA.

Manager, Fire Management Services Branch Murray Carter said that fire was becoming a national business.

"I will watch with significant interest the outcomes of the Victorian Royal Commission due at the end of July, which is bound to set standards and expectations for firefighting nationwide," he said.

He said this season had been

challenging for Public Affairs and Fire Management branch staff, with the introduction of a national approach to scaled fire warnings.

In WA, DEC used water bombers across a wide geographical range during the season, required as far north as Kalbarri.

"While generally it has been a quieter fire season in our three south-west forest regions, other regions were kept fairly busy with the bulk of fires caused by lightning," he said.

"It has been a very good year for prescribed burning. We are currently close to achieving the 200,000-hectare nominal target for the south-west regions. This

has been achieved through approximately 150 individual burns.

"In addition, nearly 700,000 hectares of prescribed burning outside of the south-west program has been completed and is still continuing in the Kimberley."

Regional Services Director Peter Dans said the fantastic achievement of reaching the prescribed burn target was no mean feat.

"I would like to congratulate and thank all DEC staff involved in any way with the prescribed burning program for their outstanding efforts that have seen the highest prescribed burn results reached since 2004–05," he said.



# South Coast Region at work on Breaksea Island

**DEC's South Coast Region is currently finalising the restoration of nationally significant heritage buildings on unique Breaksea Island near Albany. Once restored, a complementary use for the buildings will be explored to ensure their ongoing conservation and to provide a unique visitor experience.**

The project involves the restoration of two lighthouse keeper's cottages built in 1902 and 1908 and part of the original 1858 lighthouse on the island. A jarrah jetty built in 1920 also requires restoration work.

South Coast Regional Manager Bruce Bone said the project demonstrated a strong partnership between DEC, Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) and the Albany Maritime Foundation, with the GSDC funding a heritage conservation plan which was used as the basis to secure \$1.3 million from the Commonwealth Government's Jobsfund.

"This funding has provided a fantastic opportunity to stabilise and restore these valuable heritage assets which were subject to severe degradation and could

have possibly been lost to Australia," Bruce said.

The project has been led by Albany District Manager Mike Shephard, with project management by Regional Planning Officer Sue Eber and on-ground supervision by Project Officer Rob Wilkes.

"The works program has been split into two parts, with the jetty upgrade being contracted out and the lighthouse and building restorations being run by DEC, which has been both exciting and challenging given the logistical and time constraints," Sue said.

"DEC site manager Rob Wilkes is doing a great job of coordinating the logistics and supervising the crew and has demonstrated great dedication and perseverance with many nights 'marooned' on the island.

"Work got under way about four months ago, starting with access track maintenance and then the restoration of the houses, including rendering and plastering, replacing the floors and decking and repairing plumbing."

Sue said the main challenge of the project was Breaksea Island's isolation.

"So far, some 19 tonnes of timber and other materials and 14 tonnes of sand and lime putty have been airlifted by helicopter to the island, from Albany," Sue said.

Other challenges include the strict hygiene protocols needed to prevent dieback or invasive species being introduced to the island and also the requirement to reproduce not only the materials used in the original construction, but also the methods employed.

"This has meant, for example,

finding specialist trades people such as a stonemason who could restore the original stonework style, and using lime-based plaster rather than standard modern products," Sue said.

The unique complex of historical buildings on Breaksea Island have major cultural significance and are one of only two convict-built lighthouses in the State. The island is a nature reserve, home to seabird populations and a fern declared as rare flora. It is listed on the State Register of Heritage Places as well as on the National Heritage List.

Breaksea Island provides a unique island experience combining scenic vistas of King George Sound, a sense of remoteness, rugged natural environment and unique nationally significant heritage buildings.

Bruce said that for heritage buildings and structures to remain intact it is critical that they be actively managed in a manner consistent with their values.

"Across Australia there are many examples where tourism ventures operate in and around heritage structures providing a means to conserve and maintain these structures, and Breaksea Island has the potential to become a unique eco-tourism destination," Bruce said.

"If a compatible ongoing use for the buildings can be established, the economic boost provided to the Albany area through the project works could continue, with opportunities for historical and conservation-based tourism ventures likely."

DEC and the GSDC have co-funded a tourism feasibility study to explore options for the tourism market following the restoration.



*DEC site manager Rob Wilkes on the Breaksea Island jetty.*