



# Quick thinking by DEC's Pollution Response Unit

**ON Monday 16 August, DEC's Pollution Response Unit (PRU) was contacted by the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) to assist with an incident where a glass cylinder with rusted metal ends and engraved with a Nazi swastika was found on a lunchroom table of an industrial premises near Perth.**

The cylinder contained orange liquid and looked like a World War II relic. The concern was that the liquid was a chemical warfare agent. The area was evacuated and hazmat and anti-terrorism protocols invoked.

FESA called DEC Environmental Hazards Manager Ken Raine for assistance after the bomb squad, Chemistry Centre, military and other agencies had exhausted their options and equipment to identify the possible contents of the cylinder.

Ken set about contacting his contacts in the United States Environmental Protection Authority and tasked senior PRU officer Peter May with research.

Within about 10 minutes, Peter identified the cylinder as potentially a movie prop.

Ken said he contacted the Perth movie prop company and sent them a photo of the cylinder.

"After convincing the manager of the company that I was not a 'prank caller', I asked him a few questions," Ken said.

"The manager of the company immediately identified the cylinder as a prop (one of about 24) created for a mini-series that was filmed in Perth several years ago.

"The movie was about a sunken German World War II submarine that had been en route to Japan during the war, carrying these toxic liquid cylinders that were going to be used to poison allied water supplies.

"The movie revolved around divers who were investigating dolphin deaths and found the sunken submarine. A full-sized

replica of the bow of a German submarine was built and sunk in the water off Point Peron for the diving scenes.

"He advised that the orange liquid was food colouring in water."

FESA was immediately contacted and advised of the situation, which quickly brought the incident to a close. The prop company manager was required to go to the scene and positively identify the cylinder prior to incident closure.

Ken said the answer to a complex hazmat problem often comes not from monitoring equipment, but lateral thinking and quick and focused research under pressure.

"Peter definitely came through in this incident and, as a result, a significant amount of resources and potential business interruptions were averted," he said.

"The company advised that there were more of these cylinders in existence and I recommended that they be tracked down and the contents drained to prevent similar occurrences in the future."

Ken said that anyone coming across suspicious items like this should contact FESA on 000 and keep people away and upwind.

"This incident ended happily with a few chuckles, but could have been a different story if the item was the real deal," he said.



Peter May at work and the mystery item. Inset photo courtesy of FESA and Chemistry Centre WA

# WA's first glass reprocessing plant opens

**ENVIRONMENT Minister Donna Faragher recently opened a new glass recycling reprocessing plant, the first of its kind in the state.**

In opening the new Colmax Glass facility, Environment Minister Donna Faragher said it was a positive step to managing waste and increasing recycling rates.

Glass has an estimated life of 1,000,000 years, is perfectly suited to recycling and may be recycled many times without loss of quality. Recycling a single glass jar saves enough energy to light a bulb for four hours.

The Minister said the new plant would crush and clean waste glass which was previously sent interstate for processing.

"Before this plant was built, glass had to be transported to South Australia for processing and the transport costs and the fact that some of the material was not clean enough to be recycled meant much was simply placed in landfill," she said.

"This situation was unacceptable for operators of material recovery facilities, for WA's environment and its people, who are keen to recycle and make a positive difference.

"This state-of-the-art complex transforms glass into high-value products suitable for a variety of practical uses, including bottle manufacture; insulation batts; surface coatings for road markings and swimming pools; blasting abrasives; filtration; and cement additives," Mrs Faragher said.

"The plant will initially divert 20,000 tonnes of glass each year, increasing to about 40,000 annually when fully operational, equivalent to 100–250 million glass jars taken out of landfill.

"This significant project is co-funded by the state government which contributed \$1.95 million through the WA Waste Authority. Industry through the National Packaging Covenant and Colmax Glass contributed the balance of the \$5.4 million project."

"As part of the Liberal-National Government's desire to reducing the waste stream, we are pleased to be able to process glass in our own state."



## More than a walk in the park

**THE Park Walks program—a partnership between DEC's Healthy Parks, Healthy People (HPPH) initiative and the Heart Foundation—organised a walk recently at the Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Rehabilitation Centre in Martin.**

Almost 70 people attended the centre throughout the day and were treated to a guided walk preceded by an informative presentation by Senior Wildlife Officer Rick Dawson from DEC's Nature Conservation Division.

Rick's presentation and the walk were the perfect way to increase awareness of important environmental issues while providing an inspiring visitor experience.

HPPH Coordinator Cathy Gazey said there was highly positive feedback from attendees, with about half of participants reporting that Rick's presentation and the friendly guides and staff were the main reasons for their high level of satisfaction.

"Many participants were pleased to find out that our magnificent black cockatoos were in such good hands and that their future may be secured," she said.

"The walk event was a timely way of highlighting the plight of WA's biodiversity, especially our iconic black cockatoos, and that all species are important directly or indirectly for human health."

Cathy said the Park Walk event coincided with the release of a United Nations report which showed that the natural processes which sustain human life face a 'high risk of rapid degradation and collapse' because of the 'record extinction rate of animal and plant species'.

"Most people in our culture have a very limited conception that a healthy natural environment is utterly imperative to sustain human life," she said.

"Programs like Park Walks are a great way to increase awareness that the 'green bits' are not just decoration but are essential for providing our life support systems and for our physical, social and mental health and wellbeing.

"The human animal needs nature in so many ways."

Park Walks is about encouraging people to be more physically active, especially in their natural environment, and aims to increase awareness of the importance of parks for physical, mental and social health and wellbeing and to facilitate an emotional connection to nature.

HPPH is coordinated by DEC's Parks and Visitor Services Division. The Black Cockatoo Rehabilitation Centre Park Walks event demonstrated the effectiveness of achieving the department objectives through combined service delivery between divisions.



# Australian Eureka Science Awards finalist

***EcoEducation* was selected as a finalist in the highly prestigious Australian Eureka Science Awards in the category of 'Promoting Understanding of Science' presented annually by the Australian Museum.**

*EcoEducation's* Elaine Horne, Stephen Crane and Hannah Hampson were nominated for this award which acknowledges their outstanding work in the program. It also reflects the professionalism and enthusiasm of all the leaders and the support of schools and teachers.

Senior project officer and award nominee Elaine Horne said being selected as a finalist for the Eureka Science Awards recognises the quality of DEC's environmental education programs.

"I would like to particularly thank the *EcoEducation* staff and DEC officers who have worked hard to make the program a success," she said.

Australia's top scientists and Australian Government Ministers were in attendance at the awards ceremony dinner—the largest single event in Australia celebrating and rewarding Australian science and the only event of its kind in the world.

Elaine attended the dinner in a self-funded capacity and shared in the suspense leading up to the announcement of award winners.

"Although we did not win the award, being one of three finalists across Australia gives enormous credibility to the *EcoEducation* program and the department," she said.

"*EcoEducation* would not have happened without the vision and energy of Liz Moore, who established and developed the program, and the dedicated support of Director of Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs Ron Kawalilak."

## Countdown to the WA Environment Awards

**THE countdown is on to the 2010 WA Environment Awards which recognises achievement in environmental care and biodiversity conservation.**

WA Environment Awards Coordinator Mitzi Vance has been extremely busy organising the awards and coordinating the judging of the submissions. She said that a total of 94 submissions had been received from community groups, individuals, small and corporate businesses, government agencies and local government authorities across the state.

"Environmental Education and Communication has been the most popular category this year with 17 entrants," Mitzi said.

Submissions currently are being assessed by 33 judges; the majority of whom are DEC staff using their fields of expertise.

"The judges' recommendations will be assessed by an executive judging panel, which will decide on the finalists, winners and the overall 2010 Environment Awards winner," Mitzi said.

"Finalists will be announced in late September and winners will be unveiled at an awards presentation dinner on Saturday 6 November 2010 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel."

This year's awards also has a new category—Rivers, Estuaries and Wetlands— and new sponsor, the Swan River Trust.

"The way we have promoted the Environment Awards during the past few years has also changed," Mitzi said.

"The awards nomination period and submission process is now promoted online, which has resulted in a big increase in submissions.

"We also have the support of a number of private and public organisations who are advertising the awards online, through their email databases and e-media publications,"

Tickets to the awards night will be available for purchase at the end of September and can be obtained by downloading a booking form that will be posted on the environment awards webpage on DEC's website. Further information can be obtained by contacting Mitzi Vance on 6467 5147.



*EcoEducation Senior Project Officer Elaine Horne pictured at the Eureka Award Dinner.*

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**Managing Editor:** Madeleine Clews

**Editor:** Sarah Deverell

**Contributing Editors:** Joanna Moore and Stefanie McBurney

**Design and Production:** Peter Nicholas

**Telephone:** (08) 9389 8644

**Email:** [ecn@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:ecn@dec.wa.gov.au)



# DEC staff join City to Surf

**ABOUT 30 DEC staff and friends took part in the City to Surf event this year, joining a record-breaking number of participants on Sunday 29 August.**

The annual fun run event is the biggest community sporting event in WA and raises research money for the Activ Foundation. This year 40,468 people took part and completed either a marathon, half marathon, 12-kilometre run or walk from the city, 11-kilometre wheelchair race, or a four-kilometre walk or run from Perry Lakes to the finish line at City Beach Oval.

The department's team, the DEC runners, included at least four people who completed a half marathon—Loretta Shillinglaw, Dave Pongracz, Murray Cox and Matt Fossey.

DEC's Risk Management Section (RMS) promoted the event as part of the department's health and fitness program and Corporate Health Officer Nardi Ling lead the DEC runners team.

"We were very impressed with all our participants, some of whom took part with their friends and family, and would like to encourage more DEC people to get involved next year," Nardi said.

"Taking part in the City to Surf provides a great sense of achievement, no matter which distance you complete.

"It is an excellent goal to incorporate into a fitness program and there is the capacity for all levels of fitness to take part."

After the event, members of the DEC runners team celebrated their achievement with a post race picnic.

Regional staff have also been involved in the City to Surf action, through DEC's regional City to Surf competition. During the month of August, participants nominated to complete a walk or run of either four or 12 kilometres.

Consultant Corporate Health Robyn McGrath said the initiative was aimed at encouraging regional staff to take on a walking or running activity to improve their health or wellbeing, often in conjunction with the Tape Measure Challenge to improve their body composition.

"Medallions are available from the RMS for those staff who register with their local Wellness Advocate, register their time and complete the distance," Robyn said.

"This could also be an extension of a walk led by their region's Wellness Advocate, who has been encouraged to lead walking groups under the Heart Foundation's Walking program."

Frances Kirchner, who leads the South West Region as Wellness Advocate, reported she had five people participate—three four-kilometre walkers, one four-kilometre runner and one 12-kilometre runner.

"This was a great effort from a very proactive work centre, who have many interested in health and fitness activities," Robyn said.

Robyn said that with all the excitement of the City to Surf just gone and inspiring stories of achievement, RMS had decided to extend the regional City to Surf competition over



*Some of the DEC runners team at the Perth City to Surf—(front, from left) Michelle Norac, Belinda Cox, Rebecca Hayes and Robyn McGrath, (back, from left) Joanna Moore, Nardi Ling, Daniel Mory, Michelle Crow with Grace Eckermann, Greg Eckermann and Aaron Eckermann.*

the month of September to encourage staff to use the spring weather to complete the challenge.

For more information about the regional City to Surf competition contact Robyn on (08) 9219 9782 or by email [robyn.mcgrath@dec.wa.gov.au](mailto:robyn.mcgrath@dec.wa.gov.au).

## One Sky Many Paths—to success

**PART-TIME DEC Pollution Response Unit employee Nadia Uink has successfully gained a place in the One Sky Many Pathways Leadership Program.**

The Indigenous youth leadership program is run by Challenger Institute of Technology and provides training for 40 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women aged between 18 and 24.

Nadia said she was really excited about creating, developing and implementing a community project relating to environmental health, as an objective of the program.

"I hope to gain a better understanding of how to implement the skills I have gained from my studies and work experience with DEC in developing community

health, safety and the environment," Nadia said.

"I've had so many wonderful mentors in the Pollution Response Unit, where I've been able to go out into the field, learn strategies and guidelines on appropriate response and gain an insight into emergency response policy."

"Now, through One Sky Many Pathways, I have the opportunity to work towards pollution prevention as well as response."

Nadia began her association with DEC in 2008 as a cadet through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Indigenous Cadetship Support Program. She undertook practical work experience with

DEC during study breaks and holiday periods while completing her university studies.

Nadia graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Health and the Environment last year and was the first person in her family to gain a tertiary qualification.

Following the cadetship, Nadia now works part-time with the Pollution Response Unit, while completing post-graduate university studies and beginning the One Sky Many Pathways Leadership Program.

"Another reason I'm really pleased is that my 26-year-old brother has decided to return to university and has secured an Indigenous Land Council cadetship, following my successes," Nadia said.

