



DEC and FESA sign heads of agreement

DEC and the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) have signed a heads of agreement to provide joint bushfire management to the Western Australian community.

The agreement delivers on the first recommendation in the Keely report into the February 2011 Perth Hills bushfires, which recommended that FESA and DEC finalise a memorandum of understanding and commit to working in partnership.

DEC Director General Keiran McNamara said it was important that both agencies shared knowledge, resources and systems ahead of the bushfire season.

"FESA Chief Executive Officer Wayne Gregson and I both believe it is critical that we are united in our approach to bushfire management if we are to better protect lives, property and the environment," he said.

"The heads of agreement paves the way for a strong partnership at all levels between FESA and DEC so both agencies can better prevent, prepare and respond to bushfires through more open communication, consultation and transparency.

"The new partnership will provide for a much more seamless approach to combating bushfires through the establishment of joint protocols and planning documents that will guide operating procedures, and a commitment to operate in accordance with the same policies and systems.

"DEC and FESA will undertake joint programs,

projects and training, collaborate and consult on a regular basis and implement joint management of resources, including aircraft."

The heads of agreement is available at www.dec.wa.gov.au or www.fesa.wa.gov.au.

It was signed on Friday 4 November at the annual WA Seasonal Outlook meeting, attended by more than 150 personnel from Western Australia's emergency services agencies including DEC, FESA, the Bureau of Meteorology, WA Police and local governments.

The briefing gave operational staff a chance to come together to discuss preparations for the upcoming bushfire and cyclone season.

The seasonal outlook is an important opportunity to ensure that all the different agencies involved in emergency services have a clear understanding of changes to operations management and state operational plans and can discuss any issues with their counterparts.

Environment Minister Bill Marmion said DEC had been taking every opportunity to undertake prescribed burns, particularly near communities in the Darling Scarp.

"For the period 1 July to 7 November 2011, DEC has either completed or begun 34 burns in the Perth Hills and Swan Coastal Plain urban interface areas over an area of 5,500 hectares," Mr Marmion said.

"This is more than twice the achievement at the same time last year, when DEC were hampered by an extremely dry winter and a lack of spring rain."



DEC Director General Keiran McNamara and FESA Chief Executive Officer Wayne Gregson.



Back on country and planning for the future



Yawuru Coastal Park Coordinator Darren Stevens discusses marine park zoning on the field trip to Yardoogarra.

A GROUP of Yawuru traditional owners recently joined the DEC Yawuru joint management team and DEC planning staff on field trips around Broome to help plan for future management of the area.

The group discussed cultural, management and conservation issues which—along with the recently-released *Yawuru Cultural Management Plan*—will feed into DEC's management plans for a new conservation estate.

The Yawuru Conservation Estate, which is currently being vested, will be jointly managed by traditional landowners and DEC as part of a historic move towards the coexistence and cooperation of traditional and contemporary land management practices.

Planning for joint management began late last year after the Yawuru traditional owners signed a number of Indigenous land use agreements with the state government.

DEC Yawuru Interpretation and Education Coordinator Querida Hutchinson said the group trips to Yardoogarra and Mangalagun were a great opportunity for all those involved in the joint management to get together and share ideas.

"It really highlighted the fact that Yawuru and DEC share similar concerns for the protection of these areas," she said.



Freddy Edgar got back on country at Yardoogarra with Dean Mathews, Darren Stevens and Luke Puertollano.

"The estate management plans are being developed with a focus on these concerns."

Querida said that for some of the traditional owners, the field trips were the first time in decades they had set foot on this difficult-to-access country, and for others, the first time ever.

Healthy forests symposium draws big crowd

MORE than 200 people got together recently to share knowledge about the effect of climate change on forests and woodlands in the south-west of Western Australia.

The 'Managing for healthy forests' symposium, held in the Swan Valley last month, was attended by members of 75 different organisations, including DEC, FESA, Murdoch University, The University of Western Australia (UWA), Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, the Forests Products Commission, local government, Landcare and catchment groups, as well as beekeepers, arborists, environmental consultancies, mining companies, the Water Corporation and the World Wildlife Fund.

The one-day symposium addressed concerns about the effects of climate change in south-west forests and woodlands, including tree decline as a result of low rainfall.

According to the Centre of Excellence for Climate Change, Woodland and Forest Health—who organised the event

along with DEC—the south-west of WA is considered by many climate scientists a 'global guinea pig' for climate change. Over the past 30 years, they say, this region has experienced a decline of 14 per cent in rainfall and a temperature increase of 0.45 degrees Celsius. Many climate change models agree that this trend is likely to continue. The centre says significant tree decline in south-west WA is already happening as a result of drought.

More than 20 speakers presented research and ideas on forest and climate change science, as well as management options. Among the speakers were James Croton from the Water Corporation, Nicholas Coops from the University of British Columbia, Neil Davidson from the University of Tasmania, with a welcome address by Chief Scientist of WA Professor Lyn Beazley.

DEC Acting Director of Sustainable Forest Management Geoff Stoneman also presented a key speech on the day.

"I discussed policy options for the management of forests

in the context of climate change," he said.

"Earlier talks covered topics such as tree declines (particularly wandoo and tuart), drought impacts in the jarrah forest, forest fauna, the contribution of the social sciences and the role of intervention ecology in maintaining forest health. To an extent, my topic integrated the earlier presentations in terms of how the research results can feed into policy settings."

Geoff's speech acted as a lead-in to the open discussion session held at the end of the day.

"The discussion forum aimed to weave together research outcomes with management issues. Discussions focused on active catchment management to address the effects of climate change, including whether thinning would be effective and what its impact on other values may be.

"The symposium provided important updates on current research and was an opportunity for stakeholders to discuss key forest management issues in the context of climate change."



DEC Royal Show presence uncovers youth enthusiasm

FOR the first time in several years, DEC's full range of publications were available to purchase at this year's Perth Royal Show, with show-goers responding well to the stall and its products.

Organised through DEC's publishing arm, WA Naturally Publications, a range of show bags were available ranging from a \$20 bag to a \$50 bag, containing various DEC books and *LANDSCOPE* magazines. Each show bag also contained promotional material including the brochure *A visitor's guide to the state*.

DEC Sales and Distribution Manager Cathy Birch said the shop front, which was located in the Centenary Pavilion, got a great response from the public.

"The feedback about *LANDSCOPE* magazine and other DEC publications was fantastic, and I'm really pleased that I've had the chance to see people's reactions and hear their comments," she said.

"Some of the more memorable comments included; 'I can't believe there is something at the show actually worth buying' and 'Now this is what the show is all about ... this is what should be here'.

Cathy said the \$20 and \$50 show bags proved very popular, as did the Bush Books.

"People were even offering suggestions of new Bush Book titles they would like to see."

Cathy said it was very encouraging to see enthusiasm from young people as well as adults.

"Children were delighted with the free bookmarks and threatened species stickers which featured the mulgara, the northern quoll and the bilby.

"We learned that a young boy (probably about 11 or 12) subscribes to *LANDSCOPE*, which was fantastic to hear.

"In addition, a little girl was given a choice by her mum between buying a Bush Book or going on a ride and/or buying a show bag, and she chose to buy the Bush Book!

"We also had a great response to our Bush Book prize draw, with over 1,100 people entering to win."

Cathy said the volunteer support at the stall was really appreciated, with volunteers and staff from Yancheep, the Cygnet Hall and Kensington offices and the Atrium library assisting over the eight days.

DEC vehicles trial new form of reversing alarm

A NEW form of reversing alarm that will lower unnecessary noise emissions in the urban environment has been installed on ten DEC heavy fleet vehicles, from bulldozers, loaders and graders to prime movers, medium and light trucks.

The broadband reversing alarm—which differs from the more commonly used tonal alarm in its use of white noise instead of a single frequency—produces a less disturbing noise output for people further away without compromising safety for nearby workers.

Noise Regulation Branch Manager Peter Popoff-Asotoff said the new form of alarm is relatively cheap, has an output volume that changes depending on the existing background noise level and provides much better directional information.

"Broadband alarms emit noise spread out over a wide frequency range. These frequencies blend to make a 'shh shh' type of noise that is easier to localise when nearby, doesn't cancel itself out in some spots as single tones can, and disappears into the background faster as you get further away," he said.

"They are also more easily heard by older people and are less likely to produce panicked reactions.

"DEC's Noise Regulation Branch encourages the use of broadband audible reversing alarms for vehicles in government and private sectors.

"Following the DEC vehicle trials, we plan to produce a leaflet for local government environmental health officers to use when addressing noise complaints regarding reversing beepers."

Peter said that although tonal reversing alarms are ubiquitous, and the public generally tend to put up with them as they believe they are required for safety reasons, they are not required by any legislation in Western Australia, other than on mining sites.

"Other workplaces are advised to produce a 'safe workspace' but the method of doing this is not prescribed.

"As a result, unless the reversing

beepers are used on a mine site, they are not exempt from the *Environmental Protection (Noise) Regulations 1997*. Interestingly, a number of mine sites are adopting the broadband alarms anyway, both for safety and environmental reasons."

"To enable local government to encourage others to adopt broadband beepers, they will need to demonstrate that it works for their fleet first, and for that, DEC needs to lead the way."



DEC contractor Jonathan Holgate tests the noise output from a broadband alarm.



Adorable Florables entertain and educate

IF YOU attended the annual Kings Park Festival earlier this spring, you may have seen the vibrant floral costumes and dazzling personalities of the popular Adorable Florables. In a move to educate and entertain the public, the team at the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority has devised a series of characters representing the state's native wildflowers.

The wattle, Queen of Sheba orchid, pink everlasting and kangaroo paw are just some of the native plant species portrayed by performers who don flamboyant costumes and make-up,



transforming themselves into real-life representations of the species.

Five years after the Adorable Florables' inception, Environment and Conservation News decided to take a look at how they came about, how people have responded over the years and the process of devising a new character.

Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority Education Officer Charlotte Vaughan said the Adorable Florables are the brainchild of Kings Park Festival Director Jacqui Kennedy, who recognised the importance of educating adults and children alike through entertainment.

"Drama is an exciting and effective tool that can deliver a strong environmental message, with interaction being a key element in its success. By delivering the message in a fun and interactive manner, children are more likely to absorb the environmental meaning and gain a better understanding and appreciation for WA native flora," Charlotte said.

"The characters were planned to be vibrant, comical, musical, interactive and unashamedly educational, so the audience learns without realising it. Education through the use of theatre and storytelling is Kings Park's signature style.

"The aim is to provide an innovative form of education that enables us to connect primarily with our young audience, leaving them with a lasting impression. It's very different to the textbook approach to education but has been extremely successful in terms of the retention of information in children of young ages."

The Adorable Florables have grown more and more popular due to their more prominent appearances at the annual Kings Park Festival, use in Kings Park education programs and resources, as well as starring in their own theatre show.

"All ten Adorable Florables made a guest appearance at the Government House Garden Party, the official state reception for the royal visit to Perth on 28 October during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)."

Charlotte said a fair amount of research into WA native species and their characteristics is done before one is chosen to join the Adorable Florable troupe.

"The proposed character must be distinctively Australian, easily recognisable to the public, and its traits must reflect the real-life adaptations and characteristics of such native plants, so the educational aspect is correct.

"For instance, the pink everlasting daisy is a pretty, pink delicate flower with a sweet scent, so the character of Eva Everlasting must also be sweet and slightly preening in personality, with a gentle, happy voice, light and floaty body gestures and a pretty pink costume.

"A detailed character brief is created for each performer, so the actor can apply appropriate verbal and non-verbal techniques to the flower's personality."

New characters for 2011 included the silver princess, as well as the troupe's first bird species, the western spinebill.

"With the amazing diversity of Australian wildflowers to choose from, inspiration is never far away," Charlotte said.

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