



Cockburn shines bright in Environment Awards

THE City of Cockburn was named the overall winner of the 10th annual Western Australian Environment Awards, in recognition of its innovative and successful Sustainability and Climate Change program.

Presenting the award at a gala dinner on Friday 25 November, Environment Minister Bill Marmion said the council was a standout entrant with its commitment to promoting sustainability in the local community.

"The City of Cockburn's exemplary effort towards this goal includes a range of initiatives including the Sustainable Living Home Online website; Sustainable Renter's Guide; Dry Cell Battery Recycling program; and the Beyond Gardens – GardenWise seminar," Mr Marmion said.

"It is wonderful to be a part of this very special 10th annual Environment Awards and I would like to congratulate all winners and finalists.

"Their high standard of achievement highlights the commitment, passion, drive and innovation of entrants to develop and implement projects. Their tireless

work to protect and improve our environment sets a great example for others to follow.

"Much of the environmental work being done by the state government relies on community involvement and support; the awards are an excellent way to acknowledge work well done."

Winners were selected from a pool of 46 finalists, while a record 112 entries from across the state were received.

In the ten years since the awards began, the program has steadily grown—a reflection of the respected status of the awards and the increasing awareness of the importance of the environmental issues. The categories have been updated in line with emerging environmental and community priorities.

The 2011 Environment Awards were co-ordinated by DEC with generous support from sponsors: Publishers National Environment Bureau, Western Power, Swan River Trust, Royalties for Regions, the Packaging Stewardship Forum, Whiteman Park, Rheem and the Waste Authority.

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*Staff from the City of Cockburn win their award for Government Leading by Example.
Photo – Terrace Photographers Pty Ltd.*



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The winners of the 2011 WA Environment Awards include:

Overall 2011 WA Environment Awards Winner

City of Cockburn – Sustainability and Climate Change Program

Biodiversity Conservation

Sponsored by Western Power
City of Stirling – Threatened and Endangered Species Protection and Habitat Restoration

Bush, Land and Waterways

Sponsored by Whiteman Park
Chittering Landcare Group – Chittering Landcare Centre

Community Achievement – Metropolitan

Sponsored by Packaging Stewardship Forum
South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare (SERCUL)

Community Achievement – Regional

Sponsored by Royalties for Regions
Wellstead Historical and Heritage Committee

Corporate Business Leading by Example

Sponsored by the Department of Environment and Conservation
St John of God Health Care – Safeguarding our environment

Environmental Education and Communication

Sponsored by Rheem Pty Ltd
Conservation Volunteers – Rio Tinto Earth Assist

Rivers, Estuaries and Wetlands

Sponsored by Swan River Trust
Regina Drummond – Brixton Street Wetlands, Kenwick

Government Leading by Example

Sponsored by Publishers National Environment Bureau
City of Cockburn – Sustainability and Climate Change program

Resource and Waste Management

Sponsored by the Waste Authority
Murdoch University – Best Practice Recycling System at Murdoch University

Small Business Leading by Example

Sponsored by the Department of Environment and Conservation
The Painted Fish



Environment Minister Bill Marmion presents the prestigious Overall Winner's award to the City of Cockburn's Engineering and Works Director Michael Littleton. Photo – Terrace Photographers Pty Ltd.

Tree Top Walk guide wins gold

RENOWNED Tree Top Walk Guide Helen Nash won the prestigious 2011 FACET Golden Guide Award during the Tourism Council Awards gala evening at the Burswood Convention Centre on Saturday 26 November.

The FACET Golden Guide Award aims to acknowledge individual excellence in tour guiding and raise the profile of the profession.

Tree Top Walk Manager Julie Ross said that Helen had received due recognition for the amazing role she plays at the Tree Top Walk.

"Having worked as a visitor services assistant at the Tree Top Walk for more than 14 years, Helen continues to be at the leading edge of guiding providing all visitors with a heightened experience of the tingle forest," Julie said.

"She runs daily guided tours through the Ancient Empire, delivers tours to coach and school groups and continues to develop fun-based activities for children during the school holidays."

Helen said she was honoured to be announced the winner at what is seen as one of the pinnacle events for tourism in Western Australia.

"I am thrilled to accept the award, not only for myself, but for all the other guides at the Tree Top Walk who

also do a fantastic job creating lasting impressions of the natural environment," Helen said.

"Raising the profile of the important role of the guiding profession was an added benefit in winning the award.

"I was proud to win the Golden Guide Award for the Tree Top Walk, the Department of Environment and Conservation and the region."



Helen (centre) with Tree Top Walk visitors.

Flora translocation success

YEARS of hard work has paid off for staff in DEC's Flora Conservation and Herbarium Branch, with the translocation of the critically endangered plant silky eremophila being hailed a huge step forward in the species' recovery.

The rare shrub, which is endemic to a small area north-west of Three Springs in DEC's Midwest Region, has been the focus of several previous translocation attempts in an effort to increase plant numbers, though without success.

However, improvements in propagation techniques have resulted in the survival of most of the translocated plants during the past two attempts.

Research Scientist Leonie Monks said improvements in germination techniques at DEC's Threatened Flora Seed Centre and changes to the potting media used by the nursery at the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority meant that survival through the nursery stage improved dramatically.

"As a result, almost 200 seedlings were available for planting in 2010. Of these, an 89 per cent survival rate over the first summer was very encouraging," she said.

"Throughout 2011 another 280 seedlings were planted. We will closely monitor their progress over summer and are hoping the survival rate will be even better than last year."

Leonie said the translocated population, located in a similar habitat to existing populations, lies within a nature reserve east of Three Springs and now totals 456 individuals.

"This is by far the largest population of this species, as wild population sizes vary from one up to 290," she said.

"The translocation has not only increased the total number of individuals of this species in the wild from 614 to 1,070; it has meant there is now a large population on secure conservation land tenure, where the threats affecting existing populations, including soil salinity and competition from weeds, are not evident."

Although silky eremophila is a popular ornamental garden plant, it is extremely rare in the wild and was ranked as critically endangered in 1995. It is thought to have been widespread throughout the Three Springs area before extensive clearing removed much of its habitat.



A newly translocated silky eremophila thrives.

Tougher fines for littering to be introduced

FINES for littering are set to increase following the introduction of a Bill to State Parliament seeking to amend the *Litter Act 1979*.

As part of a new zero-tolerance policy on potentially dangerous littering, people who litter cigarette butts will be issued a \$200 on-the-spot fine, up from \$75, while those found guilty of general littering by a court face a maximum fine of \$5,000, up from \$1,000.

Keep Australia Beautiful Council (KABC) Chair Mel Hay and KABC investigators Brad Waghorn and Cliff Bliss joined Environment Minister Bill Marmion at Scarborough Beach recently as he announced the new litter legislation.

The announcement was preceded by a 30-minute beach clean up lead by founder of the Two Hands Project Paul Sharp. KABC Community Education Coordinator Maureen Maher said the Two Hands Project encourages people to

spend 30 minutes using their own two hands to clean up their environment.

"Members of the Scarborough Surf Life Saving Club also joined in with the clean-up. It was great to see many young people so keen to take action to clean up their beach, and demonstrating how much could be achieved in just a short time," she said.

"Keep Australia Beautiful hopes that more Western Australians follow their lead and make actions for a cleaner environment a priority.

During the official announcement, the Minister said the amendments to the Act will include a new offence of 'littering that creates a public risk', which will carry an infringement penalty of \$500 and a prosecution maximum of \$5,000.

"This new offence will target people engaged in serious littering offences that pose a safety risk to people, property

or animals. This could include the littering of lit cigarettes, syringes or other dangerous materials," Mr Marmion said.

"With summer just around the corner, anyone irresponsible enough to throw a lit cigarette on a hot, dry day will face serious consequences under the government's zero tolerance for potentially dangerous littering behaviour.

"According to the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, between eight and 12 per cent of fires are started by cigarette butts, so it is important that we each do our bit to keep WA safe and litter free, whether through the enforcement process or community education."

The Minister said the Bill to amend the Litter Act complements the passage of amendments to the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* in November 2010, which created the offence of unlawful dumping of waste, with a fine of up to \$125,000.



Baiting program targets Indian Ocean Territories



Senior Research Scientist Dave Algar with a bait suspension device.

WORK to improve the conservation values of Australia's Indian Ocean Territories was recently undertaken as DEC employees took trips to Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands to perform baiting and control programs for introduced species.

Senior Principal Research Scientist and Fauna Conservation Program Leader Keith Morris said the control of introduced animal species, particularly predators, is one of the most important native fauna conservation issues in Australia.

"A key part of the Fauna Conservation Program's work involves developing efficient cat, fox and rat baiting programs and carrying them out in the field," he said.

"We have recently returned from Direction Island in the Cocos (Keeling) group where we laid out 1,200 ground and tree-mounted bait stations to eradicate the introduced black rat."

Keith said the rats were introduced to this island in 1826 after a shipwreck and have since spread to all of the other 25 islands in the Cocos group.

"The bait stations were monitored three weeks after they had been set and the results were very encouraging; with the level of bait take reducing significantly. This indicates that the numbers of rats present had declined and were hopefully heading for extinction," he said.

"Baiting was also undertaken on nearby Home Island to stop rats re-invading Direction Island.

"Monitoring on both islands will continue, and if the rat eradication on Direction Island is successful, the federal government will consider reintroducing the threatened Cocos buff-banded rail, a bird that was once abundant on all the islands."

This eradication is part of a broader, four-year Caring for our Country-funded program to eradicate introduced rats and mice from six WA islands.

"So far house mice have been eradicated from Three Bays Island in the Shark Bay World Heritage area, and a preliminary black rat survey of Dirk Hartog Island has been undertaken. Unfortunately a second attempt to eradicate the Pacific rat

from Adele Island, off the Kimberley coast, failed. Another attempt using a helicopter-borne bait bucket will be undertaken in 2012. Sunday Island, off One Arm Point, will also be targeted in collaboration with traditional owners," Keith said.

Native species on Christmas Island will also benefit from a federally-funded cat control program, following a recent four-month visit from Senior Research Scientist Dave Algar.

"In addition to a trapping program, which resulted in the removal of almost 200 feral cats, we conducted a baiting campaign that involved hanging baits on bait suspension devices. The baits had to be suspended to prevent land crabs from monopolising them. Baits were located in the field over a 20-day period," Dave said.

"Between 36 and 49 feral cats were poisoned. This drop in cat numbers will mean a significant reduction in the threat to iconic species such as the red-tailed tropicbird, whose numbers have declined dramatically over the past five years because of cat predation on nesting birds."

Keith said this work was due recognition of WA's expertise in island management by the federal government and both trips highlighted the value of islands to nature conservation to Australia.

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