



In this issue

- Message from DEC Acting Director General, Mr Jim Sharp
- Flora species named in Director General's honour
- Beetles show benefit of mosaic burns
- Easter fun at the Perth Hills
- Long-standing DEC staffers retire

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Message from DEC Acting Director General, Mr Jim Sharp

KEIRAN MCNAMARA, Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation, died peacefully on the night of Thursday 28 March in Hollywood Private Hospital. He was 58 years old.

Keiran (pictured) is survived by his wife Anne, daughter Sarah, sons Peter and Ian, and extended family in Western Australia and New South Wales.

On behalf of the department, I offer my sincere condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

Keiran was deeply touched and comforted by the expressions of appreciation, care and support he received following his announcement on 12 March that he would not continue in his role as Director General due to a terminal illness.

A funeral will be held at Karrakatta Cemetery at 1.30pm on Friday 5 April.



Flora species named in Director General's honour

A REMARKABLE and significant new species discovered in late 2011 in the Pilbara has been named in honour of Keiran McNamara.

The species, *Cochlospermum macnamarae*, is currently only known from a single population of around 180 plants on a granite outcrop south of Port Hedland. It is a deciduous shrub, losing its leaves in the dry season and often producing its spectacular yellow flowers while still leafless. Many visitors to the Kimberley and other areas in far northern Australia will be familiar with its close relatives such as the yellow kapok (*C. fraseri*), as they are a striking feature of tropical monsoonal landscapes.

The discovery of *Cochlospermum macnamarae* in the arid Pilbara is surprising and noteworthy, and an indication that many new species, even prominent ones such as this, remain to be discovered.

The species was named after Keiran in recognition of the considerable support he

provided over many years to conservation science including taxonomic research at the WA Herbarium. This support directly resulted in the discovery and naming of 154 new plant species, a remarkable legacy.

The paper describing *C. macnamarae* can be found in the WA Herbarium's journal *Nuytsia* at <http://florabase.dec.wa.gov.au/nuytsia/>.



Public service career summary



- Keiran McNamara graduated in natural resources from the University of New England in 1976.
- He then spent seven years with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in Canberra.
- He joined CALM in July 1985 and went on to become CALM's Director of Nature Conservation in December 1991 and its CEO in July 2001.
- When the then Government amalgamated CALM and the Department of Environment to form DEC in July 2006, Keiran was appointed as Director General of the agency and has since served in that role.

Beetles show benefit of mosaic burns

A STUDY aimed at determining how mosaic burning supports biodiversity is using the humble beetle as an indicator of our native animals' resilience to fire.

Research by DEC has shown that burning the landscape under mild conditions in a mosaic pattern can benefit over two-thirds of beetle species in the southern forests of WA—a reflection of what happens with larger animals.

DEC researcher Paul Van Heurck said the objective of a mosaic burn was to break up the area into longer unburnt and recently burnt areas, and to make it patchy to conserve different habitats.

"We've collected more than 400 different beetle species from areas in Mount Roe National Park, north of Walpole, over the past six years in one of the most in-depth invertebrate studies ever undertaken in Australia," he said.

"What we're seeing is that different species thrive at different time intervals after fire, with two-thirds only found in specific

fire zones. About a third of those that are dependent on particular fuel ages prefer patchily burnt areas while another third like habitats created after bushfire."

Paul said the study was part of DEC Science Division's fire mosaic research project.

"What we're trying to do is learn from what Aboriginal people have done for thousands of years, where they burnt in a patchy mosaic manner, sometimes as often as every three years in many south-west ecosystems," he said.

"Beetles are good bio-indicators of the state of the environment—one out of every five named species on the planet is some sort of beetle. Because they are short-lived, the effects of inappropriate fire regimes can be seen in beetles earlier than larger species, which depend on them for survival."

The study is funded by DEC and Curtin University with the help of volunteers from Manjimup, Walpole and university students from Perth.



Researcher Paul Van Heurck leads a team through a Walpole Caldyanup swampland.



Easter festivities at the Perth Hills Centre.

Easter fun at the Perth Hills



THE Perth Hills Centre in Mundaring again hosted the annual Easter Bilby Family Fun Day on Saturday 30 March. The event featured a traditional egg hunt, crafts, activities and the opportunity to meet a real Easter bilby.

The popular event, run by DEC, provided people with the opportunity to have a family outing in Perth's magnificent bushland, where both adults and children can enjoy a range of activities.

Program coordinator Jill Francis said the Easter Bilby Family Fun Day was a great success, with many families enjoying the festivities.

"Autumn is a lovely time in the hills for families to bring a picnic and spend the day," she said.

"Activities on offer included an enchanting storytelling of the Easter Bilby, bilby mask and puppet crafts and an egg hunt to collect special treasures left by the Easter Bilby.

"The highlight of the day was an up-close encounter with a real life bilby."

The day is part of DEC's *Nearer to Nature* program, which provides the community with unique, enjoyable activities that help participants discover the beautiful natural areas in and around Perth.

The program's overall aim is to increase the community's environmental awareness, knowledge and skills, including the related heritage of Indigenous and European cultures.

The Perth Hills Centre is located in Beelu National Park, near Mundaring Weir, and is a focal point for people seeking information about national parks, regional parks, picnic facilities, walk and bike trails and the interpretive activities offered in and around Perth.

Bookings are essential, and can be made by email to n2n@dec.wa.gov.au. For information please contact the Perth Hills Centre between 8.30am and 4.30pm on 9295 2244 or visit www.dec.wa.gov.au/n2n or www.facebook.com/decn2n.



Long-standing DEC staffers retire

Two dedicated staff members have recently retired after long, successful careers protecting and conserving our environment – Director Regional Policy and Projects Alan Walker and Nature Protection Branch Manager Dave Mell, both men commencing their careers in 1967.

Alan Walker



After a 46-year career dedicated to the protection, management and sustainable use of Western Australian forests, lands and waters, and encouraging the development

of staff who work in these areas, Alan Walker has retired.

Alan's career included many roles, such as district manager, regional manager, co-author of the 1992 draft forest management plan, Regional Forest Agreement manager and director of Regional Services Division.

South West Regional Manager Bob Chandler gave a speech at Alan's farewell function in which he acknowledged Alan's personal and professional integrity and natural disposition for leadership.

"Alan managed the largest team in the department; leadership is the premium requisite of the role and he has it in spades," Bob said.

As Director of Regional Services, Alan advanced the regional delivery of the department's programs by integrating industry regulation services, winning significant firefighting resources, making south-west forest resources and personnel available for statewide use, developing a good neighbour policy and overseeing the landmark 'smoke and grapes' Supreme court case.

In a personal letter of appreciation Director General Keiran McNamara acknowledged that Alan's professional approach, strategic thinking and interpersonal skills would be sorely missed.

Dave Mell



On 1 February 2013, staff gathered at the Western Australian Conservation Science Centre to farewell Nature Protection Branch Manager Dave Mell.

Dave's farewell event included words of appreciation spoken by Nature Conservation Director Gordon Wyre, Acting Director General Jim Sharp, Acting Regional Services Division Director Kelly Gillen and Principal Compliance Officer (Central) Kevin Morrison.

Dave began his career in 1967, when he joined the then Department of Fisheries and Fauna as a cadet fisheries inspector in Perth and Pemberton.

After spending a couple of years as a wildlife officer in Perth, Pingelly and Albany, Dave was called upon for national service and temporarily left his wildlife focus to complete his duty, before heading back into the folds of his chosen career.

Dave's successful investigations into parrot nest robbing, illegal kangaroo shooting and unlawful possession of reptiles put him on the path to senior and then chief wildlife officer.

Among many career highlights he initiated a joint research project into DNA profiling of cockatoos and pioneered the use of this technology, which significantly reduced false breeding claims by aviculturists. He also led the first successful whale rescue in WA and became Nature Protection Branch Manager in 2002.

Dave will be greatly missed and remembered for his strong work ethic.

