

Yarning Time

Issue 8, June 2017



Dr Stephen van Leeuwen
 Chair
 Aboriginal Employee Reference Group

Message from the AERG Chair

Welcome to the eighth issue of the Department of Parks and Wildlife's Yarning Time.

The Aboriginal Heritage Unit (AHU) and the Aboriginal Employee Reference Group (AERG) have established *Yarning Time* to:

- provide an update on Aboriginal staff news;
- inform all staff of the developments in Aboriginal affairs in the department; and
- share stories on the department's engagement with Aboriginal people.

Please have a read and enjoy.

Dr Stephen van Leeuwen.

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Department changes announced

WA Premier Hon Mark McGowan MLA recently announced major changes aimed at delivering a more efficient public sector.

From 1 July 2017, the Department of Parks and Wildlife will merge with the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Zoological Parks Authority and Rottnest Island Authority to form the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Mr Mark Webb PSM has been appointed to the role of interim Director General of the new department.

More information is available from the [Premier's media statement](#).

Employee news

Parks and Wildlife is committed to increasing the representation of Aboriginal employees working within the agency at all levels, occupations and locations.

Staff

There are currently 62 Aboriginal staff members working for the department. This is a great achievement as retention of staff is a huge focus for the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

Around the State

Prescribed Burning in the Great Victoria Desert with Spinifex Rangers

Parks and Wildlife rangers teamed up with Spinifex Rangers for the first time to conduct a series of prescribed burns in the Great Victorian Desert during the spring 2016 prescribed burning season.

Goldfields regional fire coordinator Ryan Butler said one of the key benefits of the burn was to expand the department's relationship with the Spinifex people and increase joint management of the Great Victoria Desert Nature Reserve and surrounding lands.

"The program was a good indicator of the great benefits and challenges of working with traditional owner groups, and how over time, trust and engagement will benefit all parties with future joint management programs," Mr Butler said.

The burning took place near Ilkurlka Roadhouse with members from the Tjuntjuntjara community. Parks and Wildlife provided a plane, pilot, fire truck, equipment and experienced staff members to participate in both aerial and ground-based burning.

Ryan said the aim was to create finer-scale mosaic fire scars in the landscape in order to reduce the size of large bushfires in summer.

The rangers worked together discussing where the aerial burning should take place each morning, taking into account weather, wind speed and direction. An elder and cultural advisor accompanied the crew to provide guidance on the location of the culturally significant sites. They used the Fulcrum app as a means of recording and storing biodiversity information and to identify ideal sites for future burns.



*Parks and Wildlife staff and the Spinifex rangers prepare to carry out a prescribed burn.
Photo – Parks and Wildlife.*



Mark Cowan with school kids from Wiluna and Leonora.



The team after putting in the sites in August 2016.

Kurrara Kurrara (Earaheedy) Biological Survey

In September, the Goldfields Region Nature Conservation team embarked on a two year project to survey the mammal and reptile fauna of Kurrara Kurrara. With help from Mark Cowan from Science and Conservation Division, the team spent seven nights trapping on the western side of the reserve. These sites will be trapped again in late summer/early autumn in 2017, and then the team will install and trap on the eastern side of the reserve in late 2017 and early 2018.

The survey provides employment opportunities for the Martu rangers, with a group of male and female rangers helping to install the trapping sites in August this year. The rangers will also come out and help with trapping and the female rangers do their own traditional surveys at each site, which will also provide data to our surveys.

The survey also provided opportunities for the local school students to come out and learn about their traditional lands. In total 51 people including 20 students from Wiluna and Leonora joined us on site for three days of learning that blends traditional ecological knowledge with western science.

Overall this round of trapping was a success with nine species of small mammal captured and 42 species of reptile.



Female Martu rangers with Parks and Wildlife survey crew and ranger coordinators.

Reducing bushfire risk at Karijini Eco Retreat with Gumula Aboriginal Corporation

The department's Pilbara Region completed a prescribed burn at Karijini National Park in collaboration with Gumula Aboriginal Corporation, owners of Karijini Eco Retreat. The burn was conducted to create a low fuel buffer around the northern section of the eco retreat to protect the tents and other infrastructure within the lease area.

Karratha staff, Karijini and Millstream Chichester park rangers as well as Fire Management Development Program staff from the forest regions worked in conjunction with representatives from Gumula Aboriginal Corporation to carry out the burn.

Pilbara Region fire coordinator Pedro Palheiro said he was very satisfied with the results.

"The burn was completed under mild conditions, with rain the day before, which assisted in creating a mosaic of burnt and unburnt vegetation within the burn," he said.

"In addition to bushfire mitigation objectives achieved, the burn served to enhance and strengthen our existing relationship with Karijini Eco Retreat."

The importance of these proactive prescribed burns was further highlighted after a large bushfire affected a large portion of Karijini National Park in late 2016, causing considerable damage to infrastructure in the Dales Recreation Area. This bushfire was caused by lightning which can be highly variable in where it strikes. As such, this latest burn will ensure the eco retreat is better protected against any future lightning strikes.



Vicky Reynen from the Fire Management Development Program.



Kerri-Ann Hudson, a member of the department's Fire Management Development Program, taking part in the burn.

Goldfields Land and Sea Council joint venture operation with Parks and Wildlife

This joint venture initiative between the Goldfields Land and Sea Council (GLSC) and Parks and Wildlife was established to tackle the ongoing soil erosion issue in Credo Conservation Reserve. The importance of 'conserving country' is the backbone of this conservation initiative.

With the expertise and experience of the GLSC rangers, jarrah pickets were placed in specially designated areas on the soil erosion site that, with the installation of native vegetation (Murren bush- *Acacia acuminata subspecies burkittii*) into these picket plots, would essentially slow down the water flow, subsequently allowing grass, native vegetation seed and alien pioneer vegetation to establish itself within these rafts of native vegetation.

The specific native vegetation selected to act as suitable brush packing was the Murren bush otherwise known as the fine leaf jam (*Acacia acuminata subsp burkittii*) due to its fine leaf structure that effectively acts as a brush to stop seeds and soils debris when the flow of water is gentle enough.

The Murren bush proved to be an excellent plant type to assist in trapping grass seeds, invasive plant pioneer weeds and indigenous plant species such as the Acacias used. Reference photographs have been taken and continual monitoring of the site will take place.

Regional leader PVS, Mac Jensen said that overall the excellent help and expertise of the Goldfields Land and Sea Council Rangers together with the Parks and Wildlife Staff involvement allowed for the success of the conservation project.



Jarrah pickets at the designated areas on the soil erosion site.



GLSC Rangers together with the Parks and Wildlife Staff involved in the project.

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa Martu Rangers visit Swan Coastal District

Swan Coastal District staff recently hosted the Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa Martu rangers from Jigalong at the Wanneroo work centre and Yanchep National Park. On a stopover as part of a trip to Alice Springs, the rangers were keen to take up an opportunity to see the work Parks and Wildlife does in the south-west of the State after working with departmental staff on their own country.

The day included a demonstration of the department's fires trucks and a tour of Yanchep National Park, including a visit to Crystal Cave.

The Martu rangers from Jigalong and Parks and Wildlife staff have a long history of close collaborative work, managing populations of endangered black-flanked rock wallabies, conducting feral animal control and fire management across Martu country including in Karlamilyi National Park. Martu country is located in the eastern Pilbara region and includes the national park and a large section of the Canning Stock Route. It spans three desert bioregions and 15 million hectares.

Karlamilyi itself is WA's largest and most remote national park, at about 1.3 million hectares.

In September 2016, Parks and Wildlife scientist Judy Dunlop collaborated with the Martu rangers on a project to trap a northern quoll in Karlamilyi National Park. It was the first live quoll seen in the area in about 50 years.



Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa Martu rangers at Crystal Cave in Yanchep National Park.

Notable archaeologist donates new collection for Parks and Wildlife library

More than 120 books were added to the department's conservation library recently following a personal donation from notable archaeologist Sylvia Hallam. In 1975 Sylvia authored '*Fire and Hearth: A study of Aboriginal usage and European usurpation in south-western Australia*', an important, scholarly work on the subject.

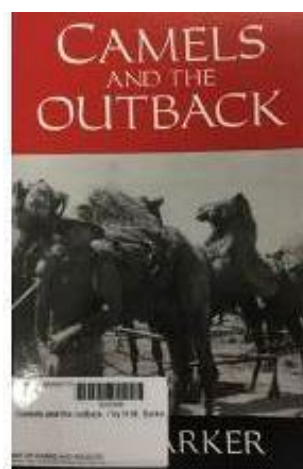
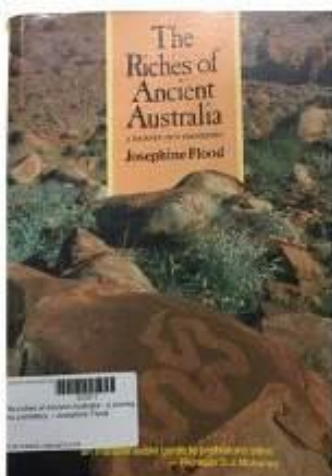
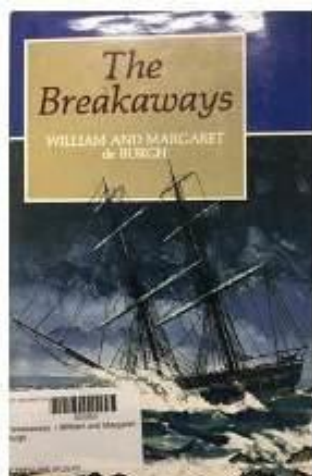
A pioneer in Australian archaeology, she completed her tertiary education at Murdoch University and a Master of Arts and PhD at Cambridge University. She was elected to the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1984 when she was Associate Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at The University of Western Australia.

Librarian Lisa Wright said the new books were a significant contribution to the library.

"The books cover mostly Western Australian history and Aboriginal people, with a few other topics also available," Ms Wright said.

The new titles include:

- *Altered ecologies: fire, climate and human influence on terrestrial landscapes* (2010) Simon G. Haberle, Janelle Stevenson and Matthew Prebble
- *Australia's vanishing race* (1934) by Frederic Wood Jones
- *Batavia's graveyard: the true story of the mad heretic who led history's bloodiest mutiny* (2003) Mike Dash
- *Bruce Rock: the story of a district* (1959) by John K. Ewers foreword J.M. Stewart and illustrations by Robin E.A. McDonald
- *Family history of William and Margaret Forrest from their arrival in Australind, Western Australia, 1842* (1982) compiled by Alison and Dinee Muir
- *A handbook to the Marsupialia and Monotremata* (1894) by Richard Lydekker
- *The history of Australian exploration from 1788-1888: compiled from State documents, private papers and the most authentic sources of information* (1983) Issued under the auspices of the Governments of the Australian Colonies by Ernest Favenc
- *In the beginning: a perspective on traditional Aboriginal societies* (1991) Trevor K. Jacob
- *Pila nguru: the spinifex people* (2002) Scott Cane
- *Reflections: profiles of 150 women who helped make Western Australia's history* (1978) edited by Daphne Popham



Assortment of the book covers now at the department's conservation library.

Marine science Aboriginal Mentoring Program

Ashley Merino is an Aboriginal university student undertaking a work placement with the marine science Aboriginal Mentoring Program at Parks and Wildlife as part of the department's Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES).

Through the AES, pathways into the department are created through Indigenous cadetships, traineeships and work experience which Ashley is taking part in while completing her final year of a Bachelor of Science marine biology at the University of Western Australia (UWA). In addition to her work placement Ashley volunteered to assist on a research trip.

This is Ashley's account of her work experience in the field.

"In early December last year I volunteered to assist on a turtle research trip to Thevenard Island for the Department of Parks and Wildlife. For the few days I was part of this team, I was lucky enough to see at least 20 turtles a night, another benefit was the refreshing distance from the city. I managed to learn and observe firsthand the requirements of recording, tagging, and releasing turtles. It's incredible seeing with your own eyes a turtle going through the effort of digging multiple body pits to form the perfect nest to lay eggs. Sneaking up behind a turtle, turning on the red-light head torch and watching the eggs fall onto a small pile in a deep hole is something hard to forget, undoubtedly my favourite sight from the experience. I had the opportunity to clamp flipper tags and to take a biopsy while the turtle was in her post-laying trance, although this trance quickly ended when she tried biting my partner after he inserted a small microchip in the turtle's shoulder. The strength of the turtles was also surprising especially compared to their delicate and graceful folding of sand when covering up their eggs and the care they put into disguising their nest. It is definitely not easy to stop these determined mothers once they have decided it is time to go back to the sea. I learnt a lot from simply watching the laying and recording process. This was my first field experience, and definitely effective inspiration compared to the typical everyday study in a class environment."

Ashley says that volunteering for Parks and Wildlife has been very educational and enlightening. "I have learnt how to appropriately analyse data using computer programs and databases, which has also been useful for my university studies. Parks and Wildlife has given me more than a simple 'Community Involvement' entry in my resume. I have seen and have had a taste first hand of my dream outcome after university – a perfect balance of working in the office and out in the field, all for conservational purposes. Parks and Wildlife has provided me with new inspiration and I now have a specific goal, career-wise set in my sights."



Ashley Merino recording the turtles measurements.



Ashley Merino with turtle in the background.

Clontarf students visit Penguin Island and the Herbarium

On 7 December 2016, students from Clontarf Girrawheen Academy and their teachers took the ferry over to Penguin Island where they met Parks and Wildlife staff. The group was taken on a walk around the Island with Theda “Teddy” Morrissey followed by a talk from John Snowden (Riverpark Officer) about working for the department. To end the session, interpretation officer and guide, Jane Dawson gave the group a talk during the penguin feeding and a behind the scenes look at a young penguin chick.

This was followed by a tour of the Herbarium by research scientist Ryonen Butcher and the day finished off with a talk from Assistant Director of Science Stephen Van Leeuwen. Overall it was a great day with the students gaining a valuable insight into what it involves working for the department.



Clontarf students viewing the penguins at the Penguin Island Discovery Centre.



Clontarf students at Penguin Island.



Ryonen Butcher showing the Clontarf students a plant specimen on the Herbarium tour.



Stephen Van Leeuwen and the Clontarf students at Kensington.



Clontarf students on the Herbarium tour.

Clontarf Academy in Geraldton visit Kalbarri National Park

On 30 March, a group of 13 to 14 year old Clontarf Academy students from John Willcock College in Geraldton visited Kalbarri National Park to see first-hand some of the work opportunities available within the park.

They met Aboriginal trainees working on the roadworks contract currently operating within the park. A senior representative from the civil contractor Watpac addressed the group, explaining what training was being conducted and how the skills gained would be of long term benefit to the trainees.

The academy students drove through the site, where they saw the work being conducted and got a feel for the type of machinery under operation. This included a talk on how the Aboriginal employment and training program was set up and highlighted it as a win-win for both the Nanda people and contractor.

In addition, Nanda Aboriginal assistant rangers Michael Davies and Stephen Eley met with the group. They explained what their job as a ranger entails and talked about the wonderful opportunity to get back on country. The response from the academy students was very positive and many indicated that they would be interested in this type of employment.

Regional operations officer in the Midwest Region, Rory Chapple said both Mike and Stephen presented themselves professionally and spoke well to the group.

“They should be commended for the role they played on the day as mentors for the young academy students,” Mr Chapple said.



Clontarf students and their teachers with Michael Davies and Stephen Eley at Kalbarri National Park.



Clontarf students and Parks and Wildlife staff at Kalbarri National Park.



Parks and Visitors Services (PVS) workshop on Aboriginal engagement

The PVS training strategy endorsed an annual PVS workshop as a primary means of professional development, sharing information, work shopping, networking and learning more about the PVS division.

A two-day event was held in late April at Kensington jam-packed with talks, presentations, displays and master classes in PVS topics. It showcased the latest in recreation trail design and construction, PVS business, recreation planning and design, visitor communication and Aboriginal heritage and culture.

The event was started with a Welcome to Country given by Noel Nannup, a well-respected Whadjuk Noongar Elder known for his story telling and work as a cultural guide, instructor and mentor. Noel's welcome was followed by an opening address from Director General Jim Sharp.

Master class

In addition to the presentation there were a number of different master classes that were conducted over the two day event which were delivered to about 145 participants.

Eighteen staff from a range of divisions and regions attended the master class on Engaging with Aboriginal communities on joint management, heritage and customary activities.

This was presented by Assistant Director PVS, Tracy Shea and senior operations officer Dr Simon Choo, as well as AHU staff Belinda Cox, Rhonda Murphy, Karim Khan and Veronica Wilson.

It was a very informative session with many of the participants sharing their experiences and knowledge of engaging with Aboriginal communities.



Participants at the master class on Engaging with Aboriginal communities on Joint Management, Heritage & Customary Activities held in Kensington.



Stephen Eley and Veronica Wilson at the Master class.

Culture in the Parks Metro Forum

On 16 March, Parks and Wildlife along with the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC) held a Culture in the Parks Forum at Kensington to share the tourism opportunities available to Aboriginal people.

The forum was delivered in partnership with WAITOC as they play a significant role in Aboriginal tourism development. The forum was opened by the department's longest serving Wadjuk employee, Trevor Wally, followed by an address from Parks and Wildlife Director General Jim Sharp. Rhonda Murphy (AHU) gave a presentation on the department's Culture in the Parks program.

WAITOC chief executive officer Robert Taylor and WAITOC chair Tahn Donovan both presented, followed by operators Troy Bennell from Ngalang Wongi Aboriginal Cultural Tours and Trevor Stack from TK Stack Consultants who shared their experience in the operation of indigenous tours.

Aboriginal tourism is a unique industry that allows Aboriginal people to participate in a meaningful way while still maintaining and valuing their cultural heritage.

It is well known that international and national tourists want to experience an authentic Aboriginal experience. The Aboriginal tourism industry is currently developing at a rapid rate and the forum highlighted the opportunities available to operators in the parks. The day was enjoyed by all who attended. Please see the short video made by PICA of the day [Click Here](#).



Mr George Walley (Mandjoogordap Dreaming) speaking with Vaughn Chapple (Senior Marine Ranger) at the Culture in the Parks Forum.



Michael Hayden Sr and Michael Hayden Jr (Njaki Njaki Tours) at Culture in the Parks Forum.



Tahn Donovan (Chair WAITOC) speaking at the Culture in the Parks Forum.



Troy Bennel tourism operator (Ngalang Wongi Aboriginal Cultural Tours) speaking at Culture in the Parks Forum.



Robert Taylor (CEO WAITOC) and Jim Sharp (Director General) at Culture in the Parks Forum.

National Reconciliation Week

National Reconciliation Week (NRW) runs annually across Australia from 27 May to 3 June. It celebrates and builds on the respectful relationships shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians. This year we celebrated two major milestones in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history. These were the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum and the 25th anniversary of the High Court of Australia's Mabo decision.

In celebration of NRW, the department ran a number of events open to all staff.

The week began with Kaalitj Ngort Koondaam (Dragonfly Dreaming), where a Welcome to Country was given by Whadjuk Elder Marie Taylor and a story told by Dr Noel Nannup. This was followed by a walk to learn about the significance of Djarlgarro Beeliar, the Canning River, and the surrounding area of Bull Creek known as Gabbiljee.

Staff from the Bunbury, Collie and Kensington offices visited Roelands Village, located on picturesque farmland deep in the Collie River Valley, for cultural yarns and heard the sometimes happy, but mostly sad stories of people who experienced life at the mission.

Whadjuk man Walter McGuire gave a Welcome to Country to close Reconciliation Week and delivered a short talk on the significance of the Crawley area to Whadjuk people at the Matilda Bay Yarn by the River event.

AHU manager Rhonda Murphy said it was great to see such an excellent staff turnout at each of the events, with representation across all the divisions.

"Our department is committed to building respectful relationships with Aboriginal people so we can work together to care for country," Ms Murphy said.

"Reconciliation week is about respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and valuing justice and equity for all Australians."



River Guardians Dragonfly Dreaming trail

In recognition of Reconciliation Week, staff from Parks and Wildlife participated in the *River Guardians'* Dragonfly Dreaming walking tour of the new interpretation facilities recently installed at Bateman Park in Brentwood. The information points enable visitors to engage with the interpretation in a variety of ways, showcasing the natural and cultural heritage of this area. A Welcome to Country was presented by Whadjuk Elder Marie, followed by a story from Dr Noel Nannup about the significance of the site. Marie explained that a seat was strategically placed under a large tree on site as a place for healing.

Staff also learnt about the Brentwood Living Stream (Dragonfly Dreaming) project and how it was implemented. The Living Stream was built as a project of the Bull Creek Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) and was completed through a partnership between the Parks and Wildlife, City of Melville, South East Regional Centre for Urban Landcare (SERCUL), Main Roads and Water Corporation, with a significant portion of the project funded through a grant received from the federal government's National Landcare Program.

The living stream provides habitat for native animals such as waterbirds and dragonflies, while improving the quality of the water that flows through it before it reaches the Bull Creek and Canning River.

Marie said that the trail was named Kaalitj - Ngort Koondaam (Dragonfly Dreaming) after Whadjuk Elders were overwhelmed with blue dragonflies on their first visit to the site. Marie encouraged everyone to care for their environment and the Brentwood site especially.

"We can all be RiverWise and help to improve the water quality in our streams and rivers by reducing fertiliser use," Maria said.

For more information, visit www.riverguardians.com.

You can download the trail here: <http://geotourist.com/tours/1019> - Kaalitj - Ngort Koondaam



Belinda Cox, Whadjuk Elder Marie Taylor, PVS Director Peter Sharp, Rivers and Estuaries Division Director Rod Hughes and Whadjuk Elder Dr Noel Nannup.



PVS Director Peter Sharp, Marie Taylor and Dr Noel Nannup speaking at Kaalitj Ngort Kiindaam – Dragonfly Dreaming event.

Roelands Village- Woolkabunning Kiaka- *“We’ve Been There, Left and Returned to Seven Hills”*:

On 30 May, staff from the Bunbury, Collie and Kensington offices visited the Roelands Village, located on picturesque farmland deep in the Collie River valley. The property was originally a farm, later used as a mission to house Aboriginal children removed from families across Western Australia.

Today it is about creating an area where culture can be rediscovered and opportunities can begin to grow.

Staff enjoyed a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony, conducted by local Aboriginal Tour Operator and artist Troy Bennell, cultural yarns and heard the sometimes happy and sad stories of people who experienced life at the mission.

PVS program leader Peter Henderson said he has read and heard stories about the stolen generation before.

“Hearing the stories at a former mission directly from people that had spent much of their childhood there was very confronting,” Mr Henderson said.

“It’s hard to understand how appallingly Aboriginal people, especially children, were treated. Despite their experiences as children it was wonderful to hear how Syd, Francis and Len are involved in local and national programs to support, encourage and achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal people into the future”.

Our visit to Roelands Village contributed towards achieving some of Parks and Wildlife’s Reconciliation Action Plan strategies for:

- reconciliation outcomes
- fee for service opportunities (Aboriginal tourism)
- engaging with Aboriginal people
- economic development
- personal development of staff
- building relationships
- cultural immersion as part of the cultural learning program



Smoking ceremony at Roelands Village.



Participants at the Roeland Village event.

Reconciliation Bridge Walk – Sorry Day May 26 2017

Staff from the Bunbury Regional Office and AHU joined more than 400 others from the Bunbury community for the Reconciliation Bridge Walk, followed by a Welcome to Country, flag raising ceremony (Australian, Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander), and stories from members of the stolen generation which were both sad and hopeful with positive messages for today and the future.

25th Anniversary Mabo Decision – Native Title

Thirty-six staff attended a lunchtime forum held at Kensington. A short documentary on Eddie Mabo was shown followed by a presentation by Dr Simon Choo on the department's engagement with traditional owners through native title. South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council CEO Wayne Nannup spoke of the importance of native title to Aboriginal people.



Dr Simon Choo talking to attendees at the 25th Anniversary Mabo Decision Native Title event.



Wayne Nannup (CEO South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council) presenting at the lunchtime forum.

Matilda Bay- Yarn by the River

Whadjuk man Walter McGuire gave a Welcome to Country to close reconciliation week and delivered a short talk on the significance of the Crawley area to Whadjuk people. Walter also discussed this year's reconciliation week theme, which is the reflection of two significant anniversaries in Australia's reconciliation journey – 50 years since the 1967 referendum and 25th Anniversary of the Mabo decision.



Walter McGuire and Ben Ansell at Matilda Bay Yarn by the River event.



Participants at the Matilda Bay – Yarn by the River NRW event.

2017 Graduation and Awards Ceremony

Parks and Wildlife had its annual Graduation and Awards Ceremony on 9 June. The event recognised a number of programs and awards from the Department of Parks and Wildlife, Department of Environment Regulation and the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority. Congratulations to all the award recipients and graduates.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy (AES) aims to celebrate the success of Aboriginal staff. The achievements are acknowledged at the annual graduation ceremony.

The Graduates

Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES)

Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management

- Augustine Badal (Broome)
- Kieran Cross (Denham)
- Nathan Hunter (Broome)
- Clay Pert (Kununurra)

Certificate IV in Conservation and Land Management

- Jason Fong (Broome)
- Jason Richardson (Broome)
- Jonnie Saegenschnitter (Yanchep National Park)

Award Recipients

Aboriginal Trainee of the year went to Jason Richardson. Jason has excelled in his studies over the past three years completing certificates II, III and IV in Conservation and Land Management to a high standard. He is a descendent of the Yawuru-Bard people and maintains strong links to culture and country – aspiring to one day become district manager of the West Kimberley.

Aboriginal trainee supervisor of the year went to Mark Varley. Mark is the senior ranger at Yanchep National Park who oversees a complex works program that he adapted to enable MATES trainee Jonnie Saegenschnitter to meet the theory and practical skills outcomes of the MATES traineeship.

The Kwabalitch Award went to Jonnie Saegenschnitter. The award recognises a trainee who has demonstrated an admirable level of dedication throughout their studies and a commitment to personal and professional development. Jonnie is a valued conservation employee with the Swan Coastal District at Yachep National Park. He has excelled in learning and gaining new skills and is always willing to share his culture and has played a critical role in mentoring many Aboriginal students.



MATES Graduates Jonnie Saegenschnitter, Kieran Cross, Augustine Badal, Jason Richardson, Jason Fong, Daniel Balint (MATES Coordinator), Nathan Hunter and Clay Pert.



Mark Varley the recipient of the Trainee Supervisor of the Year Award for 2017 and Honourable Stephen Dawson MLC Minister for Environment and Disability Services.



Jason Richardson recipient of the Aboriginal Trainee of the year Award for 2017 and Stephen Dawson Minister for Environment and Disability Services.



Jonnie Saegenschmitter recipient of the Kwabalitch Award for 2017 and Stephen Dawson Minister for Environment and Disability Services.

Aboriginal engagement accomplishments achieved during Jim Sharp's time as Director General

During Jim Sharp's time as Director General (2013 - 2017) and Deputy Director General under the former Department of Environment and Conservation, many significant Aboriginal engagement initiatives were embarked upon and major milestones achieved.

The amendments to the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, which were made in 2012 and came into effect in 2013, recognise Aboriginal connection to lands and enable Aboriginal people to become more involved in managing land and using parks and reserves for customary activities. The new objectives were created to protect and conserve the value of the land, culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons, the capacity for joint management and provisions for customary activities. The objectives have helped the department build strong relationships with Aboriginal people and provide opportunities to resolve native title.

Along with the changes to the Act, policies and guidelines have been put in place to assist staff in implementing the new provisions.

Additional changes made in 2016 give the ability to jointly vest terrestrial reserves such as national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves.

There has been extensive fostering of partnerships with traditional owners, which has generated numerous positive outcomes for land management and Aboriginal employment opportunities. This was done in the Kimberley and throughout the rest of the State with an overall total of 30 Indigenous ranger groups partnering with the department and about 220 Aboriginal people employed to undertake fee-for-service work and other contract work in managing parks and reserves.

Enhancing the cultural richness of visitor experiences in national parks and reserves was a priority for the department and this was bolstered through the interaction with traditional owners, joint management, new and upgraded facilities in regional areas and the Culture in the Parks program. There are now 17 Aboriginal tour operators throughout the State with commercial licenses undertaking cultural tourism on the conservation estate providing visitors with unique experiences.



Director General Jim Sharp presenting the RAP at the 2013 Parks and Visitor Services conference.



Director General Jim Sharp signing the Eighty Mile Beach Marine Park agreement. Photo: Jennifer Eliot.

The department's first *Reconciliation Action Plan* (RAP) launched in 2013 strongly supports the requirements of the State's *Substantive Equality Policy Framework*. Through the RAP, the department is committed to the national reconciliation effort building better relationships between Aboriginal people and the wider community for the benefit of all Australians. Some of the key outcomes:

- Staff throughout the State participated in Reconciliation and NAIDOC Week events.
- About 1000 staff have undertaken the mandatory cultural awareness training, representing all divisions and regional locations.
- A number of department-managed areas, features and assets have been named using Aboriginal Languages.
- Acknowledgment of traditional owners signs installed on departmental buildings.

The MATES program provided on the job and formal vocational training to Aboriginal employees. In the Kimberley Ngarla and Nyangumarta rangers joined the department's Mentored Aboriginal Training and Employment Scheme (MATES) following the signing of Indigenous Land Use Agreements in 2014.

Murujuga National Park is jointly managed as a national park with Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation and Parks and Wildlife. Murujuga National Park was proclaimed the 100th national park on 17 January 2013.

Yawuru Birragun Conservation Park is jointly managed as a conservation park by the Yawuru Native Title Holders Aboriginal Corporation, Registered Native Title Body Corporate and Parks and Wildlife. The conservation park was proclaimed on 1 February 2016. The area of the conservation park is 7317ha.

Thirteen management plans were in preparation in 2016 and 2017. This included the finalisation of the following management plans for new parks in the Kimberley that are jointly managed with traditional owners:

- *Lalang-garram / Horizontal Falls and North Lalang-garram marine parks joint management plan*
- *North Kimberley Marine Park joint management plan*
- *Yawuru Nagulagun / Roebuck Bay Marine Park joint management plan*
- *Yawuru Birragun Conservation Park joint management plan*

Establishment of these new marine and terrestrial parks have been enabled through joint management agreements with traditional owners, including Dambimangari, Yawuru, Nyangumarta, Ngarla, Karajarri and Balangarra peoples.

The Aboriginal Employee Reference Group and the AHU would like to acknowledge the many achievements involving Aboriginal engagement made during your time as Director General. It has been an honour working with a Director General who showed such a strong commitment to strengthening the relationships between Aboriginal people and the department.

You encouraged and supported staff to achieve these positive outcomes. Thanks to your leadership the department has made a major contribution towards the national reconciliation effort. It is now well placed to continue moving in a positive direction into the future.

We wish you the best of luck and continued success for the future, Thank you Jim.

Updates

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Due to Parks and Wildlife merging with the Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Zoological Parks Authority and Rottnest Island Authority to form the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions the RAP has been placed on hold.

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training (ACAT)

Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training has now been successfully delivered to approximately 900 staff across WA since 2014.

Sessions are scheduled for the rest of the year. The training due to take place in South West Region at Collie and Busselton, Swan Region at Wanneroo and Mundaring, Mid West Region at Jurien Bay and Geraldton, the Wheatbelt at Narrogin, Kensington and finishing off the year in the South Coast Region at Albany and Esperance.

The AHU team and Learning and Development have worked together in partnership to facilitate and deliver this training and have a packed schedule ahead.



Thank you for all of your support and contributions to the last eight issues of Yarning Times.

Contributors

- Holly Raudino
- John Snowden
- Ashley Marino
- Rhonda Murphy
- Karim Khan
- Stephen van Leeuwen
- Dave Pickles
- Karla Graham
- Mac Jensen
- Ben Ansell
- Jacinta Overman
- Rachel Hutton
- Sophie Lisle-Williams
- Belinda Cox
- Tracy Churchill
- Rory Jay Chapple
- Marnie Giroud
- Perter Henderson
- Veronica Wilson
- Eva Farm
- Shem Bisluk
- Peter Nicholas
- Grace Milne

Contact

After the 30th June

Aboriginal Heritage Unit

Rhonda Murphy – 9219 8283 / rhonda.murphy@dbca.wa.gov.au