

Breakfast workshop outcomes and looking at US national parks

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Welcome to the first issue of *WA Parks Foundation News*, where you can find updates on the progress of Western Australia's peak body encouraging community involvement in caring for the State's national parks and conservation reserves.

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Breakfast workshop outcomes

attended a breakfast workshop held at Government House on Friday 16 October. The facilitated workshop was an opportunity to seek wider advice and input to progress the planning of a foundation or friends association for our national parks and conservation reserves.



Her Excellency, the Governor of Western Australia, commented on the discussion as follows:

“I think one message which resonates with me is that most participants see this as an initiative whose time has come and can make a major difference to our natural environment through conservation endeavours and engaging the community about our parks and conservation reserves.

“Also we see the proposed Foundation or Friends of National Parks as a ‘doing’ organisation, and a collaborator in terms of engaging other organisations, but not a ‘lobbying’ organisation. I think that this latter message will be important in ensuring that it achieves the wider level of engagement which will make a real difference to our national parks and conservation reserves.”

There was a considerable amount of energy and enthusiasm in the room. The emotional connection to country was obvious and there was a strong level of support for such a foundation.

Helen Hardcastle from Learning Horizons facilitated discussions and tables were asked to provide input on the role of the foundation, the strategic planning undertaken to date, membership, corporate governance, values, risks and opportunities.



Discussions over breakfast. Photo courtesy Richard McClellan

Points raised included:

- The desirability of market research to understand why some people use our national parks and reserves and what motivates them to do so, as well as to research as to why others don't.
- The foundation would act as a coordinator, connector and collaborator and work to conserve the natural environment.
- Proper planning and 'getting it right from the start' is critical to success
- The foundation needs to avoid being or being seen as a lobby group
- The initial focus of the foundation would be to work on projects in the peri-urban area around Perth, and potentially also the Pilbara region
- Some main priorities as a new group will be community involvement and engagement, undertaking conservation projects, focusing on getting people to value the parks and conservation reserves and to take care of them by providing experiences and informational material to enable the parks and conservation areas to be better appreciated.

Looking at US parks foundations

One of Western Australia's Conservation Commissioners and active contributor

has provided information regarding a number of successful parks foundations or associations in the USA.

The purpose of this research was to draw comparisons between the make-up of these organisations and determine any learnings that could be applied to the proposed WA Parks Foundation/Friends Association.

US experts recommended that four organisations be examined in more detail, namely:

- The National Parks Foundation
- The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- The Grand Canyon Association
- The Grand Teton National Park Foundation



Above: Grand Canyon National Park

Professor Dowling commented “After examination of all four, I find that the first two national foundations are probably more similar to what we are wishing to establish in Western Australia. The third one, The Grand Canyon Association, provides a contrast in that it is smaller and more community focused. The fourth one, The Grand Teton National Park Foundation has a lot less available information so I have not included it in the following comparative lists. The GTNPF was founded in 1997 to establish a visitor center.”

He compared the organisations’ background, purpose, mission, programs,

[You can read through his findings here:](#)

Improving your nature engagement levels

The National Parks Foundation in the USA has developed a light-hearted video aimed at increasing awareness about the importance of spending time outdoors. The video features an average man undergoing a consultation with a doctor about how not spending enough time outdoors is affecting his health.

The video is a great example of engaging an audience in an entertaining way to send an importance message.

[You can view the video here](#)



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