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Conservation science centre named in honour of Keiran McNamara



Above Premier Colin Barnett and Environment Minister Albert Jacob join Anne McNamara, daughter Sarah and son Ian for the unveiling of the plaque commemorating the naming of the Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre. **Right** The Premier examines a flora sample with Herbarium Curator Kevin Thiele.

Western Australia's state-of-the-art conservation science centre has been renamed in honour of the late Keiran McNamara—regarded as one of the state's most respected public servants.

Part of the department's headquarters in Kensington, the Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre was officially opened by Premier Colin Barnett and Environment Minister Albert Jacob on Tuesday 5 November.

The Premier said the centre was a fitting tribute to Keiran, the former Director General of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

"Keiran McNamara was an eminent public servant who was at the forefront of our state's scientific and conservation achievements. He was absolutely dedicated to conserving the plants and animals of WA," Mr Barnett said.

"This conservation centre is the result of his vision. It is now the largest integrated botanical research facility in the state. It has by far the best facilities of its kind in Australia and is equal to the world's leading facilities."

Keiran McNamara joined the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) in 1985 and went on to become CALM's Director of Nature Conservation in December 1991 and its CEO in July 2001. He was appointed as Director General of DEC in 2006 and served in that role until his death in March this year.

Mr Jacob said the centre was built at a cost of \$31 million and opened in 2010. Previously known as the Western Australian Conservation Science Centre, it underpinned the extensive flora conservation work being done throughout the state.

"This facility is testament to WA's progress and status as a significant worldwide contributor to plant scientific research," Mr Jacob said.

"It contains the DNA of WA's unique native plants and houses

the Western Australian Herbarium, which has a collection of almost 750,000 specimens, including original specimens from Matthew Flinders' historic expedition in 1801."

Mr Jacob said the Threatened Flora Seed Centre, laboratories and the botanical component of the state's Biological Survey Program were also part of the facility.



Staff come together for two conferences

Two major staff conferences—the biennial Aboriginal staff conference and the annual Parks and Visitor Services Division conference—were held over one week in mid October at the Keiran McNamara Conservation Science Centre in Kensington.

Aboriginal Heritage Unit Senior Project Officer Rhonda Murphy said 30 Aboriginal staff from across the state attended the Aboriginal conference from 14 to 16 October, representing a range of DPaW regions and divisions.

“We also had invited guests from Fairbridge Western Australia Inc, the Bunuba Ranger Program and Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation,” she said.

“Staff were updated on the strategic directions of DPaW, the implications of the recent amendments to the *Conservation and Land*

Management Act 1984 and Regulations, as well as Aboriginal-specific strategies the agency is pursuing.”

Rhonda said the conference featured three significant events; the presentation of the Eugene Winmar Award, certificates awarded for Recognition of Service, and the launch of the Reconciliation Action Plan.

“The Eugene Winmar Award for Excellence recognises outstanding performance and achievement. It is named in honour of DPaW’s longest serving Aboriginal staff member, Eugene Winmar, who started work at the Forests Department in 1971,” she said.

“This year’s recipient was Karim Khan from the department’s South West Native Title Unit in the Parks and Visitor Services Division. He was a very popular and worthy winner.”

Rhonda said the conference provided staff with opportunities to develop relationships, network, share ideas and build support for each other.

“This is so important for the retention of Aboriginal staff and is a key element of DPaW’s Aboriginal Employment Strategy,” she said.

On its final day, the Aboriginal staff conference came together with the first day of the Parks and Visitor Services (PVS) conference, with speakers on that day focusing on Aboriginal programs.

More than 100 PVS staff travelled from across the state to participate in the conference, which included educational seminars, field trips and social events.

Speakers from PVS, as well as esteemed and entertaining external presenters, discussed the latest developments in park management and offered different perspectives on the diversity of work done within the division, from tourism through to tenure and land management through to landscape design.

The guest speakers offered a fresh perspective to the conference with some new ideas for tourism and promoting parks to visitors. Well-known entrepreneur John Hughes gave a humorous yet enlightening presentation on customer service, noting that regardless of the work an organisation does, it all comes down to people, and in particular, trying to create ‘wow’ experiences for people.

The Wayne Schmidt Award, which recognises staff who have shown outstanding achievement and performance within PVS, was presented during the conference. For the first time in the award’s history, joint winners were announced: Architectural Draftsperson Steve Csaba and Donnelly District PVS Coordinator David Meehan.



Joint winners of the Wayne Schmidt Award Steve Csaba and David Meehan.



Participants at the Aboriginal staff conference. Photo – L-A Shibish

New book helps kids learn about marine parks

Learning about Western Australia's marine parks has become easier and more engaging for schoolchildren following the release of a new activity book and teacher's guide.

The *Discover Western Australia's marine parks* activity book and primary school teachers' guide, launched by Environment Minister Albert Jacob at Hillarys Beach last month, provides children with a fun and educational insight into marine parks.

The new publications were produced by DPaW with financial support from ExxonMobil Australia.

The activity guide and teacher's guide has been distributed free of charge in WA primary schools, and includes worksheets for upper primary students. It will enable teachers to incorporate marine information material into class plans.

The guides are an ideal way to introduce primary-aged students to the wonders of the state's marine life. WA has 16 marine

parks and reserves that protect marine biodiversity and provide opportunities for people to enjoy and appreciate this remarkable environment.

A teacher's guide for secondary students is planned for production in coming months.

These resources will complement two identification guides for boaters and the general public also produced by DPaW and ExxonMobil, *Marine wildlife of southern WA* and *Marine wildlife of north-west WA*.



News in brief

Final DEC annual report released

The final annual report for DPaW's predecessor, the Department of Environment and Conservation, has been released.

Annual Report Coordinator Liz Grant said the report was a collaborative effort that spanned the department.

"The coordinators from all the service areas did a fantastic job, so I thank them and the many content writers who found time while dealing with day-to-day issues and extra work required ahead of the impending departmental split," she said.

"Special mention must be made of the Finance team, in particular Amanda Klenke, who kept to tight timelines in producing all the required end-of-year figures.

"Many thanks also to directors, proofreaders and graphic designer, Lynne Whittle."

The 2012–13 annual report is available on both the [DPaW](#) and [Department of Environment Regulation](#) websites.

Swan River Trust to join DPaW

The Swan River Trust will be amalgamated with DPaW to provide better protection and management for the Swan and Canning river systems.

The amalgamation will provide significant benefits to river management and conservation, as well as increased opportunities for staff.

More than 50 Swan River Trust staff will join forces with about 1,600 DPaW staff, and will foster a greater sharing of knowledge and increase the department's capacity to deliver conservation outcomes.

Legislation to give effect to the amalgamation is currently being drafted and amendments will be made to both the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* and the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006*.

For more information see the full [media statement](#).

Fire crews recognised with National Medals

More than 1,840 years of experience in fire management was recognised last month when Environment Minister Albert Jacob presented National Medals to DPaW officers from the lower south-west.

The recipients are among 74 DPaW and Forest Products Commission staff in Manjimup, Pemberton, Northcliffe and Walpole who are involved in fire management.

The presentation included 19 medals for 15 years' service, 30 first clasps for 25 years' service, 22 second clasps for 35 years' service and three third clasps for 45 years' service.

Fire Management Services Branch Manager Murray Carter said national fire medals were highly regarded across the fire industry.

"They are greatly appreciated by DPaW staff who have their lengthy and dedicated service to the community recognised in this way," he said.

"Not only do DPaW fire management staff contribute significantly to WA's bushfire suppression efforts, the same staff are the backbone of the state's prescribed burning efforts, which is our key strategy for reducing the risk to the WA community posed by destructive bushfires."

Mr Jacob said eligibility for the medal required great skill, dedication and long-term commitment.

"The National Service Medal Awards are a small token of community recognition for the personal safety risks and the impacts on lifestyle that DPaW fire fighters endure in their roles."



Fire medal recipients Ray Flanagan and Judith Flanagan with Environment Minister Albert Jacob.

New facilities open in lower south-west

Visitors to the lower south-west of the state are now benefiting from several new nature-based tourism facilities near Pemberton and Walpole.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob officially opened three new facilities in mid October: at Coalmine Beach in Walpole–Nornalup National Park, Mount Frankland National Park and Gloucester National Park.

DPaW Frankland District Manager Allison Donovan said the key feature of work completed at Mount Frankland National Park was the new \$1.25 million Mount Frankland Wilderness Lookout, also known as Caldyanup Jinning, which in Nyoongar refers to 'Mount Frankland view'.

"The lookout provides universal access to 180-degree views of the Walpole Wilderness, which had previously only been available to people with the ability to climb to the top of Mount Frankland by many steps and a ladder," she said.

The lookout project has been complemented by upgraded paths, toilets, picnic areas and the addition of an impressive stone and steel arrival space shelter, which has already been used for a wedding ceremony.

Allison made special mention of Scott Standish, who dedicated many hours meticulously welding the structure together in often-difficult conditions.

"If you know Walpole and anything about welding, imagine trying to avoid periods of rain, wind and hot, dry forest conditions and be able to weld together such an impressive structure," she said.

"Thanks also to Donnelly and Frankland districts' conservation employees who assisted Scott, especially Stephen (Shippa) Radomiljac, who prefabricated a range of modules for the lookout and walkway. Steve Csaba should also be praised for designing such a beautiful lookout and arrival space shelter."

Allison said another project at the nearby Coalmine Beach in Walpole–Nornalup National Park—which incorporated a new jetty, boat ramp and car park—has allowed for safe and easy access to Nornalup Inlet.

In DPaW's Donnelly District, a large-scale redevelopment of a popular recreation site in Gloucester National Park near Pemberton was opened.

The site, on the banks of Lefroy Brook, has been upgraded and now features a new lookout deck that gives visitors spectacular views of the Cascades waterfall.

Other work at the site includes a sealed road, a car park with 20 bays, a boardwalk linking the lookout to a new walk trail, a walk bridge over Lefroy Brook linking the site to the Bibbulmun Track and the Gloucester Tree, as well as an interpretation shelter.

Mr Jacob said the improvements were part of the State Government's vision to improve visitor facilities and ensure our national parks and other conservation areas were world-class.

The new recreation site at Lefroy Brook in Gloucester National Park. Left to right: DPaW staff Tim Foley, Jeff Daubney and Brian Moss with the Shire of Manjimup's Doug Elkins and Environment Minister Albert Jacob.



News in brief

Community fire forums held in south-west

A series of open forums were recently held in the state's south-west to inform and engage community members about the department's prescribed burning program.

The forums, held in Manjimup, Bridgetown, Northcliffe and Pemberton, were jointly organised by DPaW's Warren Region, local government agencies and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, with local Western Australia Police staff also in attendance.

Regional Fire Coordinator Rod Simmonds said residents were interested in fuel ages in local areas, as well as the specific locations of future prescribed burns.

"The general attitude towards the department's prescribed burning program was positive," he said.

Donnelly District Fire Coordinator Jeff Bennett expressed thanks to those involved in the forums.

"It was a job well done in relation to the material, information and enthusiasm that was offered to the general public," he said.

Fifty years of tortoise monitoring

Conservation efforts to save one of the world's rarest tortoises reached a major milestone last month—50 years since the oldest known living individual was first marked and monitored.

Environment Minister Albert Jacob paid tribute to the conservation effort to save the western swamp tortoise, which was once thought to be extinct. Encouragingly, numbers have now grown to more than 300.

Mr Jacob said the tortoise was Australia's rarest reptile and species conservation work involved radio-tracking some of the animals for half a century.

The department marked the conservation anniversary by inspecting the fourth tortoise to be tracked under the program, a female that was marked in 1963 at Ellen Brook Nature Reserve.

For more information see the full [media statement](#).

Lizard smuggling attempt busted

DPaW nature protection officers were part of a recent operation that saw two Japanese men charged with attempting to smuggle 30 lizards out of Australia.

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (ACBPS) officers found 28 shingleback lizards, one dragon and one skink in the luggage of the men during an x-ray of the baggage at Perth International Airport.

ACBPS Director Airport Operations Perth Jan Hill congratulated all involved for their continued work in preventing the illegal import and export of Australia's unique native wildlife.

"We take protecting Australia's native species seriously and will not tolerate the exporting of our protected wildlife. Anyone caught will be charged and could face jail time," she said.

DPaW Senior Wildlife Investigator Rick Dawson said the haul was worth more than \$130,000 in Japan.

"These lizards are highly sought after in Asia because they are easy to care for, attractive, and exotic," he said.

"The seized reptiles include 'specially protected' Rottneest Island shingleback lizards, which are worth up to \$8,000 each on the Asian black market, mainland shingleback lizards, worth around \$4,100 each with some unusual colour forms fetching even more, and a bearded dragon, valued at about \$1,000.

"This joint effort between the State and Commonwealth demonstrates that we are committed to putting an end to this cruel practice."

One of the men will face charges under the state *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, and both will face charges under Commonwealth law.



The maximum penalty for wildlife trade offences is 10 years' imprisonment and/or a fine of \$170,000 for individuals and up to \$850,000 for corporations.

People with information about the illegal removal of reptiles or who notice any suspicious activity suggesting that reptiles are being illegally removed should call DPaW's Wildcare Helpline 9474 9055, Customs Watch on 1800 061 800, the police, or Wildlife Trade Compliance on (02) 6274 1900.

Above DPaW's Matthew Swan with one of the lizards.

Right DPaW wildlife staff Karen Smith, Rick Dawson and Kevin Morrison.



News in brief

Volunteers needed for turtle program at Cable Beach

It is the nesting season for flatback turtles and Broome residents are being encouraged to participate in the Cable Beach community turtle monitoring program, coordinated by DPaW and the Yawuru joint management team.

Yawuru Program Leader Sharon Ferguson said monitoring began early this month and runs through to March during the turtle nesting period, which coincides with the Yawuru seasons 'laja' and 'man-gala'.

"As part of the monitoring, staff and volunteers conduct early morning walks along sections of Cable Beach and identify, record and report on nesting activity," she said.

Training sessions will be held for participants or those interested in becoming involved. Contact DPaW Broome on 9195 5500 or email yawuru.rangers@dpaw.wa.gov.au for more information.