EDO
Vol 16 No 2
April 2010

edonews

Newsletter of the Environmental Defender's Office WA (inc)

World Heritage nomination for Ningaloo promises greater protection

Lisa Harris, EDO volunteer, and
Josie Walker, principal solicitor

It was recently announced that an expansive stretch of Western Australia's amazing Ningaloo coast is to be nominated for World Heritage listing. If the nomination, endorsed by both the State and federal governments, is successful it will be the 18th Australian site on the list. More than 710,000 hectares have been nominated, including Ningaloo Reef, Exmouth Cape Range, and Red Bluff.

The Ningaloo coastline's oceanic wilderness contains many features worthy of World Heritage listing, with its diverse environment home to some of the world's most iconic and majestic marine life, including dugongs, manta rays, whale sharks, turtles, whales, dolphins and other marine life. On a recent visit to WA to announce the nomination, Minister for Environment Protection Peter Garrett described the Ningaloo area as having extraordinary environmental values. The obvious advantages accompanying the global recognition that comes with World Heritage listing include prestige, a likely increase in tourism revenue, availability of international assistance, and increased public funding to assist management of the area.

However, the recent push to pay homage to the isolated coastline has been met with some opposition from locals,

Photo: *Platours_Flickr, Flickr*

who are not convinced of the advantages that the international placard is meant to bring, instead fearing a governmental takeover and further bureaucratic red tape. Recent media coverage has, in our view, overstated the extent to which World Heritage listing will result in additional regulation or a "federal takeover".

Article 4 of The World Heritage Convention places a general obligation on signatories to ensure the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage situated on their territories. This obligation arises whether or not places of World Heritage significance are placed on the list. Therefore, the federal government already has nominal international responsibilities in relation to the Ningaloo coast, particularly as its own reports recognise the World Heritage values of the area, and it only remains for these obligations to receive international recognition.

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Victory in the battle for Busselton wetlands

Madison Hershey, EDO volunteer

For more than ten years the Busselton-Dunsborough Environment Centre (BDEC), assisted by the EDO has been resisting construction of a road across the Vasse Estuary at Busselton. Earlier this year WA Environment Minister Donna Farragher finally determined that the road proposal should not be implemented.

History

In the 1980s the Shire of Busselton investigated building a road across the Vasse Estuary on the alignment of Ford Road, which runs alongside the western boundary of the Vasse-Wonnerup wetland, an

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World Heritage nomination for Ningaloo

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If the Ningaloo coast is listed under the World Heritage Convention, the State of Western Australia will retain primary responsibility for managing the environmental values of the listed area, under the same environmental laws applying to the rest of WA. However, there will be greater national and international scrutiny of the state's actions, which is likely to lead to higher standards being imposed.

Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (the EPBC Act), the federal government must use its best endeavours to develop a management plan for a listed World Heritage area in cooperation with the relevant state. Such a plan does not impose direct legal obligations on anyone other than the federal government but is likely to become a factor in authorities making decisions under existing laws – for example tourism licensing, creation of new national parks and marine parks, and assessment of development applications.

The other major consequence of listing is that approval under the EPBC Act is necessary for any action which is likely to have a "significant impact on the world heritage values of a declared World Heritage property." This means that a federal environmental assessment will be required for high-impact proposals. However, this requirement is unlikely to affect small-scale local activities by local landowners, such as the construction or maintenance of working buildings on pastoral properties or houses within existing townships.

Local groups such as the Cape Conservation Group welcome the listing. WA Environment Minister Donna Faragher said "[t]he reef and adjoining Cape Range National Park attract more than 100,000 visitors a year, which result in an injection of approximately $127 million into the Gascoyne region's economy."

The precious environmental gem that is the Ningaloo coastline is too valuable not to protect with every measure available. World Heritage listing is just another tool to ensure that the relatively untouched Ningaloo coastline remains in pristine condition for the enjoyment of future generations, in keeping with our national obligations under the World Heritage Convention.

Once the application is made to the UN a decision by the World Heritage Committee is expected within 18 months. ■

Victory in battle for Busselton wetlands

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internationally recognised wetland under the Ramsar Convention. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) assessed the proposal under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (WA) (the Act) and rejected the proposal on three separate occasions. In May 2000 the EPA released a report recommending that the proposal be rejected on the grounds that the proposed road, and in particular the potential traffic movement along it, represented a risk to waterbirds. The report also noted that it would be inappropriate to subject the Ramsar wetland to such risks.

In 2001 the then Minister for the Environment, Judy Edwards, appointed an Appeals Committee because she disagreed with the Shire of Busselton as to whether to implement the proposal. In July 2002 the committee advised the Minister to approve the proposal, subject to various conditions. The EDO, however, successfully bought time for the wetlands by raising concerns that the committee's advice was inconsistent with the Swan Coastal Plain Lakes Environmental Protection Policy, an approved policy under the Act. In 2006 the Minister agreed, and recalled the Committee to make a fresh decision.

Later that year BDEC expressed concern that one of the committee members, Mr Stubbs, might be biased because, at the time of the proposal he was the CEO of the Shire of Busselton. The EDO raised this issue with the appeals convenor, who informed the EDO that Mr Stubbs had resigned. The Minister determined that the remaining committee members were to make a fresh decision. The committee sought further information and the Department of Environment and Conservation advised them of the high risk of soil and water acidification if the Vasse Estuary was disturbed.

The decision

On 14 September 2009 the committee recommended that the proposal be refused after considering *Coastal Waters Alliance of Western Australia (Inc) v Environmental Protection Authority* (1996) 90 LGERA 136 (*Coastal Waters Alliance*) and taking the view that the committee must decide solely on environmental factors. In *Coastal Waters Alliance*, the Full Court of the Supreme Court of Western Australia held that economic loss and commercial considerations are not environmental factors.

The committee noted that it was constrained by environmental factors, notwithstanding that the proposed road would relieve traffic congestion in Busselton. The committee held that the Shire of Busselton had provided no evidence to support the proposition that the proposed road would conserve fossil fuels. ➤

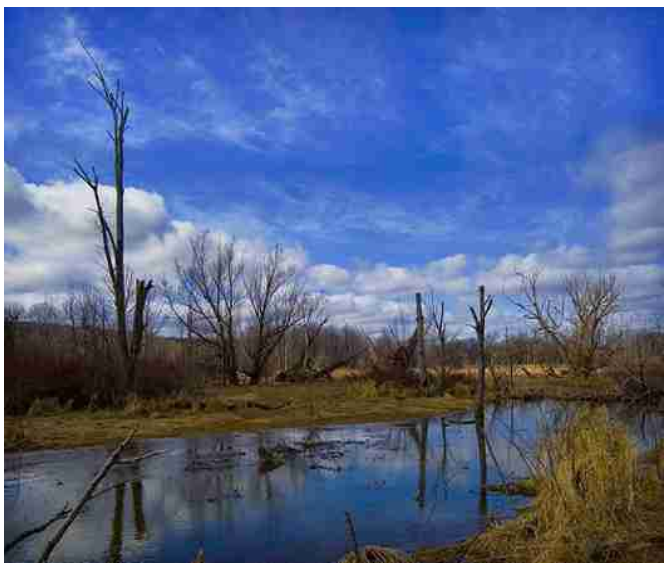


Photo: *Dustin Jameison/Big SLOW, Flickr*

The committee also considered the term "significant effect". In *Chapple v Environmental Protection Authority* (Unreported, WA Supreme Court, 27 April 1994), the Full Court of the Supreme Court of WA interpreted "significant effect" to mean "likely to cause some change in the environment". (In *Booth v Bosworth* [2001] FCA 1453, the Federal Court of Australia granted an injunction to restrain the mass culling of flying foxes, holding that the continuation of mass culling would have a significant impact on the world heritage values of the area in question because the flying fox population would be halved in less than five years, causing it to become an endangered species in that area.)

After considering the above cases, the committee formed the view that there was a clear risk to the Vasse Estuary and the Ramsar wetland, in particular the risk of habitat loss; disruption to waterbirds movement; increased waterbirds mortality rate; flooding; and presence of acid sulfate soils. The committee held that such a degree of risk was unacceptable.

After considering the various concerns, the committee applied the precautionary principle: that is, one should proceed with care when one does not know all the environmental impacts of a proposal. The committee reported that its paramount concern was protection of the Ramsar wetland, and that it held reservations about the mid- to long-term consequences that might be produced by the cumulative effect of the various risks.

On 22 January this year, after consideration of the EPA report and the committee's report, WA Environment Minister Faragher determined that the proposal should not be implemented, agreeing that the proposed road presented an unacceptable risk to waterbird habitats and water quality. ■

Federal government backflip on migratory shark protection

Lisa Harris, EDO volunteer

In December 2009 the Federal Minister for Environment Peter Garrett announced that the government would be listing three species of shark as migratory under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the Act). The sharks to be included were the shortfin mako, longfin mako and porbeagle shark.

Currently the Act requires that all species listed in the appendices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), and therefore protected under international law, are automatically listed as migratory species under s209 of Act and protected by federal law. Consequently, the killing of any of these species in Commonwealth waters becomes an offence under s211 of the Act.

This news was welcomed by environmental groups across Australia as a step forward in the protection of marine life, with CMS executive secretary Elizabeth Mrema stating in a press release that 'this first global CMS on commercially exploited species is a decisive step forward in international shark conservation', and that 'wildlife conventions, UN agencies and international fisheries need to work together to prevent these creatures ... from becoming extinct.'

But now the federal government seems to have done a backflip. In a media release on 25 February 2010, Minister Garrett announced that a new bill would be introduced into Parliament to allow the continuation of recreational fishing of mako and porbeagle sharks. This announcement came following opposition from recreational fishers to the listing of these shark species under the Act.

According to a government statement, if these proposed amendments are passed, recreational fishing for these species will not be considered an offence related to migratory species in Part 13, Division 2 of the Act. Additonally, commercial fishing of these species will be allowed if there is a management arrangement accredited under the Act. The text of the amendments has not yet been released, and the EDO is concerned that such charges will fundamentally weaken the protections applying to all migratory species.

Mr Garrett said that amendments to the Act provided for a balance between protecting the shark species in a way that reflects our national circumstance, and did not disproportionately affect recreational fishers. 'There would be no demonstrably significant conservation benefit from banning recreational fishing for the species (and) the government is acting to ensure that recreational fisheries can continue to catch these sharks,' he said.

It is extremely concerning that the federal government would compromise its international obligations and alter domestic policy in the wake of opposition from a small section of the community. The EDO believes that the concession made by the government to appease recreational fishers may set a poor precedent for the future, and that in taking this step the government has compromised its international reputation as a government committed to environmental conservation. ■

Mako shark: *Jean Tresfon, Flickr*

In the next edition ...

we report on the Montara Commission of Inquiry, and discuss the possible legal ramifications and environmental impacts of the disastrous 2009 Montara oil spill off WA's northwest coast.

EPA decision sounds final victory for Learmonth anti-mining campaign

Claudia Maw, paralegal

One of the EDO's most significant victories of the last decade has returned to the spotlight in recent months, following the decision by the Environmental Protection Authority (the EPA) to discontinue assessment of ten proposed mining leases over limestone deposits in the Cape Range area of northwest WA. On 30 December 2009, nearly nine years after the original decision by the Mining Warden to refer the matter to the EPA for assessment, the EPA advised that the proponent, Learmonth Limestone Pty Ltd, had failed to comply with requests to provide information on troglobitic fauna within a reasonable period, and that the decision had thus been taken to terminate the assessment under s 40A of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 (WA).

The EDO first became involved in the matter in 1999, under instructions from the Australian Speleological Federation (ASF), and one of its member groups the Western Australian Speleological Group (WASG). Based on their belief that the subterranean fauna of the Cape Range cave system – a "karst" system created by the limestone being dissolved by water over time – the ASF lodged objections with the WA Mining Warden to ten mining lease applications made by Finesky Holdings Pty Ltd (which transferred its interest in the lease areas to Learmonth Limestone Pty Ltd in December 1999) to the WA Department of Mines. These objections, of which there were eight, included the following:

- That the impact of mining on the karst, the endemic fauna of the caves, and the structure of the caves themselves within the proposed lease areas would be such as could not be restored;
- That the overall effect of the impact of mining in the area would be sufficient to prevent the proposed nomination of the Cape Range area for World Heritage Listing; and
- That in all of the circumstances it was in the public interest that the application should not be granted.

Following representations made by the EDO at a hearing in August 2000, Mining Warden Graeme Calder released, in February 2001, his recommendation to the Minister for Mines that mining should not occur over 99.98% of the area in the Cape Range Peninsula covered by the mining lease applications, because of its extraordinary subterranean fauna and world heritage values. Furthermore, the Warden provided that if a small operation were to go ahead, it could only do so after the completion of an EPA-led environmental impact assessment (EIA) process. Although the EPA commenced this EIA process, the subsequent failure of the proponent to comply with directions to provide information led eventually to the aforementioned decision by the EPA to discontinue the application.

The result of the EPA's decision is that the Minister for Mines & Petroleum cannot grant the mining leases to the proponent, and the application becomes void. Although this does not mean that the proponent cannot start a new application for the grant of mining leases over the proposed area, any new application would likely be referred back to the EPA for a new public assessment period, given the sensitivity of the proposed mining site. If the proponent were to begin a new application, it is likely that the application would face renewed opposition from the speleological and conservation community in Australia. Jay Anderson, Co-convenor of the ASF Conservation Commission for WA, confirmed this view: 'The value of this karst system is unquantifiable and irreplaceable – the karst system has so many significant values. Yet the nomination of the area for World Heritage listing has still not occurred, and this important natural heritage site is not protected from significant human impacts. The speleological groups will certainly use all available legal avenues to challenge any further attempts to open the area for mining.'

The case is an excellent reminder of the capacity of conservation and environmental groups in Australia to affect change and to promote the unique natural heritage of our landscape. The EDO is proud to have played a role in the success of this campaign. ■

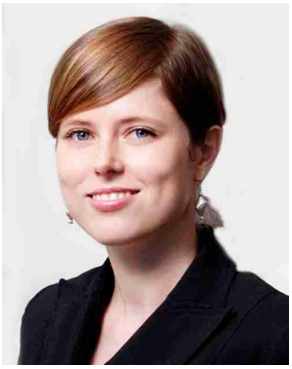
New faces at the EDO

We are proud to announce the arrival of two new staff members. The position of Outreach Solicitor, left vacant by the departure of Kristy Robinson in January, will be shared on a part-time basis between Jessica Smith and paralegal Claudia Maw.

Jessica worked as a lawyer at Clayton Utz for three years, specialising in environmental and planning law, and energy and resources law. Jessica is a co-editor and chapter author of Climate Change Law and Policy in Australia, an online LexisNexis publication. Jessica recently co-authored a paper entitled "Developing a Regulatory Regime for Carbon Geosequestration in Australia", which was presented at the 2008 National Environmental Law Association Conference and published by Thomson Reuters in Climate Change Law: Comparative, Contractual and Regulatory Considerations.

A former EDO volunteer, Claudia now works for us as a part-time paralegal. A recent immigrant to Perth from the UK, Claudia trained as a barrister in London and completed an overseas practitioners' bridging course at the University of Notre Dame (Australia) in 2009.

In addition to our new staff members we are delighted to welcome three new volunteers – Lisa Harris, Madison Hershey and Josephine Barron. Volunteers form a vital part of the EDO team, and last year contributed a total of more than 600 hours, so we are very happy to have them on board.



Jessica Smith

Farmer's protest forces inquiry into native vegetation legislation

Lisa Harris, EDO volunteer

Recently, the mechanisms for the protection of native vegetation and its impact on farming lands have been in the media spotlight. This controversial issue came to the fore when NSW farmer Peter Spencer staged a 52-day hunger strike part way up a wind-monitoring tower on his farm. Mr Spencer was protesting against the restrictions imposed on land clearing by the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* (NSW) (the Act), which he claims were imposed as greenhouse abatement measures, impacting thousands of Australian farmers' property rights.

Australia is a party to the Kyoto Protocol and as such has specific obligations and targets that must be met. The purpose of the Act is to combat climate change by reducing carbon emission or increasing removal sinks or both. Clearing bans have enabled Australia to meet its Kyoto reduction targets whilst also preserving native vegetation.

The Act was introduced for the purpose of facilitating the government's commitment to end broadscale clearing by protecting the health of land, rivers and wildlife whilst also providing investment security for farming in the future. The immediate implication for famers is that they can no longer clear their land without approval. Recent protests on Parliament in Canberra claim that farmers' rights to their land have been taken over by the Government, in contravention of s51(xxxi) of the Constitution, and that just compensation should be paid.

Even though Mr Spencer has come down from his perch, the issues raised still remain at the forefront of political debate. Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce's push for a Senate inquiry resulted in an *Inquiry into Native Vegetation Laws, Greenhouse Gas Abatement and Climate Change Measures* being launched by the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee. The Committee's mandate is to consider the impacts of native vegetation laws and legislated greenhouse gas abatement measures on landholders. These include any reduction in land asset value and productivity as a result of such laws and compensation arrangements to landholders.

What must not be forgotten is that without a sustained environment, farming would be made even more difficult than it currently is, if not impossible. Climate change has made farming in Australia very difficult, as extreme weather conditions combine to undermine farmers' efforts. The restrictions on clearing of native vegetation are one of the measures employed to help combat climate change and help ensure a sustainable environment suitable for prosperous farming. Successfully combating climate change would enable more successful farming; therefore, it is as much of an economic benefit to preserve the native vegetation as it is to clear it. The Australian Network of Environmental Defenders Offices will be lodging a submission to this inquiry.

EDOWA is of the opinion that compensation is not appropriate as a result of native vegetation clearing laws. For the government to be liable to pay compensation for land under the Constitution it must acquire the proprietary right to the land, not just restrict a right of the occupier to carry out an act on their land.

At the same time the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council is currently calling for public comment on its consultation draft of Australia's *Native Vegetation Framework*. The Framework is a national strategic policy aimed at guiding management decisions that affect native vegetation in all jurisdictions and all sectors of the community.

It is acknowledged that the successful achievement of these goals requires the co-operation of all levels of government – federal, state and local – while also requiring the co-operation of the community. It is unfortunate that measurable national targets for vegetation retention have not yet been developed to back these worthy goals.

Public submissions were open until 5pm eastern standard daylight time on 31 March 2010. The draft Native Vegetation Framework can be downloaded from www.environment.gov.au/land/vegetation/review/index.html ■

Group vows to keep fighting against coal exploration

(*Caroona Coal Action Group Inc v Coal Mines Australia Pty Ltd (No 2)* [2010] NSWLEC 1)

Madison Hershey, EDO volunteer

Early this year the NSW Land and Environment Court dismissed a challenge by a group of farmers against coal exploration on the Liverpool Plains around Caroona. The area includes some of the most fertile agricultural land in Australia. The issues raised in this case are representative of conflicts between productive agricultural uses and mining throughout the country.

In April 2006 the Minister for Mineral Resources granted an exploration licence to Coal Mines Australia Pty Ltd (CMA), a subsidiary of BHP Billiton. The Caroona Coal Action Group (CCAG) argued that the licence granted to CMA was invalid because the Minister failed to comply with the *Mining Act 1992* (NSW) (the Act) procedures when he renewed the licence in the past and when he transferred the licence to CMA. Additionally, CCAG argued that the Minister exceeded his power because the licence granted exceeded by six days the maximum period of five years allowed under the Act.

In the Court's decision, Chief Justice Preston did not think that CCAG established that the Minister failed to comply with relevant procedures. He held that the breach of the permitted licence period was not significant enough to render the licence invalid because the maximum period requirement was not essential or indispensible. Accordingly, Chief Justice Preston read down the licence to the extent that it exceeded the Minister's power granted by the Act.

In light of the "publicity and interest in the proceedings", Chief Justice Preston stressed that the Court's decision does not consider whether the licence should have been granted. He added that the "Court has no jurisdiction to determine ... the merits of allowing exploration and mining on agricultural land."

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Group vows to fight coal exploration

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Despite this setback, CCAG spokesman Timothy Duddy says CCAG is not ready to "roll over just yet". Mr Duddy understands the attraction and reliance of proceeds from mining exploration and said it would have to be a very brave court that ruled against the mining business. Even so, CCAG has promised to continue fighting to keep the Caroona area exclusive for farming and will bring a further challenge in the NSW Court of Appeal if there are possible grounds for appeal.

CCAG was represented in these proceedings by EDONSW. ■

ACCC pursues misleading environmental claims

Josephine Barron, EDO volunteer

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has recently pursued actions against power supplier Global Green Plan Ltd and carbon broker Prime Carbon Ltd, in response to environmental claims made by both companies. The ACCC ordered Global Green Plan to deliver on their promises made to consumers regarding renewable energy certificates, and have decided to take action against Prime Carbon in the Federal Court for false and misleading representations under the Trade Practices Act 1974 (the TPA). The ACCC has also released guidelines stipulating what it would consider to be misleading or deceptive language in the context of environmental claims on packaging and plastic bags.

The ACCC pursued Global Green Plan for failing to purchase enough renewable energy certificates after consumers paid extra on their energy bills to support investment in renewable power. The company was subsequently deregistered from the GreenPower Program in September 2008, but continued to accept payment from consumers for the program until November. Global Green Plan accepted that its conduct was likely to have breached the TPA and, as of 24 December 2009, has provided undertakings to the ACCC to purchase more than 4000 renewable energy certificates. These renewable energy certificates will make up the shortfall of the certificates the company did not purchase on behalf of its customers in 2007 and 2008.

The ACCC also commenced proceedings in January 2010 against Prime Carbon in the Federal Court. Prime Carbon has a 'Soil Enhancement and Carbon Sequestration Program' which, they assert on their website, "... assists landholders to return carbon to the soil from the atmosphere by the process of photosynthesis." The ACCC alleges that Prime Carbon made false or misleading representations relating to the National Environment Registry (NER) and National Stock Exchange of Australia (NSX); in particular, the ACCC alleges that Prime Carbon falsely represented that NER was the sole registry meeting the standard set by the Australian Government, and that Prime Carbon was a broker and aggregator of the NSX.

In a further development, the ACCC has issued strong statements against companies releasing unsubstantiated environmental claims about their products which are likely to mislead consumers. This is known as "greenwashing", where companies deceptively advertise their products as environmentally friendly in order to gain an edge over their competitors. The ACCC advised that a number of consumers give significant weight to environmental claims made by companies when deciding whether to buy their products and services, and they do not deserve to be deceived by misleading statements. The ACCC emphasised that businesses need to be able to substantiate the environmental benefit they are claiming, and should ensure that any such statements they make are appropriately qualified.

On 19 January 2010, the ACCC released the "Biodegradable, degradable and recyclable claims on plastic bags" guide to assist businesses decide what the ACCC would consider a breach of the TPA in relation to environmental claims on packaging. The guide noted that many consumers look for environmentally friendly claims when buying a product, and emphasised that the TPA applied to representations on packaging and plastic bags. The guide warned that even if the representation was narrowly correct, the overall impression must not be misleading. Images such as official-looking logos may mislead a customer into thinking that the product is endorsed by an environmental body.

However, misleading environmental claims on plastic bags may become irrelevant if the rest of Australia follows the example of South Australia in banning plastic bags. In December last year, the Northern Territory government announced its intention to phase out plastic shopping bags as part of its climate change policy, following the precedent established by the *Plastic Shopping Bags (Waste Avoidance) Act 2008* (SA). This Act enforces a ban on lightweight check-out style plastic bags, with fines applying to any retailers who give away or sell the plastic bags. The Act does not punish consumers, as customers cannot be fined if a plastic bag is supplied to them. The South Australian government claims that an estimated 200 million plastic bags were stopped from entering landfills and waterways as a result of the ban. ■

All change at the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Josephine Barron, EDO volunteer

The Federal government's record on environmental issues received a battering in the last quarter as it received intense media criticism of the failed Home Insulation Program (the Insulation Program), and the troubled Green Loans Program. The negative publicity caused Environment Minister Peter Garrett to terminate the Insulation Program, and make broad and ineffective changes to the Green Loans Program.

The Insulation Program was originally promoted as a scheme that would simultaneously create new jobs and increase energy efficiency in homes across Australia. Introduced quietly by the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) last July, ➤

the Insulation Program was soon surrounded by controversy after it was linked to four deaths and more than 100 house fires. Under scrutiny from the Australian media, it was revealed that law firm Minter Ellison had compiled a risk assessment warning of the weaknesses inherent in the Insulation Program, which it had made available to DEWHA in April 2009.

On 26 February 2010, and following Opposition calls for his resignation, Minister Garrett was demoted in a cabinet reshuffle. The Prime Minister announced the appointment of Senator Penny Wong as the Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water, a portfolio that involves additional responsibilities for energy-efficiency and renewable energy programs. The Minister of Defence, Greg Combet, was given the responsibility of wrapping up the Insulation Program. While Minister Garrett retains his role as Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts, his demotion means that he will not be involved in further energy or water efficiency schemes.

The Green Loans Program (the Loans Program) also caused major problems for the government, with significant delays and insufficient assessors available, highlighting severe problems with the scheme's design. Changes needed to be made to rectify these issues, but the Loans Program lost any potential environmental impact when alterations to the scheme were announced in February. The Loans Program originally offered a free household energy assessment as well as interest free loans for energy and water saving devices. The changes to the scheme, which will apply until the end of 2010, include the discontinuation of the loans component of the program, capping the amount of assessment bookings allowed for each assessor per week, as well as capping the number of assessors to 5000. The cap of 5000 assessors still does not solve the major issue that there are a number of accredited assessors that will not be contracted under the Program. An inquiry into the Loans Program was ordered by Minister Garrett; the final report will be received by Senator Penny Wong in April this year. ■

Environment book reviews

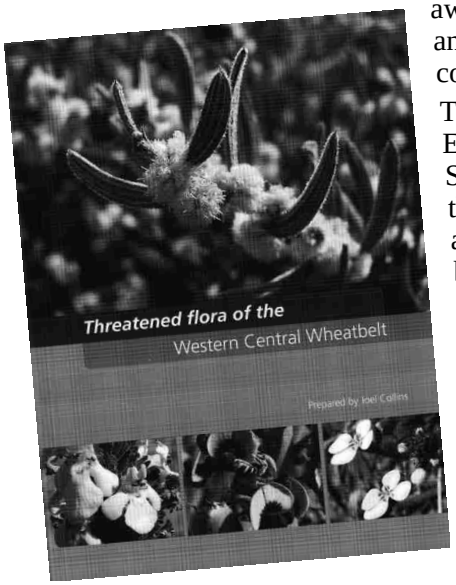
Josie Walker, principal solicitor

Threatened Flora of the Western Central Wheatbelt

By Joel Collins, Published by the Department of Environment and Conservation

The South-West Botanical Province of Western Australia is internationally recognised as a world biodiversity hotspot. This book displays just one aspect of this biological richness – threatened plants in the Western Central Wheatbelt. Leafing through this book (excuse the pun!) really brought home to me the incredible variety of life in this corner of the earth – and this only represents a small fraction of the 5710 native plant species inhabiting the South-West.

The book contains profiles of 70 species. There is a double-page spread for each species, providing a detailed description as well as information on habitat, flowering period and similar species. Five photographs are given for each species, which will help non-experts to identify plants in the field. This book should be a valuable aid to awareness-raising and on-ground conservation work.



The Avon Valley Environment Society is selling this book for $20 as a fundraiser. To buy a copy contact Peter Weatherley on 0428 221453.

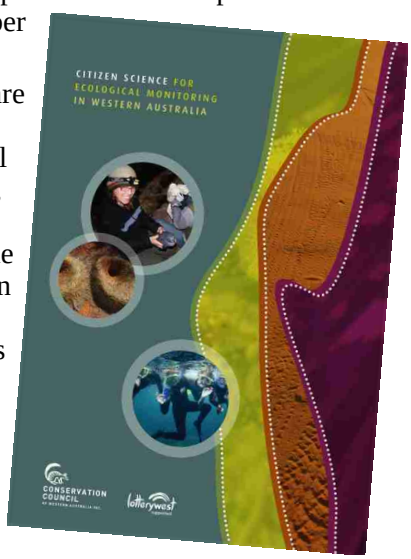
Citizen Science For Ecological Monitoring in Western Australia

By Nick Dunlop, Published by the Conservation Council of Western Australia, with the assistance of Lotterywest

This attractive handbook explains in lay terms how to design and implement ecological monitoring projects and environmental research projects, and is a resource for individuals and community groups who carry out projects not driven by government or commercial objectives. It would be useful to many EDO member groups that currently conduct on-ground environmental projects or would like to do so.

Government is often unwilling or insufficiently resourced for long-term ecological monitoring. With good resources and support it is possible for community members to fill some of the gaps and gain a more complete picture of environmental trends. In addition, people actively involved in studying the environment are likely to become more passionate about its protection.

A notable example of a citizen scientist project is lead contamination monitoring by community members in Esperance, which helped convict the Esperance Port Authority in November 2009.



The book and CD are available from the Conservation Council of Western Australia, conswa@conservationwa.asn.au or phone 9420 7266. CCWA can also arrange workshops for groups interested in developing ecological monitoring programs.

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