

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION — VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for the Environment

MR D.A. TEMPLEMAN (Mandurah — Minister for the Environment) [9.03 am]: I wish to inform the house of the tremendous volunteer work being done by Western Australians in the conservation of the state's unique biodiversity and in caring for our national parks and visitors to those parks, particularly as this is National Volunteer Week. Volunteers continue to play an important role in conservation and in people's appreciation of Western Australia's environment. The Department of Environment and Conservation's community involvement program has continued to successfully encourage and foster the participation of individuals and groups in conservation management. Last financial year, around 9 500 registered volunteers contributed approximately 496 000 hours of support to the department. Volunteers are often members of a range of different organisations throughout the state, including four-wheel-drive clubs and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

The department's volunteer program has been expanded by increasing the range and scope of opportunities for volunteers to include projects designed to protect and manage natural and cultural values and to enhance visitor experiences. In return, the Department of Environment and Conservation is committed to providing information and training to volunteers to ensure that they are well informed about the department's operations, volunteer programs and risk issues. The department provides opportunities for volunteers in areas such as the campground host program, wildlife rehabilitation, the honorary CALM officer program, WILDCARE Helpline, regional and national parks friends groups, the Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail, turtle tagging and flora surveys. A recent example of the truly remarkable work being done by volunteers was the discovery of a plant that had not been located for more than 160 years. The mystery plant was brought into the Western Australian Herbarium by long-time DEC volunteers and was found to match a specimen in a collection made by colonial botanist James Drummond in 1843. All volunteers across these programs make a significant contribution and are to be congratulated for their dedication and commitment to Western Australia's environment.