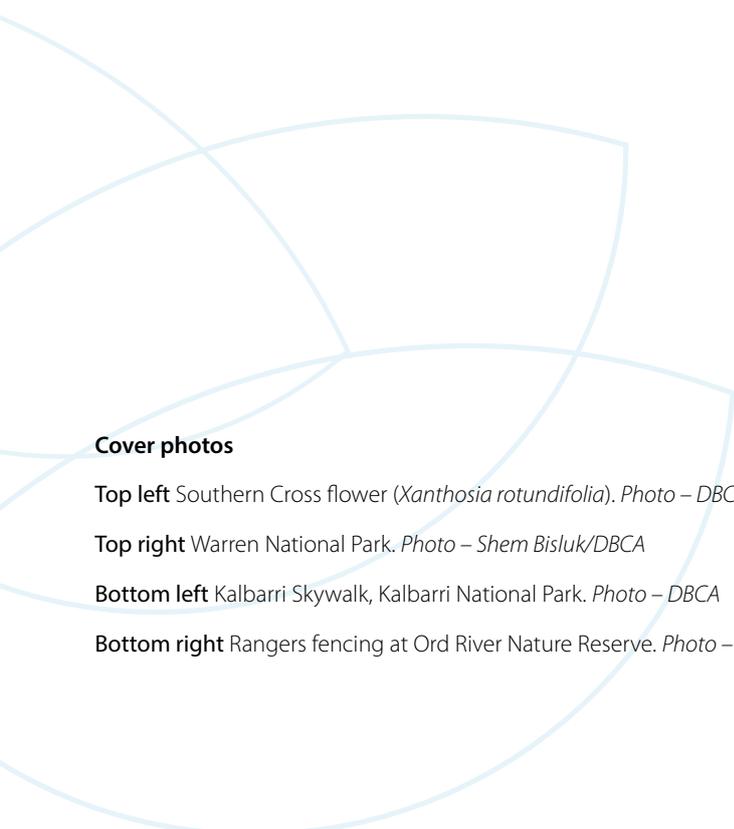




Government of **Western Australia**
Conservation and Parks Commission

Conservation and Parks Commission Annual Report 2019–20





Cover photos

Top left Southern Cross flower (*Xanthosia rotundifolia*). Photo – DBCA

Top right Warren National Park. Photo – Shem Bisluk/DBCA

Bottom left Kalbarri Skywalk, Kalbarri National Park. Photo – DBCA

Bottom right Rangers fencing at Ord River Nature Reserve. Photo – DBCA



Government of **Western Australia**
Conservation and Parks Commission

Conservation and Parks Commission
Annual Report 2019–20

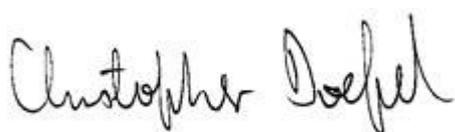
Table of contents

- Transmittal to the Minister ii
- Overview 1
 - Chair’s report 1
- Operational structure 3
 - Commission membership 3
 - Executive support 6
 - Key legislation impacting the Commission’s activities 7
 - Performance management framework 7
- Agency performance 9
 - Strategic directions and governance 9
 - Policy development and advice 9
 - Periodic assessment..... 9
 - Estate planning 10
 - Estate management..... 14
 - Vested lands and waters 20
 - Communication 21
- Disclosures and legal compliance 22
 - Financial statements 22
 - Ministerial directives..... 22
 - Other financial disclosures..... 22
 - Employment and industrial relations..... 22
 - Governance disclosures 23
 - Board and committee remuneration 23
 - Other legal requirements 24
 - Disability access and inclusion plan outcomes..... 24
 - Compliance with public sector standards and ethical codes 24
 - Recordkeeping plans 24
- Government policy requirements 25
 - Substantive equality..... 25
 - Occupational safety, health and injury management..... 25

Transmittal to the Minister

Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
Minister for Environment

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Conservation and Parks Commission for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 in accordance with section 31 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*.



Professor Chris Doepel PSM
Chair
Conservation and Parks Commission

Contacts:

Postal

Block 11
17 Dick Perry Avenue
Kensington WA 6151

Electronic

Internet: conservation.wa.gov.au
Telephone: 61 8 9219 9974

Overview

Chair's report

On behalf of the Conservation and Parks Commission (the Commission), I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the period of 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

The Commission acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to elders past, present and emerging.

The Commission continues to deliver strongly on its statutory functions, guided by its strategic plan with support of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

The Commission always welcomes additions to the conservation estate and was pleased to see the finalisation and release of three *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act) management plans. They were the:

- *Parks and reserves of the south-west Kimberley and north-west Pilbara joint management plan*
- *Jalangurru Manyjarra Bunuba Muwayi Yarrangu joint management plan*
- *Niiwalarra Islands (Sir Graham Moore Islands) National Park and Lesueur Island Nature Reserve joint management plan.*

Work on previously established parks continued with gazettal of the majority of the management zoning for Lalang-garram / Camden Sound and Lalang-garram / Horizontal Falls marine parks.

Throughout the reporting period, the Commission kept abreast of the implementation of the McGowan Government's Plan for Our Parks initiative and responded to regular Departmental briefings. The Commission was pleased to see the creation on 25 July 2019 of Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park, the first national park created under Plan for Our Parks.

The COVID-19 pandemic in the second half of the reporting year impacted the way the Commission conducted its business. In common with the general community, we adjusted our operations so that work could continue. Field visits were suspended and monthly meetings became virtual sessions. Above all, the Commission was concerned about the health and safety of Departmental staff who managed the conservation estate, as well as the health and safety of members of the public who visited parks and reserves when access was permitted. I would like to record the Commission's appreciation to the Department for keeping it informed of health and safety issues and management responses.

Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Commission saw the potential of the conservation estate to contribute positively to community health and wellbeing by providing recreational opportunities at a time when most communal recreational activities were disallowed. In addition, the Commission also recognised the role of the conservation estate in supporting much needed intra-state tourism to sustain regional economies. The Commission communicated to the Minister and the

Department its enthusiasm for parks and reserves to be used to support these objectives.

This reporting period saw further changes in the membership of the Commission. The Commission extends its appreciation to Dr Fiona Valesini for her service. Dr Valesini brought a finely-honed critical acumen to the Commission's work, demonstrating best-practice in how to approach the interface of public policy and science. The Commission welcomed Ms Kim Ekert, whose extensive experience in landcare management will be an asset in carrying out its work.

Once more, the Commission is proud to play its part in protecting, conserving and enhancing the natural and cultural values of Western Australia to support a healthy economic and social environment.

Professor Chris Doepel PSM

Chair

Conservation and Parks Commission

Operational structure

The Commission is a body corporate under the CALM Act comprising seven members appointed by the Governor on the nomination of the Minister for Environment. As part of its functions, the Commission has vested in it the following:

- (i) State forest, timber reserves and marine reserves
- (ii) unless section CALM Act 8B(2)(f) applies, national parks, conservation parks and nature reserves, either solely or jointly with an Aboriginal body corporate
- (iii) relevant land referred to in CALM Act section 5(1)(g).

The Commission also has the care, control and management of relevant land referred to in section 5(1)(h) placed with it, either solely or jointly with another person or body.

Section 19 of the CALM Act relates to the functions of the Commission.

They include:

- advising the Minister on the development of policies
- preparing and dealing with proposed management plans for land and waters vested in or under the care, control and management of the Commission, whether solely or jointly with an associated body
- conducting periodic assessments of the implementation of management plans by those responsible for implementing them, including DBCA and, if the land is State forest or a timber reserve, the Forest Products Commission (FPC).

Commission membership

Subject to sections 21(4) and 22 of the CALM Act, members are to be persons who, in the opinion of the Minister, have knowledge and experience or a particular function or vocational interest that is relevant to the functions of the Commission.

The members of the Commission are:

Professor Chris Doepel PSM – Chair (from 7 May 2019, former Deputy Chair)



Chris Doepel is a part-time Professor at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Fremantle, where he chairs the University's Program and Course Accreditation Committee and undertakes policy work within the Division of Academic Affairs. Until March 2016, he was the Dean of Business and Chair of College Committees for Arts and Sciences, Business and Law at the University. Prior to undertaking this last role, he was Dean of the Faculty of Law and Business at Murdoch University in Perth. Before joining Murdoch University in 2008, Chris was the Registrar and Chief Executive Officer of the National Native Title Tribunal. He has extensive experience as a senior manager in public administration and in the formulation of policy advice to governments. Chris holds a Bachelor of Jurisprudence, a Bachelor of Laws and a Master of Arts. He is a Fellow of the

Australian Institute of Management. In 2006, Chris was awarded a Public Service Medal (PSM) in the Australia Day Honours for his native title work.

Mrs Jo-anne Lanagan – Deputy Chair (from 7 May 2019)



Jo Lanagan is the Chief Executive Officer at Central Desert Native Title Services, where she has worked in various roles for the past eight years. Jo has held senior roles in the State and Commonwealth Governments including Director of Heritage and Culture at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Director of Claims Management for the Office of Native Title. She has led negotiations on behalf of both the State and Commonwealth Governments in the Australian Square Kilometre Array Project, leading to the CSIRO build of the largest radio astronomy observatory in the world and Australia hosting international radio astronomy projects. Jo was one of two negotiators on behalf of the State Government to reach a comprehensive native title settlement with the Yawuru people over Broome, resulting in the creation of conservation estate and the creation of a marine park. Through her native title work Jo has had the good fortune to visit much of the more remote conservation estate in Western Australia.

Professor Ross Dowling AM – Member



Ross Dowling is an Honorary Professor of Tourism in the School of Business at Edith Cowan University. Ross is an environmental scientist conducting international research, training and development of tourism in natural areas. His principal teaching, research and consultancy interests lie in ecotourism, geotourism and cruise ship tourism. He co-founded Ecotourism Australia and is a former Chair of the Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco Tourism (FACET) in Western Australia. Ross is a geotourism advisor for UNESCO Global Geoparks and a founder of the Global Geotourism Conferences. Prior to moving to Australia, Ross worked in New Zealand where he was Foundation Advisory Officer with the Ministry for the Environment and was awarded a Nature Conservation Council Foundation Citation for his efforts in conservation education. In 2011, Ross received the Medal of the Order of Australia for his contribution to ecotourism and in 2019 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to higher education, tourism and conservation. Ross is also a WA Parks Foundation Ambassador and brings to the Commission knowledge and experience in relation to conservation and tourism development.

Mr Alan Walker – Member



Alan Walker worked for more than 45 years in the management of parks, reserves and State forests in Western Australia. Since retirement from the public sector he has also worked in the private sector in the field of bushfire management. For 10 years he was the Director of Regional Services in the former Department of Environment and Conservation. He was the leader of the State's involvement in the development of the first Regional Forest Agreement that prescribed outcomes in forest and biodiversity conservation, timber production and the protection of cultural and heritage values. He was the co-author of several forest and national park management plans. Alan was awarded an Honours Degree in Science (Forestry) from the Australian National University. He is a volunteer guide and committee member with the Rottneest Voluntary Guides Association. He was a former President in Rotary and the leader of a Rotary Group Study Exchange team to South Wales. He is a keen bushwalker and he has an interest in nature-based tourism.

Mrs Tania (Tahn) Donovan – Member (from 7 May 2019)



Tania (Tahn) Donovan is a Wadandi Yok woman from Busselton and has experience in Aboriginal affairs in relation to employment, tourism, business development, policy and capacity building across State Government. Tahn is currently working as a Project and Membership Officer with National Native Title Council. She has a wide range of skills and experiences in the environmental, tourism and hospitality, disability employment, farming and transport industries.

Ms Penny Bond – Member (from 7 May 2019)



Penny Bond graduated with a Bachelor of Laws (with Distinction) and Bachelor of Arts from Murdoch University and has both public and private sector experience. She previously worked as a Senior Policy Adviser in State Government, with responsibility for ensuring the implementation of cross-portfolio policies and progressing Bills through Cabinet and the State Parliament. Penny represented the Minister as a Panel Member on the Ministerial Advisory Panel for Occupational Health and Safety Reform, which saw her work collaboratively with stakeholders on important law reform. Penny is a lawyer at MinterEllison and is undertaking a Master of Laws at The University of Western Australia, where she was recently recognised as the highest achieving postgraduate student in Climate Change and Emissions Trading Law. Penny enjoys hiking and camping and is passionate about the appreciation of Western Australia's conservation estate.

Dr Fiona Valesini – Member (until 6 May 2020)



Fiona is a coastal and estuarine ecologist with a particular interest in fish and invertebrate faunas, their relationships with environmental drivers and their future sustainability. She has 25 years of experience as a research scientist, predominantly through various roles at Murdoch University, where much of her research focused on coastal and estuarine ecosystems throughout south-western Australia. In 2019, Fiona joined The Nature Conservancy as the Marine Coordinator for Western Australia and is now the Operations Manager for both WA and South Australia. Her work centres on nature-based solutions to support healthy coastal waterways and their local communities and focuses on restoring critically-endangered shellfish reef habitats that have been lost through overfishing, poor water quality or disease. She maintains an Adjunct Senior Lecturer position with Murdoch, and roles on various advisory committees supporting estuarine and coastal health.

Ms Kim Eckert OAM – Member (from 7 May 2020)



Kim resides in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and is the CEO of Kalgoorlie-Boulder Urban Landcare Group (KBULG), a not-for-profit community organisation in the Goldfields. Kim uses her broad range of skills and experience in conservation and the environment, not-for-profit, community group, disability, tourism, and volunteering sectors to assist community groups in Kalgoorlie-Boulder and sits on many community committees. Appointed as a WA Parks Foundation Ambassador in 2017, Kim is passionate about our State's conservation areas; educating the community about the local flora (including facilitating Traditional Owners to educate the community about traditional bush food and bush medicine); connecting people to parks and nature; and promoting travel in WA to visit our most precious and natural areas. Kim holds a qualification in conservation and land management and is a graduate member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. In 2019, Kim was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her significant contributions to the Kalgoorlie-Boulder community and has recently been appointed to the Pastoral Lands Board as the Conservation Interest Member.

Executive support

The Secretariat of the Commission had the following staff base at 30 June 2020:

Director (until January 2020) Roland Mau
BAppSc (Hon), GradCertBus, AdvDipPM, DipGov, DipQA

Director (from February 2020) Kathleen Lowry
MBA, BEd, GradCertMan, DipT

Principal Environmental Officer (until January 2020) Tom Hughson,
BForSc

Operational systems support was provided to the Commission by DBCA under the Operational Agreement reviewed in August 2016 that was superseded by a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DBCA and the Commission for service delivery effective as of October 2019.

Key legislation impacting the Commission's activities

- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*
- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*
- *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*
- *Contaminated Sites Act 2003*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1986*
- *Forest Products Act 2000*
- *Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990*
- *Land Act 1933*
- *Land Administration Act 1997*
- *Mining Act 1978*
- *Public Sector Management Act 1984*
- *Native Title Act 1993 (Commonwealth)*

Performance management framework

The Commission supports Government goals with more specific desired outcomes achieved through the DBCA Government-funded services.

The Commission and its predecessors, the Conservation Commission of WA (CCWA) and Marine Parks and Reserves Authority (MPRA), maintain the statutory function to evaluate the performance of the implementation of management plans for vested lands and waters by those agencies responsible for the implementation of strategies and actions. Since the amalgamation of the CCWA and MPRA, the Commission has worked towards integration and streamlining of the performance assessment process. Service delivery changes initiated with the Government's Machinery of Government review process, identified opportunities to continue to improve the delivery of the performance assessment function through improved integration with DBCA organisational structure and programs. The Department is drafting procedures to set the high-level principles for the integration of the procedures for the reporting of management plan implementation within the Parks and Wildlife Service. It is anticipated that better integrated reporting will deliver a more systematic approach to the measurement plan implementation and will provide for continuous improvement in the development of new management plans. Table 1 below shows the relationship between the Commission's desired outcomes and services delivered to meet the appropriate Government goal.

Table 1. Support of Government goal

Government goal	Desired outcomes	Services
<p>Better Places: A quality environment with liveable and affordable communities and vibrant regions.</p>	<p>Community enjoyment, appreciation and understanding of attractions on vested lands and waters.</p> <hr/> <p>Plants and animals are conserved and habitat, ecosystem and landscape-scale conservation utilises evidenced-based science.</p> <hr/> <p>Sustainable use of forest resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vesting of land and waters for conservation either solely or jointly with an Aboriginal body corporate. • Provide policy advice to the Minister of Environment on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. • Ensure the preparation and implementation of effective management plans for lands and waters vested.

Agency performance

Strategic directions and governance

The Commission operates through a MOU that established terms for the service provisions and indicative resource requirements from DBCA. The progress of the MOU was reviewed in late 2019 with a satisfactory performance.

Regular evaluation of a board's performance is considered an integral part of effective corporate governance in order to ensure it has the necessary skills, experience and abilities to fulfil its responsibilities and determine the extent to which it is delivering on its purpose.

Key good governance processes continued to be implemented and maintained including annual reviews of the Commission's Charter, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest policy and risk register. The Commission undertook a self-review in 2020 of its governance to ensure continuous improvement in governance arrangements were maintained.

Policy development and advice

The Commission develops position statements to inform the Commission's functions under section 19 of the CALM Act. These functions include advising the Minister for Environment and preparing management plans. No changes were made to the Commission's existing position statements.

Changes were made to the *Commission's Charter* to reflect video conferencing for Commission meetings and resolutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic from March through June 2020.

Periodic assessment

Mid-term review of performance of the Forest Management Plan 2014–2023

The mid-term performance review presented an analysis of the best available information to provide an indication on what was going well and where management effort needed to be focussed in the future by the management agencies, DBCA and FPC as well as the plan's vesting authority, the Commission. The review analysed results for the 24 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) defined in the FMP. This involved determining their status in relation to established targets, identifying underlying likely causes of the achievement ratings, establishing trends over time, and providing recommendations to improve performance for the remaining period of the FMP.

The Commission is seeking to ensure continuous improvement in management to achieve the objectives of the FMP. To that end, the recommendations provided in relation to specific KPI ratings should ensure the effective implementation of the current FMP, while continuing to build a rigorous knowledge base for the development of the next FMP in 2023.

The Commission received presentations from DBCA on the progress of recommendations of the *Mid-term review of performance of the Forest Management Plan 2014–2023*, including a comprehensive annual report in October 2019 on the

achievement of performance review targets. The Commission continues to monitor the Department's development and application of KPIs.

Marine park key performance indicator status reporting

The Commission received DBCA's annual status reports for marine parks and reserves and attended the annual marine park management seminar, which focused on marine park management outcomes and key issues of four marine parks.

Annual assessments from Ningaloo Marine Park, Shark Bay Marine Park, Jurien Bay Marine Park, and a presentation on the *Lalang-garram Marine Parks Visitor Plan* were presented at the seminar.

No end-of-term assessments were published in the financial year pending the development of new procedures for the delivery of management plan assessment information currently being implemented by DBCA.

No mid-term assessments were published in the financial year pending the development of new procedures for of the delivery of management plan assessment information currently being implemented by DBCA's KPI review.

Estate planning

The Commission's main objectives in relation to estate planning are to provide quality and timely advice to the Minister for Environment and ensure the preparation and implementation of effective management plans for lands and waters vested either solely or jointly in the Commission.

Joint management

During this reporting period, three CALM Act management plans were finalised and released:

- *Parks and reserves of the south-west Kimberley and north-west Pilbara joint management plan*
- *Jalangurru Manyjarra Bunuba Muwayi Yarrangu joint management plan*
- *Niiwalarra Islands (Sir Graham Moore Islands) National Park and Lesueur Island Nature Reserve joint management plan.*

In addition, the majority of the management zoning was gazetted for Lalang-garram / Camden Sound and Lalang-garram / Horizontal Falls marine parks.

Plan for Our Parks

In early 2019, the McGowan Government announced a plan to create five million hectares of new national and marine parks and reserves across Western Australia. The five-million-hectare expansion will see the conservation estate increased by over 20 per cent.

Plan for Our Parks will create more opportunities for nature-based and cultural tourism, provide enhanced biodiversity conservation and build on Aboriginal joint management throughout Western Australia.

The plan includes long-standing reserve proposals designed to contribute to a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system, and addresses the findings and recommendations of previous enquiries into the State's marine parks

and former pastoral leases. It also builds on relationships formed over many years with Aboriginal groups and responds to the growing demand for on-country jobs.

The plan will also deliver on a number of existing election commitments and strategic priorities. Most of the proposed parks are class A national parks or class A marine parks. It is proposed that the parks will be jointly vested and jointly managed with traditional owners.

The Commission's role in the development of Plan for Our Parks has included responding to Departmental briefings on work in progress. Once a refined Plan for Our Parks is prepared, the State Government will commence negotiation of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and a concurrent management planning process for each park. As specific management plans emerge, they are submitted to the Commission's Management Planning Review Committee for scrutiny prior to receiving the Commission's final endorsement.

First national park created under Plan for Our Parks

On 25 July 2019, the first national park was created under the Plan for Our Parks initiative announced by Premier Mark McGowan. The creation of Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park coincides with the 400-year anniversary of the European sighting of the islands by Dutch explorer Frederik de Houtman.

The Abrolhos is an archipelago of 210 islands extending more than 100km from north to south and situated 60–80km off the mid-west coast of Western Australia. Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park extends to the high-water mark and includes 189 of these islands covering all unoccupied islands and parts of islands not occupied by commercial fishers and aquaculture operators. The Abrolhos Islands form the largest and most species-rich seabird breeding area in the eastern Indian Ocean. Most of the islands in the archipelago have bird nesting and breeding sites. In addition to seabirds, the islands are home to vulnerable and endangered shorebirds, and migratory waders including several critically endangered species – the curlew sandpiper, great knot, eastern curlew and bar-tailed godwit.

The islands are clustered into three main groups – Wallabi, Easter and Pelsaert – and is the site of the notorious *Batavia* mutiny and a popular destination for shipwreck history, diving, fishing and nature appreciation.

The national park is vested with the Commission and managed by DBCA. Over the next two years, the State Government is investing \$10 million into tourism and management infrastructure at the national park, including the construction of new jetties, toilets, shade shelters, walk trails, airstrip upgrade and visitor interpretation on East Wallabi and Beacon islands.

Houtman Abrolhos Islands Strategic Direction 2020–2024

The *Houtman Abrolhos Islands Strategic Direction 2020–2024* (Strategic Direction) was developed by the Abrolhos Inter-agency Project Team (IPT) to outline the State Government's vision and key initiatives for the Abrolhos over the next five years. The Strategic Direction applies to both lands and waters, and will inform future management of:

- Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park, vested in the Commission

- class A reserve vested with the Minister for Fisheries for the purpose of “conservation of flora and fauna, tourism and for purposes associated with the fishing and aquaculture industries” (the Reserve)
- surrounding State waters gazetted as a Fish Habitat Protection Area (FHPA).

In March 2020, the Conservation and Parks Commission reviewed and commented on the draft Strategic Direction. The Strategic Direction will inform the new management plans that are being developed for the Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park, Reserve and FHPA. Further stakeholder consultation will be undertaken during these planning processes.

Humpback whale management program

A draft program has been developed to address the management of humpback whales in State waters of Ningaloo Marine Park, Muiron Islands Marine Management Area and surrounding waters. The draft program outlines a framework through objectives, desired outcomes and management actions. The draft program has a focus on in-water humpback whale interactions, but also addresses commercial whale watching, recreational activities, and other marine operations.

The draft program was prepared in consultation with commercial operators, scientists and Gnulli joint management partners through the Ningaloo Coast Joint Management Body. In preparing the draft program, a literature review was undertaken, and consideration was given to the management arrangements in place for other in-water interactions with humpback whale operations in Australia.

Ocean Reef Marina

An update was provided to the Commission in January 2020 on the Ocean Reef Marina development and excision from and proposed additions to the Marmion Marine Park.

Measures are being developed to minimise losses to Roe’s abalone stocks as a result of this development by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). Mitigation measures include working with commercial operators to translocate stock from within the development envelope and the ongoing monitoring of stocks habitat.

Pilbara inshore islands nature reserves and proposed additions draft management plan 2020

The *Pilbara inshore islands nature reserves and proposed additions draft management plan 2020* is part of a suite of environmental outcomes funded from an environmental offset project (Wheatstone Project). The draft plan covers 174 small islands, islets and rocks between Exmouth and Cape Preston within the Pilbara region and Onslow which are proposed to become nature reserve over the life of the plan. The islands are located across three local government areas and include three islands within the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area.

The Muiron Islands are jointly vested with the Shire of Exmouth and the Commission and are the only islands with a purpose of “recreation and conservation of flora and fauna”. All other existing nature reserves are solely vested in the Commission. The Muiron Islands will be removed from the *Jurabi and Bundegi Coastal Parks and Muiron Islands Management Plan 1999–2009*, and once gazetted, the plan will apply to all islands identified in the funding agreement.

In accordance with the CALM Act, the draft joint management plan will be released for a two-month public comment period at the end of 2020. After consideration of public comments, a final version of the management plan will be prepared.

Kalgulup Regional Park draft management plan 2020

The State Government’s election commitment for Bunbury included the creation of two regional parks, Preston River to Ocean Regional Park and Leschenault Regional Park. A draft management plan has been prepared in accordance with the CALM Act. The Regional Park Community Advisory Committee has recommended that the two parks be amalgamated into one regional park, which the management plan has adopted.

Consultation was undertaken with representatives from the Gnaala Karla Booja Native Title Working Group who identified Kalgulup Regional Park as a Noongar name for the park. The proposed *Kalgulup draft management plan 2020* covers 295 reserves and parcels of land in the greater Bunbury region, including the Leschenault Peninsula and lands around the Leschenault Estuary and Inlet and the lower reaches of the Collie, Brunswick and Preston rivers to the north and east of Bunbury, and lands from Preston River to the Ocean south of Bunbury.

The 3100-hectare proposed regional park consists of lands managed by a range of land managers including agencies (DBCA, Department of Communities, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Water Corporation and Western Australian Planning Commission), local governments (City of Bunbury and the Shires of Capel, Dardanup and Harvey) and private landholders. The park does not include the waterways of the Leschenault Estuary and Inlet or the Preston, Collie and Brunswick rivers.

The park protects important biodiversity conservation and landscape values including highly biodiverse and endemic flora and fauna, three threatened plants, 14 threatened animals, eight threatened ecological communities and 20 wetlands. The park also protects seven registered Aboriginal heritage sites and many other significant cultural heritage places. The park also has a range of recreation opportunities that are highly valued by local communities.

The Commission endorsed the release of the draft management plan for a public comment period of two months.

Estate management

Advice on matters relating to leases, licences, permits, mining tenements and other activities such as utility infrastructure proposed on land and waters vested in the Commission was provided to the DBCA during this reporting period. Table 2 summarises the Commission's consideration of CALM Act leases, licences and permits during this reporting period.

Table 2. CALM Act leases, licences and authorities endorsed during 2019–20

Commercial operations licences	16
Apiary authorities	42
Other leases and licences	20

*Supplied by DBCA, 2020

Update on the progress of the Murujuga World Heritage nomination

On 27 August 2018, the Premier of Western Australia and Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) announced that a World Heritage nomination would be progressed for Murujuga, to have the outstanding cultural, spiritual and archaeological values of the area internationally recognised at the highest level.

The World Heritage nomination process is a partnership between MAC and the State Government. As part of the nomination requires comprehensive justification that the 'Outstanding Universal Value' of the proposed World Heritage area can be adequately protected, conserved and managed, the existing protection and management arrangements for Murujuga will be reviewed during the preparation of the nomination. This will include reviewing, and where necessary updating, formal management plans and agreements, and joint management arrangements for land likely to be included within the World Heritage boundary including some of the islands of the Dampier Archipelago.

Twenty-eight of the proposed islands are vested in the Commission and 25 of these are incorporated into the Dampier Archipelago Nature Reserves, managed under the *Dampier Archipelago Nature Reserves Management Plan 18 1990*, and a further three are reserved for conservation and recreation.

It is estimated that the nomination will be submitted by MAC and the State Government to the Australian Government in 2022 for submission to UNESCO before the 1 February deadline in 2023, to then enter the evaluation period. The earliest a determination would then be made by the World Heritage Committee is mid-2024.

Draft Interim Recovery Plans

Interim Recovery Plans (IRPs) for threatened species and ecological communities have been produced by DBCA for many years to guide conservation and management. Part 6, Division 5 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) now provides a legislative basis for both the development of IRPs and the opportunity for stakeholders to be consulted during IRP development.

Under section 106(a) of the BC Act, DBCA *must* consult with the Commission before making an IRP where the threatened species or ecological community occurs on land vested in the Commission or is otherwise relevant to the functions of the Commission. Section 106(b) of the Act provides that DBCA *may* consult with any other body or person that appears likely to be affected in a material way by the proposed plan.

An IRP has been drafted for each of the following three entities:

- *Conospermum galeatum*, a critically endangered plant species known from two locations in the Wheatbelt
- *Gastrolobium vestitum*, a critically endangered plant species known from two subpopulations within the Stirling Range National Park
- 'Mandora Mound Springs threatened ecological community' (endangered) and 'Salt Creek priority ecological community', a small area of mound springs (53 hectares) that occurs within the jointly managed Walyarta Conservation Park in the Kimberley Region.

Prescribed burning, biodiversity and monitoring

The State Emergency Management Principles and objectives are centred around protecting people, maintaining and growing the economy, effective social settings, functioning systems of Government, maintenance of key infrastructure and protection of the environment.

As a subset of these, the State Strategic Control Priorities for all hazards (including bushfire) have the protection and preservation of life as the fundamental overarching priority for the State. Other identified priorities (not hierarchical) include community warnings and information, protection of critical infrastructure and community assets, protection of residential property, protection of assets supporting livelihood and community financial sustainability and the protection of environmental and heritage values.

These State priorities are important considerations in the development and implementation of the DBCA Parks and Wildlife Service prescribed burning program.

The Commission has received feedback from environmental and forest protection groups calling for increased monitoring, reduction in prescribed burning and more transparency on the prescribed burning program.

The Commission notes the annual burn program's outcomes are reviewed on a region-by-region basis each year prior to the development of next year's indicative program. At every stage of Parks and Wildlife Service's process for planning, implementing and reviewing its prescribed burning program, biodiversity is considered and managed as an integral part of this process. This approach allows

fire managers to be responsive to new knowledge, advances in technology and changes across the environment over the life of a Prescribed Fire Plan.

The Commission supports the continued development of the Regional Conservation Plans to address prescribed burning and biodiversity management.

Regional Conservation Plans

The *Forest Management Plan 2014–2023* (FMP) refers to performance targets for KPIs defined in regional nature conservation plans. However, regional conservation plans do not identify specific performance targets for species and communities, wetlands or the management of key threatening processes. In response to the mid-term performance review of the FMP, DBCA acknowledged that improvement to the format and content of regional conservation plans was required to improve alignment with the FMP to allow improved reporting against relevant KPIs in the FMP.

In 2017, the Office of Auditor General undertook a follow-up audit to the *Rich and Rare: Conservation of Threatened Species* audit (2009) and identified that as DBCA has not documented its threatened species prioritisation process, it cannot demonstrate that it is being applied or that resources are directed to highest priorities. It recommended that DBCA consider changing how it prioritises species for conservation to ensure existing resources are used to maximum long-term effect through a management-approved structured approach.

In 2019, DBCA formed a working group to consider conservation planning processes and preparation of regional conservation plans in acknowledgement that a consistent, documented and transparent approach was required. DBCA's Swan Region was selected to pilot a new approach to regional conservation planning. A trial will be proposed in the Wheatbelt Region prior to a roll-out across the State.

In regional conservation planning, prioritisation of management actions and threat abatement programs to protect and manage conservation values is essential to ensure the effective and efficient use of the limited resources available for biodiversity conservation.

The regional conservation planning process developed over the past 12 months provides a consistent, documented and transparent approach to regional conservation planning and reporting within DBCA. It provides a process for structured decision making, in the context of finite resources, regarding the prioritisation and implementation of conservation actions for threatened and priority species and ecological communities within and outside the conservation reserve system across the nine regions within DBCA's Parks and Wildlife Service.

The planning process also focuses on addressing decline and applying active management intervention strategies to maintain viable population sizes of threatened and priority species and communities. The Commission supports the revised format for conservation plans and will monitor development progress.

Updated Commercial Operator Handbook

The Director General of DBCA is required to consult with the Commission before gaining approval from the Minister for Environment to grant a commercial operations licence in accordance with section 84(1)(b) of the CALM Regulations 2002.

Since 2002, DBCA has implemented a pre-approval process using the *Commercial Operator Handbook* to expedite the time taken to process straight-forward and non-contentious commercial operations licence applications and renewals.

All activities listed in the *Commercial Operator Handbook* are consistent with the relevant park management plans. The Commission supported amendments to the *Commercial Operator Handbook* in June 2020. Minor amendments included the inclusion of Houtman Abrolhos Islands National Park and minor administrative changes.

SMART Drumline Trial in Ngari Capes Marine Park

An update was provided by DPIRD on the *SMART Drumline* trial to the Commission in May 2020. The Commission noted the extension of the trial by 12 months by the Minister for Fisheries. The trial extension permitted the necessary scientific licence to be renewed and the inclusion of tiger and mako (along with white) sharks due to their prevalence in the initial trial's catch data. The report of the initial trial was later tabled at the Commission.

Kalbarri Skywalk

The Kalbarri Skywalk was officially opened on 12 June 2020 in Kalbarri National Park by the Minister for Environment. The skywalk project created local jobs and provided a major tourism boost for the Mid-West region. The opening of the universally-accessible skywalk marks the culmination of a \$24 million project to install two cantilevered platforms overlooking the Murchison Gorge, a kiosk, shade shelters, toilets, parking, 22km of park roads, and upgrades to Meanarra Hill and Z Bend tourist sites.

For the Nanda Traditional Owners, the facility showcases their culture and stories through interpretive and artistic elements. Visitors are greeted with an entry sign stating *kaju yatka*, the Nanda words for 'sky' and 'to walk'.

Kalbarri National Park is an iconic location, famous for its 80km gorge, coastal cliffs that plunge more than 100m to the ocean, striking wildflowers and many recreational activities. Annual visits to the national park have increased by almost 100,000 over the past five years to more than 450,000 last year.

Collie and Dwellingup Adventure Trail Projects

Located 213km from Perth's CBD and 60km from Bunbury, Collie has long been popular for adventure camping, waterskiing and outdoor activities. The State Government has committed \$10 million to make Collie become a premier 'trail adventure town' through the Collie Adventures Trails Project. The trails will become home to a world-class network of trails for mountain bike riders and bushwalkers to explore more of the area.

Collie's topography and landscape provide an array of areas to enjoy and challenges to tackle. The spectacular Collie River, which stretches from the town through Westralia Conservation Park and Wellington National Park, has imposing granite outcrops, lush vegetation and steep and varied natural features which create an ideal foundation on which to build a world-class trails network.

The picturesque town of Dwellingup is within easy driving distance from Perth and Mandurah making it an ideal location for day trip and overnight adventure activity for families and trail enthusiasts. The \$8.5 million Dwellingup Adventure Trails Project will see Dwellingup developed as a world-class trails destination.

Dwellingup is already recognised for adventure tourism receiving in excess of 250,000 visitors a year, 80 per cent of whom camp at the popular Lane Poole Reserve and are focused on family-oriented outdoor nature activities. The project will develop new trails and facilities that showcase the area's natural landscapes and cultural heritage and make a significant economic contribution to the region.

Mineral exploration consents

Section 24 of the *Mining Act 1978* requires that the recommendations of the Minister for Environment and the Commission are provided to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum prior to the Minister for Mines and Petroleum's consideration of consent to mining activities within 'other than class A' reserves managed under the CALM Act and those within class A reserves (other than national parks and nature reserves) outside the South West Division of the State and the shires of Esperance and Ravensthorpe.

In general, proponents were required to develop exploration plans or conservation management plans in consultation with DBCA that detailed the proposed activities, risks to reserve values and risk management measures before the Commission would consider the applications.

In 2019–20, the Commission provided recommendations relating to applications to undertake mineral exploration activities in a number of vested reserves including the following:

- Jilbadji Nature Reserve – Wheatbelt Region
- Kangaroo Hills Timber Reserve – Goldfields Region
- Millbrook State Forest – South West Region
- Dundas Nature Reserve – South Coast Region

In cases where recommendations agreeing to consent exploration activities were provided, the Commission also highlighted that its endorsement of further exploration activities was not guaranteed and was dependent upon detailed review of proponents' proposals and their anticipated effects on the conservation estate.

Biodiversity and Conservation Science: threatened species and wildlife management

A presentation on biodiversity conservation in Western Australia was provided by DBCA, providing an overview on the species richness and endemism throughout the State, particularly within the biodiversity hotspot of the south-west. Direct advice was provided on the synergies between the State and Commonwealth's rankings of threatened species, the differing approaches to the listing of Threatened Ecological Communities and an explanation of the State's priority list.

The Commission was satisfied that extinction of species had not occurred for many years, since DBCA and its predecessors had introduced focused management of threatened species and had eliminated many previously damaging processes (e.g. land clearing).

Management of threats to Western Australia's biodiversity

During the reporting period, the Commission examined DBCA's strategic approach to the management of threats to Western Australia's biodiversity. The Commission was updated on current DBCA policies, including policy statements on:

- management of pest animals
- management of *Phytophthora* dieback
- management of weeds.

The Commission reviewed details of key projects supporting these policies, such as the *Western Shield* program, *State Cane Toad Strategy*, and the management of recreational hunting. The Commission noted that good neighbour relations are key to the successful delivery of these policies and programs. In particular, on-ground actions are required to manage invasive animals (feral cats, corellas, cane toads), weeds and plant diseases. The importance of publicising several success stories to highlight these actions cannot be overstated.

Measuring management success through social research

The Commission examined how DBCA's Social Research Unit programs contributed to the improvement of visitor experience in the conservation estate. It considered case studies on campground design and visitor experience, visitor risk and infrastructure assessment, and crowding perceptions and user group conflict. The case studies demonstrated how a management issue led to an intervention and an improvement in management performance.

Vested lands and waters

Table 3 provides a summary of lands and waters vested in Commission during the financial year.

Table 3. Lands and waters vested in the Commission* Land classification	Area as at 30 June 2020 (ha)	Area as at 30 June 2019 (ha)
National parks	6,264,352	6,259,241
Conservation parks	1,086,805	1,086,283
Nature reserves	10,276,977	10,276,644
State forests	1,307,536	1,307,551
Timber reserves	123,147	123,174
CALM Act section 5(1)(g) and 5(1)(h)	1,060,306	1,096,898
Marine park	4,424,469	4,424,612
Marine nature reserve	132,000	132,000
Marine management area	143,385	143,385
Total	24,818,977	24,849,775

* Supplied by DBCA, 2020

Addition of land to Yalgorup National Park

The Commission endorsed the addition of land, including unallocated Crown land, closed roads and Reserves 53178 and 45717 to Yalgorup National Park on 26 August 2019. The additions will rationalise the tenure of Yalgorup National Park and facilitate the inclusion of areas purchased for environmental offsets. The additions will increase the national park by 1079 hectares.

Excision from State Forest No. 38, Sir James Mitchell National Park, Dordagup National Park and Shannon National Park

The Commission endorsed the excision of approximately 0.06 hectares from State Forest No. 38, 5.21 hectares from Sir James Mitchell National Park, 7.88 hectares from Dordagup National Park and 1.19 hectares from Shannon National Park. The excisions were to facilitate upgrades to 93km section of the South Western Highway between Vasse Highway and Deep River Bridge, near Walpole.

Excision from Marmion Marine Park

The Commission endorsed the excision of approximately 143 hectares from Marmion Marine Park to facilitate the construction of a marina complex at Ocean Reef. The excision was finalised on 4 December 2019 when all sections of the *Reserves (Marmion Marine Park) Act 2019* came into operation.

Communication

To assist in gaining a better understanding of the range of issues confronting estate managers in different parts of the State, the Commission received presentations on the following:

- Little penguin population status at Penguin Island
- Board Essentials
- Native forests and carbon stocks
- Conservation and Land Management Amendment Bill
- Update on CALM Act management plans in preparation
- Fire Management and the implications on the Walpole Wilderness Area
- Kimberley Marine Science Program.

Disclosures and legal compliance

Financial statements

In accordance with section 31(2) of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, the Commission is not a statutory authority within the meaning of the *Financial Management Act 2006*, but is a statutory body established by section 18 of the CALM Act.

Funding for the operation of the Commission is provided through DBCA. Expenditure is managed and administered by the Commission and the reporting and audit of expenditure is undertaken by DBCA.

Total expenditure for the Commission for the financial year ended 30 June 2020 was **\$509,183.06**

Ministerial directives

No Ministerial directives were received during the financial year.

Other financial disclosures

Employment and industrial relations

Further to CALM Act amendments in 2015, staffing resources are provided to the Commission through the Director General of DBCA as the employing authority.

Table 4 indicates specific staff allocated to service delivery in the secretariat of the Commission and does not include staff numbers and effort allocated to the delivery of Commission functions through DBCA.

Table 4. Secretariat staff profile at 30 June 2020

	Head count	FTE
Full-time permanent	1	1
Part-time permanent	0	0
Secondment	0	0
Total	1	1

**Tom Hughson was transferred to DBCA in January 2020*

Governance disclosures

At the date of reporting, no Commissioners or officers, or firms of which Commissioners or officers are members, or entities in which Commissioners or officers have substantial interests, had any interests in existing or proposed contracts with the Commission, other than normal contracts of employment of service; or had any interests in issues before or likely to come before the Commission for consideration, endorsement or consultation.

Board and committee remuneration

The Commission operates in accordance with Part III of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*, the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, and its Charter, Code of Conduct and other policies. The Commissioners remuneration is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Commissioners remuneration

Position	Name	Period of membership	Gross/actual remuneration (\$)
Chair	Chris Doepel	1/7/2019 to 30/6/2020	\$40,570.15
Deputy Chair	Jo-anne Lanagan	1/7/2019 to 30/6/2020	\$25,538.16
Member	Penny Bond	1/7/2019 to 30/6/2020	\$19,426.94
Member	Tahn Donovan	1/7/2019 to 30/6/2020	\$19,426.94
Member	Ross Dowling	1/7/2019 to 30/6/2020	\$19,426.94
Member	Kim Eckert	6/5/2020 to 30/6/2020	\$2,764.60
Member	Fiona Valesini	1/7/2019 to 05/5/2020	\$16,438.18
Member	Alan Walker	1/7/2019 to 30/6/2020	\$19,426.94
Total			\$163,018.85

The Commission met 11 times during the reporting period. Attendance for the total number of eligible meetings for each member are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Commissioner meeting attendance

Position	Name	Attendance	Eligibility
Chair	Chris Doepel	11	11
Deputy Chair	Jo-anne Lanagan	10	11
Member	Penny Bond	10	11
Member	Tahn Donovan	10	11
Member	Ross Dowling	11	11
Member	Kim Eckert	2	2
Member (former)	Fiona Valesini	9	9
Member	Alan Walker	11	11

Other legal requirements

Disability access and inclusion plan outcomes

The Commission is committed to fostering accessible and inclusive environment for its staff and Commissioners. The Commission advocates under DBCA's *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2015–20* for disability inclusion.

The Commission will also adopt DBCA's Disability Confident Recruiter process.

Compliance with public sector standards and ethical codes

Commission staff are employees of DBCA. DBCA provided the framework for human resource management within the Commission through an Operational Relationship Agreement and a MOU.

In the management and direction of the office of the Commission, the Director has complied with Public Sector Standards in Human Resource Management, the *Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics* and the Commission's *Code of Conduct*.

Information on both the *Code of Ethics* and the *Code of Conduct* is provided to new employees and members of the Commission on commencement with the Commission.

Recordkeeping plans

The Commission prepared and finalised its *Record Keeping Plan 2016* in accordance with section 19 of the *State Records Act 2000*. The purpose of this plan is to set out the matters about which records are to be created by the Commission and how it is to keep its records.

The State Records Commission has endorsed the Commission's *Record Keeping Plan 2016*. No changes were required to this process in 2019–20.

Government policy requirements

Substantive equality

The Commission implements the State Government's *Policy Framework for Substantive Equality* primarily through management planning processes associated with the CALM Act.

Occupational safety, health and injury management

DBCA Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) policy requires managers to demonstrate, maintain, monitor and review OSH in the workplace and places a responsibility on employees to implement a cycle of continuous improvement.

No workers' compensation claims were recorded during the reporting period.

The Commission works to the policy identified by DBCA.

No workers' compensation claims were recorded during the reporting period. The performance of the Commission OSH and injury management is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Performance reporting: Occupational safety, health and injury management

Measure	Actual result	Results against target	
	Reporting period 2020	Target	Comment on result
Number of fatalities	0	0	Achieved
Lost time injury and/or disease incidence rate	0	0	Achieved
Lost time injury and/or disease severity rate	0	0	Achieved
Percentage of injured workers returned to work: (i) within 6 weeks	0	0	Achieved
Percentage of managers trained in occupational safety, health and injury management responsibilities	100%	100%	Achieved

