

ECA WA News

Quarterly newsletter of the Environmental Consultants Association (WA)
ISSUE 01 Spring 2012



Matthew Fraser (2011 Ray Hart Memorial Scholarship winner) (from left), Professor Lyn Beazley (WA Chief Scientist), Ian Le Provost (President ECA) and Rob De Roach (Committee, ECA) at the recent ECA (WA) Inc AGM. Photo – Van Hart

this issue

Shark Bay research P.2
Ray Hart Memorial Scholarship P.2
EIA Training P.3-4
NOPSEMA P.4
Calling all 'young guns' P.5
Conferences P.5

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2012 ECA (WA) Inc AGM

The 2012 Environmental Consultants Association (WA) Inc Annual General Meeting and gala dinner on 28 August was held at the Old Swan Brewery. Highlights of the evening included opportunities to network with industry colleagues and clients, and listening to three entertaining and informative talks. Ian Le Provost briefly summarised the busy 12 months of activities by ECA (WA) Inc. Professor Lyn Beazley gave a photographic tour of WA to tell us about citizen science in WA and Matthew Fraser spoke about his honours research project at Shark



Summer ECA WA News

Summer ECA WA News contributions should be sent to ECA Editor Jo Tregonning at
editoreca@iprimus.com.au by
Monday 10 December 2012

ECA WA News is a quarterly publication of the Environmental Consultants Association (WA) Inc (ECA). It aims to inform members on the activities of the ECA and its members, events and training, and developments in the environmental industry. The views and opinions expressed in the articles in ECA WA News are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the ECA.



A day in the office at Shark Bay By Matt Fraser

Out of the swag at 5:30am, just before sunrise and enough time to start breakfast and get a quick cup of coffee before the onslaught of bushflies! The flooding of the Gascoyne Region in December 2010 happened more than 3 months ago, yet the coastline of Shark Bay still harboured an abundance of life. This was proper fieldwork – with nothing but a bush toilet within 50 km of our makeshift campsite. After breakfast we get all the gear ready and we are out for a full day on the boat. By 8am, we have reached our first site, time to put on the uniform and jump into the water, where there is seagrass as far as the eye can see!

Shark Bay is a magical place, especially in the water, where temperate and tropical species form a hugely diverse ecosystem. It has the largest and most diverse seagrass meadows in the world and they support a hugely diverse ecosystem that contributes to Shark Bay's World Heritage status. Between meadows, I see a huge amount of amazing marine life; from dugongs to turtles, and nudibranchs to dolphins. It's hard to stay focused on the job in hand with so much around to take your breath away. Not all it is friendly though, and a close encounter with a stonefish shows that you have to keep your wits about you up here! By mid-morning, the air temperature is rising, but there is not much respite jumping into the water, with a water temperature of 31°C – the result of the marine heat wave in the summer of 2010/11.

Lunchtime comes, and there is nothing better than sitting in the sun soaking up the scenery. After a quick bite, it's off to the next site. Not all the sites are glamorous though; with the water so turbid beside the Wooramel River that I can't even see the bottom until I hit it! After resurfacing, I hear a cry of pain from the skipper: a plague of native wasps have attacked. A few more sites and then a ride back to camp. There is

just enough time to enjoy dinner and a sunset (with the bushflies replaced by crickets and moths), before a few hours sorting seagrass! Night comes, and I jump into the swag, absolutely exhausted. Being so far from civilization has its advantages; with the stars the clearest I have ever seen them in my life. Just another day at the best office in the world!



Harvesting seagrass is just another day's work for Matt Fraser at Shark Bay. Photo – John Statton

About the author

Matthew Fraser was selected to be the recipient of the Ray Hart Memorial Scholarship in August 2011. Matt's Honours project looked at the spatial drivers of seagrass distribution within Shark Bay. He examined the major biogeochemical and biological factors which determine the distribution of seagrasses along the Faure Sill. Matt was awarded First Class Honours and an Australian Postgraduate Award for his thesis. Following his honours, Matt received a BayerBoost Scholarship from the Australian Geographic society to examine seagrass ecology during summer 2011/12. He commenced a PhD in March 2012 with the Oceans Institute at UWA to continue his work on understanding nutrient limitations in Shark Bay.



More information

Fraser M W, Kendrick G A, Grierson P F, Fourqurean J W, Vanderklift M, Walker D I (2012) Nutrient status of seagrasses cannot be inferred from system-scale distributions of phosphorus in Shark Bay, Western Australia. *Marine and Freshwater Research*, November.

Kendrick G A, Fourqurean J W, Fraser M W, Heithaus M, Jackson G, Freidman K, Hallac D. (2012) Science behind management of Shark Bay and Florida Bay, two P-limited subtropical systems with different climatology and human pressures. *Marine and Freshwater Research*, November.

Cambridge M L, Fraser M W, Holmer M, Kuo J, Kendrick G A (2012) Hydrogen sulphide intrusion in seagrasses from Shark Bay, Western Australia. *Marine and Freshwater Research*, November.

Matthew Fraser, Ph.D. Candidate on 6488 8127 or 20384204@student.uwa.edu.au.

2013 Ray Hart Memorial Scholarship

If you would like to contribute to the Scholarship fund you can download the donation form at www.eca.org.au.

Students wishing to apply for the scholarship can obtain more information by contacting Sophie Peoples on 6488 8071 or sophie.peoples@uwa.edu.au.

Applications open January 2013 and close March 2013.

EIA Training



The Pilbara olive python (Liasis olivaceus barroni) is protected at both the State and federal level, and is often considered in the course of EIA. Photo – Erin Harris

EIA Administration Procedures Update Forum

9 March 2012

Notes by Phil Runham (360 Environmental)

The objectives of the forum were to update discussion of the EIA Administration Procedures released in 2010; to provide consultants/proponents with an understanding of the applicability of the Procedures in the context of tangible cases; to enable the OEPA to source feedback from consultants / proponents working under the EIA process; and to facilitate improved EIA process through the joint efforts of the Agreement stakeholders.

The forum was structured around presentations relating to application of the Procedures followed by question / answer sessions with a panel comprising senior ECA and OEPA personnel. Central to the subject matter of the forum was the intended use of the Administration Procedures as a tool to streamline the EIA process in WA, but also to enhance the manner in which existing environmental values are protected.

Several key messages were apparent in the presentations. From the OEPA perspective, changes to EIA over recent years have seen an enormous increase in the average size of documents submitted for review, and a realisation that the process should focus on those projects that entail significant

environmental effects. Where this is the case, the OEPA is actively encouraging proponents to discuss proposals with both OEPA and various Decision Making Authorities for guidance on the potential level of EIA and the content of assessment documentation. The EPA considers that this will lead to a decrease in needless assessment of lower impact proposals and better environmental outcomes where significant impacts are anticipated to require mitigation or offsetting.

From the other side of the fence, there will be a greater onus on proponents to produce higher quality, evidence-based documentation and to ensure that all stakeholders views are considered. However, there is also likely to be a pay-off in terms of benefits, including more definitive regulatory expectations, higher value returns from EIA technical studies and increased community involvement, ownership and support, not to mention shorter approvals time frames.

In conclusion, teething problems seem unlikely to derail the EIA Administration Procedures should their intent be embraced by the WA EIA community.

ECA (WA) Christmas Function Wednesday 21 November,

Zamia Café, Synergy Parkland, Kings Park.
For more information visit
www.eca.org.au.

The partnering agreement signed in 2005 between the Environmental Consultants Association (WA) Inc. and Office of the Environmental Protection Authority (OEPA) aims to 'jointly support at regular intervals, a training course in Environmental Impact Assessment in Western Australia' (WA). The courses and forums seek to promote cooperation and efficiency within the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. Past workshop overheads are available at www.eca.org.au.

Offsets Workshop, Thursday 18 October 2012, 9am–5pm.

Technology Park Function Centre, Brodie Hall Drive, Bentley.

Environmental Assessment Training for Practitioners, 5–6 November 2012.

Vines Resort, Verdelho Drive, The Vines.

For more information and/or to register visit www.eca.org.au.

Photo Story

Have you taken a ripper photo and have a great yarn to tell about the photo? We'd like to hear from you! Photos and accompanying stories will feature in *ECA WA News*. ECA members will have the opportunity to vote and the winning entry will be announced at next year's ECA (WA) Inc. Annual General Meeting. Please send your photo and story to Jo at editoreca@iprimus.com.au.



Offshore Petroleum Environmental Management

Regulation 25 July 2012

Notes by Barbara Brown (Sinclair Knight Merz)

ECA assists members to be abreast of current legislation by organising presentations. The free lunch time session on offshore petroleum environmental management regulations was presented by NOPSEMA. Simon Schubach (General Manager, Regulatory), Cameron Grebe (General Manager, Environment) and Christine Lamont (Manager, Environment Monitoring and Analysis) provided an informative introduction to the history, legislative framework and NOPSEMA's approach to the regulation of offshore petroleum activities in Commonwealth waters. The trio provided an excellent insight into the role and responsibilities of the agency, particularly with respect to environment plans for offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage activities. Much of the mystery surrounding these plans, including when they are required, content and consultation requirements and above all what are the critical success factors for such a plan, was removed.

To download the presentation overheads visit www.nopsema.gov.au/assets/Uploads/presentation/Presentation-Offshore-Petroleum-Environmental-Management-Regulation.pdf.



Production rig at sunset. Photo – courtesy NOPSEMA

Environmental Assessment Training for Practitioners

14–15 May 2012

Notes by Angus Morrison-Saunders (Murdoch University)

The objectives of the two-day residential course were to define important EIA terms, theory and practice; to understand the EIA process in WA from a whole-of-project perspective, focusing on the roles and responsibilities of the OEPA; to use project examples to explore the roles and issues that emerge from EIA and to consider how the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of EIA processes in WA can be upheld and improved by practitioners engaged in the process.

The course was attended by ECA members as well as OEPA staff who worked together in small groups. A senior OEPA staff member (Anthony Sutton) was present for most of the course and an experienced practitioner now in the academic sector (Garry Middle) gave a rousing after-dinner speech alerting participants to some of the core issues for ensuring an effective EIA process.

During the first day-and-a-half of the course, participants worked through each of the steps in the EIA process in WA in detail, using an actual case study (i.e. subjected to EIA several years ago) as the basis for understanding how the current system operates and to seek ways to 'push the boundaries' on best practice. The derivation of a sample approval condition for an environmental offset that would be outcomes-based and suitable for later compliance and performance audits was a particular challenge – getting to the heart of how specific framing of EIA regulations is vital for delivering effective outcomes. The course ended with a focus on the assessment of strategic proposals and the challenges facing EIA practitioners with respect to delivering sustainable development.

Following the 2009 PTT EP AA Montara blowout and oil spill, and the subsequent Montara Commission of Inquiry, the Australian Government decided to establish a single national regulator for offshore petroleum safety, well integrity and environmental management. The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) was established on 1 January 2012 to administer the *Commonwealth Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* in Commonwealth waters. Visit www.nopsema.gov.au. To subscribe and/or to download the latest NOPSEMA *the Regulator* newsletter visit www.nopsema.gov.au/media/newsletters/.



Donkey orchid (*Diuris longifolia*) Photo – Jo Tregonning

Conferences in 2012

8–11 October 18th Australasian Weeds Conference 2012, Melbourne. Developing solutions to evolving weed problems. Visit www.18awc.com/.

29 October–2 November Australian Network for Plant Conservation 9th National Conference: Plant Conservation in Australia – Achievements and Future Directions. Canberra. Visit www.anpc.asn.au/conferences/2012.

31 October 12.30pm–5pm WA Sustainable Education Forum 2012: Our next courageous steps. Naturaliste Marine Discovery Centre, Hillarys. Cost \$20 or \$10 student. Visit <http://admail.adcorp.com.au/ch/23477/2dcvf4q/1751330/e0266gtz5.pdf>

14–15 November Strategic Planning Approaches to Improve Biodiversity Conservation Conference, Cockle Bay, Sydney. Visit <http://biodiversityoutcomes.com/>.

25–29 November 13th International Conference Wetland Systems for Water Pollution Control. Murdoch University. Visit www.promaco.com.au/events/wetlandsystems2012.html.

27–28 November Australian Institute of Environmental Accounting Conference, Melbourne Town Hall and Tuesday evening at MCG. Hear from leading experts and government agencies on NPI-NGER-EEO-CFI-Sustainability-Clean Energy. Visit www.environmentalaccounting.org.

27–29 November Australasian Wildlife Management Society Conference, Adelaide. Visit www.awms.org.au/pages/events.html.

28–30 November Conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia, Perth. Visit www.seraustralasia.com/pages/conference.html.



Native wisteria (*Hardenbergia comptoniana*) Photo – Jo Tregonning

Calling all ‘young guns’!

Are you a graduate consultant and/or have less than five years experience in consulting? Would you like to be involved in a subcommittee that focuses on training, mentoring and professional development needs aimed at improving your environmental consultancy skills?

The proposed **ECA Young Consultants Sub-Group** would have its own subcommittee comprised of three young consultants and two older experienced consultants. The subcommittee would organise its own social / professional development events with assistance from the ECA committee and events management team. Events could focus on providing workshops on the less technical and regulatory aspects of consulting to form the basis of a formal professional development scheme, whereby attendees were awarded training credits. ECA could establish a panel of independent experienced older consultants to provide mentoring advice as requested.

For more information and/or to become involved contact Ian Le Provost on 0418 997 759 or ian@leprovost.com.au by **8 October 2012**.

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8.30am–5pm Monday
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