



# Rediscover parks the theme for FACET conference

**CONFERENCE-goers were urged to 'Rediscover parks' earlier this month at the annual FACET conference, held at the Yanchep Inn and the beautiful surrounds of Yanchep National Park.**

The conference examined the role of parks in people's lives and encouraged them to enjoy and appreciate the health benefits that parks and green spaces provide.

Held by FACET (Forum Advocating Cultural and Eco-Tourism Inc) in partnership with DEC, Parks Forum, Tourism WA and the Conservation Commission of WA, the three-day conference brought together health and education professionals, park managers, tourism bodies, recreational groups, local government and others interested in exploring how we can better reconnect with nature.

Conference Convener Tracy Shea (DEC Assistant Director Policy and Planning and FACET executive member) said the conference was a great success.

"We drew together an exciting mix of speakers, all leaders in their fields, who know and understand the connection between parks and healthy communities," she said.

"Our international keynote speaker Tom Kiernan, President of the US National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), gave a fascinating address about the American national parks system, including NPCA's vision for protecting and conserving parks and landmarks, and how they work to turn that vision into reality.

"In the lead-up to the event Tom also gave a special seminar for DEC staff at the WA Conservation Science Centre."

Other keynote speakers came from diverse fields of expertise, ranging from health to tourism, all keen to share their knowledge and ideas about how to reconnect people with parks.

"We heard from many talented and committed people, including Parks Forum Patron Janet Holmes à Court, FACET founder and Conservation Commission Chair Pat Barblett, Sally Barnes, Tony Charters, Stuart Cumming, Evan Hall, Dr Tom Hatton, Griff Longley, Dr David Roberts, Denise Sullivan and Peter Yu," Tracy said.

Deputy Director General Parks and Conservation Jim Sharp gave the welcome address to the conference, highlighting the importance of rediscovering parks. Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General Michael Mischin MLC declared the conference open with a speech that drew attention to a number of initiatives being used to get locals and visitors alike to explore WA's natural wonders.

Conference attendees also witnessed the release of a number of rehabilitated Carnaby's cockatoos. The birds were rehabilitated following injury or raised from chicks by dedicated volunteers from Native Animal Rescue and the Black Cockatoo Rehabilitation Centre. Upon release, the cockatoos took to the skies together and found their home among the trees, a touching moment for those who witnessed the release.

Deputy Director General Parks and Conservation Jim Sharp said the release was a special moment for those present. Tom Kiernan agreed, citing it as a definite highlight of his time in WA.

The conference also saw attendees take part in field work sessions, which included Aboriginal cultural experiences, wildlife encounters and a peer review of Yanchep National Park. The new DEC book *Exploring Western Australia's natural wonders: national, marine and regional parks* was also launched at the conference.



Tony Charters (Ecotourism Australia), NPCA President Tom Kiernan and Dr Peter Bridgewater, a well-known Australian conservationist and Trustee of Parks Forum, who travelled from London to attend the conference

