



Ms Dena Rao
President
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Dena

Dear Ms Rao

REDISCOVERED ROCK WALLABY POPULATION IN KALBARRI NATIONAL PARK

The recent rediscovery of the Black-flanked Rock Wallabies in Kalbarri National Park is of remarkable significance for the conservation of their species in Western Australia. The Department of Parks and Wildlife acknowledges the contribution of Climbers' Association of Western Australia (CAWA) member, Remi Vignals, in the rediscovery. The Department of Parks and Wildlife also appreciates your and CAWA's willingness to work to protect the rediscovered population. The responsible approach shown to date in seeking to highlight the importance of conserving the rock wallabies provides a good basis for a collaborative approach to minimise risk to the population.

Despite extensive searches over the last several months the population of rock wallabies at the Promenade appears to be the only one remaining in Kalbarri National Park. Testing has shown that this population clearly differs genetically from others throughout the state and conservation significance of these few animals is therefore very high.

Research shows that rock-wallabies respond to outside threats by retreating to shelter sites and not feeding, or by remaining so close to shelter sites that they cause localised overgrazing of preferred foods. Ultimately this can lead to the decline of populations as the animals are not able to access sufficient resources to survive and reproduce.

Staff from Parks and Wildlife who have worked at the Promenade site have observed clear evidence that elements of activity at the Promenade may be threatening to the rock wallabies. These include:

- Loud noises from climbers whilst climbing the Promenade;
- Foreign smelling items such as camping equipment stowed in overhangs, rubbish and poorly buried toilet paper and faeces; and
- Noise and foreign smells on a prolonged basis as a result of camping in the area.

Given these potential threats and the significance of the population, a more formal policy on camping and climbing in the Promenade area is required. During the next six months Parks and Wildlife will develop a conservation plan for the Kalbarri National Park rock wallaby population. The objective of the conservation plan will be to ensure the long term protection and sustainability of the population. The plan will give consideration to the aspirations for ongoing use of the

Promenade area by climbers and other users. Parks and Wildlife will consult with CAWA in the development of the plan.

In the meantime, as a precaution, to mitigate potential threats to the wallabies from camping activities, the area between Z-Bend and Placid Pool will be designated a no camping area and approval to camp in this area will not be provided. In addition, supplementary cat and fox baiting will occur in the vicinity of the site and the goat control program will continue with operations planned to take place in February. As an interim measure, camping will be permitted near the Z-Bend. Approval to camp will be through registration with the Kalbarri National Park Headquarters. A camping code of conduct will be developed in line with the Murchison Gorge code of conduct.

Geraldton Acting District Manager, Anthony Desmond, will contact you in the near future to discuss details of the code of conduct and the ongoing use of the Promenade for climbing.

It is recognised that there have been tensions within the association regarding the possibility of restrictions on camping and use of the Promenade area, following the rediscovery of the wallabies. Senior Ranger, Mike Paxman, and Anthony Desmond have endeavoured to maintain good relations with climbers and the association until further information is gathered. However, less formal approaches are open to misinterpretation, and risk ongoing pressure at the site and potential threats to the wallabies.

The *Kalbarri National Park Management Plan* (2015, MP83) states an action to: "*maintain a registration system for visitors camping remotely, in association with long distance hiking, canoeing and rock climbing in the Murchison Gorge, and consider limiting numbers as required, to maintain the quality of this experience and manage environmental and other impacts.*" The action outlined above is consistent with this commitment and is considered a reasonable management measure to protect the wallabies.

The Management Plan also proposes the provision of improved access to Placid Pool and the recently announced Royalty for Regions Kalbarri National Park project provided for that to occur. However, this aspect of the project may be postponed to prevent an increase in visitor pressure in the Promenade area.

Please contact Anthony Desmond on (08) 9964 0901, should you wish to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely



Nigel Sercombe
REGIONAL MANAGER
Midwest Region

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