

## Festival celebrates spring

Program offers 68 events

Spring is sprung, and the celebrations are spreading across the Great Southern in September and October.

Eight shires in the north of the region are hosting events in the Hidden Treasures Bloom Festival, supported by the GSDC and Tourism Western Australia.

Festival events include wildflower displays, open gardens, workshop sessions and field walks. Special sessions include sustainable and organic gardening, gourmet vegetable cropping and the feng shui of gardens and homes.

Tasty lunch and dinner events add extra incentives for visitors to take an extended trip around the Hidden Treasures shires of Broomehill-Tambellup, Cranbrook, Gnowangerup, Jerramungup, Katanning, Kent, Kojonup and Woodanilling.

Bloom Festival flavours include ales matched with appetisers at Stonemasons Distillery in Kojonup, Bremer Bay's finest seafood matched with local wines, Borden's best beef with beer, and a range of other food and wine attractions.

The 68-event program was launched in Perth on Tuesday 14 August by Agricultural MLC Mia Davies. On Sunday 16 September,



Agricultural MLC Mia Davies launched the Hidden Treasures Bloom Festival at Kings Park in Perth in August.

Wagin MLA Terry Waldron officially opened the festival in Cranbrook.

The Bloom Festival program is available at participating outlets, visitor centres and community resource centres in the Great Southern, or by visiting [www.kojonupvisitors.com](http://www.kojonupvisitors.com).

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## Board appointments

### Chairman welcomes new members

Four new members have been appointed to the Great Southern Development Commission (GSDC) Board.

Cameron Taylor, Cr Jane Trethowan, Cr Barry Webster and City of Albany Mayor Dennis Wellington were appointed to terms expiring on 30 June 2015.

Members of the GSDC Board are appointed

to one of three categories: ministerial nominees, local government nominees and community nominees.

Mr Wellington is the Mayor of the City of Albany and a business proprietor in Albany, and was appointed as a community nominee.

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# Agency notches up 25 years

## CEO points to proud history

On 1 July 2012, the Great Southern Development Commission marked 25 years of service as a statutory authority promoting economic development in the region.

The agency was established as the Great Southern Development Authority on 1 July 1987 under the inaugural Board of Chairman Brian Bradley, Deputy Chairman Ross Anderson, members June Hodgson, Josephine Lynch, Betty Pearse and John Plewright, and inaugural Director Michael Jones.

Early projects drawing the Authority's attention included the relocation of Westrail's operations to make way for the redevelopment of the Albany foreshore, the establishment of the Down Road industrial precinct and funding for the restoration of Albany's former hospital to house the Vancouver Arts Centre.

On 8 April 1994, the authority became the Great Southern Development Commission under the Regional Development Commissions Act.

GSDC Chief Executive Officer Bruce Manning said the organisation had a proud history.

"Many of the region's major development initiatives over 25 years have been directly or indirectly advanced through the work of the GSDC," Mr Manning said.

"Initiatives that bear the hallmark of GSDC involvement include the Great Southern Festival, the University of Western Australia Albany Centre along with the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management, and the Albany Waterfront with the Albany Entertainment Centre.

"Further afield, we can point to the supporting role the GSDC played in advancing Katanning's participation in the SuperTowns program and in developing the case for the new Katanning saleyards.

"Apart from big projects, the Commission has assisted in many smaller initiatives that are nevertheless supremely important for their host communities, such as the Yongergnow Malleefowl Centre in Ongerup,

or Kodja Place in Kojonup," Mr Manning said.

The Great Southern has recorded steady growth and significant improvements in infrastructure and services in recent decades.

"As satisfying as it is to look backwards, it is exciting to look ahead to the ways in which the GSDC will continue to build the region in the context of new opportunities, a growing population and technological advances," Mr Manning said.

"Agriculture is the region's backbone and remains a great positive force, although the Great Southern welcomes other fields of endeavour.

"Our strength as a quality food producer is a strategic advantage in a world that can expect to be feeding another billion people within two decades, and a total global population of nine billion by 2050," Mr Manning said.

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## Board appointments

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Cr Trethowan, a local government nominee, is the President of the Shire of Kojonup, where she farms sheep and grain.

Cr Webster, a local government nominee, is the President of the Shire of Broomehill-Tambellup and farms wheat in Tambellup, along with other farming interests.

Mr Taylor, a ministerial nominee, is a Katanning-based partner and director of accounting firm RSM Bird Cameron, for which he manages the Great Southern zone covering Albany, Katanning and Narrogin offices.

Incumbent GSDC Board member Kevin Forbes AM was reappointed to a further term expiring on 30 June 2015.



GSDC Board Chairperson Peter Rundle

GSDC Board Chairperson Peter Rundle welcomed the new members and the reappointment of Mr Forbes.

"I thank the departing members of the Board, Len Smith and Rob Lucas, who both made valuable contributions to the work of the GSDC and have completed their terms on the Board," Mr Rundle said.

"Mr Lucas served an extended term due to the review of the state's Regional Development Commissions and his dedication is admirable.

"I look forward to working with the new Board members to further promote the development of the Great Southern," Mr Rundle said.

The GSDC Board meets regularly to set policy directions including budgets, major expenditure approvals and advice to the Minister on regional matters.

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## Unique shelter takes shape

### Karri forest haven for cyclists

A unique part of the Munda Biddi Trail experience is under construction in a secluded clearing north of Denmark.

Construction supervisor Brett Trouchet and assistant Steve Kerr are building a steel and timber shelter that is the only Munda Biddi Trail shelter located in karri forest.

DEC project coordinator Kerstin Stender said other sections of the off-road touring cycle trail passed through karri forest but no other shelters were amongst the karris.

"The other shelters are in different forest or bush settings, or the day's ride is from town to town," Ms Stender said.

"This shelter is in a beautiful location and will accommodate up to 24 cyclists inside, with more tent space outside."

Work on the shelter is part of continuing trail construction between Denmark and Walpole, following the opening of the Albany to Denmark section in May.

The \$6 million project Munda Biddi Trail project will extend the trail from Nannup



DEC project coordinator Kerstin Stender (left) inspects the Munda Biddi Trail shelter with DEC colleagues Pip Tilbrook and Howard Manning.

to Albany, supported by \$1.5 million of Royalties for Regions funding through the Great Southern Regional Grants Scheme administered by the GSDC.

Sections of the extension in the South West region are being supported by the South West Development Commission and the entire project is under the management of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC).

Shelters on the Munda Biddi Trail are located about a day's ride apart, and about a day's ride from the nearest town.

A second shelter for the Denmark to Walpole section will be built about a day's ride out of Walpole towards Denmark.

Munda Biddi Trail shelters have rainwater tanks and feature an undercover sitting area and basic bunks for 12 to 24 people, and some have verandas. Tent sites are provided near the shelter and there is an environmentally friendly toilet.

The Munda Biddi Trail extension is due for completion in summer and will ultimately connect Albany to Mundaring on a 1000km route taking in bush tracks, old rail forms and minor roads.

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## Honours for Great Southern farmers

### Excellence in regional enterprises

Three Great Southern Farmers were honoured recently in the Australian Farmer of the Year Awards.

Woodanilling farmer Bindi Murray was named Young Farmer of the Year, Kojonup farmer Robert Warburton received the Rural Leader of the Year and was a finalist for the overall Farmer of the Year award, and Frankland River farmer Richard Coole was awarded Wool Producer of the Year.

Mrs Murray is the daughter of 2008 GSDC Medal for Excellence winner Russel

Thomson, and Mr Egerton-Warburton and his wife Jennifer were finalists for the award in 2009.

Now in its third year, the Farmer of the Year award recognises excellence across a range of agricultural sectors, and the contribution of outstanding young farmers, women and future rural leaders.

The Farmer of the Year awards are presented by the Kondinin Group, the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and the ABC.

Mr and Mrs Egerton-Warburton farm sheep and wheat, and run Lucinda's Everlastings, through which they are exploring the use of the daisies to attract beneficial insects to canola crops.

Mrs Murray is part of a farming enterprise on 6000ha with 50 per cent mixed cropping and 50 per cent sheep production, running 19,000 head. Mr Coole runs 39,000 sheep for wool, meat and prime lambs.

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## Students take to the shade

Enhancements for school environment



As the spring sunshine grows stronger, students at Katanning's Braeside Primary School are taking to the shade of two new gazebos and a veranda.

With the help of \$46,900 in Royalties for Regions funding through the GSDC's Regional Grants Scheme, the school's Parents and Citizens Association took on a project to provide better covered areas for the children to use during the sunny months.

Principal Frances Coventry paid tribute to the P and C, especially former president Robert Garlick, who put a great deal of effort into the project.

Ms Coventry said the new facilities were popular with the children.

"The gazebos are good quality and built to last, and the children use them every day," she said.

"The new shade area alongside four of our classrooms helps to keep the rooms cooler and the teachers like it because they can keep an eye on the children from inside the classroom.

"We also benefit from collapsible tents provided through the project that we use for sports carnivals, fetes and so on," Ms Coventry said.

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*Braeside students enjoy one of their new gazebos. From left: Kelly Simpson, Jaymee-Lee Quarmby, Lucy Turner and Connor Debellis, all in Year 3.*

## Golf club's new lease of life

Improvements welcomed

Nyabing has an improved venue for sport and socialising, following refurbishments at the town's golf club.

A \$100,000 project to re-roof the clubhouse, build a veranda, refit the ablutions and provide a lockable storage shed was supported by \$44,000 in Royalties for Regions funding through the GSDC, along with support from the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Shire of Kent.

Leaks had developed in the clubhouse roof, damaging the walls and floors.

A district golf carnival on 18 and 19 August, the Lakes Carnival for Nyabing and five other regional clubs, provided the first major use of the refurbishment.

Nyabing Golf Club secretary Arlene Sutherland said the carnival attracted a field of 56 for a 36-hole competition over two days, and the improvements were much appreciated.

"The veranda helps to shade the clubhouse and we now have air-conditioning through the project, which will help in summer," Mrs Sutherland said.

Apart from golfers, the clubhouse is used by community and non-profit groups for meetings and events, providing fundraising opportunities for the club.

The club's official season close is on Saturday 6 October but a further event is held on Saturday 13 October when the club's male members take care of the food and babysitting while women from Nyabing and Pingrup enjoy a Pink Day on the course.

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# Mount Barker celebrates upgrade

Town centre enhanced



Wagin MLA Terry Waldron cuts the ribbon to open the Short Street town centre improvements, aided by former Townscape Review Steering Committee chairperson Peter Thorn (left) and Plantagenet Shire President Ken Clements.

Traffic flow and parking changes are part of a town centre enhancement in Mount Barker.

The Shire of Plantagenet undertook a \$250,000 project to upgrade Short Street, aided by \$123,000 of Royalties for Regions funding through the GSDC's Town Centre Enhancement Program (TCEP).

Short Street is now one-way with angle parking on one side, including a disabled parking bay. As part of the project, the road was resurfaced and footpaths were installed, along with better drainage and underground power.

Wagin MLA Terry Waldron officially opened

the project on Tuesday 21 August, and congratulated the Shire of Plantagenet on its efforts. Improvements to Short Street complement works the Shire has previously undertaken to enhance Lowood Road, with traffic calming, paving and landscaping.

TCEP funding also contributed to a separate project to install promotional banners along Lowood Road.

The program has supported town centre improvements in all local government areas in the Great Southern over the past year.

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# Landscape works its charm

Forum delegates experience Great South West Edge

Local landscapes started to work their charm on delegates to the 2012 National Landscapes Forum in Albany recently.

About 50 delegates attended the forum to discuss the promotion of Australia's most significant natural environments, as selected by Parks Australia and Tourism Australia under the National Landscapes program.

Participants took the opportunity to visit some of the local attractions and were duly impressed.

The Great Southern coastline, along with the Stirling Range and Porongurup National Parks, are part of the Great South West Edge National Landscape, which stretches from Bunbury to Cape Arid.

The area was added to the program last year, after nomination by the GSDC, Tourism WA, the Department of Environment and Conservation and neighbouring Development Commissions.

Delegates to the Albany forum included



National Landscape Forum delegates visited the Brig Amity during a break in proceedings. From left: Flinders Ranges representative Jane Luckraft, GSDC senior development officer Linsey McFarlane, Parks Australia senior tourism officer Emma Knezevic and Great Ocean Road representative Carole Reid.

representatives from the other 15 National Landscapes around the nation, the Great South West Edge Steering Committee, Parks Australia and Tourism Australia.

They started their forum with a trip to the granite sky walk at Castle Rock in the Porongurups, before two days of serious discussion.

Parks Australia senior tourism officer Emma Knezevic said she was delighted to

travel to the forum by road from Bunbury.

"I had visited Margaret River before but I had no idea how much the landscape changes on the way to Albany," Ms Knezevic said. "There is a lot to see and I was amazed at how lush and green it is.

"The forum here has been productive and it is good to see a strong commitment from the local steering committee," Ms Knezevic said.

Tourism Australia and Parks Australia initiated the National Landscapes program to promote selected significant landscapes to overseas visitors who prefer active travel rather than passive sightseeing.

Ms Knezevic said the challenge was now before businesses and organisations in the Great South West Edge to implement the experience development strategy under the National Landscape program.

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## Medal benefits spread north

Great Southern expertise at work in the Pilbara

Specialised agricultural equipment from the Great Southern is contributing to sound environmental management in the Pilbara, thanks in part to a GSDC Medal grant.

Woodanilling farmer Russel Thomson won the 2008 Great Southern Development Commission Medal for Excellence in NRM for his pioneering work in landscape drainage and used the \$10,000 grant from the award to purchase specialised equipment for trials of raised bed seeding in the Great Southern.

Mr Thomson is now using the specialised seeder to establish large-scale trials of fodder crops at a Rio Tinto-owned pastoral lease in the Pilbara.

Mr Thomson said the intention of the cropping trial was to make productive use of the huge volumes of good quality water released into the environment through iron ore mine dewatering operations.

Fodder from the irrigated pasture will be fed to cattle on Rio Tinto's six pastoral leases, and any excess that becomes

available will be sold to other pastoralists.

Mr Thomson said the seeder was especially suited to Rhodes grass, one of the fodder varieties chosen for the trials.

"The specialised seeder we used for trials in the Great Southern has a wavy disc coupler, closer plate and press wheel, which should help to get a good germination rate from the Rhodes grass," he said.

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## Cemetery heritage enhanced

Historic graves restored

Old graves harbour compelling stories of a town's past, and no consecrated graveyard in Western Australia tells older tales than Albany's Memorial Park Cemetery.

The cemetery was the first consecrated burial ground in the State and its poignant hints about life and loss in the early decades of European settlement are now better presented than they have been for years.

With the help of \$46,000 in Royalties for Regions Regional Grants Scheme (RGS) funding through the GSDC, the Albany Cemetery Board (ACB) has improved the cemetery grounds and restored more than 60 damaged graves in a project totalling \$90,650.

ACB project coordinator Peter Tomlinson said the improvements made the cemetery more welcoming to the public and would help to protect the graves.

Unsuitable trees in the cemetery had damaged gravesites by root invasion or by dropping branches on headstones.

Aided by the RGS funding, the ACB appointed an arborist to assess all the trees in the cemetery grounds and the most damaging and least healthy specimens were removed.



*Albany Cemetery Board Chairman Alan Hortin and administrator Peter Tomlinson inspect restored headstones at Memorial Park Cemetery.*

New trees have been planted to replace them, using more suitable species.

"The cemetery is something the community can be a lot more proud of now," Mr Tomlinson said.

"The restoration of the headstones has been excellent and the bollards are in place to keep vehicles off the grounds."

Memorial Park Cemetery is the burial place of pioneers including Patrick Taylor and Alexander Collie, and members of the Spencer and Hassell families.

Noongar people, sailors, servicemen and convicts are also among those interred at Memorial Park in Middleton Road.

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## Clever seating enhances Town Hall

### Katanning expands entertainment options

With the flick of a switch, Shire of Katanning building maintenance officer Don Cumby can transform the venerable Katanning Town Hall from an open-floored venue to an auditorium with tiered seating.

In about a minute, Mr Cumby can roll out 213 seats rising seven levels from the Town Hall's flat floor of polished boards.

This clever transformation is part of a planned \$700,000 upgrade of the Town Hall aided by \$69,490 in Royalties for Regions funding through the GSDC's Regional Grants Scheme (RGS).

The retractable seating was funded by \$145,000 from Lotterywest and the RGS funds covered works on the building, including reroofing and internal modifications related to the seating.

Shire of Katanning Chief Executive Officer Dean Taylor said the changes to the Town Hall allowed it to be used as a regional entertainment centre and to attract events that would otherwise bypass Katanning.

"The Shire of Katanning partnered with the Shire of Wagin for some features of the upgrade," Mr Taylor said.

"This reflects the fact that the Town Hall



*Building maintenance officer Don Cumby rolled out 213 tiered seats in about a minute. Each bank of seats folds flat so the multiple levels can roll back for compact storage.*

will now draw audiences from nearby communities to an increasing range of performances.

"All the modifications were carried out with due respect to the heritage values of the Town Hall," Mr Taylor said.

When not in use, the seating system retracts

into a compact unit at the rear of the hall, occupying only a couple of metres of floor space.

Future works in the project include improvements to the kitchen facilities.

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## Regional qualities shine

### Great Southern shows strength

Great Southern enterprises have picked up awards and gained accreditation recently in diverse fields.

Denmark leads the way in tourism, winning the 2012 GWN7 Top Tourism Award for a town with a population of less than 5,000.

Denmark tour operator Out of Sight Tours gained accreditation under the national Climate Action Certification Program, becoming one of only 61 tourism businesses in Australia to hold the status.

The certification recognises tourism

industry enterprises that have taken specific actions to reduce their carbon emissions.

Pie and wine producers have been in the news as regional businesses show that they can hold their heads high.

Great Southern pie makers performed well in the recent 2012 Official Great Aussie Pie Competition.

Albany Pie Café, Denmark Bakery and Mount Barker Country Bakery won a variety of medals in a range of pie categories,

including a gourmet category gold medal for Denmark's apple pie and gold for Mount Barker's pork belly and rice pie, and prawn, garlic and rice pie.

To accompany the food, Great Southern wineries are demonstrating that they have the goods.

Regional wine producers picked up a swag of trophies at the Perth Royal Wine Show, with outstanding results for West Cape Howe Wines, Rockcliffe (formerly Matilda's Estate) and Towerhill Estate, along with 14 other regional wine producers..

# Regional research lauded

Scientists present current studies

Rescuing penguins was a hot topic at the Great Southern Great Science conference on Friday 10 August.

Great Southern Great Science is an initiative of the Centre of Excellence in Natural Resource Management (CENRM) and is supported by the GSDC.

The 12-part program presented reports on the state of science in the Great Southern, including research on dieback, herbicide resistance and rural cancer outcomes.

Denmark vet David Edmonds gave an account of efforts to save northern rockhopper penguins that appeared recently on Denmark beaches.

Rescuing the stranded penguins entailed gaining an understanding of their behaviour since they have no innate fear of land-based predators.

Mr Edmonds also had to take account of penguin biology, securing supplies of squid to feed them and ensuring they had access to salt water for drinking, not to mention keeping them cool during hot weather.



Denmark veterinarian David Edmonds explains penguin rescues at Great Southern Great Science.

WA Chief Scientist Lyn Beazley lauded the scientific contributions at the conference and said the event was the 'best yet'.

High school students once again played a

role at the conference, presenting reports on their scientific research.

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