

Executive Officers Report 2019

Looking back over the year is always exciting, Outdoors WA has provided an ongoing focus on advocacy with continued support in promoting the value to our community of getting outdoors and the value of outdoor education. We know that getting outdoors has always been good for our health and that there must be some economic derived from the many people being active. We now know that outdoor recreation provides over \$1.08 Billion to the WA economy each year. It's time to recognise that it makes good social, health and economic sense to invest into the outdoors community here in WA.

Building the Outdoors Community

Strategically we continued to work in collaboration with different partners in the sector to promote getting outdoors and to be a conduit in connecting different providers together. An interesting but often overlooked area has been in Bush Adventure Therapy and this year saw the meeting of minds and the opening of an Australian Bush Adventure Therapy (ABATWA) Group to start to identify programs and people that are active in this space in WA. Board member Kym Gibson is the new WA representative for the ABAT and has been active in promoting the value of adventure therapy and the opportunity for more of it to happen in WA. This year we promoted the survey undertaken to identify providers in WA and look forward to the results.

A new representative has been appointed to the South West Cave Management Access Committee in the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park. Thanks to Bendon Hill for your active participation in the caving community.

We also pioneered a number of film nights in partnership with Adventure Entertainment, this has diversified our audience and reach in promoting the value of getting outdoors. We hosted the Mountainfilm, European Adventure Film tour and Women's Adventure Film Festival. We look forward to seeing more armchair adventurers going into the outdoors.



Advocacy

We were fortunate to secure a series of interviews on Saturday morning with the ABC South West. They have an audience that reaches from Bunbury across the Margaret River and down to Albany. For 2 months each Saturday we were able to encourage local people to get along to events and activities including hiking, camping, orienteering, mountain biking, paddling and more. We also were able to bring in a number of guest speakers who have been past Outdoors Ambassadors to share their knowledge and expertise on the best ways to get involved in the outdoors. It was positive between shows to hear about peoples own enjoyment in discovering about places and clubs that they did not know that was right around the corner.

Outdoors October rolled out in 2018 with over 150 events and more than 50 community groups once more all getting behind the concept of a month celebrating the outdoors. A big thanks to all of the team that was involved. Thanks to Tracy who pulled all the stings together and was there at all of the events. I have the privilege of being there in front of the media. But none of it would happen without the



important people working behind the scenes. This was a big year, we were on television through West TV along with spots on radio through RTR and local radio stations.

During Outdoors October we know that over 15,000 people are active through the many programs going on, and this is just a small fraction of the outdoors participation that is happening. It has been a successful project in highlighting the amount of activity, but it also highlights that more needs to be done in measuring the amount of participation and the value that this brings. We were fortunate to see a number of projects this year start to measure that value.



Outdoors WA has been an active part of the peak national outdoors organisation the Outdoor Council of Australia and has been a consistent voice lobbying for the recognition of outdoor recreation within the area of Sport and Recreation at the national level. Recently it was rewarding to see new national statistics showing the diversity of participation happening. It shows that whilst competitive sport is still relevant to some people there is a growing part of the population embracing outdoor recreation as their physical activity of choice. This can be seen in the Australian Ausplay data that shows active recreation encompasses participation across a person's whole life. Interpretation of the Ausplay data has revealed the Bushwalking is one of the top ten active areas of participation for Australian Adults. Did you know that Australians spend over 17.2 Billion minutes a year bushwalking?

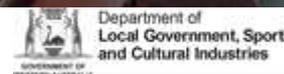
The State of Play Bush Walking report is the first of its kind to recognise outdoor recreation within the top 10 physical activities being undertaken with over 1.17 million people participating each year. The report has also identified that there is equal gender participation in bushwalking making it an attractive activity for everybody. We look forward to more of this data coming through to strengthen the case for investment.



Talking to those emerging into the sector has always been important and engaging with the Outdoor Recreation students at the University of Notre Dame is one way to gauge the enthusiasm of those coming into the sector. It is important to enlighten them to the fact that they are part of a large community and that they will be the ones contributing that will shape the future of the sector and of Outdoors WA. It was also an opportunity to thank the many students that supported the advocacy work of that we had undertaken in the past 12 months and to remind them of the importance to continue to advocate for



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the value that they bring as young professionals in getting people outdoors.

The talking and engaging continues as we seek to shape and influence government policy for the betterment of the community. We have made a number of policy submissions and seen gradual movement towards recognising the value of getting more people outdoors. We were invited to submit feedback to consultation on the WA Aboriginal Heritage Act. This Act is due for review having not changed since 1972. We are one voice amongst many calling for change and have encouraged all parties to recognise the important role that adventuring outdoors has for the cultural values of all Western Australians. It will be rewarding if we can see a new Act that provides for both protection of Aboriginal heritage and culture and promotes the opportunity for more of the community to connect to country.

Submissions were also made to the Duty of Institutions Discussion Paper that came from the recent Royal Commission. It has been recognised that there needs to be ongoing child protection processes put in place for all organisations. The submission highlighted the need for common practices and a legal framework for both commercial and community organisations if we are to ensure that common childhood experiences like campouts and school camps are to continue. As is the case with many of our outdoor adventures there is often a perception that outdoor activities are unsafe and therefore cannot be engaged with. This is untrue and we have continued to advocate that for children and adults that going outside and connecting to nature should be a regular part of their everyday lives.

If outdoors activities are undertaken the correctly they are safe and enjoyable and any risk can be well managed. We continue to support the professionalism of the sector to ensure that quality experiences are maintained.

Professionalism and Training

It has been an interesting year in the development of increased professionalism within the sector. Outdoors WA has been committed towards seeing the standards of the sector develop over time to meet the community's rising expectations. Across the country we have seen progress towards developing vocational training as well as more outdoors leaders emerging from universities. So too does community expectation rise to assume that the person providing an adventure experience will also hold a qualification in their professed area of expertise and the relevant experience and knowledge.

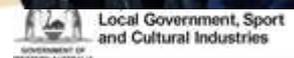
For many years we have argued for an increase in the support to outdoor education teachers to ensure that all outdoor education programs are delivered in a safe and sustainable way and that teachers get the support they need in delivering outdoors learning. In WA research has shown 50% of outdoor education teachers hold no formal qualifications in outdoor education. If we are to see this part of the sector grow then the need for investment into professional development must be recognised. In the past months we have seen a policy shift within the Department of Education towards requiring activity qualifications. We hope that this policy shift will be aided by increased resourcing for outdoor education to ensure that we have the best trained outdoor educators in the country. If we are to aspire towards a vision of outdoor education for every student then we need to ensure that there is opportunities and investment to make that happen for all schools. We hosted the first Country Week Meeting for Outdoor Educators to enable a forum to discuss and work on finding solutions to the new policy.

There has been a positive increase in training uptake over the past months in activities like mountain biking, climbing and paddling. Outdoors WA has run training in orienteering, outdoors first aid and supported the development of snorkelling training to meet the new policy needs. It has also been positive to see the return of training providers to WA in the provision of Wilderness First Aid training that can enable a proficient first aid response should something go wrong in a remote area.

As expressed WA has supported the development of the National Training Package in Outdoor Recreation over the past two years. There was a robust response to the facilitated meetings in Perth and Bunbury with Skills IQ. These were possible because of the strong sector response and the partner work with Futurenow and The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural



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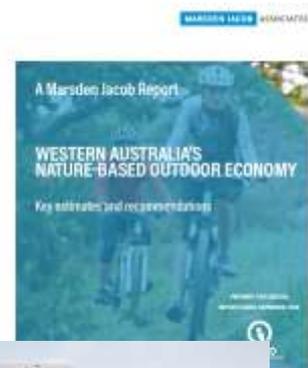
Industries. We look forward to seeing the package finalised to benefit trainees and employers.

The **Australian Adventure Activity Standard** project has continued with the rollout of numerous areas of activity guidance. This work has been sustained with strong WA support with the Technical Working Groups having representatives from WA. We are thankful for the hundreds of people lending their expertise to the project. The Australian Adventure Activity Standard and related Good Practice Guides will provide a voluntary good-practice framework for safe and responsible planning and delivery of led outdoor adventure activities with dependent participants. There has been online webinars to present on the draft material allowing for connections across the country and the project has a planned release of standards in late 2019. For the first time we will see a truly national standard in outdoor adventure activities in Australia. This will aid in the continued safe delivery of programs across the country. The high level of work between the states has been a wonderful example of what can be accomplished via collaboration. The next steps will be seeing providers take these and utilise them within their own practices. Go to <https://australianaas.org.au/> to see the standard.



Research

Research is key in being able to provide a clear and concise picture of what is happening in the sector and the value that it provides. The research commissioned by Skills IQ and undertaken by economists Marsden Jacobs has shown for the first time the valuable \$1.08 Billion of gross value added to the WA economy each year by the outdoors sector. This data provides a high level picture of the contribution that our sector makes to the economic success of the state. It also shows that the many health benefits that we are aware of in getting outdoors makes a saving of over \$208 Million in preventative health costs. Imagine the increased benefits if we can get more people outdoors and active.



We maintain support for the Journal of Outdoor and Environmental Education (JOEE). This year has seen all of the past research from the Australian Journal of Outdoor Education uploaded online. This provides a valuable resource to assist in finding the current and emergent thinking in outdoor education. It can be easily accessed for Outdoors WA members through the portal with Outdoor Education Australia.



It has also been rewarding to see the emerging project developing to support Bushwalking and Trail Running in WA. This plan will set the vision for the development of these Activities in WA and we look forward to seeing it completed and resources released to grow these activities.

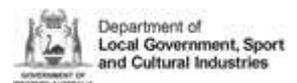
In looking ahead it is exciting to see the release of an overall vision for outdoor recreation within Western Australia from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. The **More People More Active Outdoors** report has been a shared effort over five years in the making and now provides a framework for collaboration in setting a common platform to get more people into nature. Thanks to Steve Pretzel from PX2 and Steve Bennett and Dr May Carter for seeing this project through its many stages. The report provides a clear perspective on the social and community value that outdoor recreation provides and outlines the opportunities ahead. We now need to advocate to energise these opportunities.



Governance

The board of Outdoors WA works tirelessly to keep abreast of the changing conditions in our sector. In the past year we have seen the ongoing restructuring of government departments and associated changes in policy and strategy. We have also moved to an independent board appointment for the Chairperson and it has been rewarding to see a

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number of people step into key officer positions on the board. A big thanks to Dr Lenore Lyons for her work on the policy and constitutional review. Lenore also stepped into the position of Chairperson along with Dr Duncan Picknoll and Bernadette Suriani for a time. The board also has reviewed its own operations and created three sub-committees to support the work of the organisation. These are Revenue & Finance; Human Resources, Risk & Compliance, each headed up by a board member.

We have also undertaken a strategic review and are developing a new strategic plan for the organisation to set us up for the years ahead.

The year has had its challenges and I must express a heartfelt thanks to the board of Outdoors WA to Joe, Brad, Duncan, Kym, Lenore, Bernadette, Graham, Peter, Andy, Liam and Terry for their support and collaboration over the year.

Jamie Bennett
Executive Officer
Outdoors WA



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