



Rottnest Voluntary Guides Association Inc.

Patron: Mrs P Barblett AM

2016 Premier's Awards
Public Sector Commission
2 Havelock Street,
West Perth
WA 6005

Dear Judging Panel,

The Rottnest Voluntary Guides Association Inc. (RVGA) was established in 1986 to promote an increased awareness and appreciation of the natural environment and historical significance of Rottnest Island. There are currently 260 Guides with 10 Guides on the Island each day. Guides conduct daily tours covering the History of the Settlement, Quokkas, Reefs and Wrecks, World War II Guns & Tunnels and the Wadjemup Lighthouse. The Guides also provide a Meet & Greet service at the Visitor Centre.

A greater variety of activities and tours are conducted during school holidays. These tours are aimed at families and range from star gazing to quiz nights. The RVGA also carry out special request tours from various organisations including schools and conference groups.

The RVGA interacts with between 60,000 and 70,000 visitors to Rottnest each year and is given great support by the Rottnest Island Authority in our activities.

The RVGA was invited by the Rottnest Foundation and the Rottnest Island Authority to join the existing Wadjemup Walk Trail Steering Group Committee in November 2015. The Trail project was over 60% complete at that time and as one of the direct links between visitors and the Island environment it was important for us to fully understand the Project and prepare the documentation for our new Lakes tour. Jenni & Lance Bannister-Jones, a husband and wife team that has been with the RVGA for several years, are avid walkers and have a keen interest in the project, so they were given the responsibility as RVGA's representatives on the Steering Committee.

Subsequently the RVGA has introduced a new 'Secrets of the Lakes' walking tour which showcases the Lakes section of the Wadjemup Walk Trail. One of the objectives of the Wadjemup Walk Trail project is to connect the public to cultural and natural assets on Rottnest and educate them about the importance of protecting these assets.

Government House, Herschel, Baghdad and Serpentine Lakes on Rottnest Island are some of the deepest permanent natural salt-water lakes in Western Australia and are part of the greater wetland that encompasses the Swan River estuary and Swan Coastal Plain lakes. A unique range of flora and fauna inhabit the salt lakes including large numbers of birds attracted by an abundant supply of insects and crustaceans that breed in the lakes.

At the bottom of the Lakes are active microbial mats, communities of organisms, which inhabit the floor and are very similar to those ancient microbial communities that formed stromatolites and thrombolites - part of the earliest life forms on Earth. These seemingly insignificant communities are identified as highly valuable biodiversity assets as each community is unique.

There has been interpretive signage installed along the Lakes section to help educate the community not only about the fragile qualities of the Salt Lakes but also the flora and fauna surrounding the Lakes. Our Guides also ensure that we promote the protection and conservation of these lakes when we conduct our tours to ensure the survival of the flora and fauna that call this unique ecosystem home. We also ensure that the visitors hear of the long association of the Noongar/Whadjuk people with the Island.

The Lakes section can be walked in a few hours, as it starts and finishes in the Settlement and is perfect for visitors or corporate groups visiting Rottnest on a day trip. Our 'Secrets of the Lakes' tours operate during school holidays and for special corporate groups. For example, over May, June and July this year, there are over 200 BHP Billiton employees volunteering to plant trees as part of the Walk Trail project. Members of the RVGA (approx. 2 each time) will take each BHP Billiton group (between 25-45 ppl) on the 'Secrets of the Lakes' Tour as part of their visit to the Island.

The RVGA is excited to be involved with the Wadjemup Walk Trail project and intends to create further tours associated with the Trail in the future. We have only been able to be a part of this exciting initiative because of the support of the RIA and because we agree with their responsible management in using the Trail to open up areas of the Island that were previously inaccessible, whilst ensuring the unique environment is protected and also enhanced through revegetation of ad-hoc trails.

We strongly support the RIA's application to be presented with a Premier's Award for the Trail project, under the 'Managing the environment' category.

Kind regards



Dr Brian Gunn
President
Rottnest Voluntary Guides Association

17th April 2016

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