

## Joanna Young

### *How did you come to be involved in NRM?*

I became involved with the Walpole Nornalup National Parks Association and as a botanist and forest pathologist I wanted to help protect the wonderful and diverse ecosystems of the South Coast. It was really by accident that I met an old friend and former manager of "SCRIPT", Paula Deegan, in Albany one day who encouraged me to draft a proposal for some dieback funding. She put my technical wishes into 'Canberra-speak' with words like "building capacity" in the proposal title. SCRIPT was small but with good foundations and so our journey began to build a program which would make a difference.

### *What are your biggest achievements in NRM?*

One of the biggest achievements has been establishing Project Dieback. We've designed a more strategic approach to setting priorities for dieback management in the State and are getting good public profile for the project. The partnerships we've built have resulted in a standard signage system for dieback management across the State. Seeing some of the first Dieback Protection areas recognized and managed across the Walpole Wilderness has been satisfying as well as getting recognition for the Project Dieback model of building partnerships and engaging community.

### *Who or what inspires you?*

My friends and colleagues. Gary Muir in particular has been an inspiration. We spent many late nights hatching ideas to communicate the threat of dieback. Steve Hopper's descriptions and understanding of the vegetation of the South West never cease to inspire and his insights are stimulating. To the current crew of Project Dieback who continue on and have become my friends, I feel a debt.

The diversity and adaptations of the West Australian flora are so special. There are always surprises when you look closely at flowers, fruits or foliage. We have opportunities to treasure and protect areas of naturalness long lost in many other densely populated areas of the planet.

### *What do you hope to achieve in the next five years?*

I would like to start writing a history of the Phytophthora dieback epidemic across the South West and be involved in a TV documentary on dieback. I would like to see public recognition of the importance of Dieback Protection areas and would like to influence good dieback policy settings for application across all land tenures. It would also be good to see a National Threat Abatement Plan for Phytophthora dieback management that is adopted by the State and funded to some degree by the Commonwealth.

### *What are the biggest challenges facing the South Coast environment and how can these be met?*

I see them as poor planning and lack of integration across different scales of land management; ad hoc developments impacting on the natural environment; droughts and too frequent fires in fragile ecosystems such as banksia woodlands and heaths. Our natural heritage has to be valued, not tamed or developed. I believe we have a long way to go to plan prescribed fires in a way that irreversible structural changes don't occur in many areas especially as areas seem to become drier. How do we adapt management in times of drought so systems and people don't get overly stressed? The NRM model of empowering community at the regional scale is good. I dislike "blanket management prescriptions" which don't acknowledge regional and district differences in conditions and assets being managed. Ensuring that systems don't become inflexible and too bureaucratic is a challenge for us all. We must not stifle passion and individual initiatives.

