



Images top to bottom:
Mamoongat ngoort.
Leafy seadragon (*Phycodurus eques*)
Credit: J. Martin Crossley CC BY-NC-SA

Muluwar. Thorny devil (*Moloch horridus*)
Credit: Grigory Heaton CC by NC

Night parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*)
Credit: Arianna Urso Western Australian Museum

Arianna Urso (c) W

Communique

Atlas of Living Australia Advisory Board

MEETING #24, July 10 2025

The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) Advisory Board met on 10th July 2025, hosted by the Western Australian Museum Boola Bardip. Board members attending: Ron Avery, Cathy Byrne, Robyn Cleland, Dieter Hochuli, Margie Jenkin, Toni Moate, Stephen Van Leeuwen and Andre Zerger. We were also pleased to be joined by Nat Raisbeck-Brown and Ely Wallis (ALA) and Chris Gentle (Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute).

Thank you, John Curtin Gallery

As part of our Advisory Board's commitment to improving Indigenous cultural awareness, we were privileged to be shown the Carrolup Once Known exhibition at the John Curtin Gallery a day before our meeting. Once Known showcases reproductions of the artworks created by Aboriginal children forcibly taken from their families and detained at the Carrolup Native Settlement in the 1940s. We are grateful to our board member, Professor Stephen Van Leewuen, and the gallery's curator, Susanna Castleden, for organising the visit and sharing these difficult stories.

WA Museum Boola Bardip hosts our Advisory Board

We were kindly hosted by one of the ALA's long-term partners, the Western Australian Museum. We are grateful to Alec Coles, CEO, for welcoming the board and introducing us to the museum's wildlife exhibition.

Director's Update

A key part of the ALA's utility for research and decision-making is the ability to help users understand where species are located, to explore that information via responsive spatial tools, and to contextualise it with state and environmental boundaries.

The director briefed the board on ALA's new project with Gaia Resources. This involves reviewing systems and services, benchmarking these against similar capabilities, and providing recommendations that will inform future ALA investments in spatial infrastructure enhancements.

The ALA recently implemented enhancements to the existing suite of NESP (National Environmental Science Program) portals on the BioCollect platform to improve data and usability. With these enhancements, it's hoped the platform will be further integrated into the delivery of the program, supporting a more structured and consistent approach to managing program information.

After 16 years with the ALA, and as one of its founding team members, Mr Peter Brenton has confirmed his retirement from CSIRO, Australia's national science agency, in late July. Peter led the Applications Team, which is responsible for developing and supporting products, including BioCollect, the Australian Virtual Seed Bank portal, MERIT and the Australian Reference Genome Atlas. Dr Andrew Turley has recently been appointed to lead the Applications Team and will take on this role in early August.

ALA Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Program

The Atlas of Living Australia – Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (ALA-IEK) program aims to promote the importance and application of Indigenous ecological language and knowledge by linking it to Western science within the ALA. Nat Raisbeck-Brown, who leads the program, was joined by Ely Wallis to brief the board on the program's progress and expansion opportunities. Since its inception, a total of 3,754 Aboriginal names in 13 languages have been added to the ALA for 735 species, with more detailed knowledge collected and shared for 490 species of those species. The program has been designed and delivered in close consultation and with the permission of Indigenous communities. The board acknowledged the program's success and explored potential pathways and opportunities for expansion.

Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute

We were joined by Chris Gentle, who briefed our board on major projects and strategic priorities for the Western Australian Biodiversity Science Institute. We found these activities to be of particular interest, given the strong partnerships between government & industry, and the fundamental role of biodiversity data and data analytics in supporting improved environmental outcomes and more effective environmental approval processes. Chris updated the board on the pilot projects currently underway in the Pilbara, with a specific focus on cumulative

environmental impact assessments.

ALA Strategy 2025-30

Over the last nine months, the Director has engaged with the Advisory Board and the ALA team around the development of the new ALA Strategy 2025-30. Consultation with key external stakeholders has also shaped its development. The final strategy was presented to the board and endorsed for public release in early August. We are grateful to our board, the ALA team, and our external stakeholders for helping shape this important direction-setting document, particularly as 2025 is also a significant year for the next National Research Infrastructure Roadmap.

In Conclusion

I want to thank our Advisory Board and the ALA management team for their contributions to Meeting #24. It was informative to hear from one of our board members, Margie Jenkins, on the priorities and trends in Australia's environmental philanthropy sector. This sector presents excellent opportunities for partnerships in biodiversity research and infrastructure development.

I'm particularly grateful to Alec Coles and the Western Australian Museum Boola Bardip for hosting our meeting, and to Stephen Van Leeuwen and Susanna Castleden for introducing us to the remarkable Once Known exhibition.

We enjoyed our visit to Perth and found it valuable to reconnect with ALA's stakeholders in the west.

Professor David Cantrill
Chair, Atlas of Living Australia
Advisory Board
July 2025