

Denmark dam action saved rare eucalypt

By PATRICIA GILL

LOBBYING from the Denmark and wider community to block a dam project has ensured the survival of the rare and threatened *Eucalyptus virginea*.

Denmark Environment Centre spokesperson Basil Schur told the Mawkur/Makuru Six Seasons gathering last month at Mt Lindesay/Peepetup National Park that the park was home to more than 30 priority species of endangered plants.

Gazetting the 25,000ha area in 2004 had been an important addition to the conservation estate as had lobbying to prevent the Water Corporation building of dams within the park.

Professor Stephen Hopper and botanist Grant Wardell-Johnson had formally described the *Eucalyptus virginea*, similar to a wandoo (white gum), in 2004 from specimens collected in the Mt Lindesay area in 1993.

Growing taller than wandoos growing to 20m with white, pow-



Basil Schur among the rare and endangered *Eucalyptus virginea*.

dery bark, Basil said he first saw the *Eucalyptus virginea* in the early 1990s while exploring the Mt Lindesay Gorge.

Once widespread, its 'affinities' (close relations) are two other 'relictuals' (remnants of a once wider population) now only found near Serpentine, *Eucalyptus lane-pollei* and Busselton, *Eucalyptus relict*.

Eucalyptus virginea could be found in the Lapko Road area.

Most of the population of *Eucalyptus virginea* would have been flooded if the Water Corporation had gone ahead with proposal to build a dam.

When the Mt Lindesay National Park was gazetted a section along the Denmark River was also ga-

zatted for both national park and water resources.

Conservation groups and landholders who would have had some of their farmland flooded strongly resisted Water Corporation proposals which included dams on the Kent, Denmark rivers and their tributaries.

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The then Warren Blackwood MLA Terry Redman, who was also Regional Development Minister about 10 years ago, responded by having the plan cancelled.

Basil said it was due to a concerted effort from Denmark Environment Centre, other environment groups and the community that this had been achieved.

The Denmark catchment had been a focus for rehabilitation for the past 30 years, starting in the 1980s with a ban on further clearing of native forests.

The planting of blue gum plantations in the 1990s had followed.

"Denmark River is one of the success stories of reducing salinisation and bringing it back to potable water," Basil said.

The Denmark Dam, Quick-up Dam and new pipeline from Albany is now used for a combined water supply.

The Denmark Environment Centre had provided a focus for planning the future of the region's water supply which had involved careful tapping into underground systems and in the future likely to involve desalination plants.

DEC long been interested in documenting the flora of the shire and the late Brenda Hammersley, 1929-2004, a retired pediatrician and botanical collector, had set up a herbarium at the centre.

"We owe it to people like Brenda for documenting the botany of the region that we were able to come up with strong evidence that the dam would have been environmentally damaging," Basil said.