

# The Kalbarri Skywalk

Investing in a national park to stimulate tourism  
and private sector investment



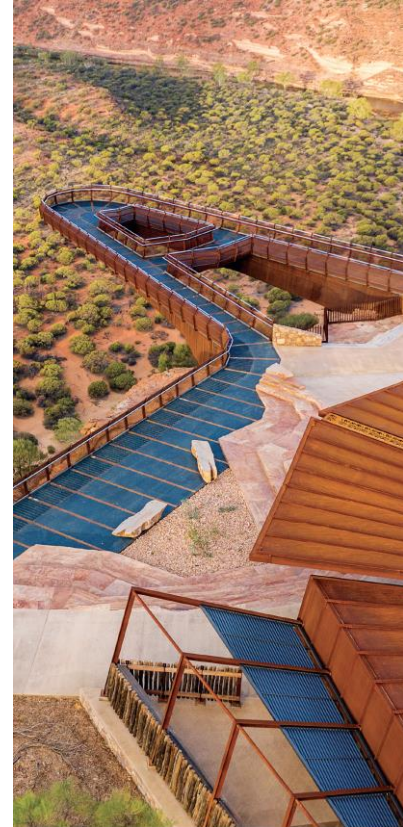
Rory Chapple

WA Parks and Wildlife Service

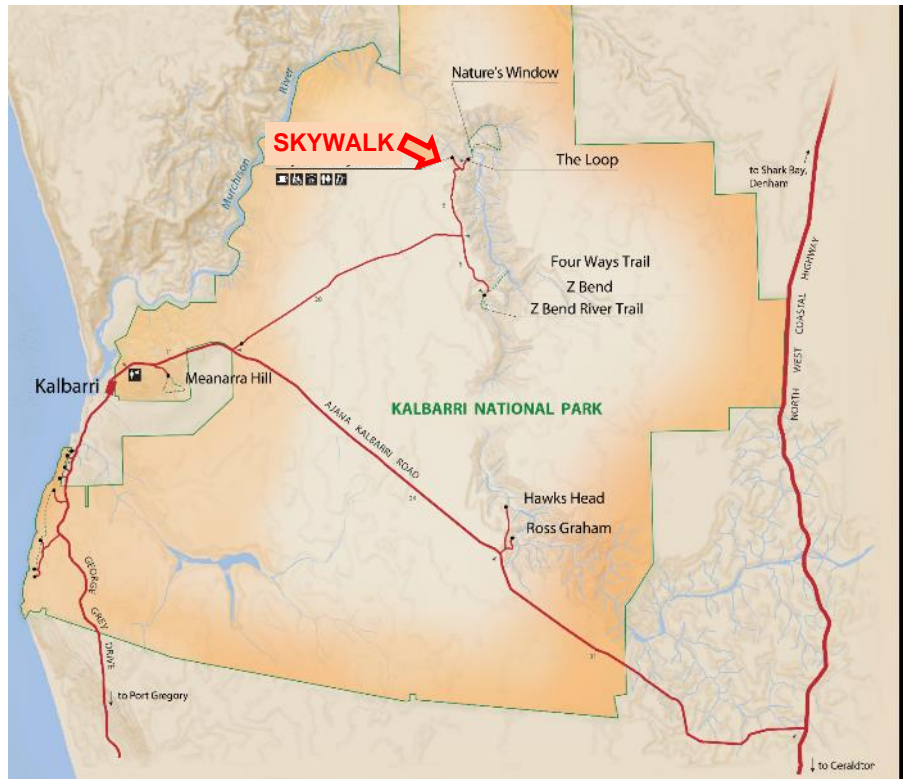
Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

# The Skywalk from concept to creation

- How the vision for the project was created
- How funding was obtained
- How the works were completed – issues and how they were overcome
- What the project will deliver for tourism



# Where is the Skywalk and Kalbarri NP?



- In the Coral Coast tourism region, 6 hours drive north of Perth
- 183,000 hectare national park



# Kalbarri National Park

## What's it like?



Gorges



Coastal Cliffs



Wildflowers



Rare animals

# The Skywalk Project



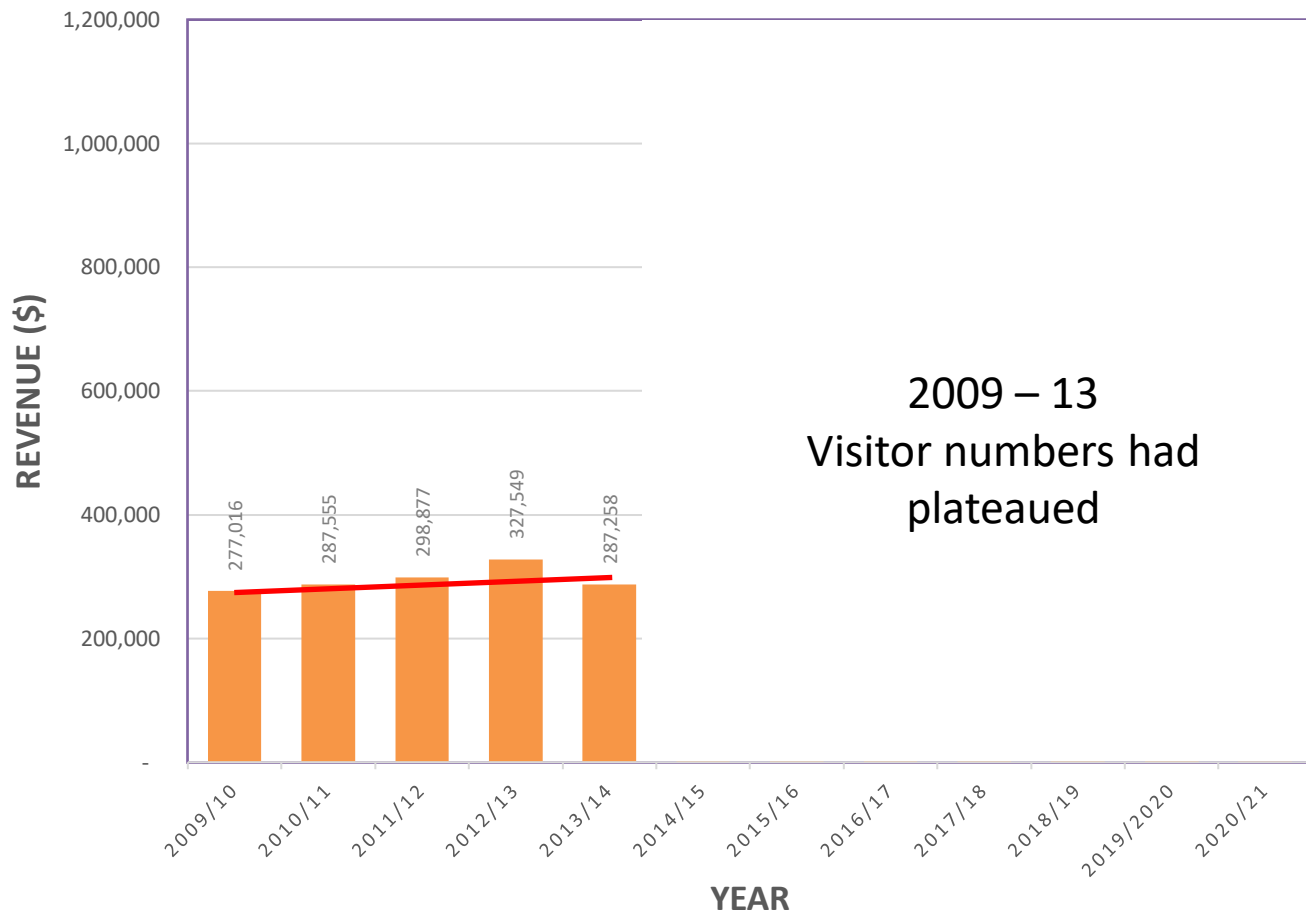
# The Skywalk Story – From Conception to Completion

*Wind back the clock to 2012...*

- An adventure destination
- Rough road to get into the gorges
- Beautiful scenery when you got there
- Often hot and with flies
- Suits some of the market... BUT  
not the elderly or those  
with children



## PARK REVENUE OVER TIME





# The Issues - Access

The access road was rough and often closed after wet weather.  
Carparks couldn't deal with the volume of visitors at peak times

*"In 30 years of driving on country roads I have never been on such abysmal roads ... I would recommend that anyone considering driving to the gorges forget the idea."*

Park visitor comment





# The Issues - Amenity

Many park facilities were beyond their use-by date.

Amenities were very basic.

Sites were overcrowded during peak times.



Nature's Window carpark and toilet

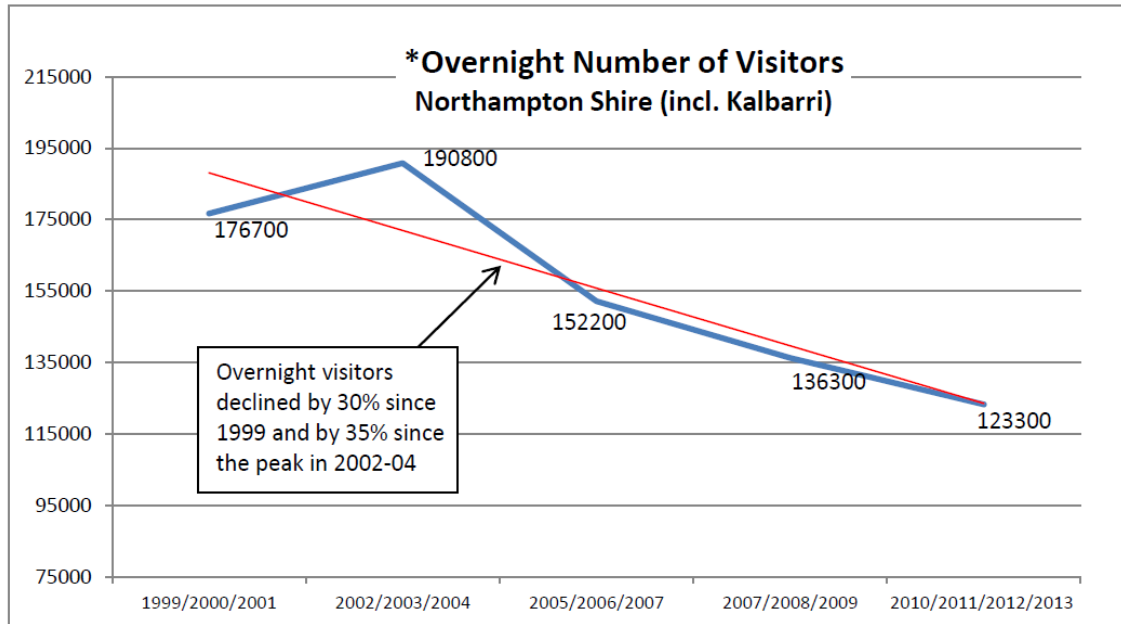


Coin ticket machine



# The Local Tourism Industry

## Declining tourism in the local area



**Figure 1 – Declining visitation to the Northampton Shire \*** (Ref: Tourism Research Australia / Tourism WA fact sheets). NB overnight visitors only. Domestic day visitors less likely to represent new spending.

# The 5 A's of Successful Tourism

Attraction



Activities



Accommodation



Access



Amenity



# Rejuvenating the National Park

## 2012 - 13

- \$7.7 million in funding obtained for Stage 1 works
- New facilities were constructed – toilets, shade shelters, walking trails and a park entry station
- 12km of road and 10 car parks were sealed by the end of 2013





# 2013

## Where to next?

- Access was still a serious issue. The last 20km of road into Nature's Window still hadn't been sealed.
  - Required investment of at least \$10 million.
- Departmental budget was not able to cover this sort of expenditure.

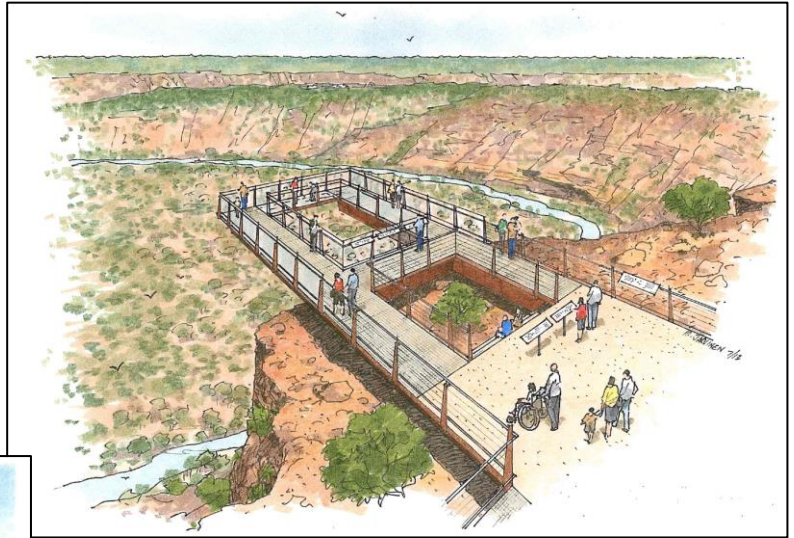
*Considerable investment was still required to complete the park's regeneration*



# Developing the Skywalk Vision

## *A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words!*

Building an iconic attraction was seen as a way to attract funding, but importantly to complete the roadworks.



An artist was engaged to do illustrative perspectives of our proposal.

By creating a vision at this early stage decision makers could share our vision.

The concept was born.

# Seeking Funding

A business case was developed to try to source WA government funding for the project.



Australia's Coral Coast

## How the Case for Funding Was Sold

- A declining local tourism industry that needed support
- Poor access to the town's major tourist attraction was hurting tourism
- Rejuvenating the park would lead to a rejuvenated local economy
- A 7% increase in visitor numbers was calculated to pay back the investment in a ten year period

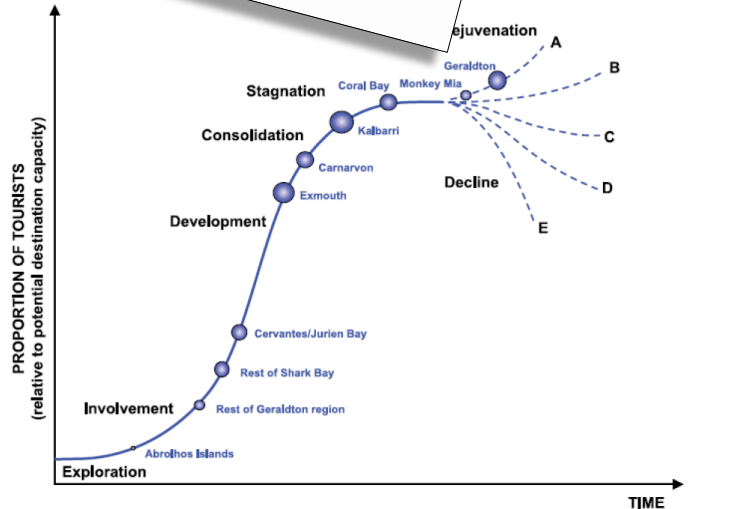
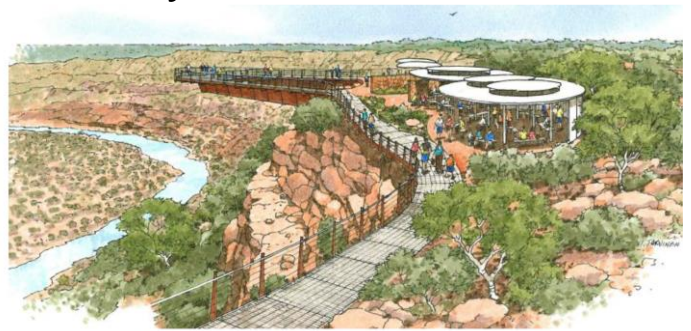


Figure 14 - Kalbarri's place in the Tourism Area Lifecycle and relative economic contribution to tourism in the Australia's Coral Coast Region (2010).  
(Source: Australia's Coral Coast Tourism Development Priorities 2010-15)

# What the Project Promised

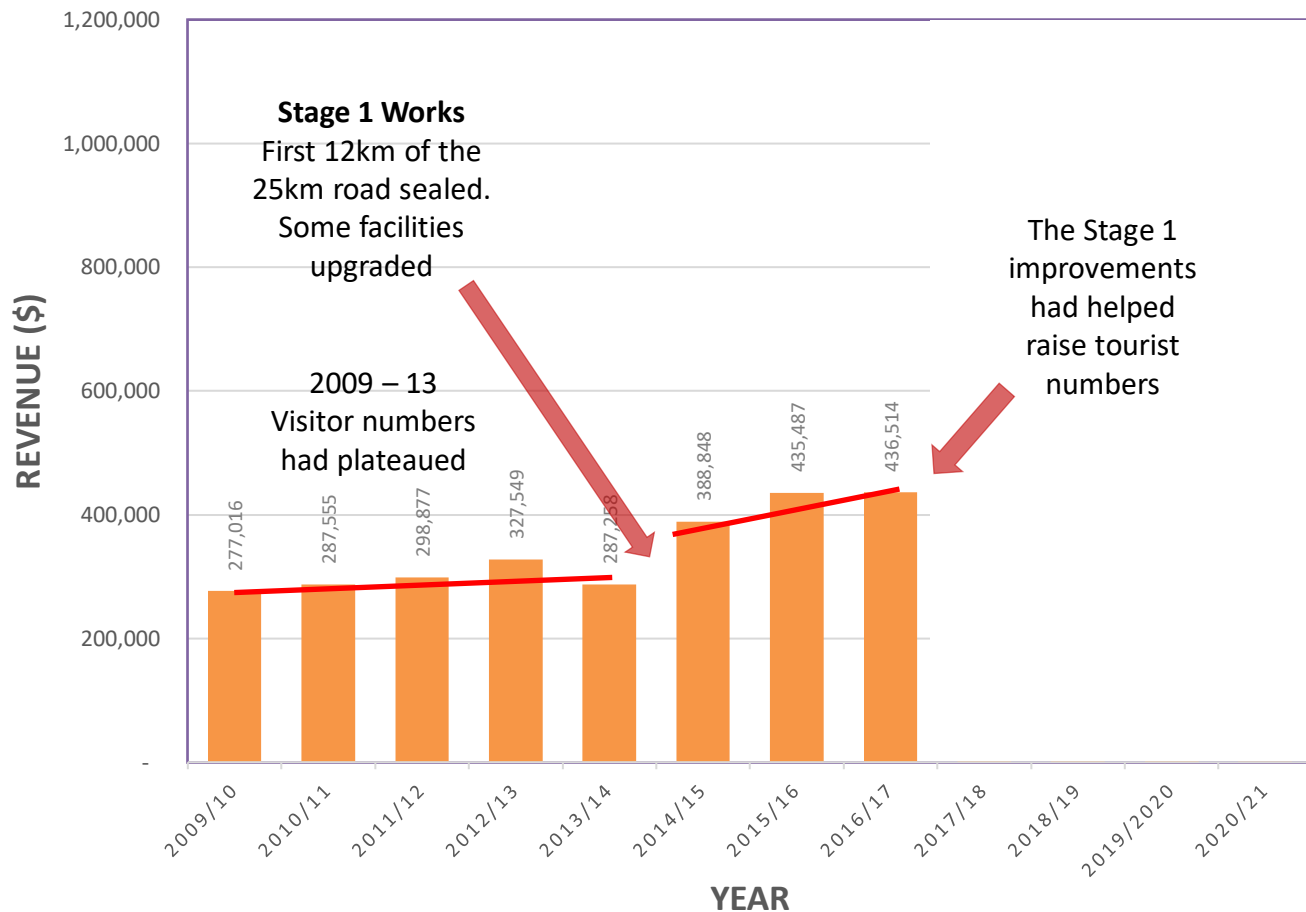
- To create a spectacular new tourism product – The Kalbarri Skywalk
- To fix the access issue – 22km of sealed road and 3 sealed carparks
- To rejuvenate the park – redevelop 2 other secondary sites
- Employ – Indigenous rangers, construction staff and others in the tourism industry
- Provide flow on benefits through the local community

*Revised  
concept*



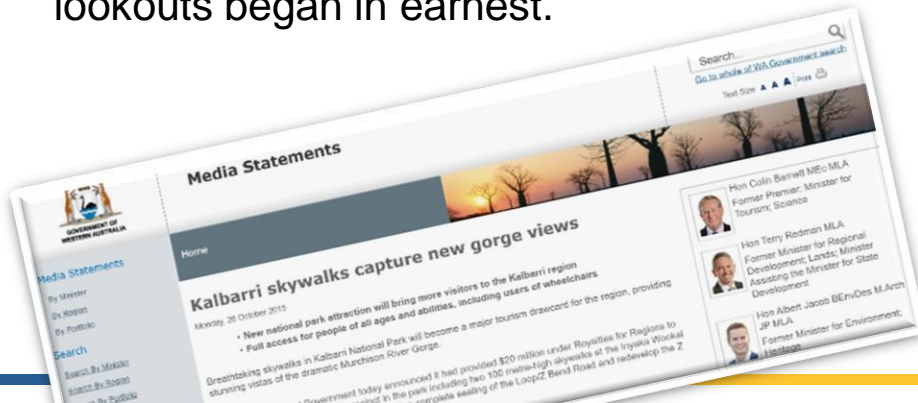


# PARK REVENUE OVER TIME



# Funding of the Project Announced!

- Funding of \$20 million was announced on **26 October 2015** (WA Royalties for Regions funding).
- Other contributors included Tourism WA and our Department (Parks and Wildlife Service)
- Work began on the construction of the remaining 20km of road in early 2017.
- Designing and engineering of the Skywalk lookouts began in earnest.



# Designing the Skywalk – Key Considerations

- Blending in with the landscape as best possible
- Access for disabled people
- A level of amenity to take the edge off the summer heat. Consider an airconditioned commercial space.
- Involvement with the local Indigenous people
- Design for no water, or power.
- Consider working in rock throughout site.



# Design and Engineering of the Skywalk

## Lowering the Skywalk into the Landscape

To help the fit the Skywalk into the landscape the challenge was to get the footings down into the rock.

This would keep the Skywalk lookouts sit low into the landscape, allow for wheel chair access and keep buildings below the tree line.





# What to do with all of that rock?



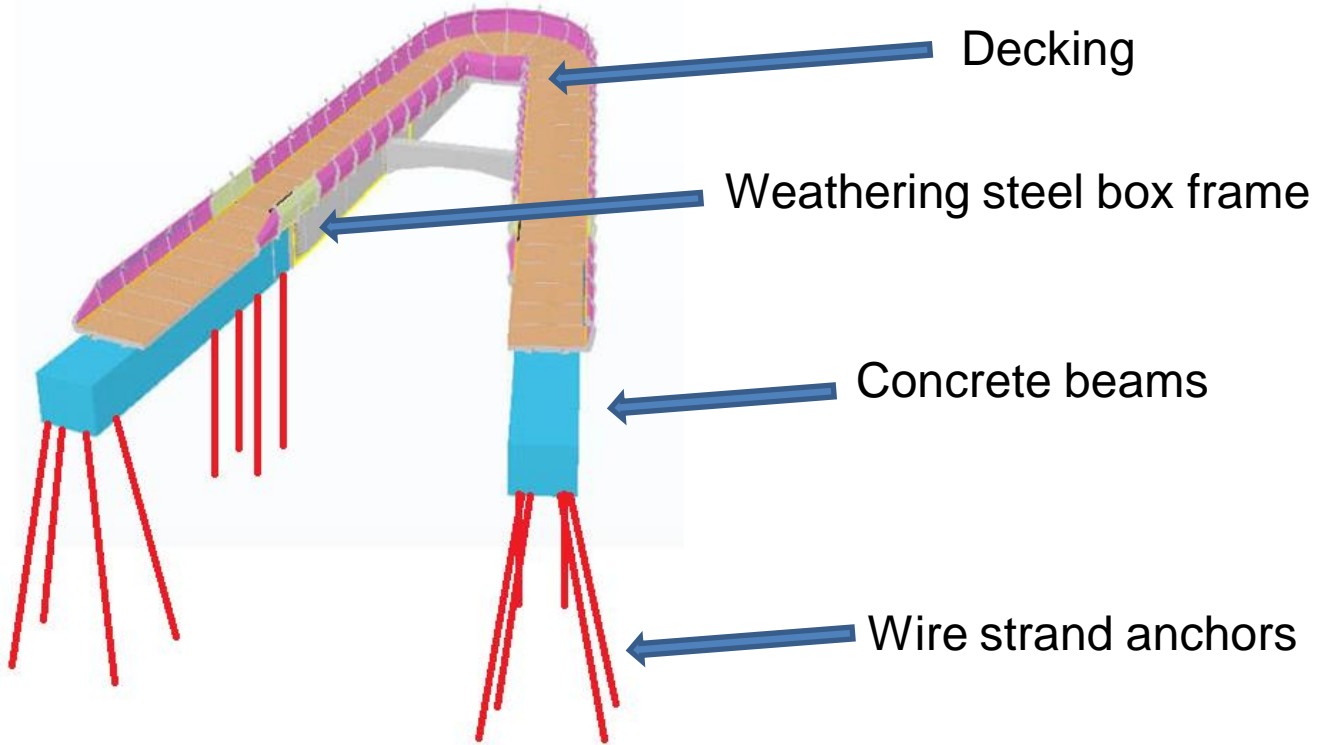
# Where was the rock used?



Toilet walls, seats and tables

Terracing

# Skywalk Simple Model





# Concrete Beams





# Craning the Segments Into Place

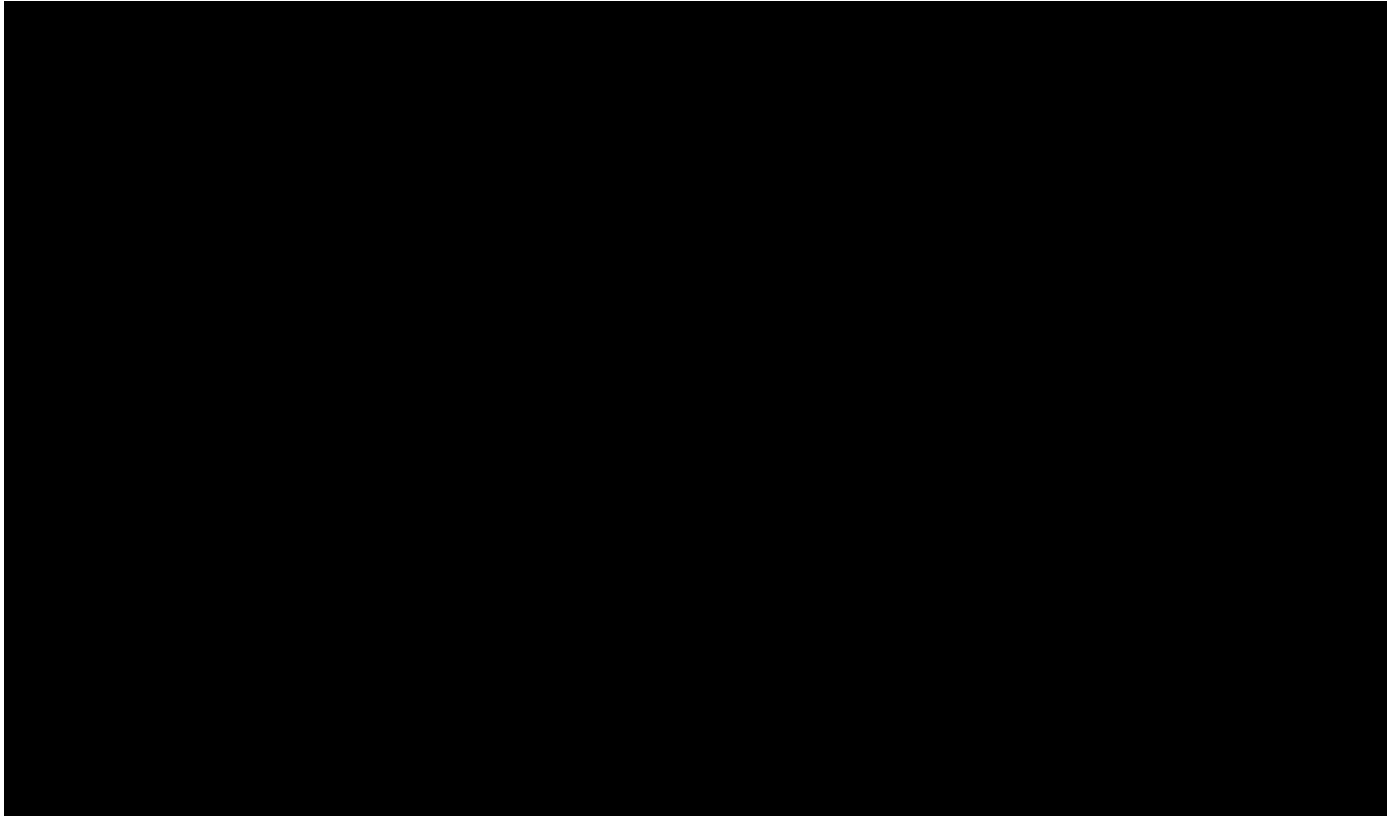


# Preassembly in Perth



Preassembly allowed the entire structure to be built in full and gave us the knowledge that it would fit together on site.

# How was the Skywalk constructed?



# Adding the Finer Touches



The project team included many finer details that added greatly to the project. Whilst this took considerable time and cost they are now the highlight of a visit for many people



# Sculptures and Interpreting the Park's Values



Rather than just using traditional signs we opted for more engaging methods - like sculptures.





The story of an ancient 400 million year old fossil was brought to life via sculpture and integrated with signage.



# Working with the Traditional Owners

Nanda culture was to be a key feature of the site:

- through art
- through telling their stories
- through language
- through employment



The Skywalk advisory group

Park ranger -  
Victor Mourambine Jnr





# Telling the Nanda Story

Language is presented throughout the site.

*Kaju yatka* – is Nanda for 'Sky' and 'To walk'.



The personal stories of dozens of traditional owners is told via static and audio interpretation.

# Working with Nanda Artists



Mauretta Drage



Colleen Drage



Kayla Hampton

Through an Expression of Interest process three Nanda artists were selected to provide artworks for the site.

The project team worked with their traditional art and helped transform them into landscaping and physical forms.



# The Nanda Art Project



Art sandblasted  
into stone



Art laser cut into  
roof panels



Welded steel 'Message  
Sticks' display



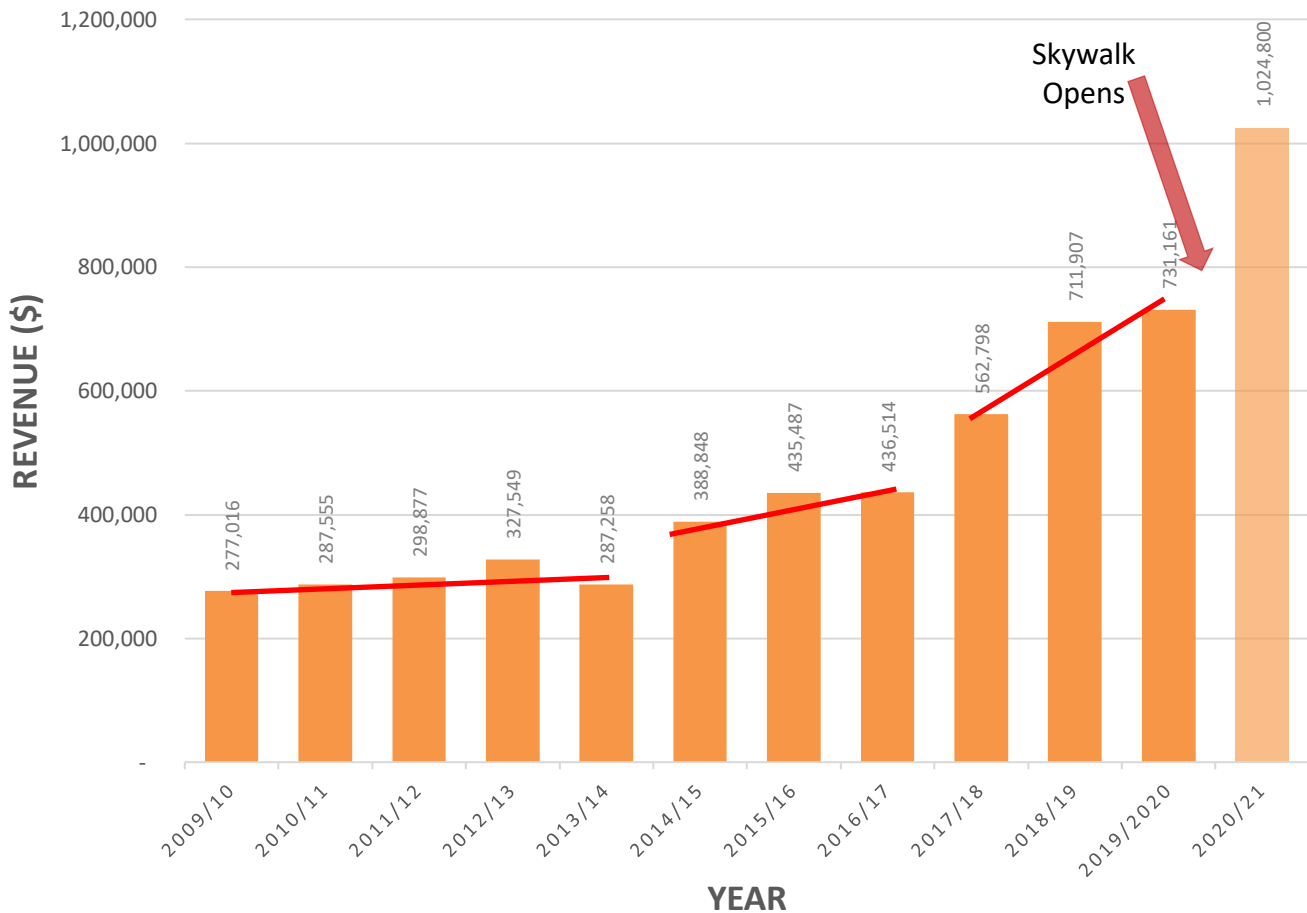
# Summary

The Skywalk achieved it's aim of generating a world-class tourism product and providing flow on tourism revenue for the local community.

Whilst the site has only been open for less than 6 months the trend for park revenue is encouraging...

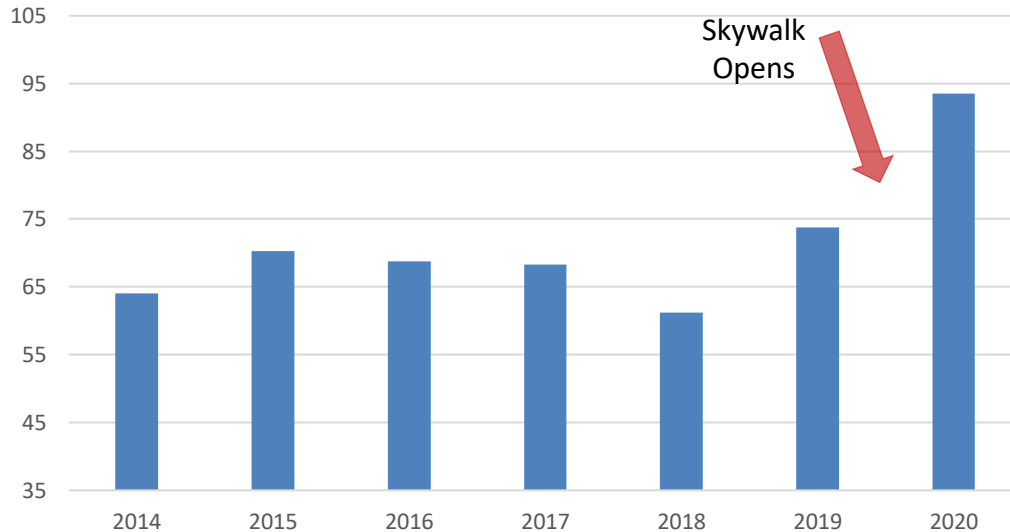


# PARK REVENUE OVER TIME



# Revenue for Tourism

Average occupancy - July to October (Edge Resort)



# Key Learnings

- Be bold and adventurous
- Build a strong vision and sell it in inventive ways
- Work hard to fit your project into the site where you are working
- Consider your WHOLE tourism experience not just the development of one single attraction.



# Thank you for your time



## Acknowledgements

Bocol Constructions  
GBSC Yurra  
EPS Architects  
Terpkos Engineering

Ben Liddelow – DBCA landscape architect  
Rory Chapple and Nicole Nelson – DBCA  
Project managers  
Mike Paxman – Senior Ranger