Aspire award success nets multi-million dollar conference for Perth
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wouldn't it be exciting to have the world's most respected scientists and thinkers share their expertise here in Perth?

Dr Christine Cooper thought so – and she did something about it.

As a member and former secretary of the Australian Mammal Society, Dr Cooper recognised the potential benefits in attracting the next International Mammalogical Congress to Western Australia.

Around the same time, the Curtin University academic first learned about the Aspire Professional Development Awards, run by the Perth Convention Bureau.

"The awards have a double purpose. Each winner has the opportunity to receive from $5,000 to $10,000 to attend an international conference relevant to their area of expertise, enhancing their personal and professional development," PCB chief executive Paul Beeson said.

"The Aspire process and the trip also serve as a fact-finding mission of sorts, helping us to identify suitable events and local conveners to host them."

The Australian Mammal Society agreed to put forward a bid for Perth to host the 12th International Mammalian Congress and, with the help of the PCB, set the wheels in motion.

The Bureau helped to smooth the bid process by organising letters of support from dignitaries, attracting destination sponsorships and assisting with the site inspection for the international decision makers.

As a result, Perth managed to attract 66 per cent of the votes over fellow bidder Beijing and was announced as the location for the 12th International Mammalogical Conference in 2017.

"This is an exciting opportunity as the IMC is the world's largest mammalogical conference," Dr Cooper said.

"It will provide local mammal researchers with the opportunity to not only present their world-class research, but to also demonstrate current conservation and management strategies for our unique mammalian fauna via conference field trips and excursions."

Mr Beeson said the efforts of Dr Cooper and her AMS colleagues were a shining example of what the Aspire program could achieve.

"Bidding for a conference can be a tough job, especially if you haven't done it before, but it is worth the time and energy," he said.

"Together with the PCB, they've taken an idea and turned it into a reality which will see 1200 delegates visit, explore and enjoy our city.

"Professionally, local experts will reap further benefits through networking opportunities with their international counterparts and exciting new collaborations which could, in turn, bring new research funding to Australian institutions.

"On a broader scale, we expect this conference alone to have a positive economic impact of around $5 million."

Applications for the 2016 Aspire Awards are now open. For more information, or to register your interest, visit http://www.pcb.com.au/aspire.

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FAST FACTS

The Aspire Program is a highly successful initiative of PCB which facilitates PCB's novel business methodology of recruiting local conveners within the West Australian community to support bids for international and national conferences.

The aim of the program is to assist the individual's personal and professional development, either through attendance at a relevant international conference, or by undertaking further study in their chosen field of endeavour. The funding covers travel, accommodation and registration expenses to the maximum value of the award.

- Awards are open to Not for Profit associations
- Awards range in value from $5K to $10K
- Application close on the 31st March with exception of the Telethon Kids Institute Award which closes end of this year
- Shortlisted applicants will be invited for a short interview in April 16
- Finalists are invited to attend the Awards Breakfast at the Perth Convention and Exhibitions Centre in May 2016

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