

Media Release:

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## **Australia Korea Young Leaders Exchange Program**

Alice Springs based Environmental Officer Michelle Walker will travel to South Korea this week to participate in the first Australia Korea Young Leaders Exchange Program.

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts (NRETA) Water Conservation Officer Ms Walker said the program aims to develop the leadership skills of young potential or current leaders, aged between 25-45, from both Australia and Korea.

"The 2007 exchange program is aimed at applicants involved in environmental issues," said 26 year old Ms Walker.

"South Korea has a population of more than 49 million people and has developed rapidly since the 1960's, which has had a negative impact on the natural environment.

"I will have the opportunity to learn about how the Government of South Korea is tackling different environmental issues such as pollution, climate change and environmental standards for industry.

"Due to my background in water management and conservation, I'm interested to learn about how water is managed to service such a large population."

Ms Walker said one of the most exciting prospects is her visit to the Korean Demilitarized Zone, as for the past 50 years this area has been left virtually untouched by humans and has become a unique preservation area providing habitat for rare birds and animals.

"I'm hoping the experience will provide me with an international perspective on environmental issues that will deepen my understanding of current Australian environmental issues," Ms Walker said.

The Australia-Korea Foundation, in partnership with the Korea Foundation and the Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific fully sponsor and manage the program.

Ms Walker said in 2008 young Korean leaders will visit Australia to participate in the Program.

"Along with seven other Australian participants, we will attend briefings and meetings with our counterparts in South Korea, as well as visiting different places such as a smelting factory and the World Cup Park, which has been turned from a rubbish dump into an ecological park," Ms Walker said.

"We also get the chance to develop an insight into contemporary Korean culture."

Ms Walker works as a Water Conservation Officer in Alice Springs where she manages the NT Waterwise Schools program and the NT Waterwise Central Australia Rebate Scheme that provides residents in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek with rebates for eligible water saving products and services.

Ms Walker has also initiated a program to educate a class of students from Santa Teresa about water conservation and hopes to run a similar program in other remote communities in future years.

For more information go to [www.usyd.edu.au/riap/leadership/AKYLEP](http://www.usyd.edu.au/riap/leadership/AKYLEP)

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**Media Note – For more information contact Michelle Walker on 8951 9209**

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