



# BOAB BULLETIN

No. 127

April 2015

## NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at

**Dalkeith Hall, 97 Waratah Avenue, Dalkeith**

 meetings are no longer at The Palms Community Centre 

**Wednesday, 1 April 2015**

**Jeff Haworth (Department of Mines and Petroleum)**

**“Offshore petroleum resources, projects and geology in the Kimberley”**

(Jeff has a Degree in Mining Geology from the WA School of Mines in Kalgoorlie and has worked in both the mineral and petroleum industries for more than 35 years.)

**Wednesday, 6 May 2015**

**Jane Balme (University of Western Australia)**

**“Archaeological research in the Southern Kimberley”**

(Jane is an Associate Professor with a PhD from the Australian National University. Her research areas include archaeological analyses, tropical archaeobotany, rock art recording, and dating vegetation change and fire regimes)

Please note that, with many of our speakers involved in work-related travel, this program may change at short notice. Should a speaker not be available, the topic may differ on the evening.

Members and visitors are invited to stay for supper after the meetings.  
The Society asks a \$2.00 hospitality fee from non-members.

### DRAFT PROGRAM FOR FUTURE KIMBERLEY SOCIETY MEETINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Topic</u>
3 June	<b>Denise Hamilton</b>	2015 Pastoral Lease Renewal Project
1 July	To be advised	
5 August	<b>Chris Owen</b>	Police activities in the Kimberley in early history

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Recently my wife Karen and I attended the Perth Caravan and Camping Show at the Claremont Showgrounds. As caravans do not excite us we concentrated on the magnitude of camping displays to gain new ideas for improving comfort in the 'bush' and how to be even more space saving with stores and equipment. It was a most interesting day's entertainment that included networking with the many stall attendants representing products, tours and services. What struck us most was the discussions with Kimberley personalities who live in and promote the Kimberley region yet have never heard of the Kimberley Society.

By the end of a full day of visiting stalls discussing tourist locations, boat tours, land-based tours, historical sites, Aboriginal communities with tourists services, agencies that promote commerce and investment in the Kimberley region, and the list goes on and on; it was disheartening to realise that the Kimberley Society is an unknown identity in the region that we promote "research on, and dissemination of information about".

Even with the aid of an impressive and informative website, residents and tourists alike still are unaware of our existence. The Society's newsletter, the *Boab Bulletin*, is mailed to many information sites throughout the Kimberley to promote us as a source of information. Yet we are still not known to the populous.

So there is significant education and promotion required to achieve the Kimberley Society's aim to provide information on all aspects of the Kimberley to a wide range of people through publications and meetings. The Kimberley Society seeks your support to meet this challenge. Please contribute by informing everyone and anyone interested in the Kimberley that the Society exists. Pass on evidence of the newsletter so the message is spread far and wide, include the Society in conversations with Kimberley people and agencies so that they also become our messengers, plus send to your Council suggestions on how we can promote our Society in the region. With all our members participating the Kimberley Society will continue to grow and be an important source of information for this marvellous region.

I look forward to seeing you at the monthly meetings at the Dalkeith Hall to share the experience.

*Jeff Murray*

## FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

From time to time, the Kimberley Society provides grants to support projects that are in line with its aim to promote the dissemination of information about the Kimberley. It aims to encourage studies, particularly collaborative projects, which will enhance knowledge and understanding of the Kimberley's history, peoples, cultures, resources, natural history, heritage, and environment.

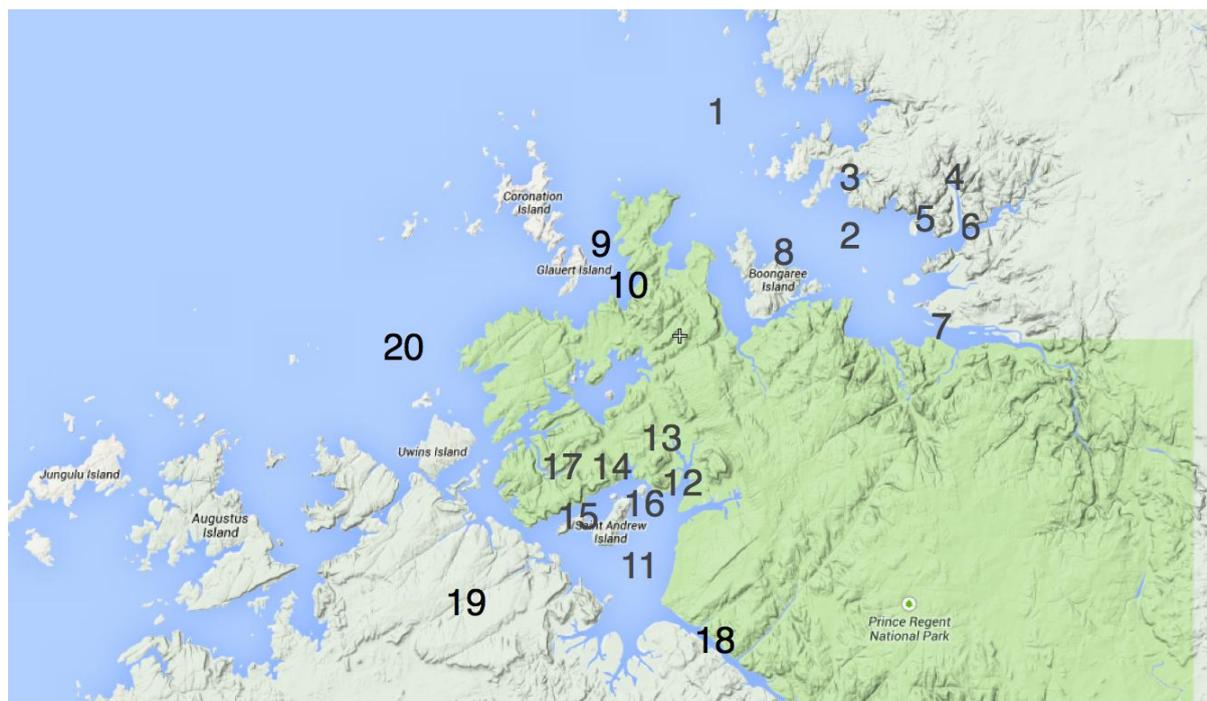
The maximum amount for any grant is \$5000. Previous grants have included contributions toward the cost of publishing books about various aspects of the Kimberley. The book note on page 10 mentions an example of one such grant.

People interested in applying for funding should seek further information from the Secretary at [admin@kimberleysociety.org](mailto:admin@kimberleysociety.org) or at PO Box 8471, Perth Business Centre, Perth, WA 6849.

## FEATURES OF THE KIMBERLEY COAST – LINKED BY HISTORY

Two of the inlets on the west Kimberley coast – [Prince Frederick Harbour](#) and [Saint George Basin](#) – are expansive spectacular water bodies separated by only tens of kilometres but with contrasting geology that has yielded interesting and distinctive local landscapes. Both were investigated and charted by [Phillip Parker King](#) and his crew between mid-September and mid-October 1820 but he spent the most time between the two careening his leaking cutter the *Mermaid*.

Prince Frederick Harbour, within York Sound, is a wide long gulf that opens to the north-west. The Hunter River and the longer Roe River empty into the head of the gulf and their estuaries are joined by many shorter, tributary waterways like Porosus Creek. Within the harbour are many islands ranging from the large Boongaree Island, the smaller Naturalists Island and a host of even smaller ones, some reduced to rocks that emerge only at the lowest of tides. Geologically the local predominant rock type is King Leopold Sandstone intruded in places by horizontal sheets (sills) of Hart Dolerite.



1. York Sound, 2. Prince Frederick Harbour, 3. NW inlet, 4. Porosus Ck, 5. Naturalists Is, 6. Hunter R, 7. Roe R, 8. Boongaree Is, 9. Port Nelson, 10. Careening Bay, 11. St. George Basin, 12. Mt. Waterloo, 13. Mt. Trafalgar, 14. Python Cliffs, 15. St. Patrick Is, 16. St. Andrew Is, 17. Marigui Promontory, 18. Prince Regent R, 19. Macdonald Ra, 20. Brunswick Bay. Map adapted from Google.

This area is within [Wunambul](#) clan homelands and historically it was given its English name after the [Duke of York](#) by King on this his second of three exploratory cruises along the Kimberley coast. Other local features were named after crew members or their relatives – Hunter River was named after his surgeon on the *Mermaid*; Roe River after the father of one of his midshipmen [John Septimus Roe](#); and Boongaree Island after [a 'native' supernumerary crewmember](#) from the Sydney Harbour [Eurora](#) clan.

During the initial development of Prince Frederick Harbour's landforms it is suggested that the river valleys would have been cut down through the King Leopold Sandstone following joints or other weaknesses in the rock so exposing Hart Dolerite sills embedded in the cliff walls of the river valley. Due to dolerite's propensity to relatively rapid weathering, the sandstone cliffs, where underlain by dolerite sills, would collapse. A likely scenario is that the broadened pair of river valleys united,

deepened and, following the post glacial sea level rises, flooded to become Prince Frederick Harbour and the river estuaries.

Along shorelines and estuaries there are many cliffs of the resistant sandstone and, where there is currently no sandstone overlying the dolerite, the local headlands are quite rounded and less steep. Around Prince Frederick Harbour we can see many examples of these points including the south-western tip of Naturalists Island. Many of the small islands and rocks in the harbour are also composed of Hart Dolerite. About 10 km north-west from Naturalists Island is an inlet that shallows quickly and terminates at its eastern end in a mangrove-lined channel. The flatter slopes of the northern shore of the inlet are covered in places with masses of large dark Hart Dolerite boulders that, from a distance, look like cloud shadows amongst the low vegetation. Here a dolerite sill has been 'freed' from its enclosing sandstone and has undergone weathering where the corners and edges of this once well-jointed dark coloured rock have disintegrated resulting in rounded boulders.

Porosus Creek occupies a straight 8 km cliff-lined valley running northwards from the harbour near the mouth of the Hunter River. For most of its length Porosus Creek is 1 to 1.5 km wide with a mangrove gallery growing in the mud flats on either side of the main channel. On the western side a complex network of channels and tidal gutters ends close to the steep foot slopes of the King Leopold Sandstone where the mangroves and the eucalypt woodland meet. On the eastern side of the creek some mangrove communities actually meet patches of monsoon rainforest growing on the foot slopes associated with a Hart Dolerite sill at the base of a sandstone cliff.

After charting and taking on fresh water, King left Prince Frederick Harbour searching for a suitable bay to careen the leaking *Mermaid* – a protected bay in Port Nelson, just south of York Sound, served the purpose and was named Careening Bay. Despite the crew's best efforts, repairs high and dry on the beach of Careening Bay had not stopped the leaks but King, before returning 'home' to the safety of Sydney Cove, was still keen to explore the waters that had been spotted by the cutter's botanist [Cunningham](#) from the high country behind Careening Bay.

King named the water Saint George Basin. Like York Sound and Port Nelson the northern side of the Basin is still within Wunambul lands but the southern section is the northern extremity of the [Worora](#) homelands. Like Port Nelson, King continued to name his newly discovered sites and points in memory of the two victorious British naval encounters along with Royalty and the British and Irish Patron Saints.

As the name 'basin' suggests this is an enclosed body of water: it forms the western end of the Prince Regent River and the seaward connection is a relatively narrow 15 km channel running NW into Brunswick Bay. Unlike York Sound, Warton Sandstone and Carson Volcanics are the main components of the diverse landforms in and around the Basin.

Two larger islands in the Basin, Saint Patrick Island and Saint Andrew Island have a Carson Volcanics (basalt) base capped with Warton Sandstone. To the northeast of the islands are two prominent mesas on the mainland, Mount Trafalgar (391 m) and Mount Waterloo (344 m) with a similar lithology, but the Warton Sandstone caps have been reduced to relatively small tabletops having been undermined by the relatively rapid weathering of the basalt. Between the islands and the mounts are several buttes – residual conical hills of Carson Volcanics – that have completely lost their hard capping. Similarity in elevations and lithology of these landforms suggests they were once interconnected as part of a plateau including Marigui Promontory and Python Cliffs that extended over the west of the current Basin and to the Macdonald Range area beyond its southern shore.



Most of this weathering and erosion and resultant landform development is likely to have occurred under terrestrial conditions without the influence of the sea. Down cutting by the ancestral Prince Regent River would have been responsible for separating the northern and southern sections of the original Warton Sandstone plateau, exposing the Carson Volcanics and transporting weathered sediments from the forming basin to the sea.

At the end of the last glacial period the Basin's land base would have been a wide valley situated below the current sea level, studded with several mesas and conical hills and connected to the sea by the ancestral Prince Regent River. Like much of the Kimberley coast this is a ria coastline now drowned by the rising postglacial waters that reached its current state some 6000 years ago.

King had spent about a week in Prince Frederick Harbour and its two rivers, five days exploring Saint George Basin and the Prince Regent River with some seventeen days between the two in Careening Bay. I wonder if the extreme worries of a permanently leaking vessel and the prospect of sailing it back to eastern Australia allowed King and his crew to appreciate the wonderful natural monuments they had recently explored and named?

*Sandy Scott*

Editor's Note: Discussion of this article with Sandy Scott gave rise to an interesting debate about the inscription carved on the [Mermaid Tree](#) at Careening Bay. The debate revolved around the prefix used for the cutter. Was it HMC or HBMC MERMAID? If it was the latter, the inclusion of the "B" would be for His Britannic Majesty's Cutter. The appearance of the letters is affected by light, shadows, the viewer's position, and what he/she expects to see. We will endeavour to bring you an article about this phenomena in the next *Boab Bulletin*.

## REST IN PEACE

On 27 December 2014, **John Creeper**, who was well known for his Kimberley work, died in Perth. In 1986 he was appointed as a temporary veterinary officer at Derby for the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign (BTEC). He also served several short periods as the Officer-in-Charge of the Derby office of the Department of Agriculture and Food before he became the Regional Veterinary Officer in the Kimberley in September 1991. In that post he was responsible for managing BTEC in the Kimberley, negotiating de-stocking activities with various stations, and ensuring that all necessary testing was completed on time. He spoke to the Kimberley Society about that work in September 2000 ([Bovine TB Eradication in the Kimberley](#)) and he was also a popular speaker elsewhere. John is survived by his wife Kim, daughters Kate and Hannah, and his sisters Jan and Lesley. More information is available in an online [obituary](#) from the Australian Society for Veterinary Pathology.

On 21 February 2015, the Society lost a founding member when **Cecil T Watts**, 88, passed away in Rockhampton. Cec occasionally contributed items to the newsletter, and he was the subject of a two-page 'Profile' in the February 1998 issue. The profile told of a 40-year career in the northern cattle industry, where Cec worked almost entirely for Vestseys. That family-owned business had about 20 stations in the Northern Territory and WA, and others in Queensland.

Cec embarked on his career at the age of fifteen, leaving his Sydney home to work on a sheep station near Narrabri in northern NSW. Four years after that he arrived in the Kimberley, having first gone to Darwin and signed on as a jackeroo with Vestseys. The company sent him to Nicholson, Flora Valley, Turner, and Gordon Downs, all of which were out of Halls Creek. The stockmen and jackeroos rode horses, using mules or camels to carry their gear. By 1951 Cec had risen to head stockman and was a respected rider at the Kimberley Goldfield races. As he moved about, he photographed places and people. Many of his images have been preserved.

When Cec had time off, he sometimes caught a lift or rode a horse to Halls Creek. The move to the new town was underway, with Bill Johnstone being the first to relocate a business there. Cec exchanged letters with Bill's young daughter Dawn for four years and then started working in Johnstone's store. That led to an elopement—all the way to Queensland—with their marriage taking place there in late 1955.

Cec rejoined Vestseys and, accompanied by Dawn, was sent to Spring Creek Station near the Northern Territory border. After that, with Cec now working as a manager, they went to Turner and then Ord River Station. In 1963 they adopted a daughter, Susan, and in 1965—the year they moved to Darwin following Cec's appointment as Pastoral Inspector for the Vestey stations in the Territory and WA—they adopted a son, Lindsay.

The scale of the pastoral inspector's job prompted Cec to learn to fly, and he did a lot of flying in his 17 years in Darwin. While there, the family survived Cyclone Tracy, despite having their house collapse on them as they sheltered in the bathtub. The next move was to Rockhampton in 1981, with Cec holding the position of Managing Director for WA, the Territory and Queensland until he retired at the age of sixty.

In each place they lived, Cec and Dawn were very much a part of the community. Cec was a Rotarian for 47 years and served terms as President of both the Darwin North and Rockhampton clubs. He enjoyed retirement and is survived by Dawn and Lindsay. A long and interesting obituary in the [North Queensland Register](#) on 5 March showed the esteem in which he was held. Vale Cec.

*Cathie Clement*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Driving east from Kununurra towards the WA/NT border late last year, **Tom Stephens**, former Member for Central Kimberley-Pilbara, was surprised to find what, for him, was a new road sign at one of his favourite creek crossings. He had first come that way in January 1977 and had used that crossing quite often; but, no longer a regular on the Victoria Highway, he didn't know when this crossing had picked up a new name!

The name "Philchowski's Crossing" had stood for many years as a road sign on the ground-level crossing of 8 Mile Creek. With this new sign reading "Phil Okowski's Ck, Northern European heritage had suddenly turned Celtic! Now Tom is a near full-blood Irishman, so his sense of grievance about the change did not spring from any "old-country" sensitivities.



Tom's understanding was that this crossing was originally named to refer to the association of the location with Rudolph Philchowski (a business partner with Joe Fegan in Spring Creek Station), who was for a number of years the mailman between Wyndham and Ord River Station. He was aware that there are a number of references to this man amongst the Durack Papers held at Battye Library in Perth; as well as a detailed reference at pages 287–290 of Mary Durack's *Sons in the Saddle* (Constable & Co., London, 1983).

When the Geographic Names Committee office team in Perth told Tom that this crossing does not have any name officially recorded, he wrote to request the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley initiate the process available to it to formally support the naming of the Crossing as "Philchowski Crossing". The intent was to reflect its historical connection to a man who was killed near this location in June 1913.

Tom felt that there could be a local Miriuwung Aboriginal name for the creek crossing that could be included alongside the "European" name. His letter to the Shire suggested that help with that might be obtained from the Kununurra Aboriginal language centre or the many Miriuwung people who live in various communities and outstations nearby.

The *Sons in the Saddle* account dovetails somewhat with what Tom knew from his discussions with Aboriginal people from 1977 when he was resident in Kununurra. Specifically he was told by both Alfie Deakin and Bulla Billinking that the killing led to the conviction and sentencing to death of an innocent Aboriginal man whose name was Jillambin.

Local people told Tom that the man who had in fact killed Philchowski was Woolambine, who was wounded in the violent reprisals that were taken against Aboriginal people in the area following the discovery of Philchowski's corpse. They said that Philchowski was killed by Woolambine in response to a serious grievance that developed between the two men. Also, that Woolambine lived on into his old age, largely in his homeland country, the area that became the Newry Station pastoral lease holding. One of his descendants said that for the remainder of

Woolambine's life he wore, tied around his neck, the bullet that had wounded him during these reprisals.

On being presented with this information, the Shire of Wyndham-East Kimberley drew to the attention of Main Roads the mistake that has slipped into the signage, and Main Roads are in the process of having it replaced. The matter of having the crossing formally named, and of whether to explore dual naming, is much more involved. New geographic names require endorsement by the local authority and then by the State Geographic Names Committee, which has strict [policies](#) for nomenclature. The Council will be considering a recommendation to proceed with the formal naming, and possible dual naming, as this newsletter goes to print.

When Tom first met the author Mary Durack (later Dame Mary) in early 1977, she told him a little more about Philchowski. It was from her that he first learnt that Philchowski had set up a camp from which it was possible (but not legal) to buy alcohol; a "sly-grog" camp. Station workers and droving camps returning east from Wyndham were reputed to be often delayed by this access to grog; much to the annoyance of the station managers awaiting their return. Mary also told Tom that, at the time Philchowski was killed, there was a local Aboriginal woman staying at his camp who was related to Wollambine. Her presence there, the way she was said to have been treated by Philchowski, and her interaction with the passing station workers, increased Wollambine's sense of grievance and anger and was said to have led directly to the murder.

Having progressed this far with the various accounts, Tom wondered if others had found something amongst official or other records, or from any other source since, that would throw further or corrective light on his recollections.

**Cathie Clement**, who works as a historian as well as editing our newsletter, has long had an interest in the matter and was aware of work done by Bruce Shaw (an anthropologist). Bruce's main informant was Johnny Walker, who was also Mary Durack's Aboriginal source for her account. Bruce integrated details from Mary's writing (1983 and 1931) with the oral history he had recorded in the 1970s with Johnny Walker, Banggaldun Balmirr and Jack Sullivan. He wrote up his results as 'The tale of Wallambain and Philchowski' ([Aboriginal History](#), vol. 11, part 1, 1987, pages 58–76) and he included a transcript of Johnny Walker's account.

Cathie's research indicates that the dead man's full name was Richard Augustus Pilchowski and that he was born in Prussia in the 1860s. He was Polish but likely to have been seen as German. After spending time in Queensland, where his work included droving, he headed west. He was in the East Kimberley by 1903, droving, carrying, and doing other work. His partnership in Joe Fegan's small station officially extended from mid-1906 until shortly before the murder at 8 Mile Well. The well was a place where travellers regularly stopped to rest at mealtimes or overnight. The records of the time document the police pursuit of the Aboriginal people said to have been involved in the killing. The man convicted of it was identified as Jellabine (Jillambin in oral history transcripts). He was tried in Wyndham, sentenced to death, sent to Roebourne, and had his sentence commuted to imprisonment for life.

Some questions about the events that took place at 8 Mile Well will never be answered. Where the name of the creek crossing is concerned, the matter of whether the dead man's name was Rudolph Philchowski or Richard Pilchowski is largely irrelevant. Local usage has it as Philchowski's Crossing, and both Tom and Cathie believe that the commonly used spelling of his surname should prevail. Also, with naming policy dictating that no possessive apostrophe is to appear in a name, they would prefer to see the formal name of Philchowski Crossing put forward.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I refer to the article on 'The Pipe Dream' in the February 2015 edition and have been prompted to write to you about the issue :-

I am a volunteer National Trust guide at the No. 1 Pump Station interpretative centre at Mundaring Weir which is part of the Golden Pipeline Project set up by the Water Corporation to have the National Trust WA conserve and interpret the decommissioned assets of the original Goldfields Water Supply Scheme which was completed in 1903.

I am frequently asked by visitors "If C Y O'Connor and his engineers could design and supervise the construction of a 565 km water pipeline from Mundaring Weir to Kalgoorlie over 100 years ago why can't the Water Corporation build a pipeline to bring water from the Kimberleys to Perth?"

My answer, with the benefit of having been a member of the boards of management of the Water Authority of WA and the Water Corporation of WA from 1993 to 2002, is that a reputable Perth consulting engineering firm was commissioned by the Water Corporation in 2004 to review previous feasibility studies carried out by itself and other organisations into bringing water from the Kimberley to Perth and concluded :-

- Although technically feasible, the project is highly complex with significant uncertainties related to aboriginal heritage and environmental approvals.
- The project would consume significant energy ( 3 times more per kl than desalinating seawater ) and create significant greenhouse gas emissions ( 4.5 times per kl more than desalination ).
- The project would create significant ecological impacts particularly relating to the Fitzroy River. ( *It should be noted that all Ord River Dam water was committed if Stage 2 of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme proceeded* ).
- At a revised estimated cost of not less than \$6.10 per kilolitre, the project remains unviable in comparison with other contemporary sources e.g. desalination.

All the above conclusions were available to read on the Water Corporation's website in late 2004.

In the lead up to the State Election on 20 February 2005 there were some interesting political games being played about Kimberley water.

In November 2004, the Premier Geoff Gallop, aware that a defence contractor, Tenix, was talking to the Opposition about building a canal to bring water from the Kimberley to Perth, announced that his Government would fund a \$5 million study into the feasibility of bringing water from the north to Perth.

Subsequently, on 3 February 2005, Opposition Leader Colin Barnett announced that if he won government on 20 February he would have the Tenix canal built, conveying 200 giganlitres of water per annum to Perth at a cost of \$2 billion.

Apparently neither party leader bothered to visit the Water Corporation website, or, if they consulted the staff of the Water Corporation about the matter, ignored their advice.

The feasibility study announced by Premier Gallop was completed in 2006 and reached the conclusion :-

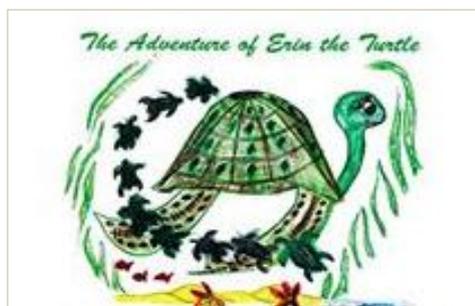
While several methods are technically capable of delivering water from the Kimberley to Perth, the water would cost much more ( at least 5 times ) than if supplied by other available options.

*Don Young*

## BOOK NOTE

**Bessie Daylight, Glenys Peters, Tara Denise Evans and Mary Rose Balacky, *The Adventure of Erin the Turtle*. Broome, 2014. A4, spiral bound, 14 pages, full colour.**

This appealing children's book was launched at Broome Public Library on 4 February 2015. It is aimed at local children but would be a hit in other places too.



While it was written and illustrated by the women named above, the book also has illustrations contributed by Patrick Gallagher and Daniel Kyle. Other input came from volunteer graphic designer Cameron Taylor, and from Broome's Read Write Now volunteer tutors. Broome is one of 19 West Australian regions in which people can overcome obstacles they face in reading and writing by participating in a Read Write Now program.

In the book, Erin, a green sea turtle, tells of her birth and how she survived living in the sea. The four authors, from the Kimberley Girls Writers Club, chose her story. Knowing that turtles fascinate children, they thought it would be a good way to share their knowledge with the younger ones. At least half of each page is filled with an attractive drawing. Up to four lines of large text, packed with a surprising amount of information, accompanies each drawing.

The book's production—from the concept through to printing and sales—shows what can be achieved by a small group of people working selflessly together. The local Read Write Now tutors had been giving lessons at Milliya Rumurra Aboriginal Corporation, and they helped to put the women's knowledge into an easy to read format. Nancy Kennedy, the local co-ordinator, knew of the Kimberley Society and secured a grant for a print run of 100 copies. The sale of those books provided funding for a second print run, which is selling well. What a great result!

*Cathie Clement*

## COUNCIL 2014-2015

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