



BOAB BULLETIN

No. 95

December 2009

NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETINGS

commencing 7.15 for 7.30 p.m. at

Shenton Park Community Centre, corner Onslow and Herbert Roads

Wednesday, 2 December 2009

Fred Chaney (Chair, Desert Knowledge Australia)

“RemoteFOCUS, can we make government work for the Kimberley?”

Wednesday, 3 February 2010

Four short, illustrated presentations by Society members

“Bushwalking in the Kimberley, 2009”

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

Saturday, 27 March 2010

KIMBERLEY HISTORY PEOPLE, EARLY EXPLORATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Aboriginal Perspective	Dr Mark Bin Bakar
The Archaeological Perspective	Professor M Morwood
Maritime Exploration	Dr Cathie Clement
George Grey's Expedition	Dr Hamish McGlashan
Camden Harbour – The Quinlan Connection	Mr Tony Quinlan
Guano Mining – The First Extractive Industry	Mr Tim Willing
Forrest Expedition & Early Development	Professor Geoffrey Bolton
The Halls Creek Gold Rush of 1886	Dr Phillip Playford
Joseph Bradshaw's 1891 Expedition	Mr Michael Cusack
Joseph Bradshaw & the Maragui Settlement	Professor Kevin Kenneally
The Hann and Brockman Expeditions	Dr Michael Donaldson & Mr Ian Elliot
The Missions in the Kimberley	Dr Christine Choo
Impacts of Settlement and Development	Mr Bill Bunbury

See “From the President” for venue and registration fees. Brochures yet to be distributed.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Elsewhere in this *Bulletin* you will find the proposed programme for the history seminar which we shall be holding at the University of Western Australia on March 27th, an all-day event. I hope that you will agree that we have some exciting speakers, in particular two who are coming from “out of town”. Dr Mark Bin Bakar, from Broome, is perhaps better known as Mary G, especially in the Kimberley where his shows and interviews are so popular. They prick pomposity and use humour to deliver what is often a serious message. Professor Mike Morwood is well known to members interested in rock art, and he is one of Australia’s most distinguished archaeologists. Many of the more local speakers have already addressed the society at some stage and are all leading experts in their fields.

We hope that the day will have wide appeal outside the membership of the Society and we are looking to you as members to spread the message. An event like this is run at significant cost and risk to society funds unless enough people come. We have set the registration fees as low as possible, especially from members whom, because of the discounted fee, we shall be subsidising to attend. The programme is concentrated but we hope there will be time for socialising at lunch and at the conclusion. Do come.

The December meeting is the last of the year and we have a most distinguished speaker, The Hon Fred Chaney. The first meeting of 2010 will be in February.

Best wishes to you all for the festive season.

Hamish McGlashan

INAUGURAL KIMBERLEY FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA LECTURE

On the evening of 20 November, an enthusiastic crowd at the University Club (UWA) heard Professor Mike Morwood speak on the topic “What does the Flores Hobbit tell us about the peopling of the Kimberley?”. Using numerous interesting and informative slides, he drew on the fossil record of parts of the South East Asian archipelago to describe likely migration patterns, habitats, and evolutionary traits of humans and animals. His analysis of how and when migration to the Kimberley is likely to have occurred provided much food for thought. A transcript of the lecture will be available on the KFA web site (www.kimberleyfoundation.com).

REST IN PEACE

Alison Lawrence, a Broome identity known for her longstanding contribution to the local community, has passed away. Her funeral took place in Broome on 24 November. The next *Boab Bulletin* will carry a fuller obituary.

A respected Aboriginal elder from the Kimberley passed away several weeks ago. Well known as an artist in his own right, and as a craftsman associated with the Kalumburu Dance Group, his work is held by the National Museum and by the National Gallery of Australia. It also appears in books that include a collection of limited edition prints that he and other family members produced in collaboration the Australian Print Workshop in 2000. He was also closely involved the Wunambal Gaambera Aboriginal Corporation, currently chaired by his granddaughter Esther Wainer, and he was among the people who dealt with the Inpex proposal to situate a gas hub on the Maret Islands off the Kimberley coast.

CRUNCH TIME FOR THE KIMBERLEY

On 5 August 2009, Josh Coates, Kimberley Campaigner with The Wilderness Society (TWS) WA, spoke to the Kimberley Society. His PowerPoint presentation was titled: "Crunch time for the Kimberley: Australia's great northern wilderness on the edge".

Josh began by providing background on TWS, which formed in 1976, born from leading the Franklin River campaign. It is now one of Australia's leading non-government conservation organisations. With campaign centres in all states, the organisation runs campaigns across Australia. It also has an international focus on forests and climate change.

TWS's organisational purpose is 'to protect, promote and restore wilderness and natural processes across Australia for the survival and ongoing evolution of life on Earth'. As its web site states, it values passion for its purpose; the power of people to make change; organisational independence and integrity; compassion in dealing with its staff and others; and a commitment to success in protecting the environment.

As a grass roots organization serving tens of thousands of members, TWS engages those people in environment protection campaigns. In describing its strong history of success, Josh listed protection of Tasmanian old growth forest, Victoria's woodlands, NSW forests, halting broadscale Queensland land clearing and protecting rivers, protecting Kakadu and the Daly River (NT), and successful South Australian outback wilderness campaigns. The organisation does not accept government or industry funding for its advocacy work. When it needs to speak out for the environment it does so without fear or prejudice.

Josh explained that TWS is driven by its WildCountry vision, which asks the question: what does nature need to survive and thrive in Australia? To answer this question it utilises the best science available, including facilitating the WildCountry science council, which is made up of many of the preeminent conservation scientists working in Australia and the world. The WildCountry vision for Australia is continental in scale, recognizing the importance of connectivity ('defragmenting' landscapes in tenure and management), continuity (of evolution and culture), collaboration and compatibility (including economic development).

TWS always seeks to work with Traditional Owners toward common goals of protecting of environmental and cultural values. Acknowledging the role of people in wilderness environments and the need for appropriate land and sea management, it recognises the important role of traditional land managers and it encourages Indigenous ranger groups.

The WA Campaign Centre is in Lotteries House, West Perth, and TWS WA currently employs eight staff on a range of campaigns. Achievements in WA include playing a leading role in securing protection for Ningaloo reef with its "Save Ningaloo" campaign and for over 250,000 hectares of old growth forest in the south west.

Its key campaign areas in WA are the Kimberley, the Great Western Woodlands (the biggest temperate woodland left on Earth), and protecting WA's amazing marine environment, where it seeks a state-wide marine conservation plan including marine parks and no-take sanctuaries.

The Wilderness Society and the Kimberley

TWS has been intermittently active in the Kimberley since 1989, working with local community, scientists, Traditional Owners and government towards regional

conservation planning. The Kimberley is currently a TWS WA and TWS national campaign priority area.

Josh sees an exciting time ahead with TWS well placed to ensure some amazing outcomes for WA's unique, beautiful, and highly valuable natural areas. He says, "The political times are going to be tough but with enough support and resources we can do it!"

The Kimberley – values, threats and solutions

As we know, the Kimberley has the longest wilderness coastline in Australia... and one of the longest in the world. It is also, Josh explained, home to one of the world's vastest, intact tropical savannah ecosystems. Rich also in Indigenous cultural values the Kimberley is a unique global asset.

The presentation utilised maps to highlight the global significance of the Kimberley as one of the least human-impacted coastal environments in the world. It also showed that the region is important in terms of global tropical savannah health and national woodland and river health.

Josh showed images of the incredible landscapes and wildlife of the Kimberley, including the group IV population of humpback whales, the largest population in the world. This population's recovery from whaling is probably due in a large part to the currently un-spoilt nature of their calving, breeding and feeding home base in the Kimberley.

The importance, wonder and natural beauty of the Kimberley is well established, and of course well understood by Kimberley society members. Yet, Josh pointed out, the region currently faces an unprecedented level of threat. TWS sees the pervasive threats of uncontrolled wildfires, feral animals, weeds, invasive species (including the cane toad) and overgrazing now being joined by the emerging threats of large scale industrial development. There are proposals for water extraction / damming of rivers for broad scale irrigated agriculture; uranium and coal mining; and the LNG (gas) processing industrial hub proposed for James Price Point 50km north of Broome.

Decisions will be made in the coming few months and years that will decide the future of the region – it truly is crunch time for the Kimberley.

Josh also spoke of the importance of protected areas in the Kimberley, pointing out that, in terms of terrestrial conservation, less than 7% of the Kimberley terrestrial area is protected in any form of reserve, and that 0% of the coastal marine waters are protected – an unacceptable situation.

James Price Point, LNG processing and the 'thin edge of the wedge'

The presentation then focused briefly on the values of the James Price Point area and the threat posed by the proposed LNG development, both to the area and the broader Kimberley. Some of the marine values include extensive sponge gardens (filter feeding communities), sea grasses, corals, an acknowledged fish aggregation area (likely to be a fish breeding area), and a high density humpback whale migration area. The terrestrial values directly at risk include dwarf pindan woodland and monsoonal vine thicket communities.

TWS sees this proposed LNG development as the 'thin edge of the wedge' for the Kimberley. The large port facility proposed and the access to a cheap fossil fuel power source has the potential to facilitate environmentally damaging activities that include strip mining for bauxite in the Mitchell plateau / north Kimberley region,

uranium and coal mining, and 'downstream' industries such as explosives and fertilizer factories.

TWS views the proposed port facility as a major environmental concern. It would require extensive blasting and ongoing dredging (impacting on seagrass, sponge gardens and corals); the construction of a large jetty; the building of a huge (5-7km) breakwater, altering the oceanography of the region; and increased boat traffic with the associated risk of oil spills, boat strike and marine pests. Other impacts would include land clearing, fresh water use (altering water tables or injecting highly saline outfalls to local waters), pollution in the form of toxic gasses and particulates and massive greenhouse gas emissions. Culture (including cutting an Indigenous song line) would be affected, and the character of Broome and the Dampier peninsula would change – impacting on local tourism and recreation and the broader Kimberley tourism 'brand'.

Josh explained that the LNG hub in the Kimberley is not a 'done deal' as portrayed by the WA premier and certain media outlets. Traditional Owners have not made a final decision on allowing the development and, while an 'in principle' agreement has been made, it does not have unanimous support. Environmental approvals are still required. The Joint Venture partners have not signed off on the Kimberley option and seem to be leaning toward more environmentally and economically attractive alternatives to a 'greenfields' development on the Kimberley coast. Alternative processing options include processing in the Pilbara at 'brownfields' sites with established industrial infrastructure and floating LNG production.

An Alternative vision for the Kimberley

TWS has an alternative vision for the Kimberley. This vision has been articulated in its extensive submission to the State Government's Kimberley science and conservation strategy, developed cooperatively with a number of other conservation groups, and available for download on the TWS website.

This alternative vision includes:

- A comprehensive conservation and compatible development plan for the Kimberley, ruling out incompatible industry and encouraging conservation compatible development with investment in sustainable industry and jobs
- Legal protection for the Kimberley's rivers
- More protected areas, and improved off reserve management as part of the overall planning approach – replacing the current ad hoc approach to planning and management in the Kimberley
- No new large scale polluting industry

Crunch time

Timelines are pressing, with various government processes underway and due for completion in 2010. The Federal Government's marine planning/parks process (for Commonwealth waters more than three nautical miles from shore) is well underway and will be completed next year. In January 2010 the assessment report for the LNG hub is scheduled to go out for public comment. Mid 2010 is the proposed timing for LNG development approvals, coinciding with the outcomes of the Commonwealth strategic assessment of the Kimberley's natural and cultural values, a process which will provide recommendations regarding national heritage listing for the Kimberley's natural and cultural landscape. TWS argues that this is a back to front process. It is also mindful that the timelines and outcomes of the State Government's Kimberley

science and conservation strategy process are uncertain. Will the process deliver a comprehensive conservation and compatible development strategy, as recommended by environment groups, or will it merely deliver a couple of public relations exercise 'gas hub offset' parks?

Concluding remarks

Josh completed his presentation by summarizing and recapping on the Wilderness Society's track record of action and commitment, reflecting on:

- A 20 year history working in northern Australia
- Collaborations with groups such as the Conservation Council, Save The Kimberley, and Environs Kimberley
- Working with Traditional Owners
- The WildCountry Science Council work
- Lobbying, State and Commonwealth
- Involving the public in decisions around the Kimberley

He then thanked the Society for the invitation and opportunity to speak to such a knowledgeable and engaged audience and encouraged members to learn more by visiting www.wilderness.org.au/kimberley.

Editor's Note: On 13 November, conservationists welcomed the news that the Norwegian-owned alumina company Norsk-Hydro had relinquished its Mitchell Plateau mining leases, citing a shortage of information about environmental values as the reason. Some 5,500sqkm may now be safe from strip-mining for bauxite. A news report on the relinquishment mentioned Josh Coates congratulating the company and urging other companies to follow suit. November also brought fresh news of Traditional Owners protesting against the government's stated intention of using land at James Price Point for a port. A second new port is also being mooted, at Point Torment near Derby, where, at intervals since 1883, successive governments have shown interest in establishing a deep water port. That location is seen as having potential to woo Inpex back to Western Australia but, at present, all the government appears to be doing is offering to support Inpex in the building of a port, e.g. by providing land and an access road.



SPECIAL CHRISTMAS OFFERS FROM BACKROOM PRESS !

Backroom Press, the small not-for-profit Kimberley publishing house, set up in Broome by Pat Lowe, Joyce Hudson and Susan Sickert, is offering members of the Kimberley Society its five publications at a special Christmas discount.

- *Jimmy And Pat Go To China*, by Pat Lowe with drawings by Jimmy Pike — \$10 (usual price \$16.95)
- *When Harry Went To India*, by Susan Sickert and Harry Watson— \$10 (\$16.95)
- *Jimmy And Pat Meet The Queen*, by Pat Lowe with drawings by Jimmy Pike — \$10 (\$12.95)
- *Looking For Bobby: A Broome Adventure* (a story for children), by Kerry Anne Jordinson — \$15 (\$16.95)
- *The Art Of Fire*, by Jimmy Pike — \$20 (\$24.95).

Books will be on sale at the December meeting.

Kimberley inspired and produced books make excellent gifts!



BORDER MARKERS EXHIBITION AND OTHER NEWS

On 7 October 2009, Wendy Carter spoke to the Kimberley Society about current and past activities of the Kununurra Historical Society (KHS). Wendy has been the secretary of the KHS for the past six years. On the evening of the talk, the audience also enjoyed a PowerPoint presentation in which Wendy's young charge from Kununurra, eleven-year-old Montana Ahwon, showed slides of the KHS Museum, its exhibits, and the various places mentioned in the talk. Wendy's summary of her talk follows.

I moved from Kalgoorlie to Kununurra at the beginning of 2003 and joined the Kununurra Historical Society the week I arrived. I was initially disappointed that the KHS didn't seem to go on any outings whereas this had been one of my favourite aspects of being a member of the Eastern Goldfields Historical Society in Kalgoorlie-Boulder (WA). Fortunately this has changed over the six years that I have now lived in Kununurra so I can report on not only some of our forays into the bush but also on some of results these outings have led to.

My first foray was as a result of a letter received from Gay Morey in regard to her friend Lal Harding, who is now a Kimberley Society member and was present at the talk. Both ladies had lived at Ivanhoe Station at different times. Lal's father had been the butcher at Ivanhoe for a while, and Lal was keen to revisit. This letter led to a wonderful outing to Ivanhoe where Mac Jenson, caretaker at the time, showed Lal & I around, taking us to what is left of the old homestead at the billabong and the graves of Tom Deacon and Neal Durack.

This initial visit led to many happy outings, billed on the annual Ord Valley Muster program as "Graves in the Long Grass", followed by morning tea at the current station thanks to a number of willing caretakers since Mac left. Other Ivanhoe outings have been with local groups such as the congregation of the Halls Creek Catholic Church and with various members of the Durack family. I always find it particularly moving for visitors to the graves to read out some of M.P. Durack's diary entries from *Sons in the Saddle* pertaining to both Neal and Tom.

In 2005 we received a letter from Kevin Markey in regard to his father Dick Markey, who was a chainman on the surveying party which visited the Kimberley in 1927, to build the NT/WA border pillar known as the "Kimberley Obelisk" and to "run out a few pastoral lease boundaries and traverse Sturt Creek." Kevin hoped to visit the Kimberley the following year along with his sister to see the team's handiwork for himself and asked for help from the KHS in locating the pillar in time for his visit in 2006.

This letter led the KHS members into earnest discussions and a lot of poring over maps. On this, as on all our subsequent outings, our President Andrew Barker did a wonderful job of checking out related archives and finding much relevant information. Armed with maps, GPS, billy and lunch, KHS members travelling in half a dozen 4WD's, set off down the Duncan Highway one weekend. After a couple of false starts we eventually gave up on trying to find any decent track and followed a fence line on a very rough and bumpy ride. It took us all day but we finally found both the Kimberley Obelisk and the 1921 Austral Pillar, which South Australian Government Astronomer, G.F. Dodwell and Surveyor C.M. Hambridge along with W.A. Government Astronomer H.B. Curlewis, used to make their astronomical observations as a prelude to marking the WA/NT border.

As a result of Kevin's interest, our various visits out to the site plus a lot of research, Andrew Barker has put together "The Border Markers" Exhibition at the KHS Museum with photos and information. Other exhibitions include the "Wirraway – Challenge" which displays the cockpit canopy frames and other components of a Wirraway

aircraft (RAAF 12 Squadron) that landed on salt marsh near the NT/WA border after suffering engine failure over the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf in March 1942. A KHS expedition retrieved the last pieces of the aircraft in October 2004.

Since 2006 we have made some most enjoyable outings and camp outs. We have visited what is left of the original Newry Station, the current Newry Station and station graves. Also Rosewood Station, where Doug and Joanne Struber have been most helpful in our quests for things historic. We have visited what is left of Dunham River Station and Cow Creek Station, the latter being at Doon Doon. We went to the police camp at Wild Dog Creek (near the border) which was active from 1896 to 1908. The stock inspectors dip on the back road to Wyndham. The memorial at the Aboriginal massacre site at Mistake Creek (near Warmun Community). The old Threeway Hotel which is now on Parry Creek Farm. A boat trip to Adolphus Island where William Nicholls was buried way back in 1819 when he died on the expedition with Phillip Parker King. We also visited the Stewart's Yard billabong, the site of Reg & Enid Durack's first home on Kildurk Station, and saw the remnants of two stone huts connected with Burt Drew, a donkey teamster of earlier days. All of Reg and Enid's children and a lot of their grandchildren were on that trip, which took place on 13 July 2009, the day after a ceremony to inter Enid Durack's ashes and erect a memorial at the Durack homestead museum at Lake Argyle.

We have organised two three-day annual 'expeditions' for the Historical Society of the NT (HSNT), one in the East Kimberley in 2004, the other in the border country of NT/WA in 2006. In July 2009 we also participated in a trip to view some of the historic sites of the former Bradshaw Station on the Defence Department's Bradshaw Field Training Area (BFTA), which took three years of planning by the HSNT. We hosted a trip by a curator from the Australian National Museum, Richard Reid, who is putting together an exhibition on the Irish in Australia in 2011. Richard was looking at the Irish families involved in the early pastoral days of the East Kimberley and NT. And of course all year long we have visitors who used to live in the East Kimberley who come in to see us, as well as visitors who have never lived here but come to write about certain aspects of history for university research, books or plays.

This year, Andrew Barker was instrumental in raising around \$15,000 from local people and businesses in order to buy eight paintings of Elizabeth Durack's from the Costello Collection, to exhibit at the KHS Museum in Kununurra. Andrew flew to Perth early to visit the auction rooms and check out the paintings, seek expert advice etc before bidding for paintings of Kinivan's Yard on Rosewood Station, of Oombulgurri, and the early agricultural days at Kununurra and building of the dams. He then bought a second hand 4WD to drive the paintings 'home' before selling the vehicle. He put an enormous amount of time and effort into this project. The acquisition of the Kinivan's Yard painting sparked another quest for knowledge and led to discoveries about its builder, Timothy George Kinivan, and its location on Rosewood (just 50 metres from the Kildurk Station boundary).

So, in the words of one of Peter Brandy's songs, the Kununurra Historical Society is now firmly "on the back roads of the Kimberley". If any of the Kimberley Society members have something they would like us to look into, please write care of PO Box 77 and we will see what we can find!

Further reading

Durack, Mary. *Kings in Grass Castles*. Constable and Company Limited, London, 1959, numerous reprints and new editions.

Durack, Mary. *Sons in the Saddle*. Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1983, Corgi Books, London, 1985.

Millett, Patsy. *The Duracks of Argyle: A summary of a pioneering venture and the years 1852 - 1950 in Kimberley, Western Australia*. Access Press, Bassendean (WA), [c. 2006].

For the program of the first annual 'expedition' organised by the KHS for the Historical Society of the NT, see <http://www.historicalsocietynt.org.au/Kimberley.pdf>.

For an account of the Historical Society of the NT's trip to Bradshaw Station in July 2009, see <http://www.historicalsocietynt.org.au/downloads/CampingBradshawStationNTAug09.pdf>.

For coverage of the KHS Museum's 'Wirraway - Challenge' exhibition, opened on 20 March 2005, see <http://www.kimberleyecho.com/archive/2005/20050310/story01.html> and <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/reporter/stories/s1335313.htm>.

THE MONTARA OIL SPILL NORTH OF THE KIMBERLEY (PART 2)

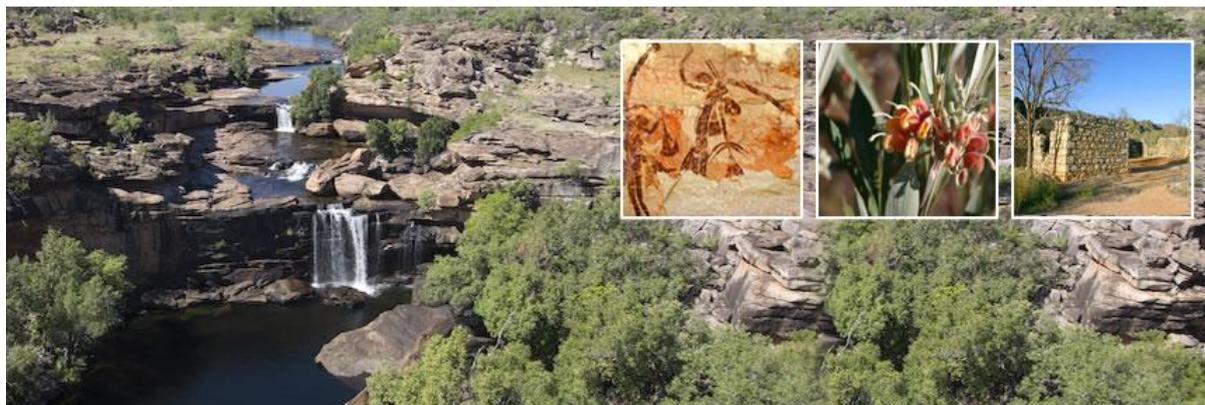
The editor compiled this log to give members insight into the oil spill and its management. The first part of the log, for the period from 21 August, appeared in the October Boab Bulletin.

- 29 September The Australian Maritime Security Authority (AMSA) continued its clean up of the gas condensate and oil leaking from a well at the Montara well-head platform. The platform, located about 250km north-west of Truscott air base on the Kimberley coast, is operated by Thailand-based PTT Exploration & Production Public Company Limited (PTTEP). The AMSA response, implemented on day one of the spill, by now included input from Indonesia's Transportation Ministry. Indonesia and Australia signed a memorandum of understanding on prevention and settlement of oil spills in 1996.
- 30 September West Australian Greens Senator Rachel Siewert criticised the Federal Government for the time it took (from 21 August until 25 September) to start using marine biologists to survey the area affected by the oil spill. Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett rejected the criticism and stated that his department had in place a long-term environmental monitoring plan. The known toll on birdlife was six dead out of fourteen oil-affected birds found on Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island.
- 1 October The flow from the well appeared to have decreased. The *Jakarta Post* reported that fishermen from West Timor had seen weathered oil on their fishing grounds, and, further, that coastal people claimed to have had skin irritation and nausea after eating dead fish found along a beach. Fear of the spill harming Indonesia's marine life had led to a team of Indonesian officials being sent to monitor Australia's response to the leak. The West Timor Care Foundation announced its intention to liaise with activists from Green Peace Indonesia to protest against the Indonesian and Australian governments 'for not paying attention to the environmental destruction' from the spill.
- 2 October Minister Peter Garrett continued to defend his government's response to the spill and he stated that the oil had not had a 'significant' impact on wildlife. He also said that the government had offered to work with Indonesian authorities in monitoring the oil.
- 6 October The Seadrill drilling team on the West Triton rig, anchored about 2km from the spill, made a first pass in its bid to intersect the leaking well some 2.6km below the sea bed, missing it by about five metres. Each pass sequence, in which electro magnetic equipment guides the drill toward the 25cm-diameter steel casing of the pipe, involves up to four days' work drilling through hard rock. Eight environmental groups placed a full-page advertisement in *The West Australian* drawing attention to the six-week-old spill and calling on oil and gas companies to offer public support for the creation of marine sanctuaries in the Kimberley. The sanctuaries call apparently related to State Environment Minister Donna Faragher having announced several days previously that the government, in anticipation of creating a marine park at

- Camden Sound off the Kimberley to protect the southern hemisphere's largest whale nursery, is drawing up a draft management plan that will be put out for public comment. The oil and gas industry responded by accusing the groups of 'being hysterical'. Petroleum producer spokesman Tom Baddeley pointed out that the industry had been working with the groups and the Federal and State governments towards the creation of such parks.
- 7 October With coral expected to spawn in the coming week on Ashmore Reef, about 150km (93 miles) north-west of the Montara wellhead platform, attention turned to the possibility of the weathered oil and the remnant dispersants affecting the coral. Dr Selina Ward, a researcher from the University of Queensland's Centre for Marine Studies, stated that contact with oil could reduce fertilization and prevent larvae turning into coral.
- 13 October The Seadrill team made a second pass in its bid to intersect the leaking well and came within about 70cm. Marine scientist Walter Starck expressed a belief that the effects of the spill on marine life would not be long-lasting but other environmental scientists were divided in their opinions.
- 15 October Environment Minister Peter Garrett released a 64-page response plan, with detailed studies of marine life, water quality and shoreline ecology. The tally of seabirds killed by the spill was put at sixteen, with no harm reported to fish, dolphins or whales. A deal had been struck between PTTEP and the Federal Government regarding the company's financial liability for the clean up and for at least two years of environmental monitoring. Australian environmental scientist John Wardrop will manage the monitoring program.
- 17 October The Seadrill team's third attempt to intersect the leaking well failed. Greens MLC Robin Chapple was critical of the limited role played by the Federal Government in the attempts to stop the leak.
- 20 October Federal Shadow resources minister Ian Macfarlane called for the government to put a crew on board the West Atlas rig, and douse it with seawater to reduce the risk of fire, if the fourth attempt to intersect the leaking well failed. Premier Colin Barnett dismissed that call. The cost of AMSA cleaning up the spill so far had amounted to \$5.3 million, of which \$3.8 million had been recouped from PTTEP. Of the 457,000 litres of oil and water removed in the clean up, 277,000 litres was oil.
- 23 October PTTEP received approval for an \$11 million purchase of new oil assets (five new exploration licences and several oilfields) in Australian waters. The licences cover an extra 1,480sqkm near the Montara wellhead platform. Conservations were outraged. A marine wildlife survey released by WWF Australia reported the area polluted by the spill teeming with wildlife. The 75-page report told of marine creatures swimming or resting in the oil slick.
- 29 October By resorting to an untried method, the AMSA clean up had accounted for about 370,000 litres more oil by skimming the sea, pumping the liquid into vats aboard two modified ships, the *Challis Venture* and *Jabiru Venture*, and then injecting it into deep sea oil and gas reservoirs. PTTEP said that it had put the cost of the spill at \$177 million, excluding lost oil. The existence of another gas leak was revealed, nine weeks after it began at the Sinopec-operated Puffin oil field about 50km northwest of the Montara spill.
- 30 October More information about the oil spill's impact on birds, cetaceans and marine reptiles became public. Demonstrators dressed as oil-affected sea creatures protested in Perth. Further reports were made of oil contaminating fisheries off Indonesia, with thousands of dead fish said to be drifting off that coast.
- 1 November The Seadrill team on the West Triton rig, which had 113 personnel on board, finally intercepted the leaking pipe, about 2km away, and began pumping mud into it to stem the flow of oil and gas. After several hours the Montara wellhead caught fire, igniting the platform and the cantilever portion of the

- West Atlas drilling rig directly above it. That rig, with an estimated value of \$180 million, suffered irreparable damage.
- 3 November The fire was extinguished, and well control experts on the West Triton rig used 3,400 barrels of heavy mud mix to plug the well temporarily. That feat stabilised the Montara project facilities, clearing the way for assessment of safety issues, and plans were made to have engineers board the ruined West Atlas rig and plug the well permanently. Plans also progressed for sending Australian officials and company representatives to Jakarta to discuss the spill with Indonesian officials. The Australian Embassy in Jakarta repudiated reports that the Montara oil had reached Indonesian coastal waters and affected fishing, other industries, and people's health. It conceded that small patches of weathered oil has crossed into Indonesia's exclusive economic zone but said the closest was almost 100km from Roti Island. Premier Colin Barnett conceded that the oil spill had damaged WA's reputation internationally and, citing the potential for accidents, he spoke against using floating LNG plants for the development of small gas fields.
- 4 November Speculation was voiced as to whether PTTEP, if found to have contravened an operations plan approved by the Federal Government, will face stiff penalties under the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) (Management of Environment) Regulations 1999, and whether the company will be found to have breached The Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. Also mentioned was that the anticipated government decision to establish marine conservation zones may hinge on the affordability of huge displacement costs payable in relation to oil and gas exploration and extraction licenses.
- 5 November Resources Minister Martin Ferguson announced that David Borthwick, the recently retired secretary of the Environment Department, will head an inquiry into the oil spill. It will have the powers of a royal commission, and six months in which to report, but there is no guarantee of public hearings. Its object is to try to determine the cause of the leak and what industry and regulatory steps are required to prevent a similar event. A call for a freeze on the granting of exploration or extraction licences during the inquiry had been rejected. Four of nine oil and gas projects proposed in the north-west sea over the next five years were said to be up for approval by Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett.
- 8 November Minister Peter Garrett stated that no significant impacts on wildlife were being seen, and that, with officials still on Ashmore Reef, and with a wildlife refuge centre set up in Broome, any affected wildlife would be treated.
- 17 November ABC Kimberley reported that 'AMSA's clean-up efforts will continue indefinitely, with boats, planes and 300 staff remaining onsite in case the well leaks again'. The amount of oil in the water was decreasing and, although isolated patches had been seen within about 30 kilometres of the Kimberley coast, those patches had either dispersed or broken up. While conditions had indicated that monitoring was unnecessary on the Australian side of the well prior to this, the change in weather patterns ahead of the wet season has some people fearing that oil-tainted water could move south.
- 21 November Reports circulated of a US government official having said that the design of the Montara well was not up to US standards because it had only a single barrier to control it. The Australian government refuted that claim.
- 22 November For the first time since the oil spill began on 21 August, three well control specialists reboarded the ruined West Atlas rig. They spent 7½ hours inspecting the fire damage, and, next day, they inspected the Montara wellhead platform. The exercise assessed the safety and stability of the two structures, to guard against debris falling from the rig onto the people who will work from the platform to plug the well. The well was still stable.

KIMBERLEY SOCIETY'S WEB SITE



The Society's revamped web site is now live and, after experiencing the workload involved in the doing the upgrade, the Council is more grateful than ever to Grant Sellwood for all the voluntary work he did in setting up the original web site more than a decade ago, managing it ever since, and absorbing all costs associated with the hosting of the site. Thanks Grant!

Jaz Creative produced the new design and liaised with Jeff Gresham and Cathie Clement to provide a PDF for each of the past talks as well as lots of images and additional information about the Kimberley. The "Photo Gallery" currently contains: Kimberley Landscape (27 Photos), Kimberley History (4), Stone and Stone Arrangements (9), Flora (21), Fauna (7), Rock Art - Wandjina (8), Rock Art - Gwion Gwion / Bradshaw (11), and Rock Art - Other (6). On the pages titled "Kimberley Region", Jeff has provided coverage of "Geography, Geomorphology and Geology", with maps; "History of Exploration", with images, and "Industries", which, so far, contains only a short list of industries. Work still remains to be done, and, once the few teething problems have been rectified, the Council members who are taking responsibility for the site will add more material to it. The address of the web site is unchanged (www.kimberleysociety.org).

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