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Community

Helping hand for homeless

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Lifestyle

Glitz and glam from Marble Bar

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Sport

Women's footy in full swing

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Wild dogs kill park's animals

Robert Dougherty

A community-run animal park has been left reeling after wild dogs killed more than 30 of the animals in eight attacks within the past year.

The loss of the animals at the park forced the Newman Lions Club, which runs it, to ask the Shire of East Pilbara if it could use \$6000 originally allocated for improvements to the facility for fences instead.

Newman Lions Club president Anthony Middleton said the fencing would allow the animals to be moved to a more appropriate space, away from the fenced children's playground where they were currently housed.

"Some of our members have scared the dogs off by yelling at them when they come in," he said.

"That's prevented a fair few attacks, we've tried patching the fence over and over again but they just keep digging through. It's upwards of a dozen, (dead) goats and sheep."

Mr Middleton said the animals were easy prey for the dogs, which were simply killing them for a thrill. "They are just using the opportunity because they are locked up in a pen to just prey on them," he said.

Shire of East Pilbara councillors unanimously agreed to refocus the \$6000 contribution into installing the perimeter fencing at their ordinary council meeting late last month. "The welfare of the animals is what is paramount to us and as a result, fencing in the facility is what must take priority before upgrades," Shire president Lynne Craigie said.



2018 Pilbara Girl finalist Alice Shields, 19, at the competition heat on Friday night. Picture: Alicia Perera

Pilbara Girl contestants a force for good

Alicia Perera

The Pilbara's next crop of young Aboriginal female role models took their place in the spotlight at the heat for this year's Pilbara Girl competition on Friday.

Nine girls, part of the indigenous women's empowerment program, showed confidence, poise and beauty in a professional-looking extravaganza involving fashion parades and entrant interviews at Karratha's ibis Styles Hotel.

But by the end of the night, those

nine were narrowed down to six as judges made difficult decisions about who should go through to the grand final.

Competing for the title of Pilbara Girl 2018 will be Cynthia Turland, Hannah Weillgomasz, Mikaila Saylor, Verinia Bin Saad, Alice Shields and Holly Spurling.

Pilbara Girl founder and Goolarri Media chief operations officer Kira Fong said the program was all about inspiring Aboriginal girls to become confident young women who were a force for good in their

communities. "It's giving us young role models and young leaders in these communities," she said.

"And we're also trying to develop a network of resilient, strong women who can pass on that resilience and nurture future generations."

Pilbara Girl is now in its ninth year, having started as a companion to the highly successful Kimberley Girl program in 2010.

The grand final will be held in Broome in October.



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BHP

Police apology offered

■ Gabrielle Knowles

WA Police Commissioner Chris Dawson apologised last week to Aboriginal people for their treatment by the State's police, claiming a history of racism or "unconscious bias" needs to end.

In an historic address at police headquarters, Mr Dawson urged his officers to ask themselves each time they dealt with an Aboriginal person if they were treating them the same as they would a person of another race or background.

He told *The West Australian* the apology did not mean police would give criminal behaviour a "free kick" and they would continue to enforce the law. He wanted a police force that was no longer distrusted and feared by Aboriginal people, as had been the case in the past.

"I think it's the right thing to do," he said. "That's not to say other police in the past have always done things wrong. Many officers have always done the right thing. I just think we can do things better."

Mr Dawson chose NAIDOC Week — which celebrates the culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people — for the gesture, which included their flags flown at police headquarters for the first time.

He stressed he did not want the apology and flying of the



Commissioner Chris Dawson

flags to be just symbolic.

"I want this to be a real movement in which we are going to act and police differently than we have in the past," he said. "We want to treat Aboriginal people as all people should be treated."

Mr Dawson said WA officers were proportionally more likely to deal with Aboriginal people than people of other backgrounds because they were over-represented as victims of crime and as offenders.

Despite that, WA Police diverted fewer Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal youths away from the court system, the agency did not have a reconciliation plan and indigenous

people were under-represented in the force, he said.

The WA Auditor-General revealed last year that Aboriginal juveniles were diverted 35 per cent of the time between 2012 and 2016, compared with an average rate of 45 per cent.

But the analysis found no clear reason for the difference because not every regional location or police station servicing significant Aboriginal populations had low diversion rates.

Mr Dawson said the disparity had to change to break the intergenerational cycle of crime. He said the history between Aboriginal people and WA Police had "been punctuated

by a lot of sadness and ... harm".

The decision of governments to have police take children from their families during the Stolen Generation, as well as keep Aboriginal people away from towns under the 1905 Aborigines Act, had contributed to the fraught relationship.

Mr Dawson said he wanted to emulate the situation in Wyndham — where Aboriginal children ran towards police cars and saw officers as their friends — in every neighbourhood. He has not sought legal advice about making an apology but has consulted Aboriginal leaders.

Grog ban in place

■ Shannon Beattie

Liquor restrictions have been put into place at Parnngurr, also known as Cotton Creek, after elders in the community requested them.

The restriction came into effect at the community, 400km from Newman, on July 7 after elders asked for help to reduce alcohol-related harm. It is now an offence to sell, supply, possess or bring liquor within a 30km radius of Parnngurr.

Police will have the power to seize and dispose of liquor containers found in the community, and anyone found to be breaching the regulations could face a \$2000 fine.

Acting Racing and Gaming Minister Bill Johnston said it was great to see community leaders taking charge to protect their people.

"The harm alcohol abuse causes (is) well documented and these communities are ready to stop the cycle," he said.

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Youth council embraces the spirit of NAIDOC

■ Shannon Beattie

NAIDOC celebrations were everywhere in Hedland last week with the festivities taking over the Youth Involvement Council on Tuesday, July 10.

Eighty youth, 20 family members and 10 stakeholders from the police, headspace, Wirraka Maya, North Regional TAFE and Department of Education attended the event.

Throughout the afternoon, the theme of "Because of her, we can" was embraced by 10 brave kids who got up and shared their story about a strong woman in their life who had helped them overcome challenges and become a better person.

There was face-painting, painting display, bouncy castle, table tennis competition, didgeridoo lessons, art and craft activities and more for all to enjoy, plus a kangaroo stew cooked up by the Fresh Start team.

YIC chief executive Vicki-Tree Stephens said the highlight of the day was when Shirley Edwards, better known as Nanna Shirley, took the microphone and thanked YIC for everything they do for



Police community relations officer Eldride Edwards spent time teaching youth how to get sound from the didgeridoo. Picture: Vicki Stephens

youth in the community. "That meant so much, we all look up to her so much for the endless love and support that she and many of the other nannas we support do for the local youth," she said.

Ms Stephens also said that while NAIDOC was the one week in the year where people stop and truly

celebrate the First Nations of this beautiful country, at YIC they celebrated that every day and every week.

"I think it is important that this respect is ongoing and ingrained in every person and organisation rather than saved for certain times or token moments," she said.

Delay of road seal ups risk of job losses

■ Tom Zaubmayr

Sealing of the Karratha to Tom Price Road faces months of delays, raising fears hundreds of local jobs at a proposed mine site along the project's route could go begging.

Online posts through WA Labor's Pilbara social media pages earlier in the year pegged the start of the project in July, but tenders have not yet been advertised.

Main Roads WA spokesman Dean Roberts said works were now anticipated to begin in October.

"Main Roads is waiting on final approval of environmental management plans prior to any works commencing," he said.

"Final approval of the environmental management plans for stage 3B works has taken longer than expected. Once approvals are granted, pre-construction activities, including pushing up of natural gravel for road construction, can commence."

Mr Roberts said tenders could be advertised towards the end of July.

The Balla Balla Infrastructure Group has said sealing the road in a timely manner is critical to ensuring a 700-strong operational workforce for the proposed Flinders Mine can be driven to site from Karratha, rather than using a fly-in, fly-out model.

North West Central MLA Vince Catania said time pressures could lead to BBIG walking away from a drive-in, drive-out workforce. "It is disappointing to have seen an election commitment by the McGowan Labor Government be delayed by potentially a year," he said.

"This has an effect on the BBIG project where we could see what was meant to be a DIDO workforce now turn into a FIFO workforce."

"The delay, which is potentially only six months, potentially more, could have an effect on the company making a decision which suits their time pressure and also the hip pocket."

Pilbara MLA Kevin Michel said he doubted it would put the potential for a DIDO workforce at risk.

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NAIDOC ends on high note at family day

■ Shannon Beattie

NAIDOC Week celebrations came to a triumphant end on Friday at a Wirraka Maya Health Service Community Event at Kevin Scott Oval.

It was a family day out with activities for children mixed with messages of importance for the whole town.

Strong Aboriginal leaders and elders gave NAIDOC Week presentations, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dancers put on a show for all to see.

Children's activities included face painting, relay races, a bouncy castle, bikes, and popcorn and slushies to eat and drink, while a free barbecue put on by Wirraka Maya kept the masses full. There was live music



Stalls at Kevin Scott Oval.

throughout the afternoon and evening from the Bradley Hall Band, and giveaways including gift bags for the women elders.

Wirraka Maya board member and role model Nora Cooke reiterated the NAIDOC Week theme of Because of Her, We Can in her speech about language and culture. Wirraka Maya chief execu-

tive June Councillor said the annual NAIDOC Week event provided a platform for the organisation to connect with the community and stand together in unity with other local agencies.

"This year our celebration echoed the theme of the national NAIDOC committee in recognising our strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who have played — and continue to play — active and significant roles in our community, at the local level," she said.

Other community organisations such as Bloodwood Tree, Spinifex Hill, Well Women's Centre and Yaandina also participated in the event by providing information or holding activities.

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Levy proposal shot down

■ Tom Zaubmayr

Regional Development Minister Alannah MacTiernan has poured cold water on the idea of imposing a \$1-a-tonne levy on exports from Port Hedland.

The Port Hedland Community Progress Association has been arguing the case for improved dust suppression and a levy to fund community development initiatives.

Ms MacTiernan said there were other ways the State Government was looking to drive diversification and employment.

"The idea of us putting another levy on mining companies, it is not going to happen," she said.

Greens Member for Mining and Pastoral Region Robin Chapple said dust needed to be brought under control, but the levy was not the way to do it.

"Unfortunately like my colleague (Ms MacTiernan) said, the ability to slap a \$1-per-tonne on iron ore... isn't going to fly," he said.

"Legally you can't do it.

"I do think the State needs to take greater responsibility for the dust."

The proposed levy would be imposed on all exports and go into a traditional owners' fund, Port Hedland redevelopment fund, Pilbara redevelopment fund and wealth fund.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt and WA Nationals member Terry Redman at the Yule River bush meeting.
Picture: Tom Zaubmayr



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Federal claims rejected

■ Tom Zaubmayr

Claims by Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion that it was always intended for the State Government to take on more responsibility for municipal services in remote communities have been slapped down.

The Federal Government withdrew funding to services provision in remote communities in 2015, a move former premier Colin Barnett infamously warned could lead to communities closing.

During an interview at Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's Yule River bush meeting last week about funding for remote housing, Mr Scullion said the Federal Government had held up its end of the bargain.

"The (State) said we are now going to be responsible for municipal services, and why should an Aboriginal township somehow be any different from Perth or Fremantle?" he said.

"We made significant investments to buy out those responsibilities to bring municipal services to Western Australia up to a level of amenity so the West Australian Government can take them over, and they did."

Former regional development minister Terry Redman said he was disappointed with the Federal Government's stance over municipal services and housing funding. "I guess the current Government is getting a taste of what we got in respect to the municipal funds," the Nationals Member for Warren-Blackwood said.

"We lost that debate, we got three years worth of funding and were told to go away."

"When you have a gun pointed to your head and saying 'this is the deal you are getting', it is very difficult."

Mr Redman said he was "fully behind" the WA Government's efforts to get a better deal from the Commonwealth for remote housing funding. Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt said Mr Scullion should take a similar approach to other States as he had to the Northern Territory.

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Long-term cop presence call

■ Tom Zaubmayr

Long-term commitments from cops to live in Roebourne would help bridge the sometimes troubled relationship between police and Aboriginal residents, according to Yindjibarndi elder Tootsie Daniel.

Ms Daniel said the apology from Police Commissioner Chris Dawson to first nations people brightened her day, but real change required trust, which could only come through longevity in the community.

"For my people in the justice system and even our young juveniles, we are born in this system where the relationship has somehow broken with the police, the community and the youth," she said. "The police need to be in Roebourne for a long time to build that trust and work towards good relationships."

"We are kings and queens in our own community, we need to be respected."

Federal WA Senator Pat Dodson said the community needed to help police build rapport. "The fact the police are owning up to the ways in which first nations are treated, not only in the past, but asking new officers to consider how they would feel when they treat first nations people and pick them up... it's a very good thing for the police commissioner to have done," he said.

"Obviously there are many ways in which we as a community have to help. Distrust is a big thing."

"You have to work out how to



Yindjibarndi elder Tootsie Daniel. Picture: Tom Zaubmayr

gain respect and trust — that doesn't happen easily.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt said the apology was "extraordinary". "Obviously the long relationship between police

and Aboriginal people has been fractious, tense and has been a long negative history," he said.

"I think police, particularly in remote and regional WA, are some of the best relationship developers

with Aboriginal people, sometimes doing so with the baggage of 100 years of bad relationships as well."

Federal WA Senator Sue Lines called on the force to employ more first nations people.

Language centre left under threat

■ Tom Zaubmayr

A prominent Pilbara Aboriginal centre is running on fumes as Federal Government funding for language preservation dries up.

It was revealed at the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's annual Yule River bush meeting that four staff had recently been made redundant at the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal language Centre in South Hedland because of a lack of funds.

Wangka Maya treasurer Anne Sibosado said the cuts were affecting the centre's ability to record and promote Aboriginal language.

"I am quite concerned because we are starting up a program to bring tourists into the language centre," she said.

"We have a fantastic building, two blocks of land on the other side. This is a shame if this has to fall through." WA Federal Senator Patrick Dodson said protection of language contributed to the "richness" of Australia.

"I don't think the Federal Government fully understands the critical nature and importance of language as the underpinning factor for our ongoing identity and ongoing relationships with land and passing on of knowledge," he said.

Greens Member for Mining and Pastoral Region Robin Chapple said losing language services in the Pilbara would be concerning.




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Women at heart of big week

■ Shannon Beattie

The Shire of East Pilbara spent last week embracing the NAIDOC Week theme Because of Her, We Can.

This year's theme celebrated the essential role women have played, and continue to play, as role models in all levels of society.

The celebrations officially began on Monday, July 9 with a flag-raising ceremony at the Shire administration office in Newman.

Cr Jay Ahmedi officiated the event and said NAIDOC Week was a significant event because it was a celebration of the contribution made to Australia by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"This is a chance for all of us to celebrate the rich history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and promote reconciliation within the wider community," Cr Ahmedi said.

The week-long celebrations included cultural cooking, an elders' morning tea, traditional crafts, a police barbecue and story-time at the Newman library.

The week culminated in a free community concert starring Central Road Band, Wild Dingo Band, Yabu Band and Theona Councillor at Boomerang Oval in Newman on Sunday, which included traditional bush tucker and a range of children's entertainment.



Pilbara Development Commission chief executive Terry Hill answers a question posed to the Future Local Business Landscape panel at the forum. Picture: Robert Dougherty



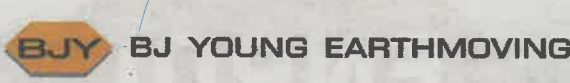
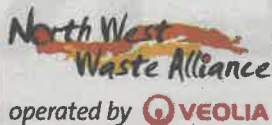
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Focus on post mine future

■ Robert Dougherty

What does the local business landscape hold for the Pilbara in the future?

A panel of industry experts discussed the conundrum in front of more than 250 delegates at the 2018 Hedland Economic and Resources Forum at Matt Dann Theatre and Cinema in South Hedland late last month.

Pilbara Development Commission chief executive Terry Hill, Youth Involvement Council chief executive Vicki-Tree Stephens, Goodline community engagement Karen Munro, Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation chief executive June Councillor, and Njama People's Trust general manager John Van Der Ende led the conversation.

Mr Hill said the Pilbara was starting to look at significant opportunities in agriculture after years of a mining focus.

"I think there's strong momentum in the agricultural industry... we had our first cattle exports out of the port for the first time in many years," he said.

"The Kimberley Pilbara Cattlemen's Association now have an office in Port Hedland, they are sharing our office, and we are starting to see the results already.

"We are likely to see a person for the cattle industry appointed full-time in the next three or four months." Njama People's Trust general manager John Van Der Ende said the community was rushing to upskill workers.

"We identified very early on that while we were getting many early opportunities from mining companies to employ people, very few of our people had these skill sets to do these jobs," he said.

Speakers also discussed the need for a local butcher and fresh vegetable supplier in Hedland to compete with larger companies.

Artists' shop boost

■ Robert Dougherty

The West End Markets' makers and artists have united to launch a local pop-up shop in Port Hedland.

A trial run of the shop, The Junction, will feature works by 10 locals as well as a limited-number wine bar at night on July 28 and 29.

Organiser Katie Evans said the pop-up shop would feature about 10 local makers and artists to boost their exposure at the West End Markets.

"All of us currently sell our wares at the West End Markets, the Pilbara's largest makers' market, but it's only held four times a year, so we got together and decided to host a pop-up shop," she said.

"We have also seen these makers-only type of pop-up shops in Broome and Karratha, so thought 'why not Port Hedland?'"



Campus to open in October

■ Alicia Perera

The doors of the new Karratha Health Campus are set to open in October after management of the facility was handed over from builder Multiplex to the State Government at the end of construction last week.

After 22 months of construction, the \$207.15 million health campus — the biggest health infrastructure investment in regional WA history — reached practical completion on Thursday, finishing on time and on budget.

Patients will begin to be accepted from late October.

The health campus, which will replace Nickol Bay Hospital, will include an expanded emergency department with double the number of current beds, a surgical centre, a maternity wing with delivery suites, an expanded outpatients' unit and essential services including child health clinics, medical imag-



The \$207.15 million Karratha Health Campus has reached practical completion. Picture: Alicia Perera

ing suites and telehealth services.

There will also be a helipad for emergency transfers into and out of the hospital.

Health Minister Roger Cook said the hospital would include sophisticated health-care technology to increase options for local patients.

"(The hospital) brings

together a wide range of services on a single, modern site enhancing healthcare delivery to the local community and improving working conditions for staff," he said.

"Innovative technology plays a huge part in modern-day healthcare and the Karratha Health Campus features a number of high-tech

systems including expanded telehealth services to provide locals with more options for treatment closer to home."

Pilbara MLA Kevin Michel said the hospital build had been a stimulus for the local economy and, once open, would be a drawcard for health professionals.

City of Karratha deputy

mayor Grant Cucel said the local government was looking forward to another major facility opening in the city centre.

"This Karratha Health Campus is a terrific addition to the CBD and will bolster the City's efforts to activate the city centre and support local businesses," he said.

In late 2015, the City of Karratha criticised the design of the hospital and a perceived lack of consultation by the previous Coalition State government, but Mr Cucel said the Government had since been "actively engaged" and incorporated the City's feedback "to ensure the campus complements its central location".

WA Country Health Service board chairman Neale Fong said the facility had been designed for patients' care and comfort and contained the latest health-care technology and equip-

Dig into mining fund to create Aboriginal ranger jobs: Redman

■ Zach Relp and Tom Zaunmayr

Funds from a State Government-controlled kitty to rehabilitate WA's abandoned mines should be used to cre-

ate long-term Aboriginal ranger jobs across the State, a Nationals politician says.

WA Nationals member Terry Redman last week called for the Mining Rehabilitation Fund to support employing

Aboriginal rangers for mine site recuperation.

Mr Redman said the MRF, introduced in 2013 to replace the environmental bond system, would have about a \$150 million cash balance by June

30 next year. "One of the great challenges is the isolated nature of many Aboriginal communities," he said.

"They don't have an economy or employment base. This offers that employment base.

The MRF requires tenement holders to contribute to the fund annually.

Mines Minister Bill Johnston said the McGowan Government was exploring the idea.

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Culture kept alive in week of celebration

■ Alicia Perera

The Pilbara community spent last week celebrating the strength and achievements of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People for NAIDOC Week.

It was a busy few days of events in the region as the public took the chance to acknowledge the important contributions of indigenous people, especially of women with this year's NAIDOC Week theme being Because of Her We Can.

On Saturday, July 7, the Yaburara and Coastal Mardudhunera Aboriginal Corporation hosted the annual Karratha NAIDOC Ball at the Tambrey Tavern Sunset Room.

This year, the VIP guest was Gail Mabo, daughter of native title champion Eddie Mabo, whose speech focused on her mother's strength in supporting the family in difficult times, in line with this year's theme.

Event organiser and YACMAC program manager Audrey Cosmo said it was important for NAIDOC Week to be widely acknowledged and its value understood.

"I think it's for everyone to recognise NAIDOC Week because it's an important event," she said.

Karratha City Shopping Centre also held a community event, with prominent local Aboriginal businesswoman Josie Alec sharing her story to an audience in Kmart before a public session of arts and crafts with indigenous female community members got started outside, MCed by Josie Samson.

Roebourne was a hive of activity over the week with events including the annual NAIDOC Week football carnival, a Juluwarlu Aboriginal Corporation cultural celebration on the local oval on Monday and Aboriginal arts and craft activities at the local library.



Joan Evans and Bailey Scott, 2, at the NAIDOC Week Community Concert in Roebourne. Pictures: Alicia Perera



Rhonda Tittums at Karratha City Shopping Centre.



Karratha City SC event MC Josie Samson and Vicinity Centres WA's Richard Terhorst. Picture: Pilbara Site Pics

At the weekend, a community concert in Roebourne drew a crowd to listen to tunes by local band JoKeria and visiting acts the Stiff Gins and Apakatjah, along with performances by children who are part of arts groups the IF Foundation and Big hART.

Also on offer were a range of community service group stalls, food vans and bouncy castles for the children.

Ngarluma elder Pansy Hicks said a lot of the Roebourne's elders were female and it was good to see them being acknowledged by this year's NAIDOC theme.

She said she hoped everyone enjoyed themselves at the event.

Paraburdoo and Pannawonica also held community events featuring cultural activities and award ceremonies during the week.



Ngarluma elder Pansy Hicks and City of Karratha's Margaret Bertling at the NAIDOC Week Community Concert in Roebourne.



Sarrisha Bin Saad and Natasha Shires at Karratha NAIDOC Ball.



Selina, Susan and Cecil Mowarin at Karratha NAIDOC Ball.



Tracey Heimberger at one of her favourite birding spots near the Karratha Airport. Picture: Tom Zauymayr

Nature photography heals and opens new chapter

■ Tom Zauymayr

From the high-vis synonymous with Pilbara industry to ghillie suits more fitting with the region's natural habitat, it is rare to see Tracey Heimberger wearing what one may describe as "normal" clothes.

The Dampier resident, traditional owner and resources worker took up wildlife photography after the death of her husband as a way to heal.

It is a hobby which has become a passion and Ms Heimberger has spent thousands of dollars on getting the right gear to master the art of capturing birds on camera.

"It was a sad time for us and I got depressed because I supported a person with stage four cancer who passed away," she said.

"I am a mother of 15-year-old twins, so I decided to make myself feel better and healthy and ended up being a nature photographer.

"When I get out in the bush I feel it is really grounding."

Ms Heimberger is from Balladong country in the South East, and credits much of her success to the strong women she has surrounded herself with in the Pilbara.

"The Because of Her, We Can message (of NAIDOC Week) reminds me to be thankful for all the women who have worked hard to get us what we have today," she said. "My mother, grandmother,



A galah. Pictures: Tracey Heimberger



A spinifex pigeon takes flight.

all the women who work around us, the women who fought hard during the Pilbara Aboriginal strike in the late 1940s, and all the women who led the way at the tent embassy in Canberra.

"I'm very lucky to work for Rio Tinto. Rio has an affirmative policy for employing indigenous people... as well as having an affirmative policy for employing women in the workplace."

Ms Heimberger would like to turn her passion into a career one day, hoping to capture a slice of the lucrative international birding tourism market for the Pilbara.

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Pub to become cultural hub

■ Alicia Perera

For the first time in several decades, community members were able to explore the inside of Roebourne's Victoria Hotel last week as restoration works on the building start to take shape.

Right Foot Forward, the company managing the redevelopment for building owners the Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation, opened the hotel up for community tours early last week to give the public a sneak peek of its progress so far since works began in September.

The building has now been stripped to the bare bones after the demolition of any parts not structurally sound, leaving only the main structure of the building and components of heritage value in place.

Once construction is completed, the building will retain its external stone facade albeit with some fixes, RFF project manager Robert Gordon said.

The ground floor will be a community hub space incorporating a centre showcasing Yindjibarndi culture informed by the nationally recognised Juluwarlu archives, the Roebourne Visitor Centre and possibly also the local library.

On the upper floor, a handful of corporate offices will be occupied by businesses, interest for which has reportedly so far been high.



Artwork on a ground floor wall of the Victoria Hotel. Picture: Alicia Perera

Subject to funding, proponents are also hoping to create a small park which will function as a community gathering space along the side of the building.

The Victoria Hotel was first built 125 years ago in 1893, when it was the first hotel in the North West, and had a chequered past until it closed in the late 1990s.

In 2013 YAC bought the building with the aim of restoring it for use

as a community building and began works in 2016. Mr Gordon said the community was excited about the hotel's restoration and a lot of local groups had so far contributed to the project, including sub-contractors with local Aboriginal business part of DB Yurra, Roebourne District High School students and members of the Roebourne Prison work camp.

"This project in a nutshell is

about acknowledging that history and turning it into a positive one for the Roebourne community, by making a positive asset for the community both financially and culturally and celebrating that cultural heritage," he said.

Restoration works are expected to be completed in November, though the building may not officially open until February next year.

Possible abuse of 25 kids in care

■ Gabrielle Knowles

Twenty-five children in the care of child protection services were identified as possible victims of sexual abuse during a police investigation in the west Pilbara.

The Department of Communities revealed the numbers to *The West Australian* after criticism from the Opposition about secrecy surrounding Operation Fledermaus, which was launched in 2016 to investigate allegations of widespread child abuse in Roebourne and surrounding communities.

Police have charged 54 men, most from Roebourne and some from nearby Wickham and Karatha, with more than 360 child sex abuse offences.

While more than 180 children and teenagers were suspected of being abused, police have refused to reveal the number of children to whom the charges relate.

A department spokesman said yesterday that police had laid charges over the alleged abuse of only one of the 25 children in its care who were identified as suspected victims since the operation started in October 2016.

The alleged assailant was not the child's carer, the spokesman said.

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Minister denies funding cut to housing

Tom Zauymayr and Peter de Kruijff

The Federal Government is confident of putting an end to a bitter dispute and striking a deal with the State over ongoing funding for housing in WA's remote communities

Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion faced an at-times heated crowd at the Yule River bush meeting in the Pilbara last week, where funding for remote housing was a key talking point among traditional owners.

The State Government has accused Mr Scullion of walking away from remote housing funding over a deal which would see the Commonwealth commit \$60.9 million in three years.

Mr Scullion said he was optimistic a deal could be struck soon. "I am not sure why Western Australia would take less responsibility for their first Australians than Queensland or the Northern Territory," he said.

"The WA Government says they have \$90 million on the table, let me tell you there are parts of

my offer that can meet and eclipse that. We haven't cut money to the (National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing); NPARIH in fact is going to finish in 2021 and for your information I last week provided \$130 million to the West Australian Government specifically for NPARIH."

WA Premier Mark McGowan said the arguments from the Federal Government were spurious. "They just don't want to spend the money ... that's all it is," he said.

Barking Gecko program at Red Earth Arts

Tom Zauymayr

Karratha's Red Earth Arts Precinct has attracted one of WA's most loved performing arts groups to set up a permanent presence in town.

The Gecko Ensemble run by Barking Gecko will begin running a weekly drama program at the precinct for youth in town to get a taste of creative pursuits from this weekend.

Barking Gecko artistic director Matt Edgerton said the new arts precinct was a key factor in the decision to set up a presence in Karratha.

"Rather than FIFO where we visit for a week then disappear, what we are trying to do is find great teaching artists around WA, train them up and employ them to run programs year-round," he said.

Gecko Ensemble teaching artist Megan Wood-Hill said the performing arts helped people realise they were capable of creating magic.

"Kids here are as creative as any other child anywhere else, so why should they not have the same opportunities to convene, work together and play together?" she said.

"There are so many individuals out there and you have no idea what they can bring unless you open the door and let them in. Hopefully ... with



Megan Wood-Hill will be leading Karratha's Gecko Ensemble. Picture: Tom Zauymayr

this, they don't get shaped and conditioned into thinking they have to follow this pathway into an apprenticeship or university, because there are all these other opportunities and careers to explore."

Ms Wood-Hill said the ensemble would start with 8 to 12-year-olds and expand as demand grew.

The ensemble will host its first performance, based on a story from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy in term four.

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AT THE RED EARTH ARTS PRECINCT

MOVIES	City of Karratha moonrise CINEMA	DATE	TIME	MOVIE	PG	TIME
		19/7	19:00	Jurassic World	M	14:00
		28/7	14:00	Jurassic World	M	14:00
		28/7	19:00	TAG	MA15+	19:00
		29/7	10:00	Incredibles 2	PG	18:30
		4/8	14:00	Ant-Man & The Wasp	PG	14:00
		5/8	14:00	Show Dogs	PG	14:00
		10/8	19:00	Skyscraper	M	19:00
		13/8	18:30	A Silent Voice	M	18:30

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Exports levy proposal rejected

■ Tom Zauunmayr

Regional Development Minister Alannah MacTiernan has poured cold water on the idea of imposing a \$1-a-tonne levy on exports from Port Hedland.

The Port Hedland Community Progress Association has been arguing the case for improved dust suppression and a levy to fund community development initiatives.

Ms MacTiernan said there were other ways the State Government was

looking to drive diversification and employment.

"The idea of us putting another levy on mining companies, it is not going to happen," she said.

Greens Member for Mining and Pastoral Region Robin Chapple said dust needed to be brought under control, but the levy was not the way to do it. The proposed levy would be imposed on all exports and go into a traditional owners' fund, Port Hedland redevelopment fund, Pilbara redevelopment fund and wealth fund.

Municipal services claims shot down

■ Tom Zauunmayr

Claims by Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion that it was always intended for the State Government to take on more responsibility for municipal services in remote communities have been slapped down.

The Federal Government withdrew funding to services provision in remote communities in 2015, a move former premier Colin Barnett infamously warned could lead to communities closing.

During an interview at Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's Yule River bush meeting last week about funding for remote housing, Mr Scullion said the

Federal Government had held up its end of the bargain.

"The (State) said we are now going to be responsible for municipal services, and why should an Aboriginal township somehow be any different from Perth or Fremantle?" he said.

"We made significant investments to buy out those responsibilities to bring municipal services to Western Australia up to a level of amenity so the West Australian Government can take them over, and they did."

Former regional development minister Terry Redman said he was disappointed with the Federal Government's stance over municipal services and housing

funding. "I guess the current Government is getting a taste of what we got in respect to the municipal funds," the Nationals Member for Warren-Blackwood said.

"We lost that debate, we got three years worth of funding and were told to go away. When you have a gun pointed to your head and saying 'this is the deal you are getting', it is very difficult."

Mr Redman said he was "fully behind" the WA Government's efforts to get a better deal from the Commonwealth for remote housing funding. Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt said Mr Scullion should take a similar approach to other States as he had to the Northern Territory.



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Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt and WA Nationals member Terry Redman at the Yule River bush meeting. Picture: Tom Zauunmayr

'Work-like' tasks demeaning for elders

■ Tom Zauunmayr

Concerns have been raised about senior members of Aboriginal communities being pushed into demeaning tasks as part of work requirements enacted by the Federal Government.

The Community Development

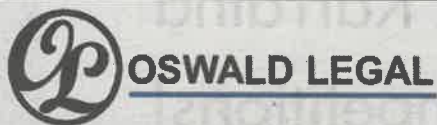
Program requires jobseekers to perform up to 25 hours a week of "work-like" activities which benefit their community.

WA Senator Sue Lines said there was evidence of elders being put into "humiliating" work which belied their status in the community. "We have had

police tell us some awful stories. "When we went to Kalgoorlie they had been out to the land and seen local elders being asked to pick up rubbish," she said.

"We know how elders are revered in the community.

"Everywhere we went we saw harm being done."



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Federal Senators Patrick Dodson and Sue Lines and WA Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt.
Picture: Tom Zaubmayr

Elder calls for long-term cop presence

■ Tom Zaubmayr

Long-term commitments from cops to live in Roebourne would help bridge the sometimes troubled relationship between police and Aboriginal residents, according to Yindjibarndi elder Tootsie Daniel.

Ms Daniel said the apology from Police Commissioner Chris Dawson to first nations people brightened her day, but real change required trust, which could only come through longevity in the community.

"For my people in the justice system and even our young juveniles, we are born in this system where the relationship has somehow broken with the police, the community and the youth," she said.

"The police need to be in Roebourne for a long time to build that trust and work towards good relationships.

"We are kings and queens in our own community, we need to be respected."

Federal WA Senator Pat Dodson said the community needed to help

police build rapport. "The fact the police are owning up to the ways in which first nations are treated, not only in the past, but asking new officers to consider how they would feel when they treat first nations people and pick them up . . . it's a very good thing for the police commissioner to have done," he said.

"Obviously there are many ways in which we as a community have to help. Distrust is a big thing.

"You have to work out how to gain respect and trust — that doesn't happen easily."

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Ben Wyatt said the apology was "extraordinary".

"Obviously the long relationship between police and Aboriginal people has been fractious, tense and has been a long negative history," he said.

"I think police, particularly in remote and regional WA, are some of the best relationship developers with Aboriginal people, sometimes doing so with the baggage of 100 years of bad relationships as well."

Federal WA Senator Sue Lines called on the force to employ more first nations people.

Funds cut risks muting language centre

■ Tom Zaubmayr

A prominent Pilbara Aboriginal centre is running on fumes as Federal Government funding for language preservation dries up.

It was revealed at the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation's annual Yule River bush meeting that four staff had recently been made redundant at the Wangka Maya Pilbara Aboriginal language Centre in South Hedland because of a lack of funds.

Wangka Maya treasurer Anne Sibosado said the cuts were affecting the centre's ability to record

and promote Aboriginal language.

"I am quite concerned because we are starting up a program to bring tourists into the language centre," she said.

"We have a fantastic building, two blocks of land on the other side. This is a shame if this has to fall through."

WA Federal Senator Patrick Dodson said protection of language contributed to the "richness" of Australia.

"I don't think the Federal Government fully understands the critical nature and importance of language as the underpinning fac-

tor for our ongoing identity and ongoing relationships with land and passing on of knowledge," he said. "You can't afford to not support it because of the richness of traditions and knowledge, and the views which come through a different language which contributes to the richness of Australia."

Greens Member for Mining and Pastoral Region Robin Chapple said the loss of language services in the Pilbara would be cause for concern. "It has been an incredible institution in WA and to see it losing its money (is) certainly (troubling)," he said.

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