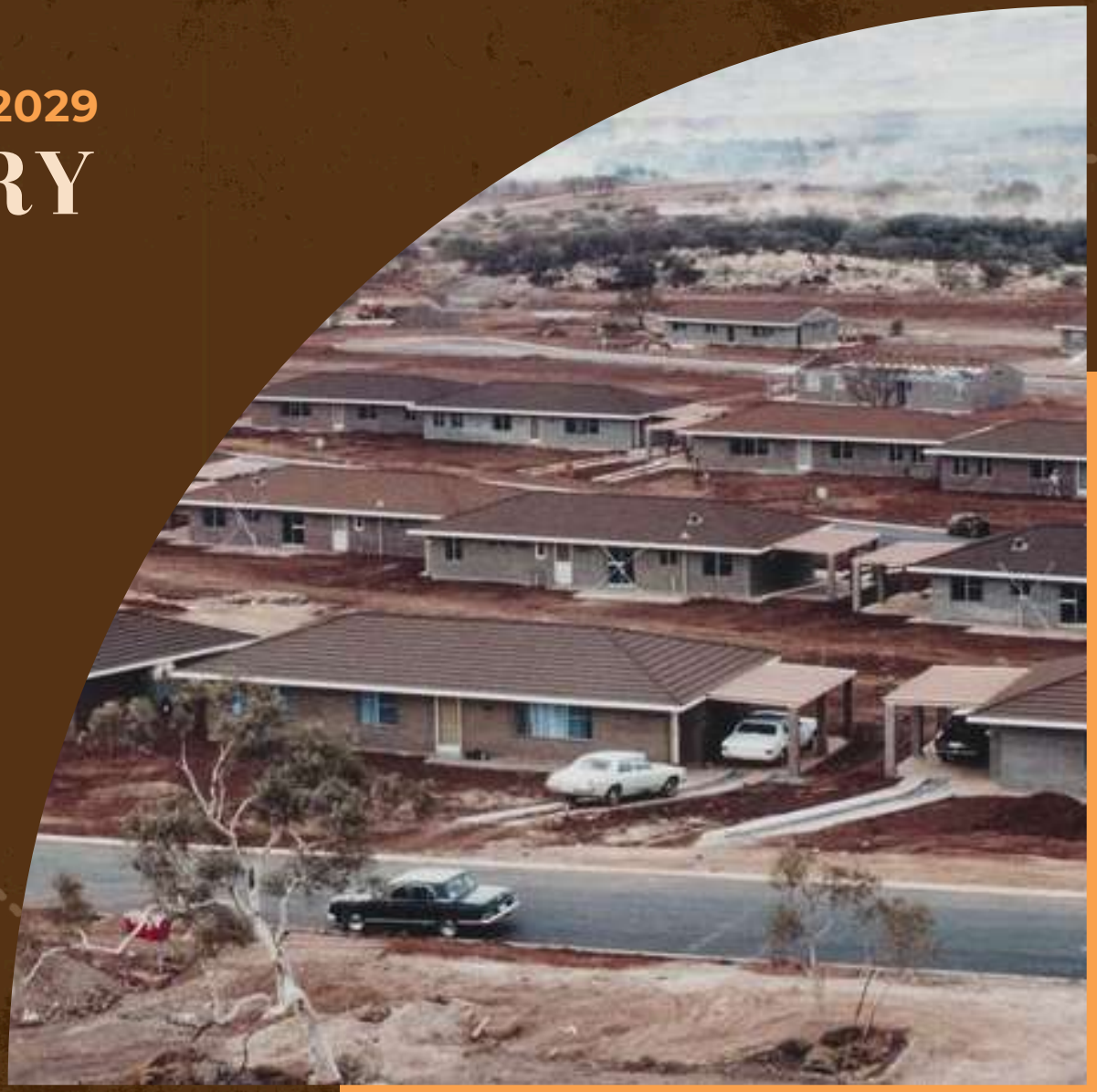
shire of Ashburton

2025-2029

LOCAL HISTORY STRATEGY

Knowing, Protecting, Supporting
and Promoting our Local History



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Shire of Ashburton respectfully acknowledges the local Indigenous people, the traditional custodians of this land, and pays respect to them and their elders, past, present and emerging.

We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of our community and the region.

The Shire has a long history that extends far beyond the arrival of European settlers. Before this, the land was occupied by Aboriginal peoples for tens of thousands of years, and they developed deep spiritual and cultural connections to the land, rivers, and coastal areas. The Shire's original history centres around these Indigenous communities and their millennia-long stewardship of the land, including the Thalanyji, Banyjima, Kurrama, Yinhawangka, and Innawonga peoples.

At the heart of this strategy is a dedication to inclusivity and truth-telling, particularly in recognising the deep and often painful histories of our traditional custodians.

Truth-telling is an essential part of the reconciliation process, enabling us to acknowledge the impacts of colonisation, dispossession, and the ongoing effects of historical injustices. By embracing a commitment to a complete and honest account of our history, and by ensuring that the voices of Indigenous peoples are central to our local history narrative, we foster understanding, empathy, and respect within the broader community, which are essential for building genuine and lasting reconciliation.

This strategy will implement truth-telling through collaborative partnerships with traditional custodians and local communities. This includes documenting oral histories and cultural knowledge to ensure they're preserved and shared, creating spaces for dialogue where Indigenous people can share their experiences, and educational programs to help our community learn and reflect. Together, we will ensure that the past remains a vital and accessible part of the Shire's present and future.

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The Local History Strategy has been developed for the Shire of Ashburton by Wicked Strategies. The information in this document has been prepared with care by the authors and includes information from apparently reliable secondary data sources which the authors have relied on for completeness and accuracy. However, the authors do not guarantee the information, nor is it intended to form part of any contract. Accordingly, all interested parties should make their own inquiries to verify the information, and to satisfy themselves in all respects.

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Cover Photo: Aerial photograph of the town of Tom Price, November 1967. Rio Tinto collection of photographs, State Library of Western Australia B4859433_2

Cubs unload bottles from trailer during a bottle drive at Tom Price, 24 March 1976. Rio Tinto collection of photographs State Library of Western Australia B5136571_1

A MESSAGE FROM THE SHIRE PRESIDENT

It is with great pride that I introduce the Shire of Ashburton's first Local History Strategy, a significant milestone in our journey to preserving, honouring and celebrating the rich and diverse history of our communities. This strategy reflects our deep commitment to safeguarding the narratives that define who we are, from Onslow to Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Pannawonica, Wittenoom, and Old Onslow.

The history of Ashburton is woven in its landscapes and culture, deeply rooted in the traditions of the Aboriginal peoples and the development of our mining and pastoral industries. This strategy is a tribute to the many hands and hearts that have shaped our region, ensuring that the stories of our land, our people, and our progress are remembered and also accessible to all.

Through the Strategy, we take a comprehensive and inclusive approach to documenting our past. This includes preserving precious historical documents, photographs, and oral histories, alongside a digitisation program that will ensure our heritage is protected for future generations.

This forms the cornerstone of the Shire's leadership role in local history, and as Shire President, I am truly proud to witness this important initiative come to life, securing the legacy of our Shire for future generations to explore, appreciate, and carry forward. Together, we will ensure that the stories of Ashburton remain alive and thriving, deeply embedded in the fabric of our communities.

Audra Smith

Audra Smith

Shire of Ashburton President

INTRODUCTION

The Shire of Ashburton's history reflects the resilience of its people, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, in adapting to the region's unique and often challenging environment.

From its early days as a pastoral hub to its transformation into one of the world's leading mining regions, the Shire has grown through reliance on its natural resources and the hard work of its settlers. The development of key infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, and housing, has supported its growth, while the rich cultural heritage of its Traditional Custodians remains a vital part of the Shire's identity. Today, the Shire continues to evolve, balancing industrial progress with environmental stewardship and cultural preservation.

Local history is more than just a reflection of the past, it's a treasure chest of memories, knowledge and insights that have shaped the identify and character of our towns. The cultural and social aspects of a place and the people, and the stories of those that came before us should be honoured, celebrated, and accessible to everyone who lives, works, and visits the Shire.

While the preservation of build infrastructure and unique living landscapes that identify places of heritage is a priority for all government, there is little preservation of local histories. In developing this strategy, the Shire becomes a pioneer among its peers in placing the same importance on its local history as it does on its heritage. The Shire will be a leader of local history implementation, and will advocate, educate and encourage others to do the same.

The Local History Strategy will set out how we aim to collect, document, preserve, store and promote the history of Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Pannawonica and Onslow, plus past towns of Old Onslow and Wittenoom, and other facets of our district including pastoral stations. It defines strategies and actions for the preparation of projects, policies and procedures across five plans that each detail a specific component of local history management – Community and Social Media Engagement, Oral Recordings, Digitisation, Shire Processes, and Preservation and Storage. Additionally, a Working Group comprising Councillors and members of the Community will be established for guidance and advice. The strategy and its plans combine to provide Council with clear directions for support and decision making on local history initiatives, for the next five years.

2. STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

This strategy focuses specifically on local history as distinct from heritage, to ensure a comprehensive approach to preserving the stories, experiences, and narratives that define the community, beyond its physical sites. However, it also compliments and supports the Shire's heritage efforts, and the legislative framework that governs the conservation of physical heritage. This ensures a wholistic approach to preserving the Shire's cultural legacy. The Strategy aligns to relevant plans and polices:

STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN 2022-2032

1. People: We will support opportunities for the community to be safe, socially active, and connected:

1.1.3. Lead and empower employees to seek and attain performance excellence.

1.2.5. Recognise the uniqueness of the community, and the diverse cultures, and welcome all residents to participate in, share, and celebrate their backgrounds and traditions.

3. Prosperity: Sustainable commerce and tourism opportunities:

3.4.4 Partner with key resource industry partners and State Government to target investment opportunities designed at stimulating more diversified business and economic development to benefit the community.

OTHER SHIRE PLANS AND POLICIES

- Community Engagement Policy
- Digital Information and Records Policy
- Local History Collection Policy
- Marketing and Communications Strategy
- Recognition of Aboriginal Cultural and History Policy
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- Recordkeeping Plan

3. PURPOSE AND VISION

PURPOSE

Preserve the unique characters of our communities, ensuring its history remains a vibrant and accessible part of life

VISION

Inspire a legacy of historical preservation that is transformative for our community, region and state

4. UNDERSTANDING LOCAL HISTORY

History is what we value from the past, and want to save for future generations. It focuses on the everyday lives and culture of people and places, highlighting how events and development have impacted communities at an intimate level. Knowing the local history gives us a better appreciation of how our towns evolved, as well as a better understanding of the resilience and diversity of those that came before us. It reminds us that we belong to something special, and can make us proud of our heritage.

History encompasses tangible and intangible elements that combine to form an understanding and connection to our past

TANGIBLE

Physical elements that provide evidence of the past including photographs, maps, documents, books, clothing and objects that can be seen and touched.

INTANGIBLE

Non-physical elements that are often passed down through generations including stories, songs, traditions, languages, folklore, and customs.

Some tangible elements may no longer be available as residents or workers have died or families have moved away. Items have been lost or destroyed, often due to weather conditions or limitations on storage space, as well as a lack of perceived importance for retaining memories from the past. This makes it imperative to have a strategy, so that what remains can be appropriately collected, documented and protected, and so the historical value of the area can be understood, shared and celebrated.

BENEFITS OF LOCAL HISTORY

Cultural Identity

Connects communities with their roots, and fosters a sense of belonging by understanding the unique characteristics and significance of a place

Preservation

Motivates the community to preserve and protect the unique stories, experiences, artifacts and traditions

Tourism and Education

Attracts visitors and enhances knowledge of local events, important figures, and historical landmarks, offering a rich learning experience

Community Pride

Enhances civic pride and encourages engagement in community activities

Shire Decision-Making

Informs future developments and town planning, ensuring respect for local history and heritage continuity

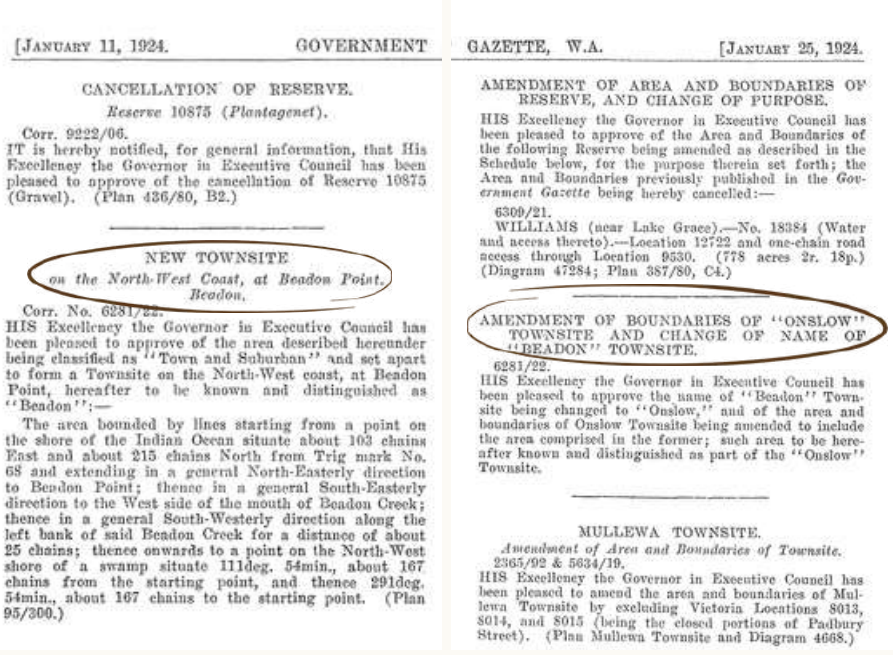
WHY A LOCAL HISTORY STRATEGY?

Onslow 100 years — Celebrate the centennial of Onslow and the many influences that shaped the town to what it is today

Wittenoom Legacy — Preserve and honour the memories of the workers and families of the Pilbara's largest town in the 1950's, before it was closed forever

Legislative Protection — Although legislation protects local heritage, there is no requirement to safeguard local history other than the State Records Act 2000, which only applies to State archives

Leadership Position — Establish the Shire as the leader in Local History, inspire other governments, share insights and knowledge about history preservation



[JANUARY 11, 1924. GOVERNMENT GAZETTE, W.A. [JANUARY 25, 1924.

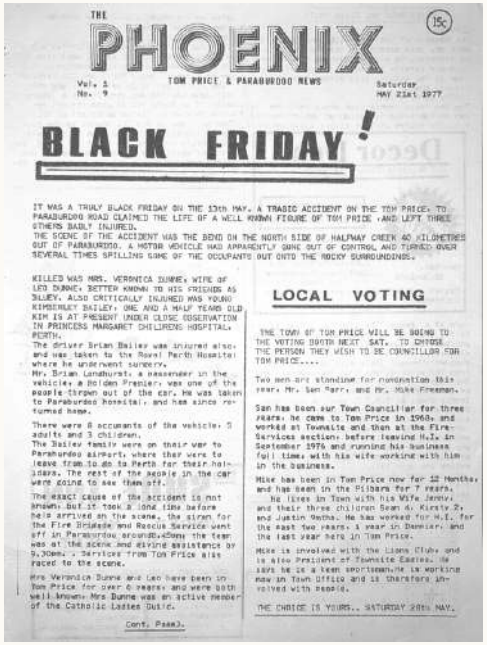
CANCELLATION OF RESERVE.
Reserve 10875 (Plantagenet).
Corr. 9222/06.
IT is hereby notified, for general information, that His Excellency the Governor in Executive Council has been pleased to approve of the cancellation of Reserve 10875 (Gravel). (Plan 436/80, B2.)

NEW TOWNSITE
on the North-West Coast, at Beadon Point, Beadon.
Corr. No. 6281/22.
HIS Excellency the Governor in Executive Council has been pleased to approve of the area described hereunder being classified as "Town and Suburban" and set apart to form a Townsite on the North-West coast, at Beadon Point, hereafter to be known and distinguished as "Beadon":—
The area bounded by lines starting from a point on the shore of the Indian Ocean situate about 103 chains East and about 215 chains North from Trig mark No. 68 and extending in a general North-Easterly direction to Beadon Point; thence in a general South-Easterly direction to the West side of the mouth of Beadon Creek; thence in a general South-Westerly direction along the left bank of said Beadon Creek for a distance of about 25 chains; thence onwards to a point on the North-West shore of a swamp situate 111deg. 54min., about 167 chains from the starting point, and thence 291deg. 54min., about 167 chains to the starting point. (Plan 95/300.)

AMENDMENT OF AREA AND BOUNDARIES OF RESERVE, AND CHANGE OF PURPOSE.
HIS Excellency the Governor in Executive Council has been pleased to approve of the Area and Boundaries of the following Reserve being amended as described in the Schedule below, for the purpose therein set forth; the Area and Boundaries previously published in the *Government Gazette* being hereby cancelled:—
6309/21.
WILLIAMS (near Lake Grace).—No. 18384 (Water and access thereto).—Location 12722 and one-chain road access through Location 9530. (778 acres 2r. 18p.) (Diagram 47284; Plan 387/80, C4.)

AMENDMENT OF BOUNDARIES OF "ONSLOW" TOWNSITE AND CHANGE OF NAME OF "BEADON" TOWNSITE.
6281/22.
HIS Excellency the Governor in Executive Council has been pleased to approve the name of "Beadon" Townsite being changed to "Onslow," and of the area and boundaries of Onslow Townsite being amended to include the area comprised in the former; such area to be hereafter known and distinguished as part of the "Onslow" Townsite.

MULLEWA TOWNSITE.
Amendment of Area and Boundaries of Townsite.
2365/92 & 5634/19.
HIS Excellency the Governor in Executive Council has been pleased to amend the area and boundaries of Mullewa Townsite by excluding Victoria Locations 8013, 8014, and 8015 (being the closed portions of Padbury Street). (Plan Mullewa Townsite and Diagram 4668.)



THE PHOENIX
TOM PRICE & PARABURDOO NEWS
Saturday MAY 21st 1977
BLACK FRIDAY!
IT WAS A TRULY BLACK FRIDAY ON THE 13th MAY. A TRAGIC ACCIDENT ON THE TOM PRICE-TO PARABURDOO ROAD CLAIMED THE LIFE OF A WELL KNOWN FIGURE OF TOM PRICE AND LEFT THREE OTHERS BADLY INJURED.
THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT WAS THE BEND ON THE NORTH SIDE OF HALFWAY CREEK 40 KILOMETRES OUT OF PARABURDOO. A MOTOR VEHICLE HAD APPARENTLY GONE OUT OF CONTROL, AND TURNED OVER SEVERAL TIMES SPILLING SOME OF THE OCCUPANTS OUT ONTO THE ROCKY SURROUNDINGS.
KILLED WAS MRS. VERONICA DUNNE, WIFE OF LEO DUNNE, BETTER KNOWN TO HIS FRIENDS AS BILLEY. ALSO CRITICALLY INJURED WAS YOUNG KIMBERLEY BAILEY, ONE AND A HALF YEARS OLD KIM IS AT PRESENT UNDER CLOSE OBSERVATION IN PRINCESS MARGARET CHILDRENS HOSPITAL, PERTH.
The driver Brian Bailey was injured also, and was taken to the Royal Perth Hospital where he underwent surgery.
Mr. Brian Landhurst, a passenger in the vehicle, a Holden Premier, was one of the people thrown out of the car. He was taken to Parabardoo hospital, and has since returned home.
There were 6 occupants of the vehicle, 3 adults and 3 children.
The Bailey family were on their way to Parabardoo airport, where they were to leave from, to go to Perth for their holidays. The rest of the people in the car were going to see them off.
The exact cause of the accident is not known, but it took a long time before help arrived on the scene. The siren for the Fire Brigade and Rescue Service went off in Parabardoo, around 5.45pm, the team was at the scene and giving assistance by 9.30pm. Services from Tom Price also raced to the scene.
Mrs Veronica Dunne and Leo have been in Tom Price for over 6 years, and were both well known. Mrs Dunne was an active member of the Catholic Ladies Guild.
Cont. Page.

LOCAL VOTING
THE TOWN OF TOM PRICE WILL BE GOING TO THE VOTING BOOTH NEXT SAT. TO CHOOSE THE PERSON THEY WISH TO BE COUNCILLOR FOR TOM PRICE....
Two men are standing for nomination this year, Mr. Ian Parr, and Mr. Mike Freeman.
Ian has been our Town Councillor for three years, he came to Tom Price in 1968, and worked at Townsite and then at the Fire-Services section, before leaving it, in September 1976 and running his business full time, with his wife working with him in the business.
Mike has been in Tom Price now for 12 months, and has been in the Pilbara for 7 years.
He lives in Town with his wife Jenny, and their three children Sean 4, Kirsty 2, and Justin Tasha. He has worked for M.I. for the last two years, 1 year in Dampier, and the last year here in Tom Price.
Mike is involved with the Lions Clubs and is also President of Townsite Eagles. He says he is a keen sportsman, he is working now in Town Office and is therefore involved with people.
THE CHOICE IS YOURS.. SATURDAY 28th MAY.

Local children clean up Paraburdoo
Unusual breed available in Tom Price
Tom Price girl takes on teaching
TOM PRICE ENTRANT'S FUNCTIONS POPULAR
Open a Town & Country 7½% passbook savings account
Arts & Crafts popular in Tom Price
Sminthopsis Froggatti found on School Oval
Wesfarmers Stores Dampier, Karratha, Paraburdoo
Ian Sinclair Chemist Tom Price
Town & Country
EVENING WITH AN ASIAN THEME
ANGLICAN CABARET BALL MAY 3rd
FOR SALE WANTED

Top L: WA Government Gazette, 11 January 1924
Top R: WA Government Gazette, 25 January 2024
Bottom L: The Phoenix News, 21 May 1977
Bottom R: Hamersley News, 25 April 1974

BURRA CHARTER THEMES

A set of principles that are the national standard for Australian heritage conservation practice

KNOWING

Identification, assessment and documentation

Improve our understanding, identify criteria and develop robust processes

PROTECTING

Policy development and appropriate management

Ensure local history is protected, appropriately managed and valued by all

SUPPORTING

Providing assistance, advice, advocacy and financial assistance

Supporting local history education, development and strategy implementation

PROMOTING

Raising awareness and appreciation, and sharing the stories

Celebrating the community, encouraging visitation, and enabling access for everyone

5. HERITAGE PRINCIPLES

The approach to the strategy supports the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013, the nationally accepted standard for heritage conservation practice in Australia. Although local history is not distinguished in the Burra Charter, its principles are, and will continue to be, embedded in Shire policies and management practices, to ensure cohesion of history and heritage:

Identify – Desktop research of local history information, with strengths and weaknesses identified

Understand – Interviews with key stakeholders and community feedback to enable a clear understanding of the needs and aspirations, and an overarching purpose and vision underpin the strategy

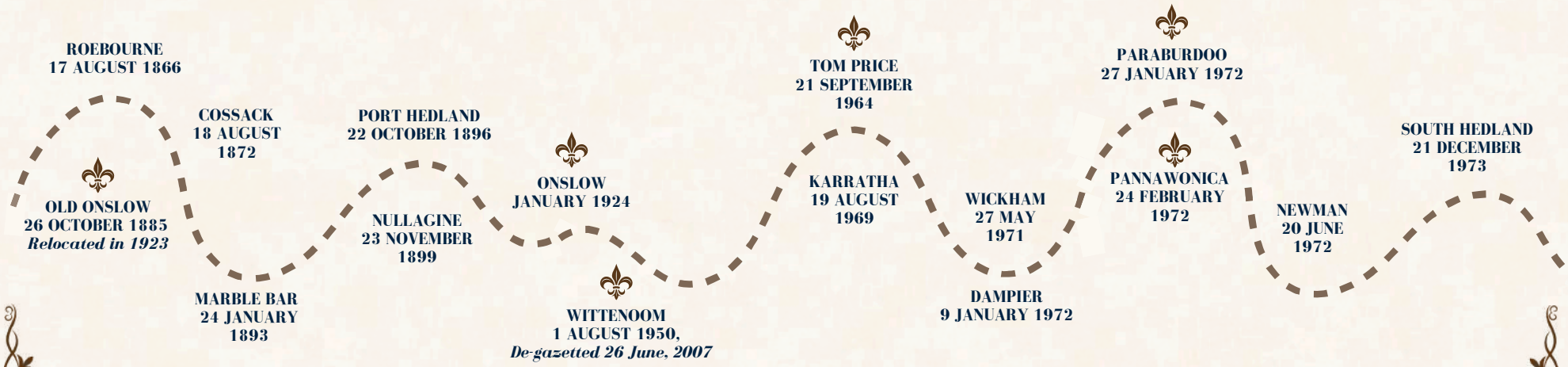
Develop – Strategies are linked to the vision, build on existing strengths, address key issues and reflect the Shire's aspirations

Manage – The Strategy is implementation oriented and aims to facilitate action. Mechanisms to enable the Shire to monitor and review its effectiveness

Below: Mr de Pledge's car at Minderoo: Mervyn, chauffeur, Mr de Pledge, and Mrs Clarke, 1914 or 1915, Forrest family and Minderoo Station State Library of Western Australia B3780975_2

PILBARA CHRONOLOGY

Gazetted Towns



FORMING COUNCIL

In 1887, the Ashburton Road District was created to govern the pastoral stations and the growing town of Onslow, and provide essential infrastructure and services including the construction of roads, management of the port, and other public works.

In 1961, the Ashburton Road District was renamed the Shire of Ashburton, aligning with the WA Local Government Act 1960. The Shire's boundaries expanded as Tom Price, Paraburdoo, and Pannawonica were established to support the region's booming iron ore industry in the 1960s and 1970s.

Just over a decade later in 1972, the Shire of Ashburton and Shire of Tableland amalgamated to become the West Pilbara Shire Council, and the first meeting convened in Onslow on 8 June 1972.

The Karratha area was becoming more established and was commonly referred to as the West Pilbara, so the Shire's name was changed back to the Shire of Ashburton on December 18, 1987, one hundred years after the establishment of the former Ashburton Road Board.

As Tom Price was more centrally located, the Shire's main administration office moved from Onslow to its current location in Tom Price, in January 1990. On 13 January 2013, a fire completely destroyed the Onslow town hall, library and Shire offices, with many council records, photographs and artifacts lost. The new administration complex took three years to build and was opened in late 2016, on the original site.

6. THE HISTORY OF ASHBURTON

The Shire covers a vast area of over 105,000 square kilometres, and its history is deeply connected to its natural environment, Indigenous heritage, and abundant resources, including some of the world's largest open-cut mines, pastoral leases, and cattle stations, set against a beautiful and arid landscape.

Ashburton is home to almost 8,000 residents across the towns of Onslow, Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Pannawonica, with 10.4% identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, some of whom live in the small Aboriginal communities f Bellary, Bindi Bindi, Innawonga, Jundaru, Ngurawaana, Wakathuni and Youngaleena.

European Exploration

European coastal exploration of the Shire began in the early 19th century, when Australian-born British naval officer and explorer Phillip Parker King, mapped the north western coast of Australia from 1818 to 1822, including what is now the Pilbara.

Although the Ashburton River is believed to be first charted in 1627 by Dutch voyager Willem de Vlamingh, who named it 'Willem's River', King mapped it as 'Curlew River' for its numerous bird life and fish, including bush stone-curlew, black swans, heron, mangrove jack and barramundi. It was finally renamed 'Ashburton River' in 1861 by surveyor and explorer Francis T Gregory. Overland exploration of the region hadn't been attempted until he took on the task, and as his expedition was funded by the British Royal Geographical Society, Ashburton River was named in honour of the Society's President, William Bingham Baring, the 2nd Baron Ashburton.

Pastoral Establishment

In the 1860's and 1870's, pastoralists from the southwest of WA began to explore the inland Pilbara for grazing. The discovery of fertile land for sheep farming along the Ashburton River led to large sheep stations across the vast plains and river valleys, to supply wool for export markets. The first known pastoral lease in the Shire was awarded to Timothy Edward Hooley in 1867 by the WA Government, as a reward for creating a stock route from Perth to Roebourne. Hooley also became the first person to ship wool directly from Ashburton to southern markets.

The early European settlers encountered Aboriginal peoples who's ancestors had been living on and managing the land for tens of thousands of years. A vital element in the survival of the pastoral leases was the contribution made by Aboriginal labour as stockmen and domestic helpers but by 1869, the local Aboriginal population began to use force to try to break the British occupation of their land, and a fierce conflict resulted in a massacre of Aboriginal people. Hooley later abandoned the property due to continued Aboriginal resistance, and in 1878 David Forrest secured the leasehold, naming it Minderoo Station, and building one of the first homesteads.

Below: Yanrey Homestead 1914 or 1915, Forrest family and Minderoo Station
State Library of Western Australia B3780760_2

Pearling Industry

The pearling industry was a significant early economic activity with Onslow emerging as a pearling hub in the 1880's. It primarily focused on harvesting mother-of-pearl shells for making buttons and decorative items, and it relied heavily on Aboriginal labour and the work of Asian divers. European settlers initially controlled the industry, and many Aboriginal people were forced or coerced into working in dangerous conditions as pearl divers or labourers, while Japanese divers became highly valued for their deep-sea diving skills .

By the early 20th century, the pearling industry in Onslow began to decline due to over-harvesting of pearl shells, competition from cultured pearls, and the rise of synthetic materials like plastic that reduced the demand for mother-of-pearl. Cyclones and natural disasters also wreaked havoc, further contributing to the weakening in production and trade.

Colonial Settlement

Onslow become the Shire's first gazetted town and as more settlers arrived, they adapted to the harsh climate, learning to manage the land and survive the challenging conditions. Pastoralism remained the dominant industry for many decades, with wool production at its peak in the early 20th century.

Contact between Aboriginal communities and European settlers had devastating consequences for the Aboriginal population due to the introduction of European diseases, to which they had no natural immunity. This led to widespread illness and many lives were lost from measles, leprosy, smallpox, influenza, and typhoid.

Industrial Development and Natural Resources

The natural environment continued to shape the local industry well into the 20th century. Asbestos mining in Wittenoom in the late 1930's marked the start of significant mineral extraction efforts in the Shire, however the scale was somewhat small compared to the discovery of iron ore deposits found in the 1960's and 70's. This transformed the region's economy with the establishment of Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Pannawonica specifically to house the growing number of workers.

Salt production became another significant industry with the opening of the salt mine in 1994 and becoming one of Australia's largest solar salt operations, further diversifying the Shire's economy. Into the first decade of the 21st century, the Wheatstone LNG project brought large-scale natural gas production to Onslow, turning the town into a major hub for Australia's energy exports.

The mining and resources industry keeps the Shire firmly on the global resource map, and employment is dominated by the sector, which collectively employ approximately half the Shire's residents. It's not just the local economy that benefits, but also Australia's international standing as a major resource exporter.

Below Left: Onslow Races, circa 1948
Below Right: Water pipeline to Pannawonica crossing the Fortescue River, 9 April 1972. Rio Tinto collection of photographs State Library of Western Australia B5147633_1

Weather Factors

The Shire has a long history of dry conditions as well as tropical cyclones. Areas experience extreme heat and prolonged heatwaves due to high solar radiation, low rainfall, and desert winds.

In summer, temperatures regularly reach 40 degrees, and on 13 January 2022, Onslow sweltered through record-breaking heat of 50.7°C (123.3°F), matching the 1960 record in Oodnadatta, South Australia.

The Shire is also located in one of the most severe cyclonic wind regions in Australia, requiring all structures to be designed and certified in accordance the Building Code of Australia and related Standards.

Cyclone season starts in November and ends in April each year, with January and February generally the wettest months, based on cyclone activity off the North West coast.

Notable Cyclones

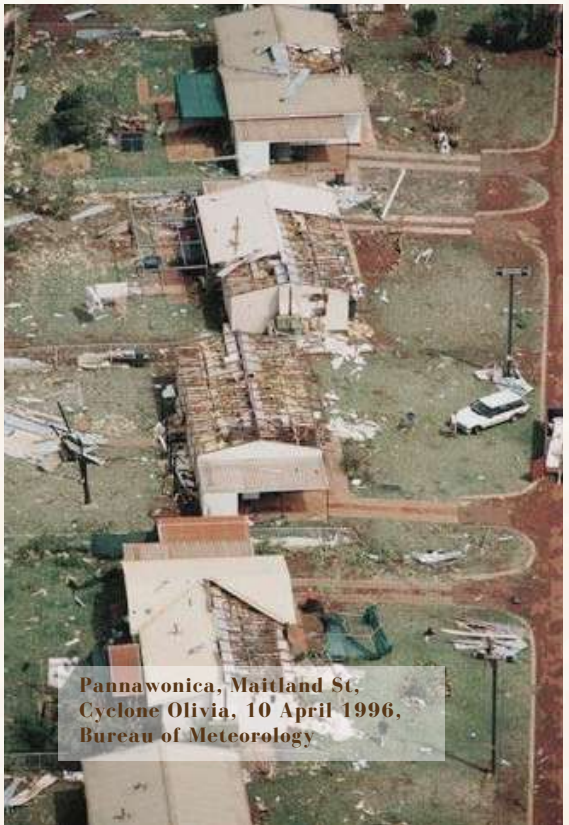
22 March 1999, Tropical Cyclone Vance (category 5) is the most destructive cyclone to ever hit the Shire. It made landfall in Exmouth with wind speeds of 267 km/h (the highest ever recorded on mainland Australia), before dropping to 174km/h when it reached Onslow. It caused catastrophic damage to buildings, infrastructure, and homes, and flooding that left a long-term impact on Onslow, requiring years of recovery and rebuilding.

1 December 1975, Tropical Cyclone Joan (category 5) remains one of the most intense tropical cyclones to affect Australia. Her strong winds and heavy rainfall caused widespread damage and flooding in Tom Price and Paraburdoo, disrupting mining operations and isolating towns. Marandoo near Tom Price, registered 591 millimetres of rainfall and many other sites recorded over 400 millimetres. Some of the two and three-day totals registered over the Hamersley Range represent a once-in-100-year event.

25 February 1995, Tropical Cyclone Bobby (category 4) recorded wind gusts of 183 kilometres per hour when it passed near Onslow, and seven lives were lost when two fishing trawlers sunk off the Onslow coast. The roofs of approximately 20 houses were damaged and over 400 millimetres of rain fell, flooding roads and bridges, and destroying crops.

10 April 1996, Severe Tropical Cyclone Olivia (category 5) passed over Barrow Island near Pannawonica and is famous for the strongest non-tornadic winds ever recorded globally, with peak gusts of 408 kilometres per hour (254 mph). Although it subsided to Category 4 when it made landfall about 75 kilometres north-northwest of Pannawonica, every house sustained some damage and mining operations were halted.

Cyclone damage in Onslow from the 1963 cyclone, State Library of Western Australia B2807265_1



Pannawonica, Maitland St, Cyclone Olivia, 10 April 1996, Bureau of Meteorology

Pannawonica, Maitland Street, rebuilt, 1997

POPULATION THROUGH THE DECADES

1900-1920: Early European Settlement and Pastoral Expansion

In the early 1900's the population estimate was around 200-300 people, mostly in the European settlement of Onslow and scattered across remote pastoral stations. Census Information from 1911 indicates fewer than 500 people, which overlooked the Aboriginal population until 1971. Infrastructure was basic, but the establishment of the first General Store (and a liquor licence) in 1884, Hotel in 1884, Telegraph Office/Post Office in 1885, school in 1893 and hospital in 1910 marked slow but steady progress in developing public services.

1920-1935: Relocation of Onslow and Economic Challenges

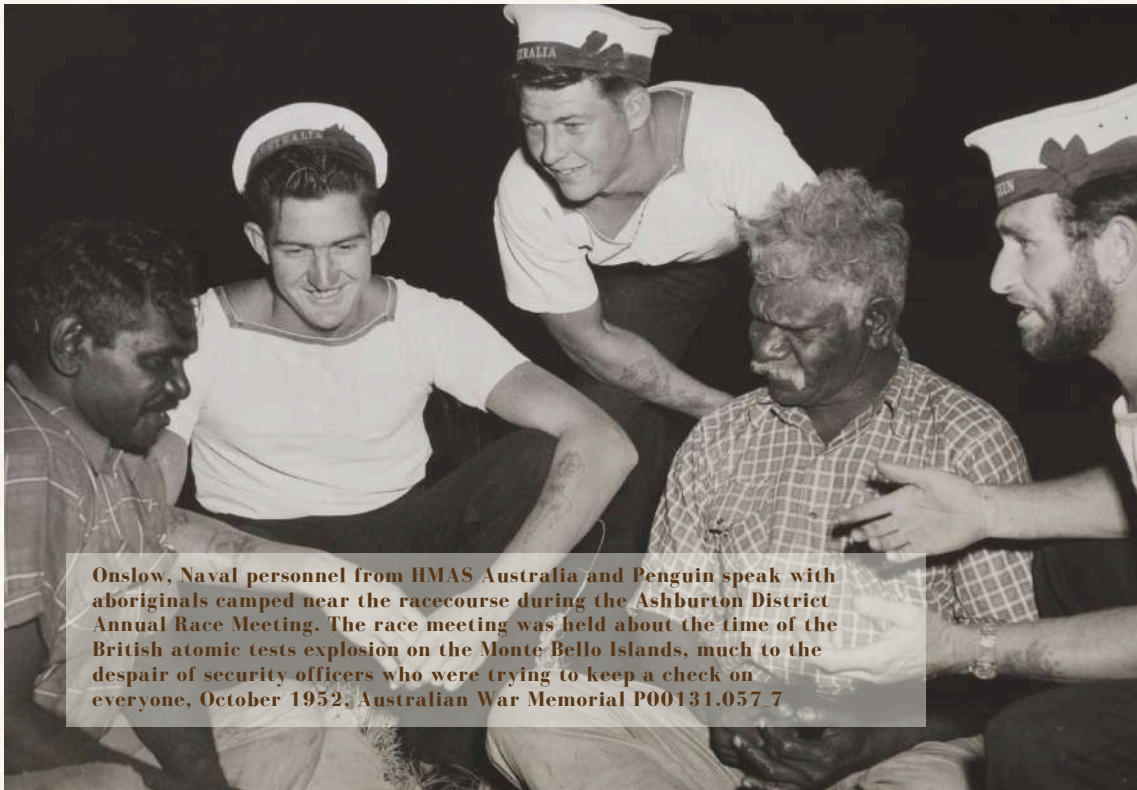
By the time Onslow was relocated in 1925, the port access was better but the new jetty took time to become fully operational, disrupting shipping and trade in the interim. The physical relocation was expensive and logistically difficult with buildings, infrastructure, and homes moved by camel train including the Police Station and quarters, Courthouse, St. Nicholas Church, private homes and residences. This added substantial costs for both the government and private residents, who bore the financial burden of rebuilding their lives and businesses in the new townsite. The population was slowly growing to approximately 300-400, but the 1933 Census still noted there were fewer than 500 residents.

1935-1950: World War II and the Beginnings of Change

The onset of World War II temporarily slowed development in the Shire, but military activity and defence efforts brought troops stationed along the coast to guard against potential threats from Japan. Onslow was hit by Japanese bombs in 1943, reflecting Japan's broader strategy of disrupting Allied supply lines and striking fear into the local population. The psychological effect on the local population was significant.

Asbestos mining in Wittenoom began in 1937 and ramped up during the 1940's to meet global demand. The 1947 Census recorded approximately 600-700 people, and the economy was still centred around sheep stations and wool exports, although the discovery of mineral resources in other parts of the Pilbara hinted at the economic transformation to come.

Onslow, two sailors walking along the jetty used by the many vessels involved in the preparations for the British atomic tests on the Monte Bello islands in October 1952, Australian War Memorial P00131.015_7



Onslow, Naval personnel from HMAS Australia and Penguin speak with aboriginals camped near the racecourse during the Ashburton District Annual Race Meeting. The race meeting was held about the time of the British atomic tests explosion on the Monte Bello Islands, much to the despair of security officers who were trying to keep a check on everyone, October 1952, Australian War Memorial P00131.057_7

1950-1965: Mining Discovery and Population Growth

The 1950's marked the beginning of significant change for the Shire with geological surveys revealing the presence of rich iron ore deposits. The 1954 Census noted around 1,000 residents, just before Wittenoom began thriving as a town of almost 1,000 people, but by the early 60's, the dangers of asbestos became evident and mining eventually ceased in 1966. The 1966 Census recorded around 3,000 people, and new opportunities are attracting big players.

1965-1980: Establishment of Mining Towns and a Population Boom

Large-scale iron ore mining began with the opening of the Mount Tom Price mine in 1965, ushering in one of the world's largest iron ore mining operations. The shift from a predominantly pastoral economy to a mining-driven one was well underway. By 1970, the workforce was heavily male dominated with labourers and tradesmen, and the 1971 Census recorded a major population increase to 7,620 people, with Tom Price emerging as the largest town. In the 1971 Census, Aboriginal people were officially counted for the first time in Australia, and the data would have included Aboriginals living in the towns and surrounding areas. In 1978, the State Government began phasing down the Wittenoom townsite and encouraging residents to relocate.

1980-1990: Continued Expansion of Mining and Community Development

The 1980's heralded improvements in town infrastructure and services to support families and long-term residents, with schools and recreational facilities developed to accommodate the growing communities. In 1981 the population was around 9,500 with the majority living in Tom Price and Paraburdoo. The pastoral industry, while still present, became secondary to mining, which drove the local economy and employment.

1990-2000: Economic Diversification and Stability

Heading into the 21st century, mining remained the primary employer, but salt production and the early stages of the Wheatstone LNG project were beginning to diversify the Onslow economy. The 1996 Census reported around 9,000-10,000 residents.

2000-2010: Fly-in, Fly-out (FIFO) Workforce

The large-scale Wheatstone LNG project brought an influx of workers to Onslow, significantly boosting the population during the construction phase. However, the rise of the FIFO workforce meant that many workers lived outside the region and commuted to work. From 2001-2011 the population remained steady at around 10,500 residents.

2010-2020: Industrial Expansion

FIFO continues to contribute to a transient workforce particularly in Onslow, which became a hub for energy exports. Aboriginal communities in the Shire have gained recognition through native title agreements and cultural heritage preservation. The 2016 Census reported approximately 13,026, with 8% Aboriginal residents and a more diverse population.

2020-Present: Stabilisation and Long-Term Trends

By the 2021 Census, the Shire's population had stabilised to around 12,500 residents as the construction boom related to LNG and mining projects slowed. The Shire has focused on infrastructure improvements, including housing and community facilities, to support its growing population with an increased emphasis on enhancing liveability, promoting tourism, and fostering cultural inclusion, especially through initiatives that highlight Aboriginal heritage.

Below: Building Wittenoom Town, Day 2 1951, State Library of Western Australia B5739265_11

Loading goods salvaged from a cyclone onto a truck in Onslow
28 March 1934, Edgar Walker collection of photographs
State Library of Western Australia B6058470_2

7. THE TOWNS OF ASHBURTON

Old Onslow and Onslow

Traditional Custodians Thalanyji people
ABS Population 2021 829

Onslow was originally established at the mouth of the Ashburton River, which was central to establishing the pastoral industry, and influenced the positioning of Onslow, the Shire's original port that depended on the river for trade. The river has also provided water, food and cultural significance for the Traditional Custodians, the Buurabalayji Thalanyji people for tens of thousands of year.

The townsite was named after Sir Alexander Onslow, the Chief Justice of Western Australia at the time. It was built as a port town built for exporting wool from the local station owners and graziers established along the Ashburton River, as well as sending gold to Perth from the gold mines that had developed in Marble Bar and Nullagine, and pearls to Asia and Europe. In the early settlement days, good pearls were found in Exmouth Gulf and the town became home to a fleet of pearling luggers. These luggers stayed in local waters until World War II when most were commandeered by the armed forces or destroyed. The post-war period saw pearling start again, but in a small way and the last lugger was sold in 1965. Today pearling is a small industry with the shells farmed for blister and culture pearls.

One of the first recorded station leases was purchased by David Forrest on 15 August 1878, about 40km south east of Onslow. He acquired approximately 250,000 acres (101,171 hectares) to establish a station with 5,000 sheep and named it Minderoo. By 1890 all land along the Ashburton River had been taken up, running mainly sheep, from stations including Nanutarra, Towera, Yanrey. Today, the stations are predominantly cattle.

One of the most influential people of Onslow was James Clark, along with his brother-in-law John McKenzie. The first building in the town was a goods shed taken over by Clark and McKenzie on their arrival in 1883. Clark ran a successful lightering service from the wharf constructed in 1886, also holding the town's first liquor license, and with this he built the Rob Roy Hotel, named after his old ship that he tended as ship's engineer. He also established Wogoola Station in 1891 (now known as Emu Creek).

Problems with cyclone damage and silting that made it difficult for larger ships to access the port forced the town to relocate to Beadon Bay in 1924, about 18 km northeast of the original site. There was deeper water at Beadon, enabling better access for shipping, so the town was moved to where it is today. When it moved, locals were eager for the name to become Ashburton, but Onslow eventually won out and the name was changed from Beadon to Onslow in January 1924. Despite the move, Onslow is still located in one of the most cyclone-prone regions in Australia and, on average, has experienced a cyclone event once every two years since 1910.

In 1942, the Royal Australian Navy established HMAS Melville, a naval communications and fuelling facility in Onslow. Onslow's deep water port allowed naval vessels to refuel and resupply as they patrolled and defended the coastline. The town also served as a base for small naval vessels, such as minesweepers and anti-submarine patrols, tasked with protecting the region's coastal waters from enemy submarines and raiding vessels. Onslow's airfield was upgraded for military use, with reconnaissance flights conducted along the coast to detect any enemy activity. On 15 May 1943, Onslow became the most southerly town in Australia to be bombed by Japan, but fortunately, with no major damage or casualties.

Below: Old Onslow, Clandon Street, circa 1930, Goods Shed Museum

Wittenoom

Traditional Custodians Banyjima people

The economy of Wittenoom revolved around the mining and processing of blue asbestos, which was first discovered in the area in 1937, by Langley Frederick George (Lang) Hancock, owner of Mulga Downs pastoral station. Hancock was a prominent prospector and pastoralist, and noticed the blue colour of the mineral as the commercially valuable resource as blue asbestos (crocidolite) used in insulation, cement, protective clothing and more. He and his partners Peter Wright and Leslie McLean acquired the land lease and mining rights and began operations, along with Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) Ltd, which diversified into mining.

The town was named after Frank Wittenoom, a prominent pastoralist and business associate of Hancock. The town was built to house the workers and their families, creating a community around the mine. At its peak, it had a population of over 1,000 people with schools, shops, and other facilities to support the mining community.

CSR was the major player in Wittenoom's asbestos mining operations and in 1943, it acquired the leases, and the mining and milling rights from Hancock and his partners, officially taking over full control.

CSR expanded significantly, turning Wittenoom Gorge into the centre of Australia's blue asbestos mining industry for several decades.

Despite the initial economic success of asbestos mining, the health dangers were becoming evident and concerns about the risks associated with asbestos were growing. Miners and residents were unknowingly exposed to large quantities of asbestos dust, leading to severe and fatal illnesses such as asbestosis, lung cancer, and mesothelioma. In 1966, the CSR Company ceased asbestos mining operations in Wittenoom and it's now known that inhalation of asbestos fibres can have long latency periods.

Although mining ceased in 1966, many residents continued to live in Wittenoom until the government began to depopulate the town. In 1978, it was officially removed from the list of towns by the state government, by the 1990's, most residents had left and by the early 2000's, Wittenoom was almost completely abandoned. In 2006, the Australian government officially de-gazetted the town, it was declared a contaminated zone, and warnings were issued to prevent access due to the ongoing danger of contamination.

Wittenoom's status as one of Australia's most notorious environmental and public health disasters, remains a reminder of the deadly consequences of asbestos mining, and the human cost of ignoring health warnings. Those that have lost their lives will not be forgotten.

Below: MMA DC3 VH-MMD -RMA Durack, at Wittenoom Gorge Airport, 1961
State Library of Western Australia B4232624_8

Below: The mine at Wittenoom
https://www.mininglegacies.org/mines/west-aust/wittenoom/

Wittenoom Gorge Race Club meeting at Wittenoom Racecourse in late August, circa1975, State Library of Western Australia B5276343_10

Tom Price Supermarket check-outs,
Rio Tinto collection of photographs
State Library of Western Australia B4930811_2

Tom Price

Traditional Custodians Eastern Guruma people
ABS Population 2021 2,910

Tom Price was established to support the Mount Tom Price iron ore mine, named after American geologist Thomas Moore Price, a Vice President of the Kaiser Steel Corporation. In the 1960s, Australia was looking to expand its iron ore production, and Australian mining company Hamersley Iron, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, partnered with Kaiser Steel. Price's influence and expertise was key to securing agreements to develop the Pilbara's iron ore resources.

Mount Tom Price mine commenced operations in 1966 and was the fourth iron-ore mine to commence production in Australia. In its early years it was the largest open-cut iron ore mine and the largest producing iron-ore mine in Australia, and is still the fifth largest in size, seventh largest in annual production and second in total production.

One of the major challenges was the lack of transportation networks, particularly roads and railways. Building the necessary infrastructure to transport iron ore from the Mount Tom Price mine to the coastal port at Dampier was a massive undertaking. The 426-kilometer rail line linking the mine to the port was critical, but took time and effort to complete, delaying the start of full-scale operations.

Access to basic supplies including goods, services, and food was difficult with everything brought in across great distances, adding to the cost and logistical complexity.

The town was designed to be self-sufficient and was purpose-built to house workers and their families, providing the necessary infrastructure of schools, hospitals, and recreational facilities. Tom Price has grown in parallel with the mine's success, playing a vital role in the region's economic contribution to both Australia and international markets.

In recent decades, a focus on sustainability and environmental management has become a social, cultural and economic debate with increasing emphasis on minimising environmental impacts and rehabilitating the land.

Tom Price is the highest town in the state at 747m (2,451 feet) above sea level. This unique location at the base of Mount Nameless (Jarndunmunha), one of the highest accessible peaks in WA, gives the town its picturesque setting. The elevation and surrounding landscape make Tom Price a gateway for exploring the Pilbara's rugged natural beauty, including the stunning Karijini National Park, known for its breathtaking gorges, waterfalls, and rugged landscapes that attracts visitors from all over the world.

Below: Tom Price Shopping Centre. Approximately 1973. Stevenson, Kinder and Scott photograph collection State Library of Western Australia B4930811_2

Typing class under way at Paraburdoo District High School, 5 November 1984.
Stevenson, Kinder and Scott Corporate Photography
State Library of Western Australia B5582163_1

Paraburdoo

Traditional Custodians Yinhawangka people
ABS Population 2021 1,319

Paraburdoo was established in 1972 by Rio Tinto subsidiary Hamersley Iron, to support iron ore mining operations in the nearby Paraburdoo Mine. The town was developed specifically to accommodate the growing workforce, with housing, schools, recreational facilities, and services to create a community. It's one of several towns in the region that started from the demand for iron ore in the early 1970's, which became a critical export commodity for Australia, particularly to markets in Asia.

Paraburdoo is derived from the Aboriginal word Pirupardu meaning "meat feather" or "feather of the white cockatoo", with the area home to large populations of white corellas. Ecologically, the white corellas play an important role in the local environment. As a native bird species, they contribute to seed dispersal and help maintain the health of ecosystems. They feed on seeds, nuts, and fruits, which assists in the natural regeneration of plants. They also adapt well to the semi-arid environment of the region, thriving in natural bushland.

Paraburdoo Airport was opened in 1970 and coincided with the development of the town. It remains a key transport hub for fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) workers as well as a major connection to Perth for locals and visitors.

Top L: Paraburdoo, Community Centre and Playground, 1970s, Rio Tinto collection of photographs, SLWA B4931216_2
Middle L: Paraburdoo, Library, 13 June 1975, SLWA B3430772_1
Bottom L: Paraburdoo, shopping centre early 1980s
Top R: Pannawonica Play School, 1976
Middle R: Pannawonica, Library early 1980s
Bottom R: Pannawonica, Boot Tree 2020

Pannawonica

Traditional Custodians Kurrama people
ABS Population 2021 685

Pannawonica was the last town in the Shire established for mining, and was built to support the Robe River iron ore mining operations, managed by Cliffs Robe River Iron Associates (now Rio Tinto). In 1969, a landmark event occurred with the signing of the world's largest iron ore sales contract in Tokyo, between seven Japanese steel producers and Cliffs Robe River Iron Associates. This led to the 1970 construction of the mine, followed by 53 houses, 15 duplexes and 36 single men's quarters, and in August 1972 the first shipment of iron ore left Pannawonica, bound for Japan. It is one of only few 'closed towns' in the Pilbara, as its facilities are limited for visitors and accommodation is reserved for mining staff. Tourists are welcome, but cannot stay on a long term or permanent basis.

The name Pannawonica means "the hill that came from the sea," and is rooted in an Aboriginal folktale. According to the story, Pannawonica Hill was once part of an island called Collanbogan, located offshore near Mardie Station. Two tribes fought over the island, and one of them stole the hill while the other was away. They dragged the hill across the landscape, leaving a scar known as the Pannawonica Track, and placed it above the Robe River to protect their people, where they could spot enemies approaching and defend themselves from its peak.

The Boot Tree has become a unique and cherished local tradition, located on the outskirts of town. It's adorned with work boots and shoes left by those leaving permanently, symbolising the completion of their work and the end of their time in the town.

8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder and community consultation was undertaken to better understand the areas of importance, and the community perception of the local history strategy.

Engagement followed IAP2 practices, ensuring community views are considered and encompassed in the decision-making, and was facilitated between March and June 2024.

The Shire appreciates the invaluable feedback from *schools, sporting groups, community groups, chamber of commerce, Aboriginal Corporations, mining and resource companies, residents and Shire employees.*

The engagement included a series of activities across all four towns, with 328 participants

- 234 completed responses of the print and online survey.
- 20 one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders including four Aboriginal Corporations, online and in-person.
- One presentation to 15 stakeholders.
- Four community pop ups, with one in each town, talking to 52 people living, working or visiting the Shire.
- Attendance at the Welcome to Town event in Tom Price, talking to new and existing residents.
- One workshop with eight Shire of Ashburton staff.

The activities were promoted on the Shire website and Facebook pages, posters were displayed at key community locations, a media release was disseminated, newsletter stories were featured and stakeholders were communicated via email.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

COMMUNITY POP UPS

Tom Price, Paraburdoo, Pannawonica, Onslow

Fri 22 Mar -
Wed 24 Apr

ONLINE & PRINTED SURVEY

Community Pop-ups, Libraries, Facebook, QR code

Thu 14 Mar -
Sun 28 Apr

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Businesses, Community groups, Aboriginal Corporations, Councillors

Mon 25 Mar -
Thu 13 Jun

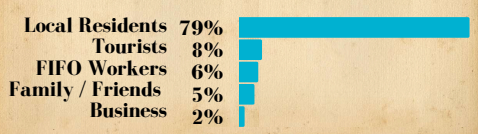
LOCAL EVENTS

Opportunity to speak to stakeholders and the community

Thu 21 Mar -
Sat 23 Mar

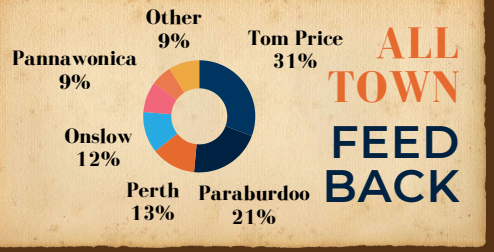
AT A GLANCE

79% Local Residents



97% SAID Local History IS IMPORTANT

45% WANT TO SHARE THEIR STORIES



ALL TOWN FEED BACK

59% HAVE VISITED WHITTENOOM OR OLD ONSLOW

23% <2 YEARS IN THE SHIRE

PREFERRED WAYS TO FIND LOCAL HISTORY

Website 74% Libraries 55%
Socials 60% Newsletter 20%

41% Unprompted interest in a local museum

What local history items should the Shire preserve?

92% PHOTOGRAPHS, NEGATIVES & SLIDES
76% MAPS
75% ARTIFACTS AND OBJECTS
71% DOCUMENTS
70% VIDEO RECORDINGS
69% TRADITIONS
68% CULTURES
68% STORIES / SONGS
59% AUDIO RECORDINGS

KEY FINDINGS

The findings underscore the importance of preservation, and demonstrate the support for ensuring local history is not just in the past, but is a vital asset for the future.

1. High community, stakeholder and visitor interest in local history
2. Opportunities to enhance visitor experience, product development and new attractions
3. A showcase in each town is important to local communities
4. Towns have strong community connections to past residents
5. Historical records in a poor state, soon to be beyond restoration
6. Transiency has resulted in records and artifacts thrown away
7. Businesses, local groups are inspired to document their history
8. The mining sector has a crucial role in sharing its history
9. Trust and genuine engagement are key to Aboriginal history
10. Truth-telling is needed for reconciliation, documenting the past

WORD REPRESENTATION OF THE TOWNS

9. TOURISM

Tourism plays an important role in offering a platform to showcase the area's natural landscapes, Indigenous culture, pastoral heritage and mining legacy, and attracting those who seek authentic, remote experiences.

Visitors are drawn to the breathtaking gorges, waterfalls and unique geological formations of Karijini National Park, and explore sites like the Old Onslow town, and the ancient Aboriginal rock art that tell the stories of the Traditional Custodians across the area. Many are also interested in station stays that offer a glimpse into life on an outback cattle station and its rugged, picturesque terrain, as well as the beaches, fishing and wartime stories of Onslow.

These experiences allow visitors to gain a deeper appreciation of the Shire's rich past, while their engagement helps to support the continued celebration of these cultural and historical landmarks for future generations

Most visitors traverse the Pilbara in caravans, driving from Perth to Broome and stopping in the Shire along the way. There are opportunities to leverage visitation by enhancing the local history product:

- Local History and Oral History Tours: Guided or self-guided tours that focus on oral histories from local elders, long-term residents, and community members. Delivered in-person or through digital apps and podcasts, allowing visitors to hear first-hand accounts of life in the region.
- Heritage Trails: Self-guided opportunities to explore the Shire's history. By connecting key historical and cultural sites, these trails create immersive experiences that link visitors to the heritage of the area.
- Cultural Heritage and Truth-telling: Guided tours by Traditional Custodians that introduce the deep connection of Indigenous peoples to the land and their enduring history in the region. This fosters greater awareness and respect for local history while contributing to the preservation of cultural knowledge.

Along with opportunities, there are also some challenges posed by the region's unique geography that may discourage visitors or limit their ability to stay for extended periods. These include the vast distances between towns as well as the limited accommodation options, often due to mining industry demands.

Below: Old Onslow, remnants of the Police Station complex built in 1893, www.destinationpilbara.com.au

10. THE SHIRE'S ROLE

Collaboration and partnership is integral to achieving the outcomes, including internal and external parties, and the best results will occur when the resources of the Shire can join forces with the resources of its partners, community organisations and Government to expand the opportunities for success.

The implementation will be delivered by the Local History Team, a new department encompassed within our Libraries across each town, and led by the Manager, Libraries.

The Shire is proud of its local history intentions, and will be involved in many ways, including as a leader

ADVOCATOR

Increase the visibility, secure support and resources to achieve strategic outcomes

COMMUNICATOR

Source of trusted information, genuine intention to engage, promote local history

FACILITATOR

Bring key players together, strengthen partnerships, provide mechanisms to achieve shared goals

FUNDER

Financial assistance, staffing, resource support for initiatives to achieve strategic goals

PARTNER

Collaborate, support and participate in initiatives to deliver the strategy

PROVIDER

Develop and implement strategies and actions that guide the delivery of local history goals

11. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Implementing the strategy presents an exciting opportunity, but there will be challenges to navigate along the way

The Shire is in a unique situation, with no documented or catalogued historical collections, and no structured record of its history, although there are record books dating back to the early 20th century, some of which are in a perilous condition.

These will require thoughtful solutions, careful planning and collaboration, as well as community participation to create innovative solutions that ensure local history is preserved for future generations.

INTERNAL CAPACITY

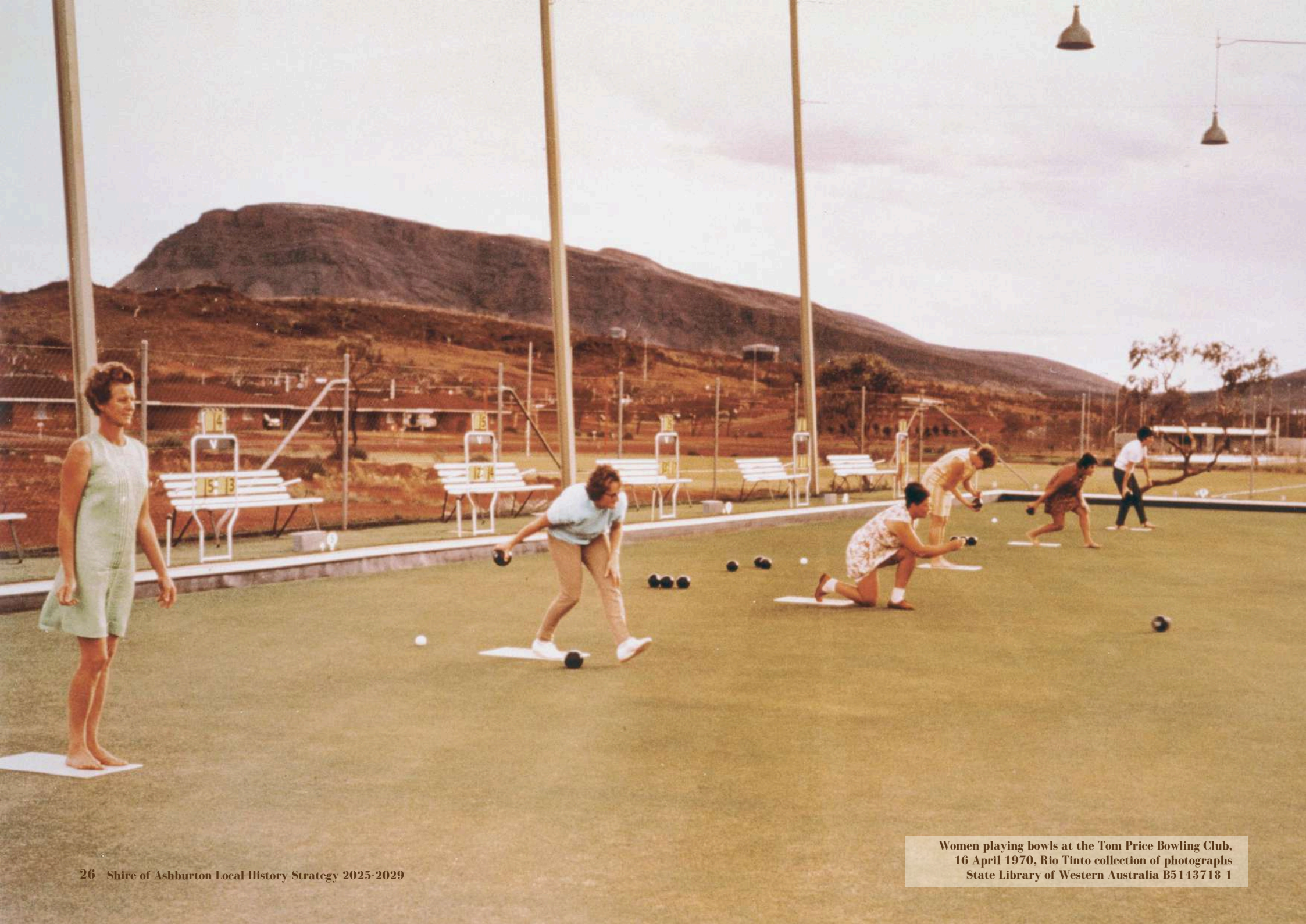
- Complex and significant undertaking, multiple Plans over five years.
- Dedicated resource required, Local History Officers.
- Professional development, subject matter experts to become a leader in local history.

BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS

- Funding to implement strategies and actions, and achieve outcomes.
- Feasibility to save vulnerable collections, build climate controlled spaces.
- Consultant expertise across many requirements.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

- No historical societies in any town, developing community participation.
- Investment in community engagement and marketing.
- Commitment to genuine Aboriginal engagement and truthtelling.



Women playing bowls at the Tom Price Bowling Club, 16 April 1970, Rio Tinto collection of photographs State Library of Western Australia B5143718_1

12. LOCAL HISTORY PLANS

The Local History Strategy enables us to align our actions with the shared aspirations of the community to collect, document, preserve, store and showcase our past.

This is achieved through five Plans and a Working Group:

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT PLAN
Engaging and connecting with the community to showcase and celebrate our unique local history

ORAL HISTORY PLAN
Encouraging the oral recording of diverse voices and experiences to preserve and share our unique stories and culture

DIGITISATION PLAN
Creating a digital approach to capturing and converting history, in easily accessible and sustainable formats

PRESERVATION AND STORAGE PLAN
Ensuring the long term preservation and environmental protection of local history assets

SHIRE PROCESS PLAN
Providing guidance through clear procedures and policy, to achieve best practice in local history outcomes

COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP
Supporting and guiding the implementation to advance strategic outcomes

ACTION PLAN

1. Community and Social Media Engagement Plan

Engaging and connecting with the community to showcase and celebrate our unique local history.

1.1 ONSLOW 100 YEARS CELEBRATION
Celebrating the vibrant and rich history of our first gazetted town

OUTCOME
Local pride and identity have grown, with residents and visitors sharing stories and connecting deeply to Onslow's history

1.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
Facilitating participation and interest in local history

OUTCOME
Active participation, more inclusive appreciation of local history, diverse voices reflect their stories and experiences

1.3 ABORIGINAL ENGAGEMENT
Fostering respectful collaboration to preserve local Aboriginal stories and truth telling

OUTCOME
Greater understanding, collaboration and respect is developed, Aboriginal stories are an integral part of the history narrative

1.4 MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA
Enhancing information, community awareness and appreciation of our history

OUTCOME
Effective promotion increased awareness and reach, making it easy for people to engage and contribute to story telling

1.6 PLANNING & PROCESSES
Developing systematic and purposeful procedures and practices to enhance engagement and marketing

OUTCOME
The delivery of projects is effectively and efficiently achieved, through clear, robust and accessible practices

1.7 STAFFING & RESOURCES
Equipping our people to achieve transformative local history outcomes

OUTCOME
Relevant resourcing support ensured internal capacity and capability is enhanced and projects are well-managed

1.7 DONATIONS & LOANS
Encouraging public contributions to develop Shire collections and assist preservation

OUTCOME
Preservation of artifacts and collections fostered a shared sense of ownership and increased the value of local history

1.8 DISPLAYS & EXHIBITIONS
Providing public access to moments in time that showcase our local history

OUTCOME
Public appreciation is enhanced through visual and educational platforms, showcasing diversity in local history

1.9 TOURISM & VISITOR EXPERIENCES
Promoting historical places and stories that shaped our towns and communities

OUTCOME
Visitors were enriched by unique, immersive history experiences, contributing to cultural appreciation and economic impact

2. Oral History Plan

Encouraging the oral recording of diverse voices and experiences to preserve and share our unique stories and culture

2.1 STANDARDS & EQUIPMENT Implementing industry standards and high-quality equipment to record and preserve oral history	**OUTCOME** Preservation of community stories is enhanced through recognised professional methods and technologically advanced equipment
2.2 PLANNING & PROCESSES Developing systematic and purposeful procedures and practices to deliver oral history requirements	**OUTCOME** The delivery of oral projects is effectively and efficiently achieved, through clear, robust and accessible practices
2.3 ABORIGINAL ORAL HISTORY Collecting and preserving Aboriginal storytelling including oral histories, languages, and cultures	**OUTCOME** The respectful recording of Aboriginal voices and truth telling enriched our understanding of their cultural heritage
2.4 STAFFING, RESOURCES & TRAINING Equipping our people to achieve transformative oral history outcomes	**OUTCOME** Relevant esourcing and training support ensured internal capacity and capability is enhanced and oral projects are well-managed
2.5 PRESERVATION & STORAGE Securing the integrity and safety of oral recordings, for future generations to appreciate	**OUTCOME** Oral recordings are safe guarded through preservation practices, ensuring stories are protected and collections are accessible into the future
2.6 MARKETING & PROMOTION Enhancing information, community awareness and appreciation of our history	**OUTCOME** Effective promotion increased awareness and reach, making it easier for residents and visitors to engage and contribute to oral story telling
2.7 LEADERSHIP & PARTNERSHIPS Guiding, influencing, and inspiring conversations and evaluation, to support achievements in oral recordings	**OUTCOME** Regional, state and federal advocacy and innovation efforts secured sustained support, resulting in greater oral recording achievements

3. Digitisation Plan

Creating a digital approach to capturing and converting history in easily accessible and sustainable formats

3.1 STANDARDS & EQUIPMENT Implementing industry standards and high-quality equipment to digitise and preserve local history	**OUTCOME** Preservation of community stories is enhanced through recognised professional methods and technologically advanced equipment
3.2 PLANNING & PROCESSES Developing systematic and purposeful procedures and practices to enhance digitisation	**OUTCOME** The delivery of digital projects is effectively and efficiently achieved, through clear, robust and accessible practices
3.3 ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PROTOCOLS Respecting and following the local customs, cultures and traditions of our Indigenous People	**OUTCOME** Acknowledging and honouring Aboriginal protocols ensured cultural integrity and fostered stronger cultural preservation
3.4 STAFFING, RESOURCES & TRAINING Equipping our people to achieve transformative digital outcomes	**OUTCOME** Relevant resourcing and training support ensured internal capacity and capability is enhanced and digital projects are well-managed
3.5 PRESERVATION & STORAGE Securing the integrity and safety of digital history, for future generations to appreciate	**OUTCOME** Digital items are safe guarded through preservation practices, ensuring stories are protected and collections are accessible into the future
3.6 MARKETING & PROMOTION Enhancing information, community awareness and appreciation of our history	**OUTCOME** Effective promotion increased awareness and reach, making it easier for residents and visitors to engage and contribute to digital content
3.7 LEADERSHIP & PARTNERSHIPS Guiding, influencing, and inspiring conversations and evaluation, to support achievements in digitisation	**OUTCOME** Regional, state and federal advocacy and innovation efforts secured sustained support, resulting in greater digitisation achievements

4. Preservation and Storage Plan

Ensuring the long term preservation and environmental protection of local history assets

4.1 STANDARDS & EQUIPMENT Implementing industry standards and high-quality equipment to preserve and store historical artifacts	**OUTCOME** Preservation of community stories is enhanced through recognised professional methods and technologically advanced equipment
4.2 PLANNING & PROCESSES Developing systematic and purposeful procedures and practices to deliver preservation and storage requirements	**OUTCOME** The delivery of preservation and storage projects is effectively and efficiently achieved, through clear, robust and accessible practices
4.3 STAFFING, RESOURCES & TRAINING Equipping our people to achieve transformative preservation and storage outcomes	**OUTCOME** Resourcing and training support ensured internal capacity and capability is enhanced, and preservation and storage projects are well-managed
4.4 PRESERVATION & STORAGE Securing the integrity and safety of artifacts, for future generations to appreciate	**OUTCOME** Artifacts are safe guarded through preservation practices, ensuring stories are protected and collections are accessible into the future
4.5 LEADERSHIP & PARTNERSHIPS Guiding, influencing, and inspiring conversations and evaluation, to support achievements in preservation and storage	**OUTCOME** Regional, state and federal advocacy and innovation efforts secured sustained support, resulting in greater preservation and storage achievements

5. Shire Process Plan

Providing guidance through clear procedures and policy, to achieve best practice in local history outcomes

5.1 STANDARDS & EQUIPMENT Implementing industry standards and high-quality equipment to support internal delivery	**OUTCOME** Preservation of community stories is enhanced through recognised professional methods and technologically advanced equipment
5.2 PLANNING & PROCESSES Developing systematic and purposeful procedures and practices to enhance digitisation	**OUTCOME** The delivery of projects is effectively and efficiently achieved, through clear, robust and accessible practices
5.3 ABORIGINAL CULTURAL PROTOCOLS Respecting and following the local customs, cultures and traditions of our Indigenous People	**OUTCOME** Acknowledging and honouring Aboriginal protocols ensured cultural integrity, and fostered stronger cultural preservation
5.4 STAFFING, RESOURCES & TRAINING Equipping our people to achieve transformative digital outcomes	**OUTCOME** Relevant resourcing and training support ensured internal capacity and capability is enhanced and process projects are well-managed
5.5 WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY Increasing community and visitor access to local history information	**OUTCOME** User experience is enhanced with increased accessibility features, and delivered a more inclusive digital environment
5.6 DONATIONS & LOANS Enhancing community awareness and appreciation of our history	**OUTCOME** The preservation of artifacts and collections fostered a shared sense of ownership and increased the value of local history
5.7 LEADERSHIP & PARTNERSHIPS Guiding, influencing, and inspiring conversations and evaluation, to support achievements in digitisation	**OUTCOME** Regional, state and federal advocacy and innovation efforts secured sustained support, resulting in greater local history achievements

12. WORKING GROUP

To assist the effective outcomes of the strategy, a Council and Community Working Group will be established. This collaborative body will be an advisory panel, providing guidance and support, offering local insights, fostering community engagement, and leveraging partnerships to advocate for investment and promotion.

The Working Group will function according to a Terms of Reference, and will play a key role in shaping and sustaining the Shire's commitment to local history, for future generations to enjoy.

13. MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

The Shire will monitor and report on the progress of the Local History Strategy on a fixed schedule:

WHEN	WHAT	WHO
Ongoing	• Seek feedback from participants after each Shire activity or program	LH Officers
	• Review feedback results	LH Manager
	• Report key findings to the Working Group	LH Manager
Quarterly	• Collect information from Program partners, stakeholders, community	LH Officers
	• Enter how the Strategy actions are progressing in the Implementation Plan	LH Officers
	• Report key findings to the Working Group	LH Manager
Quarterly	• Report on the progress and status of the Actions to Shire Executive and Council	LH Manager
Quarterly	• Adjust implementation Plan, as needed	LH Manager
Quarterly	• Survey Program partners, stakeholders and the community to learn about the effectiveness of Strategy Actions	LH Officers
	• Report key findings to the Manager Local History	LH Officers

14. BIBLIOGRAPHY

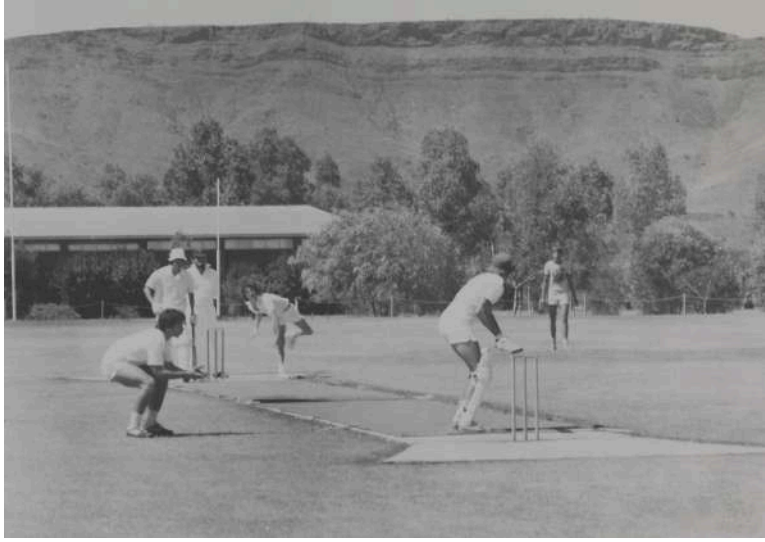
The Shire's libraries hold a selection of publications on the history of our region, covering settlement, Indigenous heritage, pastoral life, and the mining industry. While not exhaustive, this collection provides valuable insights into the people and events that shaped our community. Further materials will be added as part of the strategy, ensuring continued growth and preservation of our shared history.

The current collection of local history publications includes:

Bickerton, Marjorie (1980). Dust over the Pilbara, Artlook, Perth.
Cafarella, Antonio (1998). A town called Onslow, A.Cafarella, South Australia.
Coate, Yvonne E and Coate, Kevin (2017). Western Australian lonely graves and burials at sea, Hesperian Press, Carlisle.
Forrest, Kay (1996). The challenge and the chance: the colonisation and settlement of north west Australia 1986 – 1914, Hesperian Press, Victoria Park.
Holland-McNair, Lisa (2007). Red dust in her veins: women of the Pilbara, UWA Press, Crawley.
Idriess, Ion L.(1954). The nor 'westers, Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
Kilpatrick, H.L. (1991). The Hancock story, H. Kilpatrick, Kingsley.
McDonald, Rhonda (2002). Along the Ashburton, Hesperian Press, Carlisle.
Sharp, Eloise I (2011). Some ghosts, some not, Hesperian Press, Carlisle.
Webb, Martyn J. and Webb, Audrey (1983). Edge of Empire, Artlook Books, Perth.
Weller, Helen Et Al (eds.) (1979). North of the 26th: a collection of writings, paintings, drawings and photographs from the Kimberley, Pilbara and Gascoyne regions, Nine Club, East Perth.
Woldendorp, Richard (1991). Hamersley Iron : twenty-five years, Hamersley Iron, Perth.

Photos from page 31 **Top L:** Paraburdoo, Lions Club merry-go-round at Paragala 20-26 September 1976, SLWA B5130375_11 | **Top M:** Paraburdoo Rugby Club (in white shorts) vs Tom Price in Paraburdoo, 27 May 1973, SLWA B5129933_2 | **Top R:** Paraburdoo, cricket match 1981, SLWA B5090595_2 **Middle L:** Pannawonica, women's basketball team, in Dampier circa 1977 | **Middle:** Paraburdoo, Regatta 1985, SLWA B5275800_2 | **Middle R:** Pannawonica v Dampier, NW Basketball Championships in Dampier October 1979, SLWA B5133893_2 | **Bottom L:** Paraburdoo Speedway circa 1980's | **Bottom Middle:** Paraburdoo, Junior Rugby circa 1980, SLWA B5283786_2 | **Bottom R:** Paraburdoo, Swimming Pool 1971, SLWA B4931217_2

LIONS



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shire of Ashburton

LOCAL HISTORY STRATEGY

2025-2029

TOM PRICE Lot 246, Poinciana Street, Tom Price WA 6751
LIBRARY: 9188 5455

PARABURDOO Ashburton Avenue, Paraburdoo WA 6754
LIBRARY: 9190 2220

ONSLOW Second Avenue, Onslow WA 6710
LIBRARY: 9184 9311

PANNAWONICA 70 Deepdale Drive (Rooms 1&2), Pannawonica WA 6716
LIBRARY: 9134 9501

EMAIL: local.history@ashburton.wa.gov.au

Wicked Strategies