

Department of Social Sciences and Security Studies

**'Every Winter To Infinity': Seasonal Repeat Visitors' Interactions With
The Physical And Cultural Environments Of Western Australia's
Ningaloo Region**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University**

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I Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number #HR171/2008.

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Date: 25 / 06 / 2018

II Abstract

Situated within the discipline of cultural geography, this study aims to explore how repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region interact with its physical and cultural environments. It is informed by semi-structured interviews with over 100 repeat visitors to the region. Western Australia's Ningaloo region is both an alluring destination for travellers seeking warmer weather during the winter months and the site of heated conflict over its cultural and environmental heritage. Located over ten hours' drive north of Perth, this remote area is known for having one of the longest fringing coral reefs in the world. Since the 1960s, the region has developed as a tourism destination known best for camping and marine leisure activities including fishing, surfing and snorkelling.

However, the last 20 years have seen the area's stakeholders, including tourist communities, 'local' communities, environmental activists, government and industry, embroiled in disputes about how best to manage the region to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism growth. For some Western Australians, the area holds special significance as the setting for their annual holidays. As the region develops as a tourism destination, some of these repeat visitors are anxious about their stake in Ningaloo's future. Many feel marginalised by planning processes and are sensitive to changes that have the potential to alter their experiences in the region.

The research has produced four main findings. Firstly, contrary to the critiques of ephemerality and superficiality that are often levelled at tourists, generations of families visiting Ningaloo feel a bond with the region which they have developed through repeat visits, at different stages of their lives. Secondly, groups of repeat visitors create and maintain a sense of community through place-specific performances within the region. Thirdly, many repeat visitors structure their year-round lives around their annual visit to Ningaloo. Finally, the repeat visitors fear

marginalisation and seek a say in the development of management regimes in the region.

These findings in the Ningaloo region contribute to our knowledge about tourism dynamics in sites where tourist communities, 'local' communities, environmental activists, government and industry collide. On a theoretical level, this study contributes to two facets of contemporary cultural geographical scholarship. Firstly, the study approaches tourism research in that it examines what happens beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of 'the holiday'. Whereas traditional tourism research is circumscribed in space and time, the study looks more broadly both spatially (out of the region) and temporally (throughout lifetimes). In doing so, it adds to the body of tourism mobilities research within cultural geography, Secondly, the thesis, through its focus on the emotional connections between people and places, makes a contribution to the relatively new field of emotional geography. In particular, it furthers the burgeoning subset of emotional geography scholarship that explores the relationships between repeat visitation, emotions, leisure and environmental contestation.

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All photographs were taken by Philippa Chandler unless specified.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

I interviewed Ben on a warm summer's evening in 2008. We sat on the patio of the spacious, suburban home in Perth, Western Australia, that he shares with his wife Bronwyn and their three young children. 30 years old, Ben chatted freely in a broad Australian accent as he sipped a beer. He first visited the Ningaloo region when he was just two years old, whilst on a family holiday. Ben's father, grandfather and uncle knew Ningaloo well, because his father and uncle were commercial shell divers on the reef the 1970s. Ben has visited the area countless times since childhood and has fond memories of spending time there with his family.

Bronwyn had never been north of Perth until Ben took her on a trip early in their relationship. He paints a romantic picture of this first journey, with the two of them 'taking off' in a borrowed car with a boat and basic equipment for camping and diving. They snorkelled on the reef, swam in creeks, sunbathed, visited islands by boat and ate freshly-caught fish. Ben and Bronwyn had their first child when Ben was 22 and they continued to make frequent trips to the region as their family grew.

Ben visits the region several times each year, and each trip has a slightly different focus. For example, Ben's uncle organises annual 'boys only' fishing trips to Gnaraloo pastoral station, which Ben attends whereas, for family holidays, Ben and Bronwyn take their children to the resort settlement of Coral Bay. Ben's family are particularly attached to the coastal shack settlement known as the Blowholes, near Point Quobba. Ben's uncle and many of his friends have illegal shacks there, and he estimates he has been to this one site at least 20 times. He describes the strong sense of community he feels there.

However, Ben felt that recent changes in the region have had an impact on Ben's family. He will no longer visit Exmouth, the area's largest town, due to recreational

fishing restrictions, and his father now avoids the tourism resort of Coral Bay for similar reasons. As much as Ben finds Coral Bay crowded, his family love it too much to stop visiting. He avoids staying in the area's Cape Range National Park because he feels it is dominated by rules and regulations, and feels that the government employees who manage it 'like to stamp their authority' without a clear purpose.

Ben speaks passionately about the region, describing his family as 'fourth generation' repeat visitors. He says, 'this place is a part of me'. He would desperately love to own some land there and likens this feeling to how he imagines Indigenous people feel about the land. He returns to this subject several times throughout the interview. The interview transcript – 13,000 words – is charged with emotion and vivid detail.

Western Australia's Ningaloo region is an alluring destination for people seeking warm weather during the winter months. Located over ten hours' drive north of Perth, the remote region is known for having one of the longest fringing reefs in the world. Two Australian Aboriginal groups have lived in the Ningaloo Coast region: the Yinikutira in the north and the Baiyungu in the south (Jones 2013, 41). Since the 1960s, the region has developed as a tourism destination known best for camping and marine leisure activities including fishing, surfing and snorkelling. For some Western Australians, the region holds special significance as the setting for annual holidays. For this group, these holidays are part of their family's history and their lives are intertwined with the region's past, present and future.

However, the last 20 years have seen the region's stakeholders embroiled in disputes about how best to mitigate the impacts of tourism growth. As the Ningaloo region develops as a tourist destination, repeat visitors are anxious about their stake in its future. They feel marginalised by planning processes and are sensitive to changes that alter their experiences of, and potentially their relationship with, the region.

Ben's story is emblematic of how many repeat visitors feel about the region. He 'loves' it there but has felt the impacts of environmental management regimes and is anxious about the region's future and his stake in it.

This thesis draws on interviews, fieldwork and participant observation conducted in 2008 and 2009 when the state government's decision to change the region's pastoral leases was causing uneasiness amongst visitors, pastoral lease holders and government staff in the region. While the changes that have occurred in the decade between primary data collection and thesis submission will be explained briefly later in the thesis, the study focusses on the physical and cultural environment of the time.

This thesis will focus on several elements of Ben's story that recurred throughout my interviews with repeat visitors. Firstly, the study will explore the 'sense of community' that repeat visitors experience in the region. Secondly, it will investigate how travel to a beloved destination varies throughout the life course to accommodate changes in circumstances such as having children, and how feelings of attachment are 'passed down' through generations of a family to create memories, strong ties and a sense of ownership. Thirdly, this thesis will examine how families like Ben's structure their year-round lives to enable them to visit the region regularly. Finally, the study explores repeat visitors' anxieties about the future and the uneasy relationships that repeat visitors can have with environmental managers.

This study responds to a gap in the literature about the Ningaloo region. The majority of research about the area has focused on understanding the implications of tourism growth from a management or environmental perspective.

Environmental science studies have sought to evaluate the impact of tourism on the area's fragile eco-system. In the humanities, much of the literature investigates the economic advantages of tourism or seeks to model the various outcomes of it. One study has argued that it is important to understand the emotional and social aspects of Ningaloo repeat visitors (Tonge, 2012), yet it employs a natural resource

management framework where the emphasis is on understanding place rather than people. The present study aims to address this literature gap by focussing on the emotional intersections between people and places and, importantly, between people in place.

1.2 Research aims

In this study, I aim to discover how repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the Ningaloo Coast region of Western Australia. This research aim comprises five sub-questions:

1. What are the characteristics of repeat visitors to the Ningaloo coast region? Are there sub-categories of repeat visitor?
2. How do repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the region?
3. How do visitation patterns change throughout a lifetime, and how do these relate to intergenerational relationships with the region?
4. How do repeat visitors maintain their relationships with the region despite changes in their personal circumstances?
5. How have repeat visitors responded to current and proposed management regimes in the region?

This thesis uses a set of qualitative methods to investigate the research objectives, including a literature review, participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews and field observations. Limits were imposed on the scope of the study in order to achieve these aims efficiently. 'Repeat visitor' was defined as anyone over 18 who had visited the area more than three times. These criteria were chosen

since they indicated an ongoing relationship with the region. Two extra criteria were applied. Firstly, the main purpose of the interviewee's visit to the region had to be leisure rather than work. This was to exclude seasonal workers and business travellers. The second criterion was that their first visit to the region had to have been before 2002. This year was selected as a 'cut off' point because a controversial tourism development in Ningaloo evoked much media coverage that year. This watershed moment is explained in detail in Chapter Four, and I sought research participants whose relationships with the region pre-date this controversy and potential management regime shift. To gain a fuller understanding of repeat visitors, I also interviewed a small number of residents. The criteria for including these participants were that they were over 18 and involved in the tourism industry therefore having extensive experience and regular interactions with repeat visitors. Further information about this process is included in Chapter Four.

This is a qualitative research project, underpinned by discussions about 'space' and 'place' that have been taking place within cultural geography since the mid-1990s (eg. Massey 1994; Crang 1997). It is also informed by more recent cultural geographical scholarship concerned with the impact of increased mobility on contemporary culture (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2010; Bissell 2014; Gorman-Murray and Bissell 2018), the emotional intersections between people and places (Anderson and Smith 2001; Davidson, Smith and Bondi 2007) and spaces of wellbeing (Fleuret and Atkinson 2007; Foley et al. 2019).

1.3 Significance and contribution

An key outcome of this study is its contribution to the literature on the Ningaloo region. When considered in conjunction with research generated by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and Western Australian Marine Science Institution (WAMSI), this study provides an insight into the human experience that other literature has overlooked to date and represents a shift in the research focus on Ningaloo away from approaches that have hitherto prioritised natural resources over human experience. The

perspectives of repeat visitors have been marginalised because this group spends less money in the region than first-time visitors and they are perceived as creating environmental impacts without contributing much to the economy. Government departments have been conflicted about how to manage repeat visitors and have sometimes regarded them as a nuisance. However, this stance overlooks the positive ways in which repeat visitors have shaped the region and their potential for stewardship. This research may inform decision-making processes concerning the Ningaloo region's future in such fields as those concerning infrastructure development, the increase of tourism nodes, accommodation provision in national parks and the ways that government bodies communicate with repeat visitors.

On a theoretical level, this study contributes to three facets of contemporary cultural geographical scholarship. Firstly, the study takes an unusual approach to tourism research in that it examines what happens beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of 'the holiday'. Tourism research often regards travel as though it is an activity that is distinct from and cut off from the rest of daily life (Franklin and Crang 2001) whereas this study looks further both spatially (out of the region) and temporally (throughout lifetimes) and in doing so, makes a contribution to the body of tourism mobilities research within cultural geography. Secondly, the thesis contributes to the relatively recent field of emotional geography in its focus on the emotional intersections between people and places. In particular, it furthers the burgeoning subset of emotional geography scholarship that explores the relationships between repeat visitation, emotions, leisure and environmental contestation. Thirdly, the thesis is aligned with recent geographical research about spaces of wellbeing. This framework is rarely applied to leisure and recreational contexts, so this study represents a fresh perspective on this theme.

1.4 Positioning the researcher

I am originally from regional Western Australia, but the southern part of the state. Before commencing this study, I had visited the Ningaloo region twice. Once was as a child with my father on a 'father/daughter road trip' and again when I was 20,

borrowing my parents' car and taking along two friends, one of whom was visiting from the United Kingdom. I enjoyed introducing them to the vast open spaces of remote Western Australia. These visits were at least a decade apart and, while my parents have visited the area, our family have no ties nor 'sense of connection' to the region. During the fieldwork for this project, I drove a hired Toyota 4WD Landcruiser on some trips and borrowed my parents' 4WD vehicle for others. The registration number plate on my parents' vehicle indicated that it was from a regional town. Upon noticing this, people in caravan parks would greet me warmly and refer to me as a 'country girl'. Despite my cosmopolitan pretensions developed over several years living overseas, I had to agree with them. It was noticeable that I received a warmer welcome when I drove this vehicle and towed a shabby-looking camper trailer, than when I drove an anonymous-looking Landcruiser. This speaks to how politicians, researchers, and government employees - who tend to drive hired Landcruisers - may be perceived in the region. In an article about identity and self-reflexivity in rural sociology, Pini describes a similar situation of being positioned as a 'nice country girl' by her research participants, despite their hostility towards 'people from universities' (2004). Undertaking this study has therefore not only extended my knowledge of contemporary cultural geography scholarship, but has enabled me to explore an aspect of Western Australian culture and my role within it.

1.5 Overview of the study

This thesis consists of eight further chapters in two main parts. In the following three chapters I situate the study within the academic literature, introduce the study area and establish the research methodology. In Chapter Two, I review relevant social scientific literature, with particular attention paid to 'emotional geographies' and 'mobilities' scholarship from the last twenty years. Chapter Three outlines the physical geography of the region and explains how the region's remoteness and climate have contributed to its current tourism status. Chapter Four explains why a qualitative research approach was the most suitable way to

address my research aims and how I employed a range of qualitative research methods: a literature review; semi-structured, in-depth interviews; participant observation; and, field journals for this purpose.

I then present the results of my data analysis in chapters that correspond to my research aims. Chapter Five examines how a sense of community is built and maintained by repeat visitors through place-specific performances. Chapter Six explores how generations of families have created a sense of 'heritage' through repeat visits at different stages of their lives. Chapter Seven demonstrates how repeat visitors maintain their relationships with the region despite changes in their personal circumstances; in this way, the impact of the trip extends beyond the time and space of the trip itself. Chapter Eight explores the nuanced ways that repeat visitors interact with management regimes. Chapter Nine draws links between the empirical data and the literature and considers how the research objectives have been addressed throughout the thesis. Chapter Ten contains the conclusions and a reflective evaluation of the study and suggests further research opportunities.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

The Ningaloo region was a compelling place to research. There was controversy in the air, tensions were high and people were keen to regale me with their opinions. It was apparent that the area deserved further attention and that repeat visitors were a significant stakeholder group. In the previous chapter I noted that much of the existing research on the Ningaloo region has been concerned with weighing up the economic benefits of tourism compared to its social and/or environmental impacts (Wood 2003; Carlsen and Wood 2004; Wood and Hughes 2006; Wood et al. 2006; Lewis 2011). This literature, stemming from the disciplines of natural resource management or economics, prioritises the environment and its inhabitants over those who visit it. This approach tends to overlook visitors' positive experiences of the region and there are many academics who advocate an approach to tourism studies that looks beyond the narrow scope of economic benefits and impacts (Brunt 1999; Franklin and Crang 2001; Urry 2002; Pearce et al. 2004). For example, Craik argues that Australian tourism policy too often focuses on short-term economic effects rather than its long-term cultural effects. She believes "policies for tourism must be compatible with the cultural framework of the community of a tourist site. The lack of attention to the cultural context of tourism has contributed to the boom and bust character of the tourist industry" (1991, 38). This thesis explores the 'cultural context' of repeat visitation to the Ningaloo area and is intended to contribute to the development of a more sustainable future for the area. Franklin and Crang have suggested that, in reading the literature on tourism, "it would be hard to get a real sense that perhaps the central feature of tourism is pleasure, fun and enjoyment" and that "we need to be able to say tourism matters because it is enjoyable, not in spite of it" (2001, 14). My research takes up the challenge posed by Franklin and Crang. My thesis argues that repeat visitors matter, and not only because of their impact on the environment or the local economy. Repeat visitors hold a significant stake in the region and their own emotional responses are often marginalised in debates about the area's future

(Carlsen and Wood 2004). This research complements the economics and natural resource management literature and makes a contribution towards a more nuanced understanding of tourism dynamics in the Ningaloo region. The discipline of human geography underpins this thesis, with particular attention paid to 'emotional geographies' and 'mobilities' scholarship from the last twenty years. However, as Graburn and Jafari write, "no single discipline alone can accommodate, treat, or understand tourism; it can be studied only if disciplinary boundaries are crossed and if multidisciplinary perspectives are sought and formed" (1991, 7-8). This research, therefore, draws on ideas and material from disciplines traditionally grouped as social sciences (anthropology, sociology, human geography) as well as disciplines associated with the broader humanities such as history, Australian studies and cultural studies.

How do repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the Ningaloo Coast region of Western Australia?

A body of academic literature focusses on tourism in the Ningaloo region that, as mentioned above, has stemmed from the disciplines of natural resource management or economics (Wood 2003; Carlsen and Wood 2004; Wood and Hughes 2006; Wood et al. 2006; Catlin and Jones 2010, Smallwood et al. 2011; Smallwood, Beckley and Moore 2012). While these studies tend to pay little attention to the perspectives of visitors, they provide useful contextual information for my study, including 'baseline' data about tourism expenditure and human usage of the region. This literature has informed Chapter Three, which provides background information about the region's physical environment and history as a tourism destination.

Jones, Ingram and Kingham (2007) explored the tense dynamics between environmental managers, 'wilderness' campers and pastoralists in the Ningaloo region. 'Wilderness camping' is the practice of camping in hard-to-access places where few – if any – amenities are provided. In a witty article, the authors use the characters from the folk song *Waltzing Matilda* to draw parallels between the

stakeholders at Ningaloo and Holmes' (2006) post-productive values of protection (environmental managers / troopers), consumption (tourists / swagmen) and production (pastoralists / squatters). The article provides an excellent explanation of how the region has come to rely on tourism and why these stakeholders have fraught relationships with each other. However, the article gives little attention to campers' perspectives. Also, it focusses only on the contestations surrounding 'wilderness' camping at pastoral stations and does not include the passionate campers who stay in national parks or commercial caravan parks. My research extends Jones, Ingram and Kingham's work by looking at the broader category of 'repeat visitors' and using primary data to explore their perspectives.

Lawrie explored patterns of coastal tourism growth in the Ningaloo region, and the implications for informal camping (2007). Lawrie argued that informal camping and caravanning along the Western Australian coastline is a significant component of the tourism industry and that this market 'niche' could be displaced or marginalised if it were not recognised and catered for in tourism planning (2007, 45). Lawrie's work is an important contribution to understandings of coastal camping in the Ningaloo region. However, by focusing on informal camping it misses the significance of the region's caravan parks. It also pays limited attention to the campers' perspectives.

Also relevant is the cluster of scholarship that explores the political complexities of the world heritage designation process in the Ningaloo region. Christensen et al. (2013) examined the community and socio-economic impacts of the process, comparing the 1991 Shark Bay World Heritage designation to the Ningaloo designation which occurred 20 years later. Jones, Jones and Hughes (2015) develop these ideas using the concept of scale to explore the World Heritage process in a more theoretical way. While these studies do not focus on visitors' experiences, they are relevant in that they recognise the tensions in the region and the tensions between the local, state and national decision-making hierarchies. These studies provide relevant information about the social and political contexts to which repeat visitors are contributing, and they have informed the following chapter.

Tonge explores place-attachment among campers in the southern part of the region in a study highly applicable to my research (2012). Having conducted primary research with repeat visitors, she argues that emotional and social aspects play a key role in visitors' attachment to the Ningaloo coast, and that they do indeed care for and act in an environmentally responsible way while camping along the Ningaloo coast. My study corroborates these findings. However, Tonge pays limited attention to the relationships *between* people, and side-steps the tensions between repeat visitors, managers and pastoral leaseholders outlined in previous research.

The review of literature about the Ningaloo region indicates that most literature has focussed on understanding the implications of tourism growth from a management perspective. While Tonge has argued that emotional and social aspects are important, she does so within a natural resource management framework where the emphasis is on understanding **place**. The present study aims to address this literature gap by focusing on the emotional intersections between people and places and – importantly – between people and **each other** in place.

While scholars have long argued that people feel strongly about places and landscapes (eg. Tuan 1974), geographers are increasingly interested in the emotional intersections between people and places, so this research is aligned with this trend in contemporary human geography. In a landmark article, Anderson and Smith (2001) argued there was a 'void' in geographical scholarship when it came to emotions. This emotional 'turn' was recognised with the publication of the edited book *Emotional Geographies* in 2007 (Davidson, Smith and Bondi) and the launch of the journal *Emotion, Space and Society* in 2008. The emerging field of emotional geographies has tended to focus on matters such as family life (Rose 2004; Tarrant 2016; Hall 2019), health and ageing (Morris and Thomas 2007; Collis 2007; Milligan, Bingley and Gatrell 2007) and grief (Hockey, Penhale and Sibley 2007). A growing body of scholarship addresses the emotions produced by our interactions with the physical world (Smith 2007; Waitt, Gill and Head 2008; Gill, Waitt and Head 2009; Foley 2017). "The editors of a recent book about 'blue space' suggest that geography is experiencing a hydrophilic turn as cultural geographers focus on

aspects of water that are “affective, life-enhancing and health-enabling” (Foley et al. 2019). Equally relevant is the subset of emotional geography research that seeks to explore the relationships between repeat visitation, emotions, leisure and environmental contestation. It is to this body of geography scholarship that this research thesis aims to make a contribution. The importance of emotions in geographical scholarship has been addressed in the context of bushwalking in NSW (Waite, Gill and Head 2008; Gill, Waite and Head 2009, Foley 2017). They argue that environmental managers cannot rely on the technical discourses of conservation biology in order to enlist the support of citizens. Instead, environmental managers need to have an understanding of the pleasures that recreational activities – such as bushwalking – bring to people. The present study about repeat visitors in Ningaloo is a timely contribution to this burgeoning interest in the emotional intersections between people and places.

Mobilities research has prompted a new appreciation of the significance of tourism in contemporary life. Tourism was once described as "the temporary movement to destinations outside the normal home and workplace, the activities undertaken during the stay and the facilities created to cater for the needs of tourists" (Mathieson and Wall 1982, 1) or a “structural break from ordinary life” (Graburn 1983, 8). However, new ways of considering human movement were proposed in the early 2000s, when academics proposed a ‘mobilities turn’ or ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (eg. Sheller and Urry 2006; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2010). This research agenda sought to move away from positivist models of spatial science and pay more attention to the ways in which people are living increasingly mobile lives (Adey et al. 2014). This body of scholarship challenged the notion that tourism was separate from ordinary life, instead regarding tourism and mobility as a powerful component of the pervasive and encompassing process of globalisation. These scholars critiqued the rigidity of the traditional definitions of tourism and have suggested that contemporary cultural practices - such as second home ownership, repeat visitation, use of communication technology, frequent travel, remote working and seasonal migration - render such notions as 'temporary movement' and 'normal home and workplace' outdated and/or inadequate

(Franklin and Crang 2001; McIntyre, Williams and McHugh 2006; Larsen et al. 2007). While mobilities theory has been applied to a range of contexts including fly-in-fly-out workers (Gorman-Murray and Bissell 2018), academics who travel for work purposes (Hopkins et al. 2015) and commuters (Bissell 2014), a sub-section of mobilities literature focusses on tourism itself (Iaquinto 2018). Franklin and Crang argued that tourism is a significant factor in global social life with ramifications far beyond just what happens at tourist 'sites' (2001). Tourism is incorporated into home life and home life is replicated on holiday (Crang 1997; Kearns & Collins, 2004). Long, regular holidays where people create a 'home away from home' disrupt Graburn's notion that tourism provides a 'break' from ordinary life (1983). More recently, it has been suggested that tourism mobilities must become less Eurocentric to remain relevant (Cohen and Cohen 2015) and that the very notion of tourism mobilities may have 'had its heyday' (Coles 2015) altogether. Nonetheless, these theories about mobility continue to underpin academic research in a range of contexts. For example, recent journal special issues (Schwanen and Atkinson 2015) and edited collections (Atkinson et al. 2012) indicate that geographers are increasingly interested in wellbeing. A framework of 'spaces of wellbeing' has assisted geographers in conceptualising the link between these two concepts (Fleuret and Atkinson 2007). However, when dealing with multilocality there is a "need to account for how networks of inter-related spaces, and spaces of mobility as well as mooring, together influence wellbeing" (Gorman-Murray and Bissell 2018, 235). The interaction between wellbeing and mobility has been explored using the examples of older people moving around from village to village in daily life (Ziegler and Schwanen 2011) and those who work away from home (Gorman-Murray and Bissell 2018). As a remote location that is disproportionately visited by elderly retirees, health and wellbeing is a concern to the many repeat visitors who participated in my study. This PhD research is a contribution to this growing body of geographical scholarship that investigates how 'spaces of wellbeing' are experienced by mobile bodies (Doughty 2013, Gorman-Murray and Bissell 2018).

Doreen Massey's book *For Space* (2005) provides a framework for an analysis of spaces and places. Referencing Sarah Whatmore's work on the mobile lives of

animals and plants, Massey suggests that places are unstable and ever-shifting. Rather than understanding places as something fixed, Massey (2005, 139) suggests they could be understood as a series of encounters:

'Here' is where spatial narratives meet up or form configurations, junctures of trajectories which have their own temporalities (so 'now' is as problematical as 'here'). But where the successions of meetings, the accumulation of weavings and encounters build up a history. **It's the returns** (mine, the swifts') and the very differentiation of temporalities that lend continuity. But the returns are always to a place that has moved on, the layers of our meeting intersecting and affecting each other; weaving a process of space-time. Layers as accretions of **meetings**. Thus something which might be called there and then is implicated in the here and now. 'Here' is an **intertwining of histories** in which the spatiality of those histories (their then as well as their here) is inescapably entangled. The interconnections themselves are part of the construction of **identity**. [my emphasis]

With her talk of returns, meetings and intertwining of histories and identity, Massey could almost be writing about repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region. Massey's themes of returning, meeting, history and identity will be explored in this thesis. Massey's dynamic theory that places are continually re-made by those who meet in them contrasts with the natural resource literature about Ningaloo mentioned earlier in this section that takes the stance that Ningaloo is a fixed, pre-existing place that visitors simply visit and 'impact upon'. This study draws on Massey's theories to make a contribution to scholarship about places and identities.

What are the characteristics of repeat visitors to the Ningaloo coast region? Are there sub-categories of repeat visitor?

Several studies have been conducted with similar groups of repeat visitors in international contexts, such as Swedish retirees (Gustafson 2002) and American

'Sunbirds' (Mings and McHugh 1995; McHugh and Mings 1996; Onyx and Leonard 2005; Onyx and Leonard 2007; Kusenbach 2018). Gitelson and Crompton identify five factors that motivate someone to return to an area: 'reduced risk that an unsatisfactory experience would be forthcoming; an assurance that they would find 'their kind of people' there; emotional childhood attachment; to experience some aspects of the destination which had been omitted on a previous occasion; and to expose others to the experience' (1984, 1). These five factors are all highly applicable to the motivations of repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that ecotourists sometimes demonstrate 'destination loyalty' (Kyle et al. 2004; Weaver and Lawton 2011; Chi 2012; Moore, Rodger and Taplin 2013).

In an Australian context, research has been conducted on repeat visitors to destinations including Karajini National Park (Moore, Rodger and Taplin 2017), the Valley of the Giants Tree Top Walk (Hughes and Morrison-Saunders 2002) and Dandenong National Park (Ramkissoon, Smith and Weiler 2013). Cridland conducted an analysis of the winter movement of 'grey nomads' – the affectionate name for older Australians who have retired from the workforce and take longer self-drive holidays (2008). In researching the travel patterns and population characteristics of this group, he considered whether grey nomads were a homogenous population and, if not, how any differences within this group affected their mobility and destination choices. Davies has also researched grey nomads, in order to better understand population ageing in rural Australia (2011). Davies notes that grey nomads are usually excluded from assessments of rural ageing despite the fact that a seasonal influx of older people causes a considerable swelling in the total population of many rural towns. While Cridland and Davies' research is Australia-wide and not specific to the Ningaloo region, it nonetheless provides a useful lens through which to view the region's older repeat visitors.

More immediately applicable to the Ningaloo context is the survey data collected by Jones et al. (2009) (of which I am a co-author) about visitors to the Ningaloo region. This study acts as a baseline for understanding visitation to the region,

providing information about visitor numbers across seasons, including what kinds of activities the visitors undertake and their expenditure and accommodation preferences. However, Jones' research looks at all visitors to the region, and repeat visitors are solely a sub-section of them. So, while it provides important contextual information and informs the background chapter for this thesis, it does not answer specific questions about sub-sets of repeat visitors or focus on the complex dynamics of returning, meeting, history and identity.

How do repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the region?

Studies of Australian beach and holiday culture provide a starting point for an understanding of how repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the Ningaloo region. The beach features strongly in cultural studies literature and is arguably the discipline's "most privileged (environmental) site" (Matthewman 2004 1). It is conceptualised as a 'liminal zone', a social and geographic periphery (Shields 1991). Fiske's semiotic reading of Western Australia's Cottesloe beach is a classic example of 1980s cultural studies, with Fiske arguing that the beach is packed with meaning and can be read like a text (1983). Fiske's use of an Australian beach to make generalisations about beaches world-wide were subsequently criticised by a New Zealand academic (Matthewman 2004). There have been many investigations into the link between the beach and Australian national identity (Game 1989; Morris 1992; Drew 1994; McGregor 1995; Gibson 2001; Booth 2001; Huntsman 2001) including how uneasy Australian racial politics have resulted in race 'riots' centred around urban beaches (Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll 2006; Johns 2008).

The culture of Australian caravan parks is vividly described by Carmel Foley, who noticed themes of relaxation, sense of community and friendship in her interviews with repeat visitors in Australia's east coast (2007; 2017). The participants in Foley's research reported that "friendships and a sense of community were special and attractive features of caravan park holidays; these were features they believed to

be missing in other types of holidays” (2017 9). The repeat visitors in Foley’s study refused to be driven by schedules, socialised with other tourists and felt “no compulsion to use time purposively” (2017 1). Foley argues that this rejection of ‘time thrift’ is a form of slow tourism (2017 1).

A body of work explores the Australian camping and caravanning industry (Caldicott and Scherrer 2013; Caldicott, Scherrer and Jenkins 2014; Caldicott, Jenkins and Scherrer 2018). These studies focus on political debates about the supply (and perceived shortages) of camping and caravanning sites, the life-cycle of commercial caravan parks and the intersecting interests of stakeholders such as caravan manufacturers, local councils, commercial caravan park operators, caravan owners seeking free or low-cost sites (known as ‘freedom campers’), motoring organisations like the RACV and Tourism Australia.

In a New Zealand context, there is a substantial body of work on the social aspects of camping (Collins and Kearns 2010; Kearns and Collins 2012; Kearns, Collins and Bates 2017) and hostels (Wildish, Kearns and Collins 2016). Place-attachment, freedom, friendship and a sense of community are strong themes in this scholarship, as is the sense of loss when beloved campsites are closed-down. Camp grounds facilitate the seemingly paradoxical desire for both solitude and community (Wildish, Kearns and Collins 2016) and offer children opportunities for outdoor play, adventure, activities and family time that is limited in their ‘usual and generally urban-based lives’ (Freeman and Kearns 2015 106).

Two engaging books explore the history of Australian holiday culture; White’s history of Australian holidays (2005) and Garner’s history of camping (2013). Garner argues that white Australian culture was founded on camping. In her doctoral thesis about representations of the Australian beach in film and literature, Ellison (2013) provides a good overview of scholarship on Australian beach cultures which generally focuses on ‘iconic’ elements of the (sub)urban beach such as surfing and surf lifesaving. The studies Ellison cites tend to take a representational approach in which beaches are read like texts, and little attention is paid to remote beaches.

Remote beaches in national parks and on pastoral stations constitute a separate category of beach that is under-researched. This thesis expands knowledge of Australian holiday culture by focussing on how repeat visitors interact with and understand remote coastal locations.

How do visitation patterns change throughout a lifetime, and how do these relate to intergenerational relationships with the region?

Some repeat visitors have a ‘family history’ of visiting a region and may have visited an area with their parents – or grandparents – when they were children. The concept of a family life cycle has been developing since the 1960s (eg. Wells and Gubar 1966; Murphy and Staples 1979; Bernini and Cracolici 2015) and has been used as a framework to understand travel practices. Broadly speaking, a family life cycle begins when individuals are young and single and ends with the death of the last partner (Collins and Tisdell, 2002). Zimmerman (1982) explored the link between household type and travel using five household types: nuclear family, single parent, child-free couple, single person and unrelated individuals. Over thirty years later, this typology seems simplistic and outdated now that diverse sets of relationships – particularly blended and LGBTQI families – are recognised more broadly. However, all families go through transitions and Zimmerman’s description of the ‘nuclear family’s’ transition from “the young single person stage to young married and child-rearing stages, to the “empty nest” stage to the elderly “sole survivor” stage” (1982, 57) remains applicable to many of Ningaloo’s repeat visitors.

While families change, so do destinations and it is worthwhile summarising the influential model of tourism-led development proposed by Richard Butler in 1980. The Butler model proposes that tourism destinations experience stages of involvement, commencing with an ‘exploration’ phase led by early-adopters, followed by development, consolidation and stagnation. Once a destination’s tourism offering has become stagnant, the destination may rejuvenate or decline. The Ningaloo region is arguably following this model, with repeat visitors both contributing to (and impacted by) the region’s increased popularity. Chapter Three

will argue that families' experiences of the Ningaloo region are intertwined with its development as a tourism destination, in that repeat visitors' parents or grandparents may have visited the region during its 'exploration' phase.

Informal holiday shacks at the Blowholes, a coastal camping area in the south of the Ningaloo region, are passed down through families. The shacks' heritage and controversial status will be explained further in the following chapter, and this phenomenon of families building cheap and possibly illegal holiday accommodation is not unique to the Ningaloo region. These Australian shack settlements echo the 'plotland' developments in South-East England between 1910-1930 (Ward and Hardy 1985). Plotland settlements were established in a "brief period in English history when it was possible for people with no capital and no access to credit to make their own place in the sun, with profound effect on their family lives" (Ward and Hardy 1985, 63). The same could be said for the New Zealand 'bach', traditionally a modest, low-cost site of temporary accommodation (Collins and Kearns 2008) and for other Australian shack settlements that hug the coast (Selwood and Jones 2010; Picken 2018). However, it isn't just shacks that get passed down through generations but memories and experiences in a process that could be termed "heritage from below" (Robertson 2012).

Ageing and travel have been examined from various academic perspectives including housing research (Rose and Kingma 1989), gerontology (Longino et al. 1991; Longino et al. 2002), tourism and leisure studies (Blazey 1991; Backman et al. 1999; Sie et al. 2016), marketing (Shoemaker 1984; Vincent and De Los Santos 1990) and health (Guinn 1980; Zhou et al. 2018). A number of academics have investigated the links between ageing, retirement and travel (Jobes 1984; Bates 2006; Onyx and Leonard 2005; Onyx and Leonard 2007), with some theorists suggesting that older people disrupt the dichotomy of 'home' and 'away' by residing "in multiple locales, forging place attachments and experiences via seasonal migration and recurrent mobility" (McHugh and Mings 1996). In his research on Swedish retirees in Spain, Gustafson (2002) found that that the retirees attempted to create a social space for themselves between 'tourists' and the Spanish. In this

way, retired migrants fall between the commonly-held categories of 'locals' and 'tourists'.

Retired repeat visitors are one of the most numerous, noticeable and influential groups who visit the Ningaloo region. Since this group tends to visit annually and to stay for months on end, they have developed strong relationships with the area and with each other. They have fostered a connection to a specific place and to their small community and they have decided to return there annually. Therefore, research about older travellers is particularly relevant to this study. The first research into retired seasonal migrants was conducted in the United States in the 1950s (Hoyte 1954) when large numbers of older members of the population began spending extended periods in warmer locations over the winter. In the United States these people are affectionately known as 'snowbirds' and congregate in areas such as Arizona (McHugh and Mings 1991; McHugh and Mings 1996; Happel and Hogan 2002; Lindblom et al 2019). Snowbirds tend to be in their mid-60s, married, with middle-incomes, moderately educated, of Anglo Celtic origin and to be attracted to their winter residence by the good weather and lifestyle (McHugh and Mings 1991; McHugh and Mings 1996). According to Mings and McHugh (1995), three qualities characterise the snowbird lifestyle: the discretionary time for recreational pursuits; the importance of social interaction amongst snowbirds, facilitated by recreational vehicle (RV) resort programs; and the geographic mobility of snowbirds which permits both their annual migration, and numerous short trips from their base location. Mings (1997) collected survey data on 'Australian snowbirds' in far North Queensland. He reported that the Australians had a similar demographic profile to the Americans, and that both groups were attracted to warm weather. However, Mings recorded that the Australians interacted much less with other couples and placed less importance on social interaction. Mings explained this difference by highlighting the low level of formal programs, activities and recreational infrastructure provided in Australian caravan parks and campgrounds compared to those in the United States of America (1997 181). Australians also tended to move more often, to return to the same location less, and to travel longer distances while based in one place.

Australian grey nomads have been the subject of increased academic scrutiny over the past fifteen years. In 2005, the Australian researchers Onyx and Leonard took Mings to task for "imposing" the snowbird paradigm on Australia's grey nomads when he conducted fieldwork here (2005 65). Onyx and Leonard found that grey nomads placed a high value on their freedom to do what (and go where) they want. They also found that social networks were important to grey nomads for advice, help and companionship but that they avoided resorts and motels where possible, preferring sites that impinged less on their sense of and desire for 'freedom'. These differences could be explained in a couple of ways. It could be attributed to a cultural difference between Australian grey nomads and American snowbirds in that the former group place a high value on their freedom and tend to avoid commercial leisure infrastructure. However, it is possible that Mings and Onyx and Leonard were actually studying different travel phenomena. For example, Mings only recruited interviewees from caravan parks for his Australian fieldwork whereas Onyx and Leonard included 'free camping' sites. Those staying in 'free camping' sites may be less inclined to enjoy organised activities. One can at least hypothesise that America also possesses a cohort of adventurous older people who avoid organised resorts, instead preferring to stay in the American equivalent of 'free camping spots', but these were not covered by Mings' research.

The 'freedom' of the 'grey nomad' lifestyle, in terms of both movement and from societal expectations, may be its most attractive feature (Westh 2001). The emphasis on freedom, adventure and autonomy has led to a body of research promoting this type of travel as a positive model for ageing (Westh 2001; Higgs and Quirk 2007; Onyx and Leonard 2007). Onyx and Leonard are the only authors who use empirical research to address this topic (2007). They link two more determinants linking successful ageing and continuing mobility. First, the existence of social networks which provide social interaction and reduce the risks associated with equipment failure, injuries and illness. The second determinant is personal growth through travel to new, remote and beautiful locations, engendering a sense of wonder and discovery (2007, 391). This literature tends to view the 'grey nomad' experience positively. Holloway (2007) is the only author writing in this field who

identifies negative issues arguing that the promotion of 'positive ageing' could reinforce negative connotations of ageing by denying the limitations of bodily decline; and that negative stereotypes of grey nomads in some host communities could indicate the presence of local conflicts.

How do repeat visitors maintain their relationships with the region despite changes in their personal circumstances?

Throughout my research I met people who had been regular visitors to the Ningaloo region for over twenty years. Considering the region is remote, and access is expensive, this demonstrates considerable commitment. Repeat visitors balance their desire to return to the Ningaloo region against impediments imposed on them by the other 'everyday' components of their lives. Barriers mentioned by interviewees included health problems, the constraints of low income, limited annual leave, and having school-aged children. The notion of 'leisure constraints' has been explored by many academics (Kleiber et al. 2008; Damali and McGuire, 2013;) including the related idea of 'constraint negotiation process'. This process has been theorised as models (Hubbard and Mannell 2001), hierarchies and a series of propositions (Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey 1993). However, it is generally argued that participation in leisure activities does not depend on an absence of constraints, but on negotiations of them. These negotiations may modify rather than prohibit participation (Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey 1993). For older travellers, one of these constraints may be their health. Research has shown that grey nomads travel despite chronic health conditions (Hillman 2013; Raven 2016; Hungerford et al. 2016) demonstrating 'health preparedness' and an ability to accommodate their health problems on the road (Calma, Halcomb and Stephens 2018). These 'self-care strategies' (Raven 2015) could be understood as ways to negotiate leisure constraints.

While there is a body of academic literature that investigates planned versus realised tourist behaviour (Stewart and Vogt 1999; March and Woodside 2005; Yiannakis and Gibson 1992) this 'travel planning' literature tends to be interested

only in what visitors plan to do *when on holiday*, and overlooks how tourists organise themselves *in order to* take a holiday. While the constraints mentioned above – such as poor health or limited annual leave - may be common to aspiring tourists around the world, the physical isolation of the Ningaloo region poses a specific series of challenges. There is little literature examining how repeat visitors, in particular, overcome such constraints. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature on leisure constraint negotiation processes by focusing on repeat visitors travelling to remote settings. It is important to note that repeat visitors to Ningaloo are not necessarily affluent, and some make considerable financial sacrifices to be able to afford to return regularly. The ways in which repeat visitors to Ningaloo negotiate these constraints – both generic and Ningaloo-specific - are explored in Chapter Seven.

How have repeat visitors responded to current and proposed management regimes in the region?

Repeat visitors are sometimes accused by other stakeholders of behaving as if they 'own the place'. Yet, while they may feel a sense of ownership or even entitlement, repeat visitors to Ningaloo do not usually possess property in the region. As the Ningaloo region develops, repeat visitors are finding themselves impacted by changing management regimes. In Australia, tourism-lead regional development can cause friction, particularly in remote and regional areas (Selwood, Curry and Jones 1996). Selwood, Curry and Koczberski (1995, 39) write that:

Wherever tourism occurs, there is pressure to upgrade facilities and infrastructure. These pressures generally stem from bureaucrats' attempts to protect the environment, as for example, to 'contain' growth, to achieve economies, or to maintain health and sanitation standards.

It has been said that “getting off the beaten track often means that track becomes a road, or even a highway” (Wearing and Neil, 2009, xiii). The controversies associated with the development and management of informal holiday shacks on

the Western Australian coast has been studied by Selwood and Jones (2012). My study will make a contribution to the growing body of research that focuses on tourism-related change in regional Australian communities - such as John Selwood's work on change in Denmark, Western Australia (Selwood et al. 1995; Selwood et al. 1996; Brunger and Selwood 1997).

Repeat visitors' emotional responses to change have been explored in academic literature. Collins and Kearns have shown how the closure of coastal camp grounds in New Zealand has generated strong emotions for those whose families had camped at these sites for generations. The authors argue that "an emotional connection between people and place is at stake" (2010, 73). In later work, the same authors suggest that emotions are critical to understanding what is at risk in contested coastal developments. It is these emotional connections, they argue, that motivate repeat visitors to take action to protect the holiday destinations they frequent (Kearns and Collins 2012). In an Australian context, Selwood and Jones have explored the tension between families who have built informal coastal holiday shacks on Crown land, and authorities tasked with regulating and managing this land (2010). Attempts by 'shackies' to maintain the recreational lifestyles they 'love' are seen as a threat to the social order, and Selwood and Jones conceptualise their efforts to protect their shacks as a "heritage from below" initiative (2010). This thesis contributes to this literature through recording and analysing the emotional and social ties repeat visitors develop to coastal campgrounds, and the ways these are important to understanding the dynamics of conflict around coastal planning and development.

2.2 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that there is a growing body of research on emotional responses to places, and that this is a dynamic research field. By organising the material according to my research questions, I have shown that my research engages with several academic debates related to repeat visitation, Australian holiday cultures, travel and the life-course, travel and ageing, leisure

constraints and emotional responses to regional change. More broadly, my research draws on – and contributes to – human geographical scholarship concerned with emotional geography, mobility and understandings of place. In particular, the contribution this thesis makes is to explore these issues within the context of a remote region. Subsequent chapters demonstrate that my interviews with repeat visitors yielded rich data on these themes. The following chapter provides contextual information about the Ningaloo region’s physical and cultural environments.

3. Background

3.1 Introduction

A casual scroll through Tripadvisor’s listing for Ningaloo Reef provides an insight into how visitors regard the region. Reviewers extol the region’s beauty using clichés such as ‘pure’, ‘paradise’, ‘unspoilt’, ‘wild’ and ‘deserted beaches’. This chapter will explain how an area regarded for centuries by Europeans as inhospitable and barely suitable for livestock has not only developed a reputation as a tourism destination but has come to depend economically on this industry. This chapter outlines the physical geography of the region and explains how the region’s remoteness and climate have contributed to its current tourism status. It then gives a brief history of the region, before focusing on contemporary tourism practices. Then I outline recent controversies over environmental management and tourism development in order to provide the context for the period when data for this thesis was collected in 2008-09.

3.2 Physical geography

The Ningaloo region is located in the north west of Australia on a narrow peninsula called the North West Cape. It is just north of the Tropic of Capricorn. The western coast of the peninsula is fringed by a coral reef named the Ningaloo Reef and on the eastern side are the more sheltered and shallow waters of the Exmouth Gulf (Figure

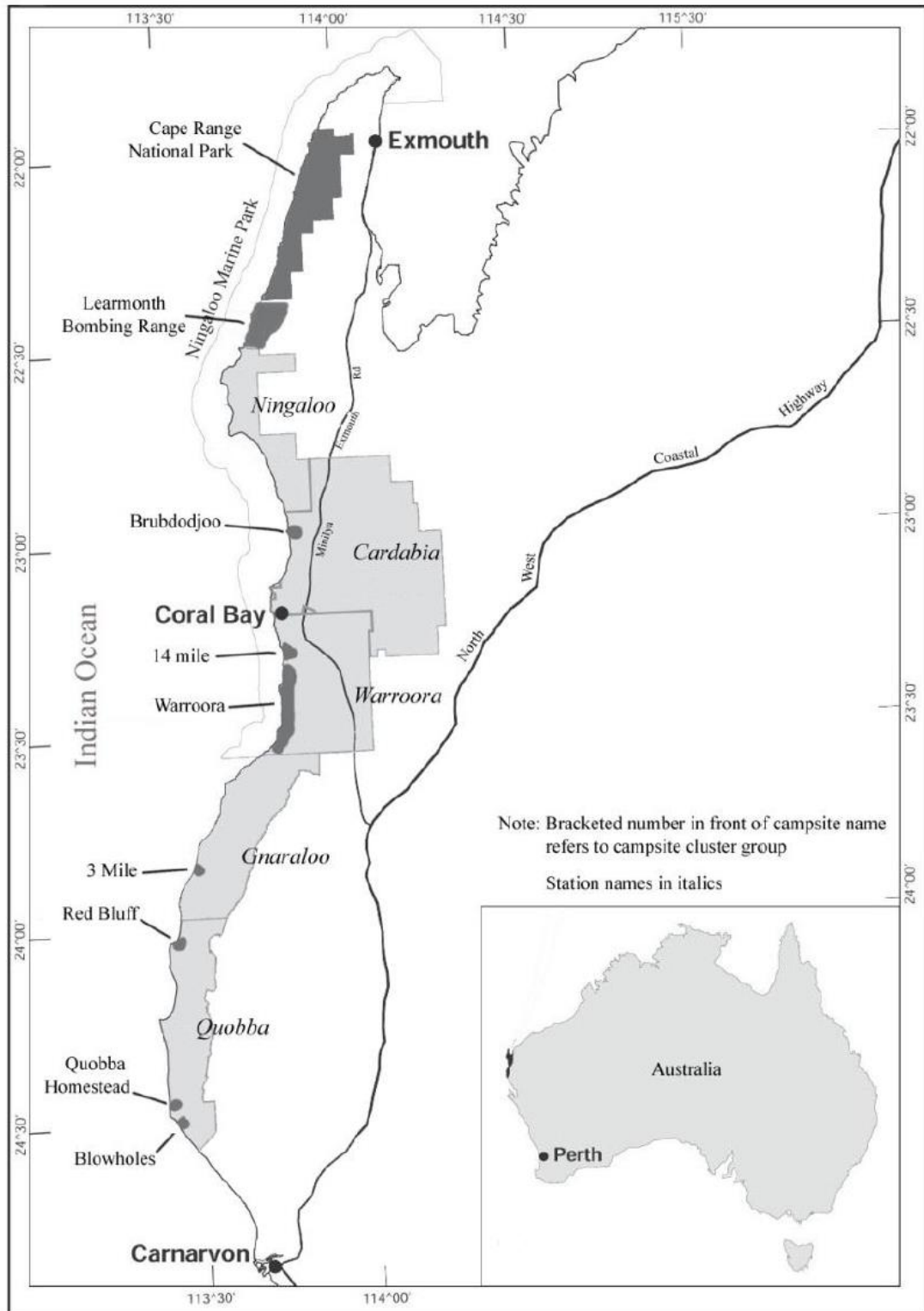
3.1). The Cape Range divides these contrasting marine environments (Morse 1988). The North West Cape sits within the larger administrative region of the Gascoyne which extends more than 500 kilometres inland. It includes the four local government shires of Carnarvon, Exmouth, Shark Bay and Upper Gascoyne.

The word 'Ningaloo' comes from the indigenous languages of the region and is used to refer to a variety of physical locations and sites, including the pastoral station, 'Ningaloo Station', the reef, 'Ningaloo Reef', and the broader region that adjoins the reef which is called 'the Ningaloo region' or 'the Ningaloo coast'. This was the case when the primary research was conducted and remains the case today. In this thesis, the phrase 'the Ningaloo region' refers to the land from which the Ningaloo Reef can be accessed. This includes the towns of Exmouth, Carnarvon and Coral Bay, the Cape Range National Park and the five coastal pastoral stations – all of which will be described later in this chapter.

On a national scale, the region is classified as 'very remote' (University of Adelaide 2006). The town of Exmouth has a population of approximately 2514 (ABS 2018) and is located 1250km north of Perth. The drive to Exmouth takes about 13 hours. The flight schedule for Learmonth Airport – 30km south of Exmouth - is simpler than a bus schedule, with just one commercial inbound flight per day (Shire of Exmouth). The area is served by commercial bus operators with an overnight journey that takes over 17 hours from Perth. The area is not connected by rail. To put this in a national context, Exmouth is a 52 hour drive from Sydney in a journey of over 5000km. There are no direct commercial flights from any Australian capital city, except Perth.

The Ningaloo Coast region is classified as an arid zone with an average annual rainfall of less than 300 millimetres (BOM 2016). Conditions in the more extreme north range from an average monthly mean maximum temperature of 37.8C in January to a mild 24.7C in July (BOM 2018). The area is prone to cyclones between January and March. Because of the climate, tourism follows cyclical patterns. Winter is the peak tourism period when cooler temperatures in the south of the

state drives visitors north to experience comfortable temperatures in the mid-twenties. Conversely, high temperatures, wind and humidity mean that the region is quieter in summer. The population therefore fluctuates with the seasons, not only due to travellers but also with workers in the tourism industry.



While the region is best known for the reef, the terrestrial landscape is likewise spectacular and fragile. According to Köppen classifications, it features grassland vegetation in the north of the region and desert in the south (BOM 2016). The Cape Range is a rugged limestone range reaching up to 300m above sea level and is most prominent in the northern part of the peninsula. The presence of active karst solution as a result of seawater incursion is rare in Australia, and Ningaloo Coast is the best example in Australia of this globally significant karst solution process. The range has spectacular gorges and is home to a number of species of wildlife including birds, emus, wallaroos and red kangaroos.

The region is currently renowned for having Australia's largest fringing coral reef. The Ningaloo Reef (Figure 3.2, Figure 3.3) stretches for over 350 kilometres and is visited by whale sharks, turtles, humpback whales, and manta rays (DEC 2010). It is a popular destination for snorkelers and divers and, unlike Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the Ningaloo Reef can be easily accessed from the beach. Given its current remoteness from large population centres and industrial/mining development, the reef is regarded as being in better health than the Great Barrier Reef. However, as a fringing reef, it is more vulnerable to the environmental impacts of onshore development. The presence of whale sharks – the world's largest fish – annually from March to August has led to the growth of whale shark tourism since approximately 1990 (Catlin 2010), which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.



Figure 3.2 Ningaloo Reef coastline



Figure 3.3 Ningaloo Reef coastline

3.3 History

Two Australian Aboriginal groups have lived in the Ningaloo Coast region: the Yinikutira in the north and the Baiyungu¹ in the south (Jones 2013, 41).

Archaeological research on shell middens in the Cape Range has uncovered artefacts including knives, dishes and pendants made from baler shell and adzes made from giant clams. These have proved that people were living in the area in the Pleistocene period (Morse 1988; Przywolnik 2003). Morse writes that it is ironic that an area regarded by European colonialists as almost inhospitable “should offer the first archaeological evidence in Australia for a Pleistocene marine economy” (1988, 87).

The Yinikutira people were living in the Cape Range area in the nineteenth century, and their interactions with Europeans at that time are documented. This group of people disappeared from the region at the time when local pastoral leases were granted to European settlers (Dagmar 1978). The exact cause of their demise is unknown. Today, the pastoral station Cardabia is run by the Australian government’s Indigenous Land Corporation and the Baiyungu Aboriginal Corporation. Around 19% of Carnarvon’s population are Indigenous, and some of these people have family connections to the Yinikutira lands (ABS 2016). The Baiyungu people have a strong presence in the southern part of the Ningaloo Coast, and the BAC also owns freehold land at Coral Bay. The BAC also provides beach camping and station accommodation on Cardabia station. The Gascoyne region has a number of distinct Aboriginal groups, seven of whom have joined together to

¹ ‘Yinikutira’ is also spelled ‘Jinigudira’. ‘Baiyungu’ is also spelled ‘Payungu’, ‘Baijungu’ and ‘Bayungu’. For detailed information on Indigenous Australian group names and their spellings, I recommend the Australian Indigenous Languages Database <http://austlang.aiatsis.gov.au>

form the Gnulli Aboriginal Corporation that oversees native title claims in the region. The Aboriginal community in Carnarvon is diverse and active.

The first Europeans to record visits to the North West Cape were Dutch sailors. Haevik van Hillegom recorded sighting the Cape in 1618, and Willem de Vlamingh charted Vlamingh Head in 1696. The Australian-born hydrographer Phillip Parker King visited in 1818, as part of a survey of the coastline to research potential settlements (Australian Dictionary of Biography 1967). The Gascoyne district attracted its first European settlers in 1876 when the Minilya sheep station was established as a pastoral lease that covered the whole Cape Range peninsula. Pastoral stations were “the main causes of disturbance in the lives of the Aboriginal people of the Gascoyne district” (Dagmar 1978, 19). Pearl grounds were ‘discovered’² in the Exmouth Gulf in 1885 and pearling boats worked in the area until the early 1900s (Bach 1955). Norwegian whalers worked in the region in the early 1900s and a whaling station was constructed at Norwegian Bay, near Point Cloates, in 1915 (Stanbury 1983). Minilya station was gradually subdivided, with its northernmost component being resumed as Cape Range National Park in 1974 (DPAW 2016). There are currently five pastoral leases in the region – Ningaloo, Warroora, Gnaraloo, Cardabia and Quobba.

In addition to its remoteness, the broader Gascoyne region is sparsely populated. It has a population of 9,757 which, when averaged across the region, is a population density of only 0.1 people per km² (ABS 2016). There are three urban settlements in the area – Carnarvon, Exmouth and Coral Bay - from which visitors access the Ningaloo Marine Park.

Over half of the population (52.8%) are concentrated in the regional centre of Carnarvon (ABS 2016). Carnarvon was established in 1883 to service the sheep stations that had been established in the preceding decade (Dagmar 1978). In the 1960s, Carnarvon played a role in the American space program and in the

² Indigenous people have a long history of collecting and trading pearl shell, so may have visited these pearl grounds prior to 1885.

Australian telecommunications industry. The Carnarvon Tracking Station was commissioned in 1964 and operated for 11 years, employing 200 people at its peak. A second communications site was established in 1966 and played an important role in relaying the first steps on the moon (Carnarvon Space and Technology Museum 2018). In the 2016 census, the town of Carnarvon³ had a population of 5160. Of the employed people in Carnarvon 5.7% worked in the vegetable growing industry (ABS 2016). As a regional centre, Carnarvon has several banks, a hospital, high school, post office, police station and a number of other state and federal government department regional offices as well as a considerable range of commercial services. The hospital employs 5.1% of the employed population (ABS 2016). Carnarvon also has a range of accommodation including several caravan parks, hotels and hostels.

During WWII, the Royal Australian Air Force operated from an airfield named Learmonth south of Exmouth. In 1942 the United States Navy established a submarine base on Exmouth Gulf (Jones, Ingram and Kingham 2007). In the 1950s the airfield was redeveloped as an RAAF base to provide fighter defence for the Australian and American troops based in the region. The construction of the Exmouth township began in 1963 - the same year that the U. S. Navy began building the Harold E. Holt United States Naval Communications base nearby. The town and base were officially opened four years later. In 1992, the United States withdrew its personnel from the region and, without a military *raison d'être*, Exmouth reinvented itself as an eco-tourism destination (Jones, Ingram and Kingham, 2007). Exmouth is now considered a 'tourism town'. Its facilities include a small hospital, post office, government schooling up to Year 12 and a Tertiary & Further Education (TAFE) campus that offers vocational education. It also has a range of businesses including restaurants, cafes and two small supermarkets.

Coral Bay (Figure 3.4) was once known as Bill's Bay, named after Ruby May 'Billie' French who was the wife of a local pastoralist. The spot became increasingly

³ This data is from the area that the Australian Bureau of Statistics defines as "Carnarvon: Statistical Area Level 2".

popular in the 1950s and 60s with adventurous travellers and fishers. In 1968, formal settlement began with the construction of a hotel, caravan park and service station. The hotel was named the 'Coral Bay Hotel' and the settlement became known as Coral Bay. The construction of a sealed road into Coral Bay and further on to Exmouth in the 1980s fuelled Coral Bay's development as a tourist destination. With a population of just 207 (ABS 2016), the settlement exists to service the tourism industry and facilities include a hotel/motel, two commercial caravan parks (with a variety of accommodation options), and a backpackers' hostel. It has a range of tourism businesses, a supermarket and several cafes.



Figure 3.4 Coral Bay town

3.4 Tourism history

American servicemen were among the first tourists in the region, camping and fishing in their leisure time. More general tourism development began in the 1960s when the hotel was built at Coral Bay (Jones, Ingram, Kingham 2007). Western Australia's surfing community started visiting surf breaks such as Red Bluff in the region in the mid-1970s (King 2015). Access to the Ningaloo Coast was limited until the 1980s, when the main road to Exmouth was sealed. Gnaraloo station attracted professional surfers in the late 80s and early 90s, and it was the setting for several surfing documentaries (Stranger 2011). Following the withdrawal of American and Australian defence force personnel in 1992, funding from the sale of US Navy homes was used to seal the road from Exmouth into the Cape Range National Park. This was an important moment in the history of the region, as explained by Jones, Ingram and Kingham (2007):

The key factor which has transformed this region over recent decades has been a very geographical one, namely the massive reduction in its isolation.

There have also been events that have brought the Ningaloo Coast to the attention of niche markets. The surfing brand Billabong held 'challenge' events at Gnaraloo in 1995 and 1996, and the site was featured in articles in *Surfing Life* and *Tracks* magazines (Stranger 2011 and Gnaraloo n.d.). The presence of whale sharks on the reef, a natural event occurring from March to August each year, has led to whale shark tourism (Catlin 2010). Whale shark tours based in Exmouth have operated since 1989 although it was not until 1993 that their popularity grew. Controversies over planning decisions in the region (discussed in the next section) also drew attention to its attributes.

In the late 1990s a number of 'upmarket' accommodation options opened in the region. The Ningaloo Reef Retreat in the Cape Range National Park opened in 1997. The safari-style luxury accommodation facility was heralded as a 'model ecotourism

development' (Government of Western Australia 2005) when it opened with a 12-bed capacity. It was rebranded as 'Sal Salis' and expanded in 2008, when its management changed. After further expansion in 2016 it now accommodates 32 people. Quobba station added three 'safari tents' at their Red Bluff camp ground in 2005. In an interview with a farming magazine, station lease-holder Tim Meecham said "we didn't want to overcrowd the place with more campers, surfers or fishermen, but we hope it will attract a small number from a top-end niche market" (Carew-Reid 2005). The 68-room luxury hotel Novotel Ningaloo Resort opened in Exmouth 2007, and continues to operate under the name Mantarays Ningaloo Beach Resort. Throughout this time, caravan parks upgraded their facilities and built more cabin-style accommodation. These upmarket options are sometimes derided by residents and repeat visitors who perceive them as being expensive and elitist. Nevertheless, their longevity and expansions indicate that they are commercially viable. The upmarket accommodation options tend to feature in the national and international media, bringing wider attention to the region.

3.5 Environmental protection and controversies

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the region's complex local ecosystems are vulnerable to both natural and human-induced pressures. As tourism numbers have grown, there is tension between those charged with managing the region and tourists, particularly those "who perceive it to be their birthright, as Australians, to roam (and camp and fish) in what they see as the 'wide open spaces' of their native land" (Jones, Ingram and Kingham 2007, 80).

A reserve was established in the Cape Range in 1964, with its status upgraded to that of a National Park in 1971. Later that decade, this area was expanded to around 50,000 hectares through the inclusion of former pastoral lease land (Jones, Ingram and Kingham 2007, 83). As for the aquatic environment, the Ningaloo Marine Park was proposed in the mid 1970s, and eventually established in 1987.

The region was thrust into the spotlight in 1987 when a substantial tourism resort at a location known as Maud's Landing near Coral Bay was proposed by a development consortium. The Western Australian Labor Party was in opposition at the time, and its objection to this proposal was a factor that contributed to its surprise state election victory in 2001 (Jones, Jones and Hughes 2015).

By 2002, 'Save Ningaloo Reef' stickers appeared frequently on cars in Perth and a rally in Fremantle attracted 15,000 people (Green Left Weekly). Prominent Western Australian author, Tim Winton, became a spokesperson and donated the literary prize money from his novel *Dirt Music* to the cause. Winton was joined by the actor Toni Collette and basketball player Luc Longley. The new Labor Premier officially rejected the Maud's Landing proposal in 2003 (Jones, Jones and Hughes 2015). Alan Smith, the Executive Director of the Coral Coast Marina Development Group derided the decision as "a victory for celebrity and bumper sticker politics" and "a great tragedy for Western Australian tourism" (Weber 2003).

However, with the Maud's Landing resort off the cards, more specific controversies emerged. The WA State Government announced that it would seek World Heritage designation for the Ningaloo Coast as part of a broader plan for the region (Jones, Jones and Hughes 2015) that included the development of tourism nodes and plans for greater regulation of camping and the modification of coastal pastoral leases.

Despite the long-term economic viability of the region's pastoral stations being regarded as "marginal at best" (Jones, Ingram and Kingham 2007, 80), these proposals triggered anxieties in the region and speculation that the government was 'doing a land grab' or that the heritage listing would be detrimental to the region's economy. Pastoralists and 'wilderness' campers were unhappy about plans to excise a two kilometre coastal strip from their leases in 2015 which would inhibit them from offering coastal camping on their land (Jones et al., 2007). Jones gives further context for the situation (2013, 38):

The pastoral lessees claimed that they were the most appropriate managers of their land in the context of their positions in the ongoing negotiations over the excision of a coastal strip from their leases and the allocation of development rights for coastal tourism nodes. Their views resonated with those of other locals who were unhappy with increased state agency regulation which had curtailed their recreational opportunities.

The controversies and conflicts echoed those that had played out in neighbouring Shark Bay, when it was nominated for inclusion (and eventually inscribed in 1991) on the World Heritage List. Reasons for the conflicts are suggested (Christensen et al. 2013, 2):

When two World Heritage designations occur in a remote, sparsely populated, demographically and economically dynamic and environmentally challenging region such as the Gascoyne within a relatively short space of time, the potential for disagreement and conflict is likely to be considerable.

An analysis of media coverage about the World Heritage listing process indicated that “many of the news items highlighted an insider-outsider dichotomy, with Perth-based or state and federal government sources being portrayed as being in opposition to the ‘locals’” (Cox 2013, 97). The situation was described by the Northern Guardian newspaper a ‘Coastal land grab’ (Cox 2013, 113). Letters were published in newspapers, that “sought to place responsibility for any abuse of the region on ‘City tourists... who plunder the reef’ and ‘camp for weeks and leave us with the mess to clean up’” (Cox 2013, 107).

The boundaries of the Ningaloo Marine Park were extended in 2004 and, in 2005, the Department of Environment and Conservation oversaw a locally controversial increase in non-fishing sanctuary zones from 10 to 34% of the marine park which prevented access to some popular fishing spots (Ingram 2008).

In 2007, the surfing brand Rip Curl made enquiries about hosting a professional surfing competition off the coast of Gnaraloo station. The event concept was supported by the State Government, but the local surfing group NW Surfers Alliance opposed the event, and their online petition attracted over 2000 signatures. After conducting an environmental impact assessment (and, perhaps, being lobbied by surfers opposed to the competition) Gnaraloo station withdrew their support in 2008. The event did not go ahead.



Figure 3.5 Graffiti opposing the Rip Curl surfing competition

'Wilderness' camping on the pastoral stations also came under government scrutiny in 2008-09 when this project was conceived and when the interviews were conducted. Due to the camping occurring on fragile dunes very close to the water's edge, questions were raised about the environmental sustainability of the practice. The pastoral stations' 'wilderness' campsites were located within the two kilometre coastal strip that was proposed for excision from the pastoral leases. These camping practices were seen as damaging to fragile dune environments (Lewis 2013) yet were hailed as an affordable holiday alternative for those willing to camp with minimal amenities. A regional plan was developed with a focus on coastal accommodation, and this was open for public consultation. The mounting tension in the region was demonstrated in a documentary 'Quarrel Coast' screened on ABC television in 2009 (Landline 2009). This documentary featured interviews with

pastoralists who spoke about their 'loss of control' over their (leased) land and government leaders who referred to 'difficulties' and a state of 'constant argument'. It also interviewed a spokesperson from Rip Curl and from the North West Surfers Alliance about the thwarted surfing competition.

The preceding information about environmental management controversies has been given so that the reader can understand the political context in which the data used in this thesis was collected in 2008-09. A more detailed discussion of changes in the region after the primary research was collected is included in Chapter Nine. It is worth noting here that the region was nominated for World Heritage status in 2010, and was awarded this in 2011. A negotiated version of the coastal strip is going to be excised but is yet to be finally determined despite the renewal of pastoral leases in 2015, with the exception of Ningaloo Station.

3.6 Department of Environment and Conservation

Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) was a department of the Government of Western Australia that existed from July 2006-June 2013. The primary research for this study was conducted during this time, so research participants referred to DEC in their interviews. For accuracy and to preserve participants' meaning, this acronym will remain in quotations from interviews and in any references to environmental management during that time period. When DEC was dissolved in 2013, another department was formed called the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW). When this was restructured in 2017, yet another new department was formed called the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

3.7 Accommodation in the region

This section gives an overview of the accommodation types used by the respondents to the interviews I conducted. It includes caravan park, campsite and cabin locations including the Cape Range National Park, pastoral stations and the Blowholes. These accommodation options vary considerably in terms of amenities provided, cost, management and opportunity for visitor interaction and it is worth considering this in the context of the broader social politics of the region. The upmarket options outlined earlier in the chapter – including hotels and expensive safari tents are not considered in this section since they were not among the accommodation preferences of the repeat visitors interviewed in this research.

3.7.1 Caravan parks

A popular accommodation choice for those frequently visiting the region is to stay in a caravan park (Figure 3.6). A caravan park is a commercially operated tourism business that offers a range of accommodation options, including chalets, motel units, on-site vans and sites for caravans, camper trailers and tents. The caravan parks considered in this study may be family owned, or be part of a larger chain, such as Big 4.

Caravan parks offer communal facilities including a kitchen, toilets, shower block, children's playground, laundry, televisions and/or games room (Figure 3.7). Some may also have a swimming pool or offer entertainment such as 'movie nights' in peak seasons. In winter 2018, an unpowered site at a caravan park costs \$280 - \$315 per week for two people. Powered sites are more expensive.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Australian caravan parks differ from those in the United States in that there are fewer institutional arrangements and organized leisure activities (Mings 1995; Onyx and Leonard 2005). For example, members of two craft clubs located within the caravan park context were interviewed for this project, however the clubs were organised by the campers themselves rather than

by park management. The ways in which campers organise themselves and create social bonds will be explored in depth in Chapter Five.

The caravan parks in this study exhibit subtly different characteristics. For example, the Ningaloo Caravan and Holiday Resort in Exmouth is located within walking distance of the town's lawn bowls club, so is favoured by campers who enjoy this leisure activity. Other caravan parks may be more popular with dog-owners, or be particularly popular with young families because they have a good playground. Caravan parks are heavily booked during peak periods, and it is common for repeat visitors to secure their bookings, and favoured sites, a year or more in advance.

3.7.2 Cape Range National Park

Cape Range National Park is usually accessed from the north, via a sealed road from Exmouth. There is a visitor centre and a range of leisure activities including self-guided walks, glass-bottom boat tours and interpretive/experiential activities aimed at school children during school holidays (Lewis 2013). There are 13 camping areas in Cape Range National Park (Figure 3.8, Figure 3.9), with a combined total of 110 campsites. Wooden logs are used to demarcate parking and camping areas. Each camping area has a long-drop toilet and rubbish bin. Cape Range National Park is far more regulated than the pastoral station camp sites, with rules including no fires, no dogs and a maximum stay of 14 nights in peak periods. Camp sites are close together. A volunteer camp host is based at many sites to greet campers, provide information and keep the site clean.



Figure 3.6 Caravan park



Figure 3.7 Caravan park signage



Figure 3.8 Cape Range National Park campsite

CAMPSITES AVAILABLE			
Neds Camp 8 kms	GENERATOR SITES <i>Full</i>	Pilgramunna 30 kms	AVAILABLE <i>Full</i>
Mesa Camp 8 kms	GENERATOR FREE <i>Full</i>	Osprey Bay 36 kms	GENERATOR TOP SITES <i>Full</i>
North T/Bone 12 kms (No Generators)	AVAILABLE <i>Full</i>	Bungarra 36 kms (No Generators)	GENERATOR FREE <i>Full</i>
Lakeside 12 kms	AVAILABLE <i>Full</i>	Yardie Creek 46 kms	2
Tulki Beach 17 kms	AVAILABLE <i>Full</i>	One K Camp 47 kms (4WD Access only)	AVAILABLE <i>Full</i>
North Mandu 25 kms (No Generators)	AVAILABLE <i>2</i>	Boat Harbour 52 kms (4WD Access only)	AVAILABLE <i>Full</i>
Kurrajong 29 kms (No Generators)	<i>Full</i>		

This information correct at:

For more information visit the
Milkyring Information Centre 11 kms
OPEN 9am - 3.45pm

Figure 3.9 Cape Range National Park campsite availability

3.7.3 Pastoral stations

At the time the interviews were conducted in 2009, the five pastoral leases abutting the reef – Ningaloo, Warroora, Gnarlloo, Cardabia and Quobba – were all offering accommodation, including camping, purpose-built cabins, renovated shearing sheds and workers’ quarters. The pastoral stations vary in their facilities, capacities and approaches to regulation. Detailed descriptions of each pastoral station’s camping arrangements, particularly with regard to facilities and environmental management, can be found in Lewis (2013).

Table 3.1 Camp grounds at pastoral stations

Station	Camp grounds where interviewees primarily stayed
Ningaloo	South Lefroy Bay
Warroora	14 Mile
Gnarlloo	3 Mile Camp
Cardabia	9 Mile
Quobba	Red Bluff

It is the ‘wilderness’ camping offered by these pastoral stations that attracted most visitors. While some campsites may provide a communal rubbish tip, there is no electricity or water (Lewis 2013). Sites are often only accessible by 4-wheel-drive and visitors bring their own tents, caravans or camper trailers. Due to the remote locations and expense of reaching these sites, visitors tend to stay for at least several nights but often much longer, and invest energy in establishing a comfortable camp that will provide protection from the sun and wind. A typical campsite for a camper staying for a week or longer would include: a 4 wheel drive

vehicle, a caravan or camper trailer, an annexe or shade structure, furniture including chairs and table, a petrol-powered generator or solar panels, a portable chemical toilet inside its own small tent and large containers to store water. More elaborate camps might also have a satellite dish to receive a television signal, a welcome mat and cooking appliances such as breadmakers or food processors. Campsites are sometimes adorned with flags, plaques or decorative lights. Some campers take extra steps to simulate 'home' by growing tomatoes or lettuces.

A caretaker will often be based at these remote campsites, acting as a representative of the pastoral station leaseholder. Caretakers seldom have qualifications in tourism or environmental management but possess a passion for camping and the willingness to work in a remote area for long periods of time. The relationship between caretakers and repeat visitors can be genial or tense, and this is explored further in Chapter Eight.

Like many remote campsites on pastoral stations, 14 Mile in Warroora Station (Figure 3.10 and 3.11) is popular with retirees who set up elaborate campsites in the winter months, April-September. It is a particularly lively site in peak season. In winter 2018, camping at 14 Mile will cost \$100 per week for a couple, approximately a third of the cost of a commercial caravan park. To offset the substantial fuel costs in reaching the region, older visitors tend to stay longer and live frugally while there. The appeal of such spots is sometimes attributed to the physical environment and the leisure activities it affords, such as fishing. However, this thesis will argue that the natural resources are only part of what makes these campsites appealing to repeat visitors.



Figure 3.10 Caretaker's caravan at 14 Mile Campsite, Warroora



Figure 3.11 Boat and fish cleaning station at 14 Mile, Warroora

Note that the fish cleaning table is made from an old ironing board

3.7.4 Blowholes

The Blowholes is a camp ground managed by the Shire of Carnarvon. It is near Point Quobba, south of Quobba station. It is notable because of its 'shack' settlement, informal holiday homes built by repeat visitors. In many cases, these shacks have been handed down in families through several generations. There is also space for camping and caravanning.

A Blowholes Master Plan developed in 2012 proposed that owners would keep their shacks, as long as they renovated or rebuilt them to comply with safety and structural standards (ABC 2012). This was opposed by shack owners and repeat visitors, who formed an alliance under the name Blowholes Protection Association. The association is positive about improvements to health and safety standards but oppose the Shire's proposal to develop the site as a tourism node as these "planning principles for this area have the potential to destroy the very character which makes the Blowholes such a popular place" (Blowholes Protection Association 2016). In 2014, after the interviews were conducted, camping fees were increased from \$5.50 per person per night to \$11.00. Anecdotally, this has deterred some repeat visitors from returning.



Figure 3.12 Blowholes shack

3.7.5 Comparing accommodation

Table 3.2 Accommodation characteristics

	Caravan parks	Pastoral stations	Cape Range NP camps	Blowholes campsite
Management	Privately owned, or sometimes part of a chain. Sometimes managed by owner, but usually by employee of owner.	Leased from the state government. Leaseholder may oversee all camping, or appoint 'caretaker' where needed.	Managed by the Dept. of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.	Shire of Carnarvon
\$ per couple per week 2018, adult price	\$280 - \$315 (Unpowered)	\$100	\$154 + \$13 park entrance fee	\$154
\$ per couple per week 2018, concession price	N/A – possibly by private negotiation for long stays and depending on	N/A – possibly by private negotiation for long stays	\$98 + \$7 park entrance fee	\$112

	Caravan parks	Pastoral stations	Cape Range NP camps	Blowholes campsite
	accommodation type			
Booking	Booked in advance	No advance booking.	At time of research, no bookings. Online booking introduced March 2016.	No advance booking.
Length of stay limit	No limit	No limit	28 days, or 14 in school holidays	30 days in peak season.
Toilets	Yes	BYO chemical toilet	Yes	Day use only. Campers must BYO toilet.
Drinking water	Yes	No	No – bore water near Ned’s Camp. 10 litre tubs for sale at visitors’	No

	Caravan parks	Pastoral stations	Cape Range NP camps	Blowholes campsite
			centre.	
Pets permitted	In designated areas only	In designated areas only	No	Yes
Electricity	Yes –unpowered sites also available	No	No	No
Note:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prices based on winter 2018 - Caravan park prices are for unpowered sites. Powered sites have an additional cost. 				

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how Ningaloo is a unique study area. It is known for being remote, fragile and environmentally valuable. The economic transition towards a reliance on tourism has therefore brought challenges. Moves to conserve the area environmentally have frequently been controversial and several have been opposed by stakeholders including repeat visitors and pastoral lease holders. Several conflicts in the region reached a crescendo when fieldwork was conducted in 2008-09. The marine sanctuary zones had recently been expanded and a regional plan focusing on coastal accommodation was open for public consultation. The world heritage listing was imminent, and a sense of ‘paranoia’ (Cox 2013, 118) was discernible in the pages of the local newspaper. Debate was raging about the excision of a 2km coastal strip from the pastoral stations, and tension was evident between DEC, pastoral station operators and campers on low incomes. These tensions were aired nationally in a television documentary.

These political controversies, combined with the state’s considerable investment in creating tourism blueprints for the region, meant that research on the region frequently attracted funding. By the time the interviews were conducted for this project, the region had been the subject of several, predominantly quantitative academic and government surveys but many long term repeat visitors felt marginalized and unrepresented in these processes (1, 3, 5, 12). It was therefore important to design a research methodology that would be appropriate to this “rather fraught local context” (Jones 2013, 127). With reference to academic best-practice, the following chapter explains how I embarked on a qualitative study drawing on interviews and participant-observation.

4. “Not another bloody survey”

We’ve done lots of surveys. We’ve done **droves** of surveys. And every time we say the same thing - there is nowhere else for us.

Brian (3)

4.1 “Not another bloody survey”: The role of qualitative research

As a research assistant distributing surveys for a different research project in the Ningaloo region I was sometimes met with this grumble. The Ningaloo region had become a focus for academic research⁴ having deservedly attracted funding from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Government of Western Australian. Astute residents and repeat visitors began noticing the increased presence of researchers, conspicuous in their hired four-wheel-drives. Filling out survey paperwork had become a regular feature of life, however the survey respondents were keen to regale me with their opinions about the region that they felt were not captured in previous surveys. As change loomed and the region’s future seemed uncertain, passions ran high. This chapter explains how I developed a research methodology that responded to the situation I observed in the region. I discuss the range of research methods available and show how academic best-practice informed my decision to conduct semi-structured interviews. The chapter details how I coded and analysed this data and the steps taken to ensure the data was reliable.

The quantitative research conducted in the Ningaloo region in recent years has made an important contribution to knowledge about the area. For example,

⁴ The Ningaloo Collaboration Cluster comprised of Murdoch University, the University of Western Australia, Australian National University, University of Queensland, Edith Cowan University, Curtin University, the Collaborative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism and CSIRO’s Wealth from Oceans Flagship. The publications arising from this research were outlined in Chapter Two.

research conducted by the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre estimated that 179,352 people visited the Ningaloo region in the year ending September 2008, staying an average of 9.92 nights (Jones et al. 2009, vii). Quantitative studies form a backdrop to my research and this thesis aims to contribute to the growing body of qualitative research about the region. I wanted to capture what people told me as they handed back their clipboards. In his 2002 book *Sport Ethnography*, Sands suggests that most informants are “appreciative of the chance to talk...to lend their experience to the ethnographer’s growing body of accumulated knowledge” (quoted in Holt 2012, 20). In taking this approach, I acknowledge my responsibility as an interpreter. As Denzin and Lincoln write:

Qualitative research is endlessly creative and interpretive. The researcher does not just leave the field with mountains of empirical materials and then easily write up his or her findings. Qualitative interpretations are constructed (1998, 29).

A characteristic of qualitative research is that it focuses on participants’ meanings and perspectives (Creswell 1998). My research does not seek ‘truth’ but aims to investigate the way informants understand their own situations and make meanings for themselves. Another characteristic of qualitative research is that data is often collected as words and pictures and that expressive language is used (Cresswell 1998). I have amassed more than 200,000 words of interview data, transcribed verbatim. My study pays particular attention to language, to the nuances of speech and the complexities it conveys. A third characteristic of qualitative research is that it occurs in a natural setting, the ‘field’. (Creswell 1998). As I explain later in this chapter, the fieldwork and participation elements of my research process were crucial in building my understanding of the region.

This project makes use of semi-structured interviews, a qualitative research technique that has the potential to enable an understanding of the deeper meanings that individuals or groups make of their lived experiences (Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Cresswell 1998; Marshall and Rossman 2006). I travelled in a caravan

and stayed in the same camp grounds and caravan parks as the interviewees allowing for many interactions between the interviewees and me outside of the formal interviews. This study seeks to 'describe the cultural behaviour of a group or individual' rather than create a theoretical or visual model. This research takes heed of personal narratives and aims to "learn about the general from the particular" (Stivers 1993, 412).

4.2 Gathering data

As mentioned earlier, my preliminary field trips to the Ningaloo region indicated that the population was suffering from 'survey fatigue'. I was sometimes greeted with 'oh no, not another survey' and/or was told by the informant that they 'didn't understand the question' put to them on a previous occasion so had 'just made something up'. While people were sometimes sceptical of responding to another survey, they were keen to air their concerns about the region's future, share rumours regarding changes and tell stories of camaraderie and friendship. It was apparent to me that existing research projects did not capture this information, and I therefore chose to explore these perspectives by combining semi-structured interviews with participant observation. I conducted 56 semi-structured interviews, each lasting between thirty minutes and two hours. All interviews were conducted in 2008-09, with the majority conducted in the peak tourism period of April - September 2009.

Table 4.1 Objectives and research methods

Objective	Method
<p>Objective 1: Investigate how repeat-visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the Ningaloo area. How are repeat visitors' behaviours and attitudes distinct from those of other types of visitors?</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews with repeat visitors in the field.</p> <p>Analysis of existing data on visitors to Ningaloo region.</p>
<p>Objective 2: Research the proposed management changes to the Ningaloo area. How do repeat visitors believe they will be impacted by management changes?</p>	<p>Literature review of planning information.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with those working in management capacities.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews with repeat visitors in the field.</p>

Objective	Method
<p>Objective 3: Critically analyse whether repeat visitors' experiences validate or challenge current academic theories of place, social impacts, rural change, national identity and repeat visitation.</p>	<p>Analysis of interview data using coding.</p> <p>Identify emerging themes in data and incorporate them into interviews.</p> <p>Comparisons between my data and existing theoretical literature.</p>
<p>Objective 4: Explore how repeat visitation to the Ningaloo region may change in future, and how the needs of repeat visitors could be taken into account during planning processes. Evaluate the potential influence of repeat visitors elsewhere in coastal Australia.</p>	<p>Analysis of theoretical literature and my own data.</p>

4.3 Semi-structured interviews

The decision to conduct semi-structured interviews arose from my initial experiences in the field. Semi-structured interviews are flexible and can be tailored to each informant. A researcher using this method will usually develop a set of questions that guide the interview. When managed well, interviews can expose differences, contradictions and explore the “complexity of unique experiences” (Bennett 2002, 151). Questions were added or removed depending on relevance, and time was allowed for follow-up questions to elicit elaboration from the interviewee (Dunn 2010). In this way, the process allowed interviewees to ‘ramble’, which has been said to provide richer and more varied responses than is possible when using a questionnaire (Babbie 2005). See Appendix A for a copy of the interview schedule.

The interviews enabled me to ‘get to know’ people in addition to recording their opinions. A paper survey could not have captured the chain smoking, the missing finger, the beer drinking and fly swatting. It would not have recorded the sarcasm, the clatter of the café or the interruptions from family, dogs, pet parrots and neighbouring campers. While the arduous task of transcribing and contextualising these transcripts occasionally caused me to question my choice, the audio files captured much more than just words.

Keeping the interview schedule flexible enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the idiosyncrasies of the participants’ perspectives as I was able to ask additional questions on individually significant topics. Semi-structured interviews produce unexpected delights and layers of meaning. Working in this method is labour-intensive but unearths depths of information not revealed in surveys nor by other research methods that strive for more efficiency.

4.4 Participant observation

An important feature of this research method is that almost all the interviews were conducted in the field. The fieldwork and resulting participant observation added depth to the interview data. One context-specific example is observing how repeat visitors organise their campsites. It was intriguing to see the objects people brought on holiday with them, from boats to breadmakers.

It was instructive seeing how repeat visitors interacted with each other, and the way repeat visitors formed clusters with likeminded people. By placing myself in the research context, I had an insight into how repeat visitors interact with 'outsiders' and with each other. For example, I was drawn into 'rituals' such as sharing fish, receiving advice and participating in evening social drinks known as 'happy hour' and these rituals will be described further in Chapter Five. Only by undertaking the journey to the region, with the associated stresses of preparation and expense, could I appreciate how committed to their annual holidays these visitors are. When I 'blew a tyre' on my vehicle or bought eye-wateringly expensive petrol or drove for an hour to obtain fresh water, it provided me with a chance to understand and interact with repeat visitors.

Another advantage to conducting fieldwork was gaining an appreciation of the seasonal 'ebb and flow' which governs tourism in the Ningaloo area. Caravan parks that were fully booked in July were deserted in September. I gained an appreciation of how the weather dominates people's experiences of Ningaloo. Surfing, fishing, snorkelling, walking and sleeping soundly depend on the wind, rain and temperature. People regularly discuss the forecast - 'I hear there's some wind coming in so you'd better get your snorkelling done today'. This gave me an insight to how critical the weather and seasons are to this form of Western Australian tourism.

4.5 Criteria for interview

I defined 'repeat visitor' as anyone over 18 who had visited the area three times or more, because this indicated an ongoing relationship with the region. Additionally, the main purpose of the interviewee's visit to the region had to be leisure, rather than work. This was to exclude seasonal workers and business travellers. The final criterion was that their first visit to the region had to be before 2002. This year was selected as a 'cut off' point because of the Maud's Landing protests which occurred that year and raised the profile of controversy and awareness. Chapter Three provided background information about the history of environmental controversies in the region.

To gain a fuller understanding of repeat visitors, I also interviewed a small number of residents. The criteria for these participants was that they were over 18 and had involvement in the tourism industry, providing extensive experience and interactions with repeat visitors. This will be detailed later in this chapter.

4.6 Recruitment method

The majority of interviewees were recruited during five field trips to the region in 2008 and 2009. Most were recruited face-to-face in caravan parks or informal camping sites, although some came from a 'snowball sample' of personal recommendations. I also recruited people by meeting them in public places. Sometimes this arose out of a casual friendly conversation - for example, I met Dawn and Glenn as they were walking on a beach. They remarked on how beautiful the view was, and we began to chat about their memories of the area. I then asked if they would give me an interview.

At other times, I approached people directly. For example, upon seeing a group of people enjoying happy hour drinks I would walk up and introduce myself as a PhD student looking to interview repeat visitors. I only approached people who were in

public as ‘door-knocking’ on caravans and tent-flaps seemed intrusive in a leisure context. This also ensured the safety of both myself and the participants. In the field, I sometimes asked interviewees if they had any friends who might be interested in granting me an interview. I was surprised by the long list that would follow - normally a list of couples’ names, where they are from, what site they camp in and how long they’ve been coming. It was obvious that the repeat visitors all knew quite a lot of information about each other.

By spending time in the region and visiting a variety of accommodation types, I was able to interview a representative sample of repeat visitors. I used a combined/mixed sampling strategy drawing on snowball/chain, opportunistic and criterion approaches:

Table 4.2 Sampling strategies

Sampling strategies (Based on Miles and Huberman in Creswell, 118-119)	Sampling strategies as used in this study
Opportunistic	Participants initially recruited based on convenience/opportunity.
Snowball/chain	Interviewees asked ‘do you know anyone else who might be interested in participating in this study?’
Criterion/Stratified Sampling	As the study progressed, care was taken to ensure that various groups were represented in the study. For example, that both those staying in caravan parks and on pastoral stations were represented. I also ensured that various age brackets were represented.

4.7 Location

Most interviews were conducted in the Ningaloo area at a mutually convenient place for both myself and the participant. This usually meant sitting on folding chairs outside a caravan, although a small number of interviews took place in other locations including on the beach, in a cafe or (in the case of those working in the tourism industry) at their home or workplace. When scheduling an interview, I would always offer to return at a convenient time but interviewees were often happy to conduct the interview 'then and there'.

4.8 Responses to the research

The people I approached were usually friendly and happy to help with the research. No participants withdrew from the study after their interview. The only notable negative reaction to my research, and the only refusal of my request for an interview, came from a pastoral lease-holder who felt that too much research had already been conducted in the region, and that their time spent in assisting previous researchers had proved fruitless.

4.9 Question route

The questions were based on themes that had arisen during informal conversations with repeat visitors in my previous trips to the region that addressed my thesis aims and objectives. The interview schedule is provided in Appendix A and B. It provided a guide and prompts to ensure that key themes and issues were discussed, although each interview was different and required attention to the priorities and perspectives of the individual interviewee. The flexible interview schedule allowed for interviewees to expand on relevant themes, and for me to ask supplementary questions.

4.10 Field notes

I took notes while in the field, using a separate notebook for each journey. These field diaries also record my insights, growing areas of interest and topics that stood out in the interviews. These diaries have proven an invaluable record of my learning process. Much of the content of these five notebooks is practical - names, phone numbers, business cards, shopping lists, to-do lists. They also served as a record of my daily activities such as where I camped, who I interviewed and who I met. I also took many photographs of repeat visitor camps and activities, some of which are included in this thesis.



Figure 4.1 Transcribing in the field

4.11 Data storage

The interviews were recorded on a digital dictaphone. The audio files and their transcripts were stored on my laptop and protected with a password. These were all 'backed up' in password-protected cloud storage. Consent forms were completed by all interviewees and stored in a locked filing cabinet.

4.12 Transcription

The interviews resulted in over fifty hours of audio material that were fully transcribed and resulted in over 200,000 words of transcripts.

4.13 Ethical Issues

At all times during the research, the welfare and rights of the participants was a priority. I thought carefully about the ethical implications of the research and ensured that information was handled in accordance with the NHMRC's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (NHMRC 2005).

All informants in this research were adults. All informants were requested to provide written consent and were provided with my, and my supervisor's, contact details. They were given an information sheet that explained the nature of the research, their rights as participants, outlined confidentiality issues and their rights to withdraw from the study at any time. I ensured that participants were not coerced or approached at 'awkward moments'. Arrangements for interviews were conducted in places that were comfortable for the participants and at convenient times.

It can be important to ensure research participants' confidentiality (Israel and Hay, 77-94) and I have therefore ascribed pseudonyms to some interviewees. Where interviewees were 'letting off steam' by airing strong opinions I have taken extra

steps to de-identify the interviewees and/or the individuals, businesses or organisations to which they refer. This may have involved omitting details about their location, gender or occupation. Despite its vast size, Western Australia remains a 'small place' socially with a population of approximately 2,240,900 when fieldwork was conducted in 2009 (ABS 2018). It is therefore vital to protect interviewee's privacy. Curtin University's data storage protocols were implemented to ensure participants' anonymity.

4.14 Fieldwork

This research project was supported by the CSIRO's 'Wealth from Oceans' funding. This provided me with a fieldwork budget which I was required to manage carefully, considering the high cost of travelling to, and within, the region. The first trip to the region was in April 2008 when I acted as a paid research assistant to a Sustainable Tourism CRC project. My role was to distribute a paper-based survey. At that point, I was in the early stages of developing my own research framework. I took detailed field notes during this trip but did not conduct interviews.

In July 2008 I organised my own travel to the region, which gave me an insight into the meticulous planning that a trip to the North West requires. The field notes of this second trip include to-do lists, to-buy lists and a fuel and expenses log. The list of equipment required was extensive: UHF radio, air compressor, tyre pressure gauge, portable toilet, tent for toilet, portable refrigerator, recovery kit, first-aid kit, inverter, spare battery, generator, gas stove, torch, water containers. There were dozens of small, yet essential, items: rope, toilet paper, batteries, pegs, gaffer tape etc. This first self-organised trip gave me an appreciation of the planning that my interviewees undertake for their annual holidays. My planning was simple compared to that of many of my interviewees who were either elderly or travelling with children and had additional needs. I was also generally staying in powered sites in caravan parks with showers, access to water, toilets and shops. This was luxurious compared to camping on remote pastoral stations.

The registration number plate on my private vehicle indicated that it was from a regional town. Upon noticing this, people in caravan parks would ask whether I was a 'country girl'. It was noticeable that I received a warmer welcome than on my previous trip when I drove an anonymous-looking Landcruiser hired by the university. I did not conduct interviews for this thesis on this trip (as I had not yet received approval from the university's research ethics committee) however I wrote field notes, took photographs and collected secondary sources in the form of brochures and maps. I also gathered information which contributed to the production of my interview schedule and pointed to how I might best approach interviewees.

In September 2008 I took my third trip to the region, again working as a paid research assistant distributing paper-based surveys. Campsites which had been crowded in July were almost empty in September, testament to the seasonal tourism cycles. During this trip, my candidacy application was approved and I began to collect contact details for prospective interviewees.

After this field trip, I sent letters to those I had met in the region asking them for an interview. I finalised an interview schedule based on my experiences in the region (described above, and also provided in Appendix A and B) and, in February 2009, I conducted 'pilot' interviews in Perth face-to-face or via the phone. These interviews were transcribed and major themes were noted.

The majority of my interviews were conducted in two fieldwork expeditions in 2009. In April-May I spent 25 nights in the region, and conducted 21 interviews. In July-August I spent 32 nights in the region and conducted a further 30 interviews. Between them, these last two trips involved driving 8547 kilometres.

4.15 Saturation, sample and demographics

By the end of my fifth trip, I had conducted a total of 56 interviews with 114 'key' participants, including interviews conducted by telephone. By this point, the

interviews were not generating new themes but rather were corroborating material from earlier interviews. I therefore considered that 'saturation' (Creswell 1998, 56) had been achieved.

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics of repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region interviewed in the region in 2009 are summarised in this section. Characteristics that will be examined include accommodation type, work status, age, and location of usual residence. These features were selected for inclusion on the basis of similar studies that have examined visitation to the Ningaloo region (Jones et al. 2009) and Australian grey nomads more generally (Onyx and Leonard 2007; Cridland 2008). While neither of these studies have focused on repeat visitors to Ningaloo specifically, there are considerable demographic similarities between the groups in all cases. The purpose of this section is to explain the sample and analyse how it fits with what is known about the entire population of repeat visitors.

4.15.1 'Key participants'

A 'key participant' is defined as someone who was present for the whole interview and signed a consent form. Key participants are therefore distinct from other members of the participants' travelling party. For example, an interview with a couple may have been interrupted (or enhanced) when their friends joined the conversation momentarily. This was not only permitted so that participants were not inconvenienced, but also provided an opportunity for me to observe and participate in the 'daily life' of the participants and the region. However, only the couple with whom the interview was initiated would be designated as 'key participants'. This means that far more than 114 people contributed to the research and inform the conclusions, but only 114 are included in the demographic data presented here and only these individuals are directly quoted in this thesis. A table summarising all key participants is provided in Appendix C. When a research participant is quoted in the thesis, their interview number will be provided in brackets so the reader can consult the table for contextual information.

4.15.2 Repeat visitors vs. industry and government perspectives

Of the 114 interviewees, ten were working in the commercial tourism industry. Six of these interviewees were managers of commercial caravan parks, one was with a hotel manager, one was a manager of an entertainment business, one was a pastoral lease-holder and one was manager of a popular camping node on a pastoral lease. In addition to this, one interviewee was a senior manager at DEC.

In addition to this, two interviewees were residents of Exmouth. One of these was on a camping holiday at a pastoral station and one was involved with the group Exmouth's Senior Citizens. Both had a history of repeat visitation to Ningaloo before settling in Exmouth, and were interviewed as they contributed valuable insights.

Table 4.3 Types of interviewees

Type of interviewee	# interviewees	% interviewees
Repeat visitor	101	88.6%
Tourism industry manager	10	8.8%
DEC employee	1	0.9%
Exmouth resident	2	1.7%

4.15.3 Location of usual residence

Of the 101 key participants who were repeat visitors living outside the study area, the vast majority were from Western Australia, with only 7.9% from interstate. These findings are in line with visitor statistics that indicate Western Australians comprise 52.9% of all visitors to the region, rising to 60% in the winter peak season (Jones et al. 2009, 7). Visitor statistics have indicated that 21.8% of **all** visitors to the region are from interstate (Jones et al. 2009, 6). As this study focusses on *repeat*

visitors, it stands to reason that Western Australians are more likely to return on a regular basis than those living further away.

Table 4.4 Interviewees' place of usual residence

Region	No. repeat visitors	Percentage of repeat visitors
Pilbara	1	1.0%
Perth Metropolitan	42	41.6%
Peel	15	14.8%
South West	27	26.7%
Goldfields-Esperance	3	3.0%
Great Southern	4	4.0%
Nomadic within WA	1	1.0%
Interstate	8	7.9%

Of the repeat visitors, the vast majority were from the areas of Perth Metropolitan, Peel and the South West – all areas in the state’s south west. This reflects the fact that the interviews were conducted in winter, when the Ningaloo region’s comfortable temperatures attract residents from the cooler south. Only one interviewee was from north of the study area.

This is typical of the peak season of winter when the research was conducted. The hot, low-season Christmas period attracts a different mix of visitors, with visitors from overseas and northern Western Australia more strongly represented. This

sample echoes Cridland’s findings (2008) that climate is an important push and pull factor in how, when and where older Australians travel, as discussed in the preceding chapter.

One interviewee was nomadic, and simply pointed to his caravan when asked for his year-round address. He follows the weather around Western Australia, favouring the southern parts of the state during summer. While 25.3% of **all** visitors to the region are from overseas (Jones et al. 2009, 6), no overseas visitors were interviewed in this study as none were found that fulfilled the criteria of having visited multiple times.

4.15.4 Work status

Whether repeat visitors were working was recorded, and is summarised in the following table.

Table 4.5 Interviewees work status

Work status	No. repeat visitors	Percentage of repeat visitors
Working	34	34%
Not working	67	66%

Interviewees were not asked about their occupation or for other indications of status such as income or education as this was deemed to have less relevance than the broader, simpler category of working / not working. There are two further reasons for this. Firstly, as the interviews were conducted in and focused on a leisure environment where people were purposefully taking a break from work – or had retired – it seemed inappropriate to probe interviewees about their working lives. Secondly, interviewees themselves claimed that egalitarianism was one of the features that attracted them to the region.

4.15.5 Age brackets and grey nomads

Only people aged 18 years and over were interviewed in this study. The oldest interviewee was 86. Statistics indicate that visitors aged over 60 comprise a quarter of all visitors to the Ningaloo region and that people in this age bracket stay on average twice as long in the region as 18-29 year olds (Jones et al. 2009, 7-8). These visitors are able to stay longer in the region because they are no longer constrained by annual leave limits or family responsibilities.

This age group forms the majority of interviewees for this study. This is firstly because this group are more likely to be *repeat* visitors than other age groups and secondly because this age group were highly visible in campsites and had more time available for interviews.

Table 4.6 Age of interviewees

Age	No. of repeat visitors	Percentage of repeat visitors
18-29	2	2.0%
30-44	11	10.9%
45-59	24	23.8%
60-69	33	32.7%
70-79	27	26.7%
80+	4	4.0%

The previous chapter gave an overview of Australian and international scholarship about ageing mobility, including research that has compared American snowbirds with Australian grey nomads. It is important to understand that this group are a

prominent group in remote-area tourism in Australia. As Cridland explains (2008, vii):

Never before in Australia's modern history have so many senior citizens had the opportunity and the ability to move freely across Australia with relative ease. Each year, tens of thousands of retired Australians leave their permanent residence with the onset of winter and relocate to destinations in northern Australia. These mobile retirees are better known as grey nomads, and are a valuable niche group for the Australia's self-drive tourism market.

It is important to note that the term 'grey nomad' is used affectionately and widely, although sometimes similar phrases such as 'silver nomad' or 'oldies' are used. A retired woman I interviewed provided her thoughts on the term:

I think it's a great phrase, good! It describes us to a tee, I think. And I think they're the only ones that can really afford to do this as well. You know, if you are looking at three or four or five month stays, I think it is the grey nomads that can afford to do it. When you think of younger people with young families it would really cut into their budget.

There are distinct differences between older and younger visitors in how they experience the region. For example, surfing and snorkelling were more popular with younger people whereas lawn bowls, craft clubs, communal dinners and charitable fundraising activities were more popular with older people. Staying longer in the region also allows this group more time to develop friendships with one another.

4.15.6 Gender

Men and women are evenly represented in the sample. It was observed that most interviewees were travelling as part of a heterosexual couple, which aligns with Cridland's finding that the vast majority of grey nomads travel as heterosexual

couples. However, five interviews took place with same-sex groups: two craft clubs comprised of women, a group of female friends whose husbands surfed, a group of female friends at a morning tea event and a group of men on a fishing trip. The fishing trip was specifically a 'boys only' fishing trip.

4.16 Data analysis

NVivo was used to code the transcripts. Coding is a process of using words or short phrases to assign “summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attributes” to units of data (Saldaña 2015). Coding is “defining what the data is all about” and is the link between collecting data and developing theories to explain it (Charmaz 2004, 506).

It is recommended that the coding framework be kept flexible, so that further insights can be explored rather than 'shoe-horned' into existing categories (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). In a process that Saldaña calls 'lumping and splitting' (2015, 22) categories are loosely assigned then later re-named, split into two separate themes or moved to become a sub-set as themes emerged in the coding. This process of re-categorising was ongoing throughout the data analysis.

In writing up the interview data, extracts were selected on the basis of how well they demonstrated a particular point and were often used in combination with other extracts (to show how widespread the views on the issue in question were). Where one extract contradicted another, they were both included and discussed accordingly. Of course, numerous additional themes, and accompanying extracts, could have been included in this thesis, but were omitted for reasons of space. I therefore selected those extracts and themes that related most closely to my research questions and aims.

4.17 Secondary sources

Ethnographers are sometimes accused of showing little interest in verifying their studies (Cresswell 1998; Denzin 1998). With this in mind, I also consulted non-academic secondary sources including newspaper articles, websites and brochures to answer some of my research questions. These have been useful for exploring 'lay' understandings and representations of the Ningaloo region.

The Northern Guardian newspaper, which covers Carnarvon, Gascoyne Junction, Denham, Useless Loop, Coral Bay and Exmouth was a useful resource because it provided a cultural context for the region. As the newspaper is written for residents, the views of repeat visitors are represented only as far as they impact upon the workings of the permanent community.

I have also drawn on reports prepared for the Western Australian Planning Commission (Wood 2003, Western Australian Planning Commission 2004). These documents also provide cultural context for my research, in that they outline the planning proposals under discussion at the time of the interviews. It is the contents of these documents (and the resulting rumours and myths) that form the political backdrop to my interviews. A discussion of planning processes including the Maud's Landing debate can be found in Chapter Three.

Websites, guidebooks, brochures and photographs of signs and plaques have contributed to my understanding of the region. These include signs made by repeat visitors themselves like jovial slogans on caravans and ironic DIY 'street signs' in campsites. These were gathered throughout my fieldwork and provided an insight into how repeat visitors represent themselves.

4.18 Validating the data

As outlined above, various forms of data have been explored in this project. I have integrated these types of data and ensured their validity, both separately and in combination using Denzin’s methods of data triangulation (1998):

Table 4.7 Data triangulation methods

Denzin’s methods of data triangulation	How the method is employed in this study
Data triangulation (using a variety of data sources in a study)	Primary data is comprised of interview transcripts and observations from acting as a participant-observer. Secondary sources include academic literature, popular ‘lay’ literature and documents prepared for government purposes.
Investigator triangulation (using several different researchers)	Coding framework checked with an expert and against comparable studies.
Theory triangulation (using multiple perspectives to interpret the same data)	Diverse areas such as environmental psychology, geography, anthropology and planning have contributed to my understanding of the data.
Methodological triangulation (using multiple methods to study a problem)	Participant-observation Thematic analysis of interview transcripts

4.19 Research limitations

Research in which the investigator plays an interpretive role has its critics and “qualitative researchers have been called journalists, or soft scientists. Their work is termed unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias.” (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, 7). One response to this is for the researcher to present thematic analysis as a pseudo-scientific process, by emphasising the technological elements (such as using specialist software) and downplaying their interpretive role. Another response is to write lengthy reflexive statements in which the researcher analyses their many assumptions and biases. Both responses are attempts to legitimise qualitative research against largely inappropriate yardsticks.

‘Real life’ tends to intrude upon even the most precise methodologies.

Ethnographic research subjects are, after all, ordinary people. Academia is awash with stories of foibles, and ethnographic researchers have been known to fall in (and out of) love with their subjects, get sick and lose their data (Van Maanen 2011). I therefore acknowledge the following potential limitations to my research and the ways in which I have sought to counter these limitations:

First, the use of opportunistic sampling could lead to an over or underrepresentation of certain cohorts of repeat visitor. Similarly, my position as a female researcher in my 20s may have influenced my sample, both in terms of the people I felt comfortable to approach and those who felt comfortable talking to me. For example, I was hesitant to approach large groups of men when I was conducting fieldwork alone. However, I have compared my sample to visitor statistics collected by other researchers and believe that my sample fairly represents repeat visitors to the region.

While my research participants were not specifically asked about their race, my observation, based on the content of interviews, participants’ surnames and appearances, and the omission of any comments about race in the interviews, is that these repeat visitors were mostly Anglo Celtic Australians. Of course, not all

repeat visitors the Ningaloo region are Anglo Celtic Australian heterosexuals. Further study exploring a broader range of repeat visitors would be a valuable contribution to knowledge about the Ningaloo region.

Second, temporal limitations mean interviews were conducted in 2008 and 2009. Therefore the interview data may no longer reflect popular opinion but must be understood as a 'snapshot' of a pivotal time when tensions and uncertainties were high.

Third, interview transcripts only record what an interviewee says but not what they actually do. It is possible that interviewees are editing their own narratives, self-censoring, exaggerating or lying. While the use of participant observation adds some context (and occasionally counterpoints) to the interview data, it is not the aim of this thesis to prove or disprove my interviewees. This thesis aimed to collect and consider people's perspectives.

This thesis pays limited attention to interviewees' incomes, political persuasions and jobs. These elements were not a focus of the study for two reasons; firstly, this information can be extracted from previous survey-based studies of visitors to the region [Jones et al. 2009] and of grey nomad travellers more generally (Cridland 2008); and secondly, it was beyond the scope of this thesis and therefore unnecessary to delve deeply into these aspects of the interviewees' backgrounds.

4.20 Conclusion

This thesis is responding to a 'real life' research gap, where a stakeholder group felt 'over-surveyed' yet marginalised by previous research. This chapter has justified the many choices I made when designing a research methodology to respond to this lacuna. It has explained why a qualitative research approach was the most suitable way to address my research aims and how I employed a range of qualitative research methods: a literature review; semi-structured, in-depth interviews; participant observation; and, field journals. This particular set of methods allowed

me to address my research objectives, ensure that my work was rigorous and respectful of research participants. The following chapter will draw on empirical data to demonstrate that repeat visitors have developed strong friendships with one another in the region, and that the 'sense of community' they feel is one of the key reasons they return.

5. A sense of community

The first thing that happens when you get out of the car, is that someone puts a beer in your hand. John (6)

We feel as if a red carpet has been laid out for us, because as soon as we arrive everyone's saying "Oh! You're here!". You've no idea what that does to your heart. It's really fantastic. Retired woman at a craft club (56)

In the caravan world, it's nothing to have two people that you've never met before stroll up with their chairs and say "g'day, how are you going? Can we have a chat?" David (33)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Three provided background information about the Ningaloo region's physical and cultural environments. It explained how the region's history, landscape, reef and favourable winter climate have created an increasingly popular tourism destination that attracts repeat visitors. But how do repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the region? This chapter paints a rich picture of 'everyday life' for repeat visitors in the region focussing on their interactions with each other, with residents of the area and with newcomers, such as international backpackers. It demonstrates that repeat visitors have developed strong friendships with one another and that their sense of community is built and maintained through place-specific interactions, performances and rituals conducted during their repeat visits.

This chapter explores the various ways that repeat visitors in the Ningaloo region build and express a 'sense of community'. It considers the ways in which 'friendliness' is perceived and perpetuated and how this contributes to a shared belief that most if not all of the regulars are 'likeminded'. Several repeat visitors, mostly older regulars, claimed to be more social in the region than they are at

home. This chapter demonstrates how self-organised activities including informal craft clubs, mystery dinners, fundraising events and excursions contribute to this sense of community. Two of the most significant activities are happy hour and craft clubs. Almost every interviewee mentioned happy hour and these informal daily drinks serve as a uniting social ritual. I also argue that craft clubs are of particular significance as craft is a female-dominated pastime often overlooked in tourism surveys about the kinds of activities people undertake in the region. These events facilitate mingling and unite regulars through a sense of common purpose. The ways in which repeat visitors customise their campsites is explored, including how 'streets' in caravan parks are named and sites are numbered in pastoral stations, creating a sense of 'lay urban planning'. It proposes that these humorous interventions are, in fact, an important form of placemaking and albeit temporary ownership. As the area is geographically remote, it is difficult for people to obtain supplies. This leads to borrowing, swapping, informal 'fixing' arrangements and an intricate web of DIY supply-chains that are critical during emergencies. Repeat visitors share fish as an informal currency as a way of thanking each other and showing hospitality to newcomers. These site-specific arrangements contribute to the sense that campers 'look after each other' and are 'in it together'. The research indicates that it is common for repeat visitors to introduce their friends and family to the region, a phenomenon that also perpetuates and expands a sense of community. Finally, the chapter examines the ways in which the social borders of this community are monitored by its members. It discusses examples of perceived antisocial behaviour and details the ways in which community members seek to set values and reinforce social norms.

5.2 Friendliness

The interviewees tended to describe their interactions in the region as 'friendly', which was regarded as a positive reason to return. Harry, for example, is a single man in his 70s who lives alone. Harry stated that he has "made a hell of a lot of friends" by caravanning in the region and feels this is a good reason to return (5).

Interviewees believe that other people seem friendlier in the region. Tony notices this as he drives north to the region, saying “you get to somewhere around about [the town of] Gingin and suddenly everyone that’s coming towards you starts waving” (33). When Joy and Ron visited the region for the first time, the people they encountered at the caravan park were so “lovely and friendly” they decided to return (58). The region is characterised as a place to *find* friendly people.

Interviewees did not just observe friendliness in others but saw themselves as becoming friendlier in the region too. Tim’s group of men on a fishing trip described themselves as a “friendly bunch” who always “say hello or have a chat” (16). Winnie at the Blowholes told several anecdotes in which she depicted herself as a friendly, welcoming person (12). Ben explained how he and his family cook pizza and share it around the campsite with anyone they meet (7). The region is characterised as a place to *be* a friendly person.

Interviewees were positive about friendliness and felt it was important. For some, friendliness is described as an ethic or a duty. For example, Brendan, Tim and Glen said that they “always *try* to talk to people” they meet at Quobba (16). Their use of the word ‘try’ is significant because it implies that a certain amount of effort – unconscious as this may be – goes into this. Jenny described campers as having “ready smiles” (33) as if campers’ bonhomie is like a loaded spring, ready at any moment. John organises games at the pastoral station he camps on and stresses that, when he holds a bocce competition, “everyone is welcome” (6). Cleo, who manages People’s Park, says that, when older regular visitors encounter young arrivals, they seem to think “they’re new so we’d better go make them feel welcome” (29). Cleo’s use of the phrase ‘we’d better...’ implies that this friendliness is a conscious effort, an act of hospitality performed out of a sense of obligation. Being friendly is to ‘do the right thing’ and to act in accordance with the social expectations of the place.

To paraphrase George Orwell, all caravan parks are friendly, but some caravan parks are more friendly than others. Interviewees compared various kinds of

accommodation in terms of their friendliness. For example, one interviewee complained that caravan parks lack the friendliness of pastoral station campsites because “a lot of people don’t talk to you in parks”. On the other hand, the manager of Marloo caravan park has been told that Marloo is one of the friendlier places that people have stayed:

They say ‘oh, we’ve been right around [Australia] and this is one of the friendliest places’ because people include them (57).

At a craft club, one of the women described the caravan park where she stays as a “friendly park” (56). This phrase implies there are other “unfriendly parks” that the interviewee avoids. Friendliness is relative and is experienced subjectively.

Friendliness can have its downside. Gina jokingly says that it sometimes feels as if she has “too many” friends in the campsite and this makes her feel busy (13). While she is clearly delighted to have an active social life in the caravan park, ‘busyness’ is antithetical to the winter lifestyle she is trying to create. She says that her husband will sometimes walk to the laundry and not return for hours as he has been chatting with other people. Mark has had a similar experience at a different caravan park. He jokes that going to the toilet can be challenging because he has “stopped and said ‘g’day’ or ‘how ya going’ about half a dozen times on the way there and the way back” (55). This story – of taking a long time to return from the ablution block – was told to me several times throughout the research, sometimes from the perspective of a partner waiting for their spouse to return from the bathroom and ‘wondering where they’ve gone’ (38).

While Paul says that friendliness is something that attracts him to the area, he is one of the few people to admit that friendliness can genuinely be tiring, and says “everyone sticks to themselves to a certain degree” (14). The ability to dip in-and-out of social activities is therefore key to understanding the social dynamics of the campsite. Louise, who was staying in a cabin in a caravan park, says that people in the cabins will ‘talk to anyone who walks past’ but because the cabins attract people on shorter stays they tend not to socialise together (53). Sally, who manages

Red Bluff, says that there are inevitably “people that stick to themselves and don’t want to socialise” but she says “most people end up chatting with others” (9). While people seem to appreciate the friendliness of others and return the friendliness out of a sense of duty, a key aspect of life in a campsite or caravan park is the ability to ‘do one’s own thing’ when desired.

These examples have demonstrated that repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region characterise the cultural environment as friendly which is variously experienced as a trait in others, a trait in the self and as a duty. A drawback is that this takes effort and can create a sense of busyness. Being able to opt-out of social interactions is key to feeling comfortable in the region. It is not my intention to claim that the Ningaloo region is literally friendlier than other places, nor is it productive to attempt to substantiate interviewees’ claims about the relative friendliness of particular campsites over others. What is important is that ‘friendliness’ is described by the interviewees as meaningful, performed, measurable and site specific.

5.3 Likeminded people

Interviewees said that other repeat visitors were ‘likeminded’ which made their interactions comfortable and enjoyable. This sense of similarity goes beyond simple demographic similarities like age and income and is explained by interviewees as having a shared outlook on some aspects of life.

Those who stayed on the pastoral stations characterised each other as likeminded. Sally, who manages the Red Bluff campsite at Quobba Station believes a ‘typical’ Red Bluff visitor is self-sufficient, enjoys being with nature and is somehow more ‘earthy’ than others. She explains that the rough access road acts as a filter because “not everyone is going to drive the road. Not everyone wants to bring their shiny caravan out there” (9). Tim, also staying on a pastoral station, echoes this sentiment, saying that Quobba is “still pretty rough, so it’s only a certain type of people who will come to rough areas” (16). In this context, the word ‘rough’ refers

to the lack of development and tourism infrastructure. Gen and Chris believe the typical camper at 14 Mile is efficient, organised, capable, experienced and self-sufficient (24). For Wayne, the people in the Cape Range National Park are “simple, down to earth people” (46).



Figure 5.1 Sausage Sizzle

Note the use of the phrase “likeminded travelers” (sic). Photo by Chris Chandler

Those staying at caravan parks also described each other as likeminded. For a woman at a caravan park craft club, the most significant link between caravanners is “being able to associate with one another and talk to people” (56). As another woman points out, this is “not everybody’s cup of tea” implying that those who do not enjoy such interactions seek out other accommodation options (56). For Leonard, the campers in his caravan park get along well because they “all like the same thing” (37). John and Leslie claim “ninety-nine percent of people in [caravan] parks are honest” (8). For Jenny, campers and caravanners in the region are united by their “pioneering spirit” (33). For a woman at a morning tea, one of the common links is that the women are ‘mature aged’ and enjoy crafting activities (51).

When repeat visitors typify themselves and try to articulate their commonalities, they often reach for an antithesis to make their point. Wayne's partner Judy contrasts the both of them to people who like "bars and spas" (46). For Cassie, the antithesis of a Ningaloo camper is someone who bases their holiday on the availability of reverse cycle air-conditioning and "can't stand sand" (4). 'Sand' recurs throughout the interviews as a metonym for the challenges and delights of the environment that separates different kinds of visitors. Brian and Marg believe themselves to be "beach people" who are only happy if their feet are in the sand. Marg explains it thus:

Some people might like to go and stay in a 5-star resort. That's not for us, we'd rather camp with our feet in the sand and go catch fish (3).

Ningaloo visitors characterise themselves as rugged, coastal people and construct an 'us and them' dichotomy in which their antithesis is comfort-seeking tourists.

Interestingly, the campers describe themselves as 'being from all walks of life' which indicates that they are aware of their class and income differences (2, 3, 12, 17, 35, 55). However, the emphasis on likemindedness may mean that certain topics are not discussed. I observed that repeat visitors avoid discussing topics that might mark them out as different such as income, politics, religion or work. For example, a professional in the region would not mention their work unless they sensed they had a 'shared belief system' with the person they were talking to, or had a practical skill like a doctor or a mechanic. Instead, it seems that repeat visitors focus on topics they can agree upon. Mark explains this:

What have [repeat visitors] got in common? Honesty. Integrity. And there's no snotty nosed bastards here that say "I'm a millionaire" although there are millionaires. They don't put on airs. They'll just have a beer with me. That's what I like about it. There's no class here. It doesn't really matter what your background was. I'm not even going to tell you what my

background was. These people [his friends Pat and Allan] know but that's because we've been friends for a while and we talk about these things. That's what I didn't like when I was in Darwin - everyone I met there was a Managing Director or a CEO or something. [chuckles] Half of them wouldn't know how to run ... anything! [I felt like I] had to put-on airs, be something I'm not. Whereas here it's just 'that's Al, I'm Mark and that's Bob' and that's all you need to know (55).

This could be interpreted as a form of social control in which people 'fall into line' with those around them, or more positively as a transcendence of the class differences that cause schisms in non-Ningaloo life. The increased opportunity to socialise on their own terms with likeminded people is a compelling reason for repeat visitors to return to the region.

5.4 More social than at home

Many older repeat visitors felt they are more social when staying in the region than in their year-round lives. There are several possible reasons for this.

Firstly, extended stays provide more time to allow friendships to develop. An older woman at Gnaraloo says that friendships can develop quickly because there's more time. "You only see people once a year, but you get to know them more than if you just met at someone's place ... because you've got more time" (13). A woman at morning tea contrasts the relaxed pace of life at Ningaloo to her life at home, where she is "always on a timeline" (51).

Secondly, the physical layout of campsites and caravan parks mean that people are in closer proximity to each other. Carol says that if she wants to play cards or mahjong she can easily "go and find someone who wants to do it" too (24). She realises that she could also find such companions in the city but says she'd "have to drive" which acts as a disincentive and makes it harder to be spontaneous. She

describes social opportunities as being “at your fingertips” in the region. This link between socialising and physical proximity is echoed by Jo and Leonard who do not have neighbours in Perth because they live on a four-acre block and also by a woman at the mini golf morning tea, who says that “unless someone comes to visit” her, she is unlikely to socialise at when she is at home (37). Norman believes that the community of campers at the Blowholes would be “closer knit than people that live in a cul-de-sac in Perth” (12).

Thirdly, the shared facilities in caravan parks play a role in socialising. Vince says that the communal kitchen, laundry and ablution facilities mean “you’re always talking” to someone (11). For Joy, this is a contrast to her year-round life in which she might “go to the shopping centre, have a coffee, and come home without talking to a soul” (58). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, many cite the return journey to the ablution block in the caravan park as a key social opportunity that recurs throughout the day. Caravan park laundries often feature a shelf where visitors, repeat or otherwise, can exchange books and magazines, and noticeboards advertising upcoming events inside and outside the caravan park. They are a social hub where women (and yes, it is usually women) share ironic views about travelling life and what they are missing back home; or make jokes about the ubiquity of domestic labour.

Fourthly, specific one-off social events and rituals in campsites and caravan parks facilitate socialising among repeat visitors. Brian says he has more friends in the region than at home because “there’s more socialising going on” than when he’s at home and cites the frequent cups of tea, morning teas and sundowners as such opportunities (3). Mick echoes this in his description of group celebrations:

[It is] a lot more social here. There’s no doubt about that. Here, if someone has a birthday, you can all go out for a meal. Here it’s quite a big deal because the whole group goes out. Whereas down there [in Perth] we wouldn’t bother doing that. We might

go out together for a birthday, but here it's a big deal because a whole group goes out. It's good fun (48).

While rituals like sundowners may recur daily, they do not require commitment. Recurrent and one-off social events in the region are therefore a contrast to year-round social opportunities like joining a choir, book club, bowls club or men's shed. These activities require a level of obligation, not just in terms of weekly attendance but in the expectation that one might help host the event (in the case of book clubs), participate in a committee (in the case of men's sheds) or pay membership fees (choirs and sporting clubs). The opportunity to partake in a one-off or recurrent social activity that requires little commitment beyond attendance is refreshing to older, long-stay repeat visitors.

A final reason that interviewees might feel more social in the region is because they have fewer commitments or stress contributors. For example, they have fewer family obligations such as providing free childcare for grandchildren or visiting elderly parents in nursing homes. They may also be relieved, albeit temporarily, from the labour involved in maintaining a family home and garden or from the obligations to attend the sorts of hobby groups outlined above.

Time and space play a crucial role in these social opportunities. Spatial constructs like proximity and privacy intersect with temporal constructs like spontaneity and having 'time to fill'. The physical and cultural environments are mutually constituted. For example, an ablution block is both a physical landmark and a powerful cultural place.

These examples have focussed on older repeat visitors. While younger repeat visitors also participate in these social opportunities, their shorter stays in the region meant that they were less likely to want to 'fill time' with organised activities. Also, younger repeat visitors did not give the impression that they were more social in the region than they were at home. For example, those visiting the region with their primary-aged children felt that their time in the region was a break from work and the flurry of activities and social obligations that dominate

their year-round lives. For many of these younger repeat visitors, their time in the region was an opportunity to devote more time to their family. This section has therefore focussed on why older repeat visitors in particular feel more social when staying in the region than in their year-round lives.

5.5 Familiar faces

The factors outlined above – likemindedness, physical proximity and the performance of friendliness – mean that repeat visitors regularly bump into people they know from their year-round lives. Brian says that “if you talk to anyone long enough, you can find a connection” and there are many examples of this (3). Tony, for example, recalls a friendly and spontaneous chat with a fellow camper, who turned out to be his godfather’s son (33). Wayne has a holiday house in Windy Harbour in the state’s South West and says that he bumps into his neighbour more often in Ningaloo than down at Windy Harbour (46). Ashley, a teacher staying in the Aspen caravan park, said she’d already bumped into one of her students and a colleague in the caravan park (39). At the craft club, a woman says that each year she runs into someone she’s met elsewhere at a different caravan park (56). Seeing ‘familiar faces’ contributes to the sense that these caravan parks and campsites are communities of likeminded people.

5.6 Rituals

Without the distractions and obligations of their year-round lives – fewer family obligations or shops to peruse – there is a sense that repeat visitors ‘create their own fun’ in the region and/or recreate elements of their year-round lives in playful rituals. The following section gives examples of significant self-organised activities described by interviewees or observed during fieldwork. Common sporting activities like boating, fishing or surfing are not included because firstly, these are already well-documented in surveys about activities in the Ningaloo region (Jones et al. 2009) and secondly, these activities occur outside the campsite or caravan

park. Instead, the rituals described below are held (or at least closely tied to) campsites and caravan parks and have largely been overlooked in previous studies of the region. The key to understanding these activities is that they are self-organised in a 'bottom up' manner, in that they are organised by repeat visitors for the enjoyment of other repeat visitors. This is distinct from the organised activities that are provided by the managers of American RV resorts as described by Mings and McHugh (1991; 1995).

Happy hour, mentioned earlier in the thesis, deserves further explanation as it is a significant cultural ritual. The term is used to describe relaxing at the campsite with a drink and snacks. While the drinks are usually alcoholic, the focus of happy hour is not heavy drinking but having 'a couple' of drinks as the sun goes down and relaxing before the evening tasks of cooking, showering and preparing for bed begin. Happy hour is not explicitly social and may just involve a couple sitting down together. However, happy hour drinks are usually consumed outside the tent or caravan in full view of people wandering past thus facilitating informal socialising. Norm explains that it has laid the foundations for some enduring friendships:

Philippa: Can you give me one example of one friendship?

Norm: Well, it usually happens as you're walking past their campsite going to the toilet. You say hello as you go past, then you're invited in for drinks. The one big difference [between home and Ningaloo] is there is happy hour! We don't have them at home (2).

The key to understanding happy hour is that it is optional and that people bring their own drinks. As Norm explains above, a couple or family group may sip their drinks outside their own caravan or tent and engage passers-by in conversation. The passers-by might then be invited to join them (2). Or perhaps an interaction between campers earlier in the day might end with the invitation to 'come 'round for happy hour tonight'. The fact that people bring their own drinks means that hosting happy hour is cost-neutral, apart from perhaps supplying some low-key

snacks. While happy hour occurs every night and was mentioned by almost every participant in this study, it is important to understand that it is organised in a 'grass roots' manner rather than by accommodation managers. Some groups of campers formalise happy hour a little further, by creating a designated meeting space. In one caravan park I was invited to the "ALBAR" – a marquee between two campsites with enough room for about ten chairs. ALBAR stands for the names of its creators [A.L.B.A.R.] and is re-created each year. Some interviewees explained that they purposefully try to keep happy hour from 'getting out of hand' by, for example, purposefully serving simple 'nibblies' rather than fancy ones. This is to prevent happy hour from becoming competitive and/or spiralling into an expensive activity. One happy hour where cocktails were served was regarded negatively as being 'organised' and "a little bit upmarket" (33). The implication here is that such 'fanciness' is unsustainable as a nightly routine.

Two rituals involve campers on remote pastoral stations travelling to the nearest town as a group social activity. The first example is the annual Mothers' Day excursion organised by the regulars at 14 Mile campsite on Warroora station. As Mothers' Day falls in May in Australia, it is early in the grey nomad season in the Ningaloo region, and the celebration involves an outing to eat lunch at the Ningaloo Reef Resort in Coral Bay. The excursion involves up to 40 people travelling across rough, unsealed roads in convoy, a journey that takes approximately an hour each way. While everyone who camps at 14 Mile is welcome to participate in the excursion, the organiser, Boz, estimates that 15 out of the 20 couples who participate are repeat visitors (1). A second example occurs at Gnaraloo pastoral station where a group of women in their early 60s excitedly anticipate fortnightly trips to Carnarvon to stock up on fruit and vegetables and "have a big night out" at the Gascoyne Hotel (51). Several couples co-ordinate the travel so they can socialise in Carnarvon together. Both of these examples are place-specific rituals borne out of the remoteness of the campsites.

As older repeat visitors may be in the region for months, they inevitably experience personal milestones in the region such as birthdays and anniversaries. Earlier in this

chapter, Mick, who stays at the Aspen caravan park in Exmouth (now called RAC Exmouth Cape Holiday Park) said that when somebody has a birthday, it is “quite a big deal because the whole group goes out” (48). At Yardie Creek Caravan Park, a group of repeat visitors host a birthday party every season for any repeat visitors whose birthday falls outside their time in the Ningaloo region. This celebration is held at the ALBAR, a venue that doubles as a community hub. Interestingly, the ALBAR has also hosted wakes to commemorate people who have died while on holiday in the region or, more commonly, during the off-season (55). The birthday celebrations and wakes are site-specific rituals that point to the enduring nature of the friendships and the community of campers.

While evening meals on a campsite or caravan park are usually eaten in relative privacy, communal meals are occasionally organised as a social occasion. One example is a ‘casserole night’ where campers contribute a dish to a shared meal. Chris and Gen have organised casserole nights at 14 Mile. They set up tables for the event and claim that one casserole night attracted 100 people (14). At Yardie Creek Caravan Park, a casserole night was held to celebrate Mark’s birthday (55). These casserole nights are self-organised by campers in a ‘bottom-up’ way. Sometimes the managers of commercial caravan parks facilitate communal meals. In Carnarvon a group of women work together and organise weekly ‘mystery dinners’ on behalf of the caravan park’s management (56). The mystery dinner is the closest thing to an American-style ‘organised activity’ that I encountered during the fieldwork. (Mings and McHughes’ work on snowbirds in highly organised American RV parks was outlined in Chapter Two). The mystery dinner is held in a communal area of a caravan park and attendees pay a few dollars to join in. The mystery dinners follow a formula in that participants bring their own drinks and eat garlic bread while participating in a quiz or bingo. Then “Liz gets all the salads out of the fridge and sets them out on the trestle [table] and everybody helps themselves”. The mystery dinners attract 50-70 people. At the commercial caravan park People’s Park in Coral Bay, the management provide an annual ‘sausage sizzle’ at a nearby beach. The food is free and the event provides an opportunity for guests, both regulars and newcomers, to mingle. The manager told me the event is popular and gets people

“very excited” (29). Aside from caravan parks, one of the few businesses to capitalise on repeat visitors’ love of social rituals is Exmouth Mini Golf. The business is located across the road from Aspen caravan park and offered a weekly morning tea of fresh scones with a hot drink for \$7.50. According to the business manager, the event attracted “mainly the ladies” and was good exposure for the business (52). This event acted as a rallying point for the retired women in the region, a weekly ritual where women could gather and talk. Communal meals represent a change in routine and are another site-specific example of how repeat visitors interact with their cultural environment.



Figure 5.2 Craft club signage

Craft activities including patchwork, knitting, crochet and embroidery were a popular pastime among the retired women. While these pastimes might be conducted individually, they were also performed together at a nominated time such as a weekly craft morning (Figure 5.2). At the Lighthouse caravan park, 20-30 women participate in a craft club. This club is organised by campers themselves rather than by management. The women meet weekly at an appointed time and

bring their own craft projects to work on. The women give each other technical advice on their craft projects, share craft information such as techniques and patterns, and talk about non-craft related topics. Interestingly, two women acknowledged that their craftwork was a response to their surroundings and the culture of the campsite. A woman at the Lighthouse craft club said that she'd never been a "craft person" until she got to Ningaloo and was taught craft skills by other women. She expressed surprise at her own situation, and said "I never thought I would enjoy this. If somebody had said 'this is what you are going to do when you get to a certain age!'" Another woman explains:

I started doing patchwork up there three years ago. I'd never done it before. It was something that I wanted to do and it was the ideal opportunity. It's not a club, it's just a small group of people (38).

This quotation is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, the woman took up patchworking because of her travel to Ningaloo. Secondly, she stresses that, despite women referring to it as 'craft club' it is not *really* a club and is much less formal, which is part of its appeal. This reinforces Onyx and Leonard's claim that Australian grey nomads are resistant to being organised (2005, 65). Some women attend 'craft day' at Exmouth Senior Citizens club, however this is not a commitment but a 'drop in' session (51, 54). It is significant that these clubs are casual, for reasons outlined earlier in this chapter – older women may be trying to resist the sorts of obligations they experience in their year-round lives, such as looking after their grandchildren or elderly parents, or their responsibilities to community groups or volunteer roles. For these older women, who have spent many years caring for others, the chance to focus on a pleasurable self-directed craft project is a precious opportunity.

Women represent craft as an alternative to fishing, an activity in which many of their husbands are busily engaged. Craft is undoubtedly a highly gendered activity, and I did not observe any men participating in craft clubs. Craft may seem like a niche activity, but I argue that it is very significant because at Ningaloo it is a female

pastime. Visitor surveys tend to gather data on a limited range of activities such as boating, fishing and snorkelling. However, there is a gender bias in this definition of 'activity' because it privileges physically active, outdoor pursuits that are dominated by men and/or those with particular bodily capabilities. Craft is significant in that it does not require a physically fit body. While some craft activities require good eyesight and motor skills, they can be easily adapted to accommodate ageing. For example, a woman with poor eyesight or arthritis may do longstitch with large thread rather than detailed embroidery stitches. Other female-dominated activities such as conversing, walking, communal cooking and playing games are overlooked in visitor surveys and, as a consequence, the ways in which women interact with their cultural and physical environments are often underrepresented .

Social events that aim to raise funds for charities are another example of how repeat visitors create and maintain a sense of community. Boz and Lyn at 14 Mile can list several fundraising efforts with which they've been involved. With causes ranging from the Cancer Council to the Royal Flying Doctor, Lynn believes the campers at 14 Mile alone raised \$4000 in the previous year (1). Sharon, who stays in her bus at the Aspen caravan park, claims that Exmouth raises more money for charity per capita than other areas of the state (45). While Sharon's claim is unsubstantiated, it is indicative of how fundraising as a shared purpose is seen as indicative of a community's health and cohesion.

Interviewees gave examples of ways in which campers create events for each other just for fun. Cassie, who camps at Ningaloo station, recalls the year that some fellow campers whom her family had only just met organised a treasure hunt for Cassie's children. Cassie and her friends also hold an event that they call the 'Ningaloo Olympics', where they take part in site-specific games and challenges (4). Similarly, Gen, a regular at 14 Mile, used to run free, informal fitness classes on the beach. Carol would blow a whistle at 9.00 a.m. and "have twenty women running around a circuit, listening to music and jumping skipping ropes" (14).



Figure 5.3 Football tipping and fundraising activities

The social rituals described in this section are significant ways in which repeat visitors create and maintain a sense of community in the region. It is important to note that most of these activities are self-organised by campers and are both optional and playful in their intention. Visitor surveys tend to focus on physical

activities such as boating, fishing and snorkelling and while these water-based sports activities are indeed popular, my research demonstrates that self-organised activities such as craft, fundraisers and happy hour are also a key aspect of the region's appeal.

5.7 Customising the campsite

It is common for groups of regulars to customise their surroundings in commercial caravan parks or on pastoral stations. The ALBAR, mentioned earlier in this chapter, is an example of how repeat visitors have made the site 'their own' using imagination and a sense of humour. The sign for ALBAR states "Managers: Marg and Pat. Licensees: Alan and Leonard" (55). This is a reference to the gendered division of roles and labour with the women in charge of logistics while the men focus on alcohol. At the Aspen caravan park, a group of regulars have named their 'street' in the park 'McGossip Steet' (Figure 5.4). The name (Mc.G.O.S.S.I.P) is derived from the surnames of each couple lining the street, and their propensity to gather and talk. They have erected a homemade street sign, which they bring with them each year (48). At the Lighthouse caravan park, campers laugh as they tell me the names they've given the 'streets' and areas in the park. One area that occasionally floods has been jokingly called 'Lakeside' and another drier part of the campsite 'Sahara'. They burst into giggles when they tell me that another area of the park is called 'Dunrooten' because "we've all done rooting!" International readers are likely unaware that 'rooting' is Australian slang for having sexual intercourse, and the name reflects the shifting interests of couples as they age. Another area is known as 'the industrial area' because a female camper in that area has three sewing machines and uses them throughout her holiday. An area favoured by older regulars is referred to as 'God's Waiting Room' and another area is called 'Millionaire's Row' (55). The phrase 'Millionaire's Row' is used in several campsites to describe the areas of the campsites with the best view. It is a way for those who aren't camping in prime spots to subtly express their jealousy and/or mock the people who have secured these pitches. On pastoral stations, repeat

visitors claim their sites using homemade signs made from scrap metal. All of this 'lay urban planning' is interesting because it replicates trappings of suburbia – street signs, community centres – but is done in an ironic manner. Importantly it is also 'bottom up' in that the residents themselves are coming up with these ideas. If station management had introduced these features, they may well have been resisted. These jovial interventions in the landscape are significant forms of repeat visitor place-making, assertions of ownership, as well as establishing and maintaining status and social control.



Figure 5.4 McGossip Street



Figure 5.5 Campground signage

5.8 Providing assistance

Repeat visitors regularly recounted 'doing favours for each other', with the implication that campsites and caravan parks were friendly places where people are community minded. On remote pastoral stations, where shops and hospitals can be hours away, this assistance can be lifesaving. The reassuring presence of other concerned and socially aware campers is what makes such remote locations a feasible option for repeat visitors with health problems.

The 'veggie run' organised by campers at the remote campsite of 14 Mile at Warroora is a good example of how repeat visitors assist each other in site-specific ways. The veggie run is a way for campers to receive a delivery of fresh fruit and vegetables from the plantations in Carnarvon to their campsites on the beach. One repeat camper, Brian, voluntarily acted as the 'middle-man' between campers and a plantation in Carnarvon. Brian would take orders of vegetables from the campers, collect their cash and then 'radio through' the order. The plantation would then send the orders by truck to a halfway point where their vehicle would be met by a camper. The campers who drive out to collect the fruit and vegetables volunteer their time and have their petrol costs reimbursed. This system was so well-honed that Brian was known as "the veggie man" and was thereby an important person in the campsite (3). In describing the system, John and Rochelle said "it's a community thing" that was so highly organised as to be "unbelievable". "It's like communism" (6) they added.

As the area is geographically isolated - particularly for those campsites on pastoral stations - it can be difficult for people to purchase items that they have forgotten or broken which has led to a lively culture of sharing items and expertise. As a group of campers at Cardabia told me, if something goes wrong with your camping equipment, boat, generator or car then "there's always somebody that has got a little bit of knowledge" and "everybody pulls together" or can loan a helpful item. It is worth quoting Brian at length, as he explains the complex and nuanced hierarchy of informal repairs at remote 14 Mile:

Brian: I'm a fairly handy sort of a guy ... a Mr Fixit ... So if something breaks down, I get a call 'hey Kev, come and fix this'. Or if, ah, Marg is doing something with knitting or sewing and she gets a bit of a problem, there's a particular lady she'll go and say 'hey, give us a hand with this'. There are different experts who are able to do different things. By the way, you talked to Boz? He's the gas man.

Philippa: Oh, Boz is the gas man?

Brian: Yes, he does fridges too. But I try to take some of the other work to unload him a little bit and I'm reasonable with gas. But Boz is the gas expert. Everyone's got gas fridges, so he spends half his time running around fixing up gas fridges. I'm second down the ladder on gas [laughs]. Another man is the top man for generators, and I'm second on the ladder for that (3).

It is interesting that Brian uses the language of the workplace, with its hierarchies ("top of the ladder") and references to work and time management. When I spoke to Boz in his caravan annexe he says that he's been busy "sorting things out" for people all day. When I asked what he meant, he said "oh, sorting out their satellite dishes. I've done about six of those this year. I've serviced three fridges. Tried to fix a telephone, too" (1). David, who stays at a commercial caravan park in the town of Coral Bay, has borrowed golf clubs from the town's newsagent because he fancied a game of golf but hadn't brought his clubs with him. While the culture of borrowing and fixing cultivates a sense of community and self-sufficiency, a manager of a caravan park says that this attitude can sometimes be inconvenient for him because regulars tend to think that they can "borrow anything anytime" (50).

Because traditional emergency services such as ambulances, police, fire fighters and hospitals are not easily accessible throughout the region, the care that regulars show to each other is therefore heightened during an emergency. For Harry, a

single man in his 70s, one of the appealing things about staying at the remote Blowholes campsite is that “everybody looks after each other” (5). A nurse who stays at Gnaraloo pastoral station said:

I often have the medical kit so if anyone is injured often they'll come to me. Some girls came to me once, as one of them had an awful gash on her feet. I looked after her for a few days with all the stuff (51).

This provision of assistance is significant because the pastoral station is a long way from a hospital or nursing post. Another story that exemplified the sense of ‘pulling together’ is how the repeat visitors to the Blowholes cared for 91 year-old Jeanie when she became seriously ill during a stay. Her neighbours sprang into action:

There's an old guy that comes up from Albany, his name is Lloyd and his lady friend is named Jeanie. Lloyd is in his 89, Jeanie is 91. Jean got very ill [...] and we didn't know if Jeanie was going to make it. One of our fellow campers [...] was there luckily and is a doctor. And he was treating Jeanie and we were all very anxious. We organised for her to go down to the hospital in Carnarvon. Doc was looking after her, and everybody was looking after old Lloyd. They drove them down [to Carnarvon] because they were stressed, stayed overnight in Carnarvon, brought Lloyd back, looked after him and when Jeanie was fit enough to come back after a few days somebody else went down and drove her back. That's the community. Everyone was looking after them (6).

While things ended well for Lloyd and Jeanie, sometimes deaths occur in the region. Winnie's account of the community's response to tragedy is poignant and demonstrates how repeat visitors assist each other:

Winnie: We have such a tight knit community here that when someone gets swept off the rocks [...] the whole community, the

station people, everything else like that, the police, the SES, the local people that are camping here at the time, everybody just goes 'boom' straight in and does the job. [...] When someone goes missing it's like part of the family goes.

Male: It is terrible, but in those circumstances it's probably the tightest knit community [...] Everybody searches the beaches, everybody's looking along the rocks, everybody's out in their boat, everybody's doing everything (12).

These quotations demonstrate the lengths that some repeat visitors will go to in order to provide assistance for those around them. Her use of the phrase 'part of the family' points to the enduring nature of the friendships and the community of campers.

As fishing is a popular activity in the region and shops are expensive and sometimes distant, freshly-caught fish is a valuable commodity. However, fish obtained in this way are not sold but shared or swapped. Sharing fish can be a way to say 'thank you', or to welcome newcomers such as backpackers. The interviews yielded twelve unprompted anecdotes about sharing fish, indeed I received fish as a gift myself, and I observed the practice during fieldwork. Gen and Chris explain how fish is shared between everyone on their boat:

We take other people [out on the boat]. What we catch in the boat, we share between who's on the boat. It's not like 'I catch it so it's my fish'. If there's four people on the boat, the fish are shared four ways [...] So that's how it works (14).

In some of the anecdotes, sharing fish facilitates a pleasant interaction between repeat visitors and people who are 'different' such as sharing fish with young international backpackers. In one example, the interviewee took pity on some backpackers travelling on a tight budget and shared fish with them – only to have the favour returned when the backpacker delivered freshly made crepes the next

day. In this story below, Ben explains how sharing an enormous tuna and mackerel – too much for his own group to eat – facilitates an interaction with a group he would not normally meet:

We get to shore and there was this bloke on the shore who said ‘that’s a nice fish!’ and we said ‘I’m not sure what we’re going to do with it, would you like some?’ ‘Yeah’ and I said ‘how many of you is there?’ He said ‘twenty five of us’. I said ‘mate, this whole lot is for you!’. We sliced up [...]the whole mackerel, the whole tuna, everything. We just gave it all to him. And this guy was that appreciative. He was from a churchgoing group and they’re doing a churchie thing cruising up through [this region]. Really nice people. He runs up to the car and he grabs these church-bash shirts [...] and brought them down to me. We’re not church goers but we thought it was fantastic and put them on (7).

For Ben, sharing his fish is both practical (it would spoil without a freezer) and an act of hospitality, shown by a repeat visitor to a group of newcomers. It brings Ben in to contact with a group of people he would not normally meet – churchgoers. The link between sharing fish and community is made explicitly in the following two excerpts from separate interviews:

Jo: If someone catches a fish, you share it. It’s just, you know, good. It’s a **good atmosphere here** (37).

Gina: I like that, because we haven’t had much luck [fishing] in the last couple of years. Russell gave us heaps last year. That’s really nice because **that’s community** (13) [my emphasis]

Sharing fish is yet another example of how repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region provide assistance to each other in order to build and maintain a sense of community. It is also site-specific, in that material factors such as access to electricity, proximity, privacy and boats, all facilitate the practice.

5.9 Repeat visitors and 'blow-ins'

Interviewees made a distinction between repeat visitors and those visiting the region for the first time. The colloquial term for these new arrivals is 'blow-ins', implying they've been blown in to the area by the wind. While repeat visitors tended to socialise with other repeat visitors or within established friendship networks, many interviewees enjoyed the arrival of blow-ins and the ebb and flow of a campsite. They took pride in sharing local knowledge and pointing-out the local area's attractions to newer visitors. For example, Len enjoys introducing new visitors to good snorkelling spots. Repeat visitors took it upon themselves to assist new visitors, such as helping them reverse and park their trailer into a tight spot (17). I occasionally received such help during my fieldwork and got the sense that it was an informal 'induction' process through which site-specific knowledge is passed on. It could also be interpreted as a subtle form of social control that creates a power dynamic between the repeat visitor and the newcomer.

Some repeat visitors took pleasure in meeting young and/or foreign visitors such as the backpackers or 'nice French kids' who 'turn up in their Britz (the name of a national campervan hire firm) wagon and camp on the beach' (27). They felt that the opportunity to meet 'different' people was not possible in their non-Ningaloo lives. These interactions were regarded with pride ('we really showed them a good time') and surprise ('they were young/foreign but surprisingly nice people').

It's educational for us too, because the young ones tell us all about their countries and where they've come from, and we sit many a night around the campfire talking to all the tourists. You meet some wonderful young people from all walks of life. Winnie (12)

Gen and Chris, who camp at the Blowholes, link this acceptance of 'different' people and blow-ins to a sense of national pride;

Anyone who has the guts, that wants to get themselves geared up to come and look at our country as we see it? Good on them. (14)

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the caravan parks in Coral Bay holds an annual sausage sizzle. When the managers first organised the event they expected to see the 'younger crew' at the opposite end of the beach to the 'older crew' but were surprised at the apparent intermingling of generations. I asked the caravan park manager how these older regulars relate to young blow-ins and used myself as a hypothetical example. He said that older regulars had no qualms asking young blow-ins "what their business is, what they're doing here, whether they like it, whether they're pregnant, whether they have any kids" (29).

However, there are limits to the bonhomie shown to new arrivals. Repeat visitors patrolled the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, stepping in when newer visitors broke written or unwritten rules such as blatantly breaking fishing regulations or littering. One regular at 14 Mile says that "outsiders that come in and do stupid things become our entertainment" and it is significant that she uses the phrase 'outsiders' with its negative connotation. She goes on to explain that regulars will "fall over themselves" to help newcomers who show humility by asking for help, however:

now and again you get those smart alecs who think 'we know everything' and then get themselves into all kinds of pickles. That's when we take our chairs down to the beach, sit back and enjoy ourselves...(3)

There's a hint of malevolence in Marg's anecdote. It is important to her that new arrivals act with humility and pay their respects to their elders if they do not want to be laughed at. So, while newcomers are welcomed, this is conditional. Morris states that "mateship is an everyday medium of micropolitical pressure" (1992). In the context of the Ningaloo caravan parks and beaches, mateship is used to include and exclude others. It is used to reinforce behavioural norms. It can be used to create cultural capital (Bourdieu 1985, Throsby 1999, Roberts and Townsend 2016).

For example, a camper saying 'we're all mates up here' means 'we all understand the codes of conduct required here, and abide by them'. Adherence to written and unwritten rules is a significant element as to how repeat visitors build and maintain a sense of community.

5.10 Repeat visitors and residents

Residents of the Ningaloo region interact with repeat visitors in a variety of ways. Interviewees developed relationships with a variety of residents including staff in local shops, managers of caravan parks or tourism nodes on pastoral stations, pastoral leaseholders and members of local clubs such as the Country Women's Association (CWA) or Exmouth Senior Citizens. Positive relationships with pastoralists and the managers of commercial caravan parks and campsites on pastoral stations were the norm. In some cases, years of repeat visits meant that repeat visitors and managers had developed a friendly and familiar relationship. Interviewees were often admiring of pastoral leaseholders and caravan park managers. The manager of one busy caravan park was praised for being kind and 'firm but fair'. I observed that repeat visitors were pleased to be invited to share intimate moments of managers' lives such as being invited to their children's birthday parties. Another caravan park manager said that regular visitors sometimes invite them to their campsite for a roast meal or a barbeque. One caravan park manager, Cleo, went as far as to describe the regular visitors as being 'like family' because her own extended family lives interstate:

Every second day we have people here cuddling me and crying goodbye. It is like they are saying goodbye to their family for another twelve months. It is really special and it is probably part of the reasons we've stayed here [as managers] for so long. Cleo, caravan park manager (29)

One manager of a tourism node on a pastoral lease laughed when I asked about her relationship with regulars saying "it is very toxic on my liver! [...] They're always up

here in the afternoon with gin and tonics” (9). Interviewees pointed to the politeness and helpfulness of local shopkeepers who are accustomed to unusual requests. For example, a camper on a pastoral station may request that a shop order in a specific item (for example, a replacement part for a boat) then send the item by courier to a remote campsite. The earlier example of the ‘veggie run’ where a bulk order of fruit and vegetables is despatched from Carnarvon to a remote campsite is another example of a relationship between local traders and repeat visitors. Despite the praise and tentative friendships between repeat visitors and local managers and businesspeople, there is evidence that these relationships have boundaries. For example, the same manager who mentioned drinking gin and tonic with repeat visitors also acknowledged that she does not want to socialise with all visitors, just some. In order to act as an authority figure and enforce rules, she maintains a certain distance. One repeat visitor bluntly summarised their relationship with residents by saying “well, we’re good for cash” (10).

Aside from managers and traders, repeat visitors also interacted with local retired residents. Several interviewees were visiting members of lawn bowls, craft and Country Women’s Association clubs. Norm and Mary said that residents at patchwork and bowls made repeat visitors ‘feel like a local’ due to their friendliness. Mary attributes this friendliness to a ‘country’ attitude (2). The relationships that repeat visitors have developed with residents is another aspect of the Ningaloo region’s cultural environment and is yet another incentive for people to return to the region. These sorts of relationships fall outside of the ‘visiting friends and relatives’ category commonly used in visitor surveys, and are also overlooked in previous research about repeat visitors in the area.

5.11 New recruits

Many interviewees were encouraged to visit the region by friends or family who enjoyed holidays in the area. For example, Chris said that a friend of his had been visiting the area since the 1970s and told Chris that he had “better come and have a look” (14). For Norm, it was his sister who introduced his wife and himself to the

region (2). The sense of community is grown and enriched when these people introduce a new generation of friends and family to the region. A spokesperson in Tim's group explained how he inducted his friends to camping on the pastoral station Quobba:

A lot of these guys had never been to anything like this. If you asked some of them [before they visited, they would have said] 'it's too rough, it's too dangerous' [...] but people don't really know until they've tried it (16).

Tim was so keen to return to the region that he and his wife brought their nine-month old baby to the region – an impressive feat considering the drive takes over ten hours, and facilities are minimal. Retired regulars at Cardabia say that their adult children and their partners often join them. Frank and Glenda were paid a visit by their adult offspring when Frank turned 80 while in the region (31). David and Jenny were joined by their seven year-old grandson the previous year (33). One group in People's Park were part of a group of sixteen friends and relatives, with another eight in another part of the park (20). These large groups of family and friends are noticeable in the region, and it is not unusual to see several campsites joined together with shared facilities such as an impressive temporary kitchen or a marquee. By introducing it to friends and family, the region becomes the site for significant family events and a meeting place imbued with collective meaning and memory. This community of friends and family is yet another aspect of Ningaloo's cultural environment that acts as a drawcard for some repeat visitors.

5.12 Antisocial behaviour

Research participants told several stories of how they had dealt with perceived antisocial behaviour. Examples of antisocial (or even illegal) behaviour included littering the campsite, driving on dunes and fishing with a net. In some cases, responses were passive (such as picking up litter left behind) but in other cases the interviewee described 'taking on' the antisocial behaviour with warnings or threats.

John says that when he intervenes he sometimes “gets attitude from the Gen Y people who give you shit” but he considers it worthwhile (6). There were also examples of more nuanced antisocial behaviour such as bragging and ignoring advice. In this example, a younger interviewee who brought a group of friends to the region describes monitoring his own friends’ behaviour:

You can get one or two people who don’t fit in who can make it very uncomfortable for everyone else so [...] I try and crack down [on that behaviour]. If I’ve got guys here who I don’t know and who are running amuck I get on their back. You’ve got to think of other people, it’s important. Brendan, Tim and Glenn (16)

It is interesting that the young man in the paragraph polices his own behaviour and that of his friends. He uses authoritarian metaphors like “crack down” and “get on their back” which is notable considering the supposed laid-back atmosphere of the campsite. His statement “you’ve got to think of other people. It’s important” underlies his strong commitment to doing what he perceives as the right thing. Boz and Lynne describe an unpleasant encounter:

There was a guy doing 60 [kilometres per hour] on the beach. I told him to slow down, he put his brakes on, came up and punched me in the chest. There was him and another chap. We sorted it out eventually, Stan came along, the old caretaker, and told them to leave. They left the next day. Boz and Lynn (1)

These examples need to be understood in the context of the area’s geographic isolation. Authority and assistance can be far away especially for those camping on pastoral stations. Condoning reckless behaviour is more dangerous than it would be in other contexts, as is intervening, as the above example illustrates. While it is understandable that repeat visitors feel the need to intervene when they observe unsafe behaviour, it may also be a subtle form of social control that affirms the repeat visitor’s status as someone who understands how people ought to behave in the region.

5.13 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the region. In particular, it has used interview data and fieldwork observations to demonstrate that repeat visitors create, maintain and express a sense of community through place-specific performances. These everyday practices are under-explored in academic literature and the implications of these findings will be further considered in Chapter Nine. The following chapter will use empirical research to demonstrate how generations of families have created a sense of 'heritage' through repeat visits, at different stages of their lives.

6. Over a lifetime

6.1 Introduction

How, why and at what points do recreational travel patterns change throughout the course of a lifetime? This chapter examines the ways in which repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region modify their travel plans to account for changes in their personal circumstances and how the rhythms of these trips vary throughout the life course. It looks beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of the 'trip' to unearth personal narratives of attachment to place that span generations. For the interviewees, the trip to Ningaloo is not simply a holiday but a chance to cement the sorts of friendships explored in the previous chapter. It is also a pilgrimage that evokes memories and creates a legacy for future generations.

This chapter proposes seven life phases that shape repeat visitors' travels to Ningaloo. The chapter then looks at the various types of trips that the interviewees took throughout their lifetimes, including trips made in their own childhood, in adulthood, with preschool-aged children, trips during school holidays and trips taken as 'empty nesters' once children were old enough to be independent. One distinctive type of trip is the 'boys only' fishing or surfing trip, and this is explored in detail. The chapter considers the impact of cessation of work due to retirement, redundancy or disablement on the participants' trips, as they settle into new annual rhythms. This chapter also investigates the life events that interrupt trip rhythms, such as becoming a parent, the opportunity to do 'a big trip' during long-service leave and the arrival of grandchildren. It also considers the biggest travel modifier of all: ageing. The chapter demonstrates that most interviewees remain highly committed to a future of travel to the Ningaloo area with accommodation bookings in place 'to infinity and beyond'. Finally, the chapter looks at the research participants' desire to leave a Ningaloo-related legacy for their children or grandchildren. This is expressed in different ways including adhering strictly to regulations such as fishing bag limits in order to preserve fish stocks for future

generations or wanting to own land in the region that can be passed down through a family.

6.2 The interviewees' phases of life

The research participants' life phases can be categorised into seven categories summarised in Table 6.1 below. I am aware that these life phases appear to be heteronormative and traditional in their emphases on relationships and having children. Life, for the research participants as for wider society, is infinitely more complex than the table below suggests, but the categories have been created to reflect the interviewees' own reported circumstances. It should not be interpreted as a model of 'normal' life. Further research is required about if, and how, a more diverse range of repeat visitors experience the Ningaloo region. It is possible that the sorts of 'social norms' explored in Chapter Five are a disincentive for people from diverse backgrounds (such as non Anglo-Celtic Australians, or those in same-sex relationships) to visit the region. Adults who are retired, partnered and travelling without children are highly represented, and the reasons for this have been explained in Chapter Three and Chapter Four.

Table 6.1 Interviews by life phase

#	Life phase and travel group	Interview #
1	Child, travelling with parents	People under 18 were not interviewed in this research. However, adult interviewees recalled childhood visits.
2	Adult, travelling before having children	16
3	Adult, working, partnered, travelling with pre-school aged children	7, 39, 40, 53
4	Adult, working, partnered, travelling	4, 14, 15, 20

#	Life phase and travel group	Interview #
	with children in school	
5	Adult, working or semi-retired, partnered, travelling without children (empty-nest or travelling solo)	10, 11, 13, 17, 19, 33, 41, 42, 43, 46, 49
6	Adult, retired, partnered, travelling without children	1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 22, 24, 25, 27, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 45, 47, 48, 51, 55, 56, 58
7	Adult, retired, travelling without children, no spouse	5, 18, 36, 55

* See Appendix C for more information on the interviewees and interviews.

6.3 Phase one: childhood

While no children were interviewed for this project, two interviewees recalled visits they had taken to the region as children. Ben fondly recalled visiting the region with his father, grandfather and uncle who all knew the region well (7). Cassie visited the region as a child in the 1970s and early 1980s. In 1982, Cassie and her sister were old enough to fly alone so their parents sent them up to Exmouth by plane in order to camp with their grandparents. Her ‘gran and grandad’ would collect them from Learmonth airport, near Exmouth (4).

In addition to their own experiences in the region, Ben and Cassie have been told stories about their parents’ time in the region. Ben’s father and uncle worked in the region as shell divers before Ben was born. Cassie’s father has visited the region regularly since he was 16 and after he married Cassie’s mother the newlyweds visited the region before they had children. Because Cassie and Ben were both inducted into a process of repeat visitation by their elders, they feel that access to the region is akin to a birthright for them. Cassie says that the experience has been

“handed down through the generations” and Ben describes his own children as “fourth generation”.

Particular sites in the region symbolise their sense of family heritage. For Ben, his uncle’s shack at the Blowholes is a metonym for his sense of belonging in the region (7). For Cassie, her family’s attachment to the region is evident in her description of the ‘tinny tree’. This is a tree near the family’s beloved camping spot on a pastoral station which the family decorate with beer cans (‘tinnies’) like an improvised, out-of-season Christmas tree. Cassie describes arriving at the pastoral station at the beginning of their holiday:

As we come over the hill every year, someone will spot the tinny tree out the window and say ‘there it is, Mum! The tinny tree!’ (4).

It is interesting that specific features of the human environment - Ben’s uncle’s shack and Cassie’s family’s tinny tree – are loaded with meaning and are symbolic of their childhoods. Both Ben and Cassie are emotional about the region, telling vivid stories and recurrently using the word ‘love’ to describe their feelings. It is clear that their experiences of visiting the region as children made a big impression on them. They are both committed to taking their own children to the region to have similar experiences and thus preserve this family tradition. The theme of ‘leaving a legacy’ will be explored later in this chapter.

6.4 Phase two: adult, travelling pre-children

Travel in early adulthood has been characterised in the tourism literature by a desire for exploration, adventure, experimentation and avoidance of strong commitments. Individuals who are single or in new relationships are “young, energetic, and often prepared to improvise and have no dependent children” (Collins and Tisdell, 2002). While these definitions are rather sweeping, those who

first visited the region as childfree young adults do indeed link the region with feelings of excitement and freedom.

John, for example, recalls visiting the region in the late 1970s and remembers the 'scene' at Red Bluff of young surfing couples staying in the area. Trevor also visited in the late 1970s, and describes the atmosphere as 'free and easy' with "everyone running around with no clothes on". He says that "nobody was organising it" then and people camped on the beach. John has always "loved that part of his life" (10). Wendy, in her early 60s, recalled visiting the region in 1982 with her boyfriend at the time: "We were on surfing trips back then. We weren't married and lots of the boys were just looking for waves. We had the odd surf and the odd fish and just lived out of a tent" (13).

John says that people are astonished when he says he's been visiting the region for 30 years, implying that it was unusual to visit the region in the 1970s. As explained in Chapter Three, Western Australia's surfing community only started visiting surf breaks in the region in the mid 1970s and access to the Ningaloo coast was limited until the 1980s, when the main road to Exmouth was sealed.

John and Wendy - and Ben and Cassie's parents in the section above - were therefore what Butler (1980) would term 'early adopters', visiting the region in its exploration phase. And with their willingness to be spontaneous and 'live out of a tent' at this phase of their lives, their narratives echo the literature on travel during early adulthood (Collins and Tisdell, 2002).

By 2009, around 12% of visitors from within WA to the region were aged 18-29 (Jones et al. 2009). Visitor statistics also indicate that people who surf or windsurf in the region regard those activities as an "important or very important" element of their trip (Jones et al. 2009), suggesting that some visitors visit the region with the specific purpose of surfing or windsurfing. As these activities are difficult to combine with children, it can be deduced that people in phase two – or those travelling without their children – are the most likely group to visit the region

specifically to surf or windsurf, or participate in other physically demanding leisure activities like diving and snorkelling. This group are also able to visit outside of the school holiday peak periods.

6.5 Phase three: travelling with pre-school aged children

Starting a family and raising small children can cause repeat visitors to re-consider how they engage with the Ningaloo region. Participating in activities such as surfing becomes more difficult with babies and young children, and new parents may abandon these activities or 'take turns' at them, alternating responsibility for childcare between themselves. In some cases, the interviewees indicated that new fathers continued to participate in water-based leisure activities while women looked after the children at the campsite or caravan park (39, 40, 53). Louise says "before I had children a holiday for me was very different" (53). Travelling with children is not easy, as Kate says, "it is hard doing stuff out of a tent for kids and a little baby". She goes on to explain:

It's hard when you've got little kids. If the kids are having a tantrum and you gotta put them in time out, well, there's only one place - the tent. And the walls aren't soundproof. So your kid is carrying on and screaming and you've got old ladies poking their heads out of their tents to see what's going on (40).

Ashley and her partner usually prefer to camp in 'the bush' on pastoral stations or in the national park and "hate being in a caravan park". However, as they now have a one year-old child they have been staying in caravan parks. Ashley regards this as a temporary arrangement until they feel ready to camp with their daughter and says that they would prefer to camp near other people so that their daughter has friends to play with. Tuuli, the manager of the hotel in Coral Bay says, "when people are visiting with young children, or when their children have flown the coop, then they will tend to stay in onsite accommodation" (32). Louise's children are aged four and two and her parents-in-law own a cabin in a commercial caravan park in

Exmouth. The facilities suit her because she can “play the kids a DVD” in the cabin and use the caravan park’s playground and swimming pool (53). While travel with small children has its own challenges, people in this life phase are not restricted to travelling during the peak periods of school holidays.

Louise predicts that her pattern of visitation will change in the coming years when her children are in early primary school. She imagines they will take a month’s holiday in winter comprised of the two weeks of school holidays plus two weeks either side. She can also foresee that this holiday will be shortened to two weeks once the children “are of an age where they can’t miss any school” (53).

While having pre-school aged children allows for this flexibility, finances can be tight at this phase. Wells and Gubar (1966) refer to this as the “full nest phase” in which married or partnered individuals have dependent children and their finances are geared towards mortgage commitments (Collins and Tisdell, 2002). Vicki, whose children are now adults, recalls that “with a family you save all year to have your holiday” (33). This is echoed by Kate who sighs “when we get back from this trip I gotta find a full time job to pay for all of this” (40).

Becoming parents can prompt repeat visitors to modify their accommodation and activity choices, and provides a powerful example of how various phases of life influence the way repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the Ningaloo region.

6.6 Phase four: travelling with school-aged children

Once children are at primary school, repeat visits to the Ningaloo region tend to occur during school holidays with children possibly missing some school before or after the holidays. Since the weather is most favourable for tourism in winter, the busiest periods in the region are the Easter and winter (July) school holidays. As commercial caravan parks tend to book out in advance, repeat visitors with school-aged children can fall into a pattern of committing to a holiday a year or more in

advance, thus reinforcing annual cycles. For example, Kate's children are seven and four and every year her family stay at a commercial caravan park in Coral Bay for the second week of the winter school holidays, and the first week of the succeeding school term. Kate says that her family would "probably rather not come in the school holidays because there's just so many people" (40) but they return nonetheless. Several interviewees pointed out that the atmosphere in the caravan parks changes during school holidays, with campsites noticeably noisier and busier during the day, yet quieter in the evenings as people go to bed earlier in line with their children's rhythms.

Many interviewees felt that travel to the region was beneficial for children (4, 7, 11, 12, 13, 15, 24, 58). Cassie, for example, feels that camping at Ningaloo pastoral station instils a sense of discipline in her children and teaches them how to interact with each other harmoniously. She says that her children have to learn to live without "going to the fridge" constantly and gives a vivid description of her children learning to make their own bread by cooking it on a camp oven. She described her children "mucking around on the beach" and says that her children experience a sense of freedom in the area. Liesl, a regular at Red Bluff, similarly believes that the trip is 'grounding' for her children because it teaches them about ownership of, and responsibility for, both the coast and the broader environment. She also feels that it teaches her children to live without television. As suggested earlier in this chapter, for some repeat visitors taking children to the region is akin to 'inducting them' into a way of life. It perpetuates a sense of family tradition and transmits knowledge such as how to make bread or catch fish.

Having school-aged children causes repeat visitors to modify their travel patterns, to account for school holidays. This means that they visit the region during peak periods, and this is yet another example of how various phases of life influence how repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the Ningaloo region.

6.7 Phase five: travelling without children

Once the interviewees' children had moved out of the family home or were old enough to be left at home, repeat visitors' relationships with the region changed significantly. This is largely because they were no longer restricted by school holidays and could visit when the region was less busy and/or stay for a longer holiday. Travelling without children meant that repeat visitors were free of caring responsibilities, which changed the rhythm of their daily lives in the region. Studies suggest that the frequency and duration of travel peaks when individuals have no dependent children and a strong financial position including the accumulation of assets and savings (Collins and Tisdell, 2002). One example of this is Dawn and Glen, who were enjoying a holiday without their teenage children. They were staying at the Novotel and were "living the life of luxury" and spending time alone. Dawn said their children had reached an age where they'd prefer to "go away with their mates" and, while she was enjoying this independence for both parties, she hoped that her children would join them at Ningaloo again when they were in their twenties (41). Another example is Dianne, who visited Gnaraloo pastoral station in the July school holidays throughout the 1980s with her sons but once her sons left school, was able to vary her rhythm to come at less busy times. She appreciated the lack of queues and could stay for longer trips. She now actively avoids the region in the school holidays due to the crowds (13).

In this phase of their life, repeat visitors are generally still working. Holidays need to be taken in accordance with annual leave allowances or breaks from self-employment. However, some repeat visitors used long service leave – a period of paid leave in addition to annual leave offered by some employers after ten years of service – to take a longer holiday than usual. For example, one woman explained that she and her husband would "take a month holiday plus two weeks of our long service leave" in order to have an annual six-week stay in the region (51). For others however, long service leave was a factor that interrupted their cycle of visits to Ningaloo, and these interruptions are explored later in this chapter.

One particular kind of visit taken by adults without children is the 'boys trip'. The phenomenon of boys' trips is interesting and under-researched in Australian leisure literature. A boys' trip is defined as when a group of men travel to a region to undertake a specific leisure activity such as fishing, surfing or diving. The word 'boys' is used despite the fact that the activity involves adult men. At Ningaloo, the group size varies, and could range from three participants to 20, driving in convoy and camping in adjoining campsites. While only one group of interviewees were in the midst of a boys' trip when I interviewed them, other interviewees provided several examples (4, 7, 10, 14, 16, 43) and I observed other boys' trips during my fieldwork. The group who were undertaking a boys' trip when I interviewed them were Tim, Glen, Brendan and their friends. They visit Quobba each year as a group of men of different ages. The trip has become a memorial trip to commemorate the life of their friend who loved Quobba and died of leukaemia two years before these interviews. I asked Brendan if the 'boys only' element was important, and he replied:

Yes, it is. It's where the guys get away. Everyone's married except for me, that's why I get to organize it. Their wives do other things at other times of the year. It's a boys' thing (16).

Brent, aged in his early 50s, takes boys' trips with his male friends, and says, "I've got a circle of friends or mates that I surf with. We're always planning surf trips, constantly planning the next surf trip" (43). Ben's uncle organises boys' trips to Gnaraloo which Ben describes as "a week of fishing and probably drinking with the boys". He says that these trips are more 'hectic' than are the trips with his family because the men wake up before 6am to go fishing each day. His uncle has been organising these trips for some time, but only in recent years has Ben had been able to accumulate sufficient leave entitlements to be able to join them. Ben explains a typical day on a boys' trip:

You'll be up at 5 o'clock and you'll have one bloke organising breakfast for everyone, which is generally me [...] And in the

meantime [...] the boats are getting sorted. So all the ice goes into the iceboxes, all the bait, refuelling, all that sort of stuff. And 6 o'clock hits, you head down to the beach, put the boat in [...] and fish all day. It's a big day but it's fun. So you go out and you fish all day and come back in and basically park all your boats up next to the camp where you're staying, get all the fish out and put it on the back of the ute. All the eskies on to the back of the ute and you drive up to the fish cleaning area. You start cleaning all the fish, so all that takes probably two hours to clean the fish and bring it back to the camp. You go to the camp and I'll drift off and I'll start getting dinner ready for everyone, and everyone else starts packaging the fish. So you've got to vacuum seal it and label it and all that sort of stuff, so it's a big process. You get a whole lot of fish and yeah it's a big day but everyone enjoys it (7).

The activities that Ben describes are reminiscent of work, complete with teams and assigned roles. Ben implies that these activities are tiring when he says "it's a big day". It is interesting that, for Ben and his friends, these rhythms replicate those of work during their recreation time. John describes his trips to the region as "an old man's surfing trip" that he usually undertakes with his brother-in-law and a close friend. However, when I interviewed him, John had brought his boss, another male, along (10). Inviting one's boss on holiday struck me as unusual, but this blending of work life and private life was echoed by Glenn, who brought his apprentice along. I have since heard anecdotally that bringing work colleagues along is not uncommon on boys' trips.

Boys' trips can also be an opportunity for fathers and sons to spend time together. Paul, an avid surfer, has started bringing his sons on surfing trips to Gnaraloo now that they are teenagers:

In the last four years I've been coming with my boys who are fifteen and seventeen [...] They love surfing [...] Last year, my

older son, he's started work so I came with him for two weeks. I came for another week in September with my other son. My wife didn't get to come (16).

John has also visited the region with his 28-year-old son, who is a surfer (10). Boys trips have a distinct rhythm. The long-distance driving is done efficiently, sometimes overnight, with men taking turns behind the wheel in order to reach the destination quickly. This efficiency is not possible for older travellers or those with young children, nor is it desirable for those wanting to enjoy the scenery. But on boys' trips, minimising the driving time maximises the amount of time spent in the Ningaloo region which is important if the trip is being squeezed into a few days.

Boys' trips can involve a wide age-span and may include different generations of the same family however children do not tend to be included until they're teenagers and are independent enough to participate fully in whichever activity is the focus of the trip. While they may exist, I did not observe or hear about a female equivalent, nor did I hear of father-daughter, mother-son or mother-daughter activity focussed visits.

6.8 Phase six: cessation of work

The cessation of work through retirement, redundancy or disablement changes the pattern of visitation as trips are no longer constrained by annual or long-service leave. Visits to the region can be longer, but decision-making about finances can become an increasing challenge since retirees may be on a lower fixed income, such as a government pension or superannuation payout. This means that, while travel can be of a longer duration, it needs to be economically feasible thus affecting repeat visitors' accommodation choices and daily life in the region. Ageing and related health issues also impact on how repeat visitors engage with their physical and cultural surroundings. Tony explains how his time in the region has extended over the years from a period of weeks to three months:

In the earlier years I was obviously working, so you could only come for two weeks or three weeks at the most, until you enjoy it more so you plan a longer time and then you would come for a month and then you would come for five weeks and now we're here for basically two months in this stint and then we go away and come back again for another month, so we have three months in total, but we're retired: we can do that (33).

Other surveys indicate that retirees spend much longer in the region (Jones et al. 2009) and the present study corroborates this. Almost all the interviewees in phase six were staying in the region for a month or longer. Winnie, who has a shack at the Blowholes, is now able to spend five months of every year there. Wendy and her husband were at Gnaraloo for their first visit since retiring. "It's lovely," said Wendy (13). Several of the older retirees interviewed in this project had undertaken substantial trips during phase five or upon retirement, such as "doing Europe" (6, 19, 31) or "going round Australia" (2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 18, 22, 31, 33, 35, 51, 56, 58), before settling on an annual pattern of returning to Ningaloo in the winter.

While retirement is planned and anticipated by many repeat visitors, the cessation of work can also be abrupt, and some interviewees' travel patterns were shaped by redundancy or disablement. Harry was made redundant in 1994, and two years later took a "round Australia trip" which introduced him to the Blowholes. Boz was forced to stop working at the age of 48 when he sustained a back injury that required major surgery. While this has left Boz in a vulnerable financial situation with no superannuation and just a disability pension, he and his wife have created a mobile yet economical lifestyle. These events have had a substantial impact on how Harry and Boz engage with the region's physical and cultural environments; they travel slowly and, in accordance with the cycle of pension payments, they choose low-cost accommodation on pastoral stations and supplement their diet with the fish that they can catch. The ways in which people finance their travels are explored further in the following chapter. The interviewees in this life phase reflected on the

impacts that ageing has had on their travel plans. Janice, 64, explained that ageing slows her down:

I'm sure I used to take about an hour and a half to pack the caravan. But I think now [that I am older] it takes a day and a half. I mean, we're a bit worn out by the time we get here (22).

Death also occasionally featured in the interviews. In some cases, this was through 'uplifting' anecdotes of people dying while on holiday in the region. John, who stays at Warroora each year explains his reaction to the news that an elderly man had "carked" (died) of a heart attack on the beach:

And at that age, 90, on the beach at Warroora...you'd think "unbelievable"! People were saying [to him] "oh, you shouldn't be coming here at this age". But listen, if you're going to cark it anywhere, right, I'd rather cark it on the beach at Warroora (6).

The manager of a caravan park in Coral Bay described the death of a repeat visitor in similarly positive terms:

We had one gentleman pass away here last year, and they (his family) were quite pleased that he died here because he'd been coming here for thirty years or whatever. It was more-or-less like dying at home (21).

The fact that dying whilst on a trip in the region was regarded positively proves how strongly these interviewees feel about the area. However, a group of older female interviewees pointed out that husbands or partners dying in the region posed a problem for their widows who have to "somehow get their caravans back". In one case, a repeat visitor was getting away from the trauma associated with the deaths of relatives and friends at home:

Woman: I actually had four funerals in the last month before I came.

Philippa: Oh, before you came up?

Woman: Before I came up, so I was really stressed and I was actually dying to get away. You know? And the last one was my sister-in-law, you know, and that really hurt, it was terrible. And I think it took me two weeks but after, you know, sort of being here, well, you know, it was instantly settling (56).

These anecdotes indicate that ageing and poor health do not deter many visitors from returning. This finding supports Onyx and Leonard's research on grey nomads' attitudes to health. They suggest that "many are healthy but approximately half of all couples had experienced a major health scare by one partner" (2007, 388) but that they continue to travel regardless. Mick, 73, says, "we keep saying we're too old for the drive but we keep turning up." For repeat visitors in this phase of their lives, their commitment to visit the region is tempered by the practical implications of ageing. Norm admits that he and Mary now require "a bit of comfort" (2). Even though Jo and Leonard had said they were booked up "to infinity", Jo acknowledges that they will "have to stop somewhere" considering her husband is 72. The limits of ageing are apparent in John's phrase "I'll be coming here for as long as I can stand up on a surfboard" (10). Rex, a single man in his 80s, says that he intends to return but that this will "depend on his health".

Many interviewees mentioned their health in interviews, and felt that their health improves while they're in the Ningaloo region (1, 3, 8, 12, 15, 24, 33, 35, 37, 38, 45, 48, 51, 56, 58). One example is Harry, a pensioner who lives on his own in Perth. In summer, he lives in state housing in a suburb of Perth. Every autumn, Harry packs his caravan and drives to the Blowholes. Harry says that he "feels a lot better" when he is away (5). He gets more exercise, loses weight and feels healthier. He also feels safer and happier. Marg explains how the warm weather helps her feel healthier:

Why I go up north, where its warmer, is because I've got bad arthritis. I've now got two artificial hips and an artificial wrist. In the cold, wet weather you really suffer...I can't swim down here

[in the South West] because it's too cold for my artificial hip. But in the warm water up north, I can swim. It's healthy. I just seem to feel a lot healthier when I'm up there. I can do more (3).

According to health research, longitudinal studies point to the importance of avoiding risk factors and “getting good nutrition, physical activity, social interaction, being productive and engaged, and maintaining a positive outlook” (Byles 2007, 115). It is impossible to say whether our interviewees were better nourished while in the Ningaloo region but they certainly claim to be more active, more social, engaged with their surroundings and happier while away. The relationship between social connectedness and improved health has been the subject of much academic debate. The American political scientist Robert Putnam argues that there is a link between social connectedness and improved health (1995 314). According to the framework developed by health geographers Fleuret and Atkinson, spaces of wellbeing fall into four main groups: spaces of security, therapeutic spaces, spaces of capability and integrative spaces. The latter spatial construction is described as one which facilitates “integration into a rich network of social associations, especially those that operate at the local scale” (2007, 113). For older visitors, those in phases six and seven, the caravan parks and campsites of the Ningaloo region function as an integrative space and the many examples of support and friendship detailed in the previous chapter underpin this. While ageing impacts upon repeat visitors' accommodation choices, their engagement with the Ningaloo region continues to be significant to them as they anticipate the possibility of being unable to return. The ways in which older visitors maintain their health year-round in order to continue returning to the region is explored further in Chapter Seven.

Grandchildren play an important role for some repeat visitors in this phase of life. For example, Mary, 71, described how much she misses her grandchildren while she's away in the region (48). This is echoed by another retired woman, whose granddaughter's birthday clashes with her annual travel plans. Her granddaughter says, “Grandma, you're never here for my birthday!” which she says makes her feel guilty and sometimes makes her reconsider her plans (56). On the other hand,

being away from the demands of family life could also be liberating. Some interviewees spoke of how tiring their grandchildren could be, especially when left with them for long periods as a form of cheap childcare (22, 48). One caravan park in the region caters to this, and has a “no children” rule. The manager said that the rule lets retirees with children and grandchildren “off the hook” from having to holiday with their extended family (57). For other retirees, a compromise that enabled them to stay in the region for a long trip yet maintain contact with their grandchildren was to have their grandchildren come and visit (1, 3, 12, 19, 24, 31, 37, 45). Sharon and Kevin even have a spare bed in their motor home to accommodate their grandkids (45). The delight that these interviewees take in introducing their grandchildren to the region is a clear example of how various life phases influence people’s engagements with the region.

6.9 Phase seven – travelling solo

The death of a partner presumably deters some repeat visitors from returning to the region. A considerable feat of stamina is required to travel solo considering the region is remote and a stay entails a long drive and the ability to live with minimal facilities. Solo travel to this region is ambitious at any age let alone in one’s 70s. However, being single in their 70s did not stop a handful of research participants from returning to the region annually and from camping on pastoral stations. One example is Dot, a 72 year-old retired baker, who continued to take the trip despite losing her husband, Ern, seven years earlier. Dot’s adult children help her to drive the caravan up each year, get her settled and then fly back. However, Dot was keen to stress her good health and independence:

Dot: The kids said ‘we’ll come up and help you set up’ and then they went home again [...] because I’m alright, see? I’m set up. And when it’s time to go home I’ll pull it all down by myself and go home by myself. Like I’ve done for the past seven years since Ern died.

Philippa: Do you intend to keep coming back?

Dot: Yeah, as long as I can drive, love. As long as I can put one sand-shoe on that foot and one slipper on that foot, I am coming back. [Laughs heartily]. Yeah, I'm coming back (18).

Rex and Harry also travel to the region by themselves. Aged in their 70s, both are single and live alone. For Harry, meeting people is one of the most compelling reasons to camp at the Blowholes and he maintains contact with friends in the off-season (5). The ways that people develop friendships were explored in the previous chapter. These sentiments are echoed by Rex:

Philippa: Do you stay in contact in the off season?

Rex: Yes. Oh yes. [enthusiastically]. Yeah, not in one another's pockets but I give them a ring or they ring me. Every couple of months. Just say 'G'day, how're ya going? What are you doing? Where are ya?'. It's good. Somebody's thinking of you or you're thinking of them. It gives you a good feeling, yeah.

Philippa: Does it help bring you back here, every year?

Rex: Yeah. Yeah. First thing you say on the phone is 'where are you going this winter?' (36).

The trip is something of a social lifeline for Harry, Dot and Rex. While none of them describe their year-round life as lonely, they emphasise the enjoyment they receive from reacquainting themselves with their Ningaloo friends every winter. This is reiterated by the manager of a seniors' caravan park in the region who says that single people enjoy the camaraderie the park offers (57). The previous chapter described the myriad ways in which repeat visitors look after each other, such as how campers at 14 Mile cared for Lloyd when he fell seriously ill. It is therefore possible that single people in later life feel safe and cared for in the region, provided that they can still make the arduous journey to get there. It could be argued that repeat visitors have created what Fleuret and Atkinson (2007, 113) call

an “integrative space” that facilitates wellbeing by integrating people into a rich social network. This idea is discussed further in Chapter Nine.

6.10 Interruptions

While all the interviewees were committed to returning to the region and may have established a pattern of annual or more frequent visits, changes in their circumstances sometimes disrupted this pattern. One example is the arrival of a baby and, while some are determined enough to bring babies on the long car trip north, for many, a newborn interrupts the cycle of regular visits. Kate says that looking after a small baby in a tent is “hard work” (40). Louise, who started visiting Ningaloo on her honeymoon, said, “We couldn’t come for a couple of years because I was popping out babies” (53). This view was echoed by Brendan, who explained that most of the men on his fishing trip come every year, with the exception of one man whose wife was having a baby that year (16). The arrival of babies tends to impact people in phases two, three and four.

Another interruption to a cycle of regular visits is the opportunity to take a longer holiday somewhere else. This can be prompted by long service leave from work, which is offered to some workers after ten years of service. This is paid leave for up to thirteen weeks, and represents an opportunity for people to take a more expensive, one-off holiday such as “doing Europe” or the “big trip” of travelling around Australia (6). This was the case for Frank and Glenda, who visited Coral Bay annually for more than twenty years in a row except for one year when they visited Europe instead. The chance to take an extended holiday tends to impact upon people in phases four and five.

The birth of a grandchild can alter the travel patterns of older visitors. John, one of the few interviewees who lives outside WA, said that he and his wife will not be travelling across from Victoria this year because his daughter is due to have her second baby in June, and he and his wife feel they need to be home for that. “So,” adds John bluntly, “that sort of buggers it” (6). The arrival of grandchildren tends to

interrupt visits for people in phases five, six and seven. The ways in which repeat visitors accommodate other interruptions and leisure constraints to their visits to Ningaloo are explored in Chapter Seven.

6.11 Future travel

Most of the interviewees were committed to visiting the area into the future and many explicitly said that they had their sites booked for up to two years in advance - the maximum amount of time that commercial caravan parks tend to allow future bookings (19, 30, 33, 27, 37, 38, 56). Jo and Leonard chuckled when I asked them how far in advance they had booked, telling me that they're booked "to infinity". Brendan told me that, while he was paying his accommodation bill at Quobba station, he said, "Can you please pencil us in at the same time for the next ten years?" (16). Norm said that he cannot foresee his travel plans changing now that he and his wife have set up a pattern (2). Some ageing visitors such as Dot intend to continue making the annual journey north for as long as possible. Repeat visitors' future bookings indicate that they are dedicated to returning to the region, and that the trip has become a significant annual event in their lives. The ways in which repeat visitors structure their year-round lives in order to return to the region are explored further in Chapter Seven.

6.12 Landscape, memories and future generations

The interviewees felt strongly that it was important for future generations to be able to have the same experiences as they had had in the region. A sense of nostalgia, connection and family ties was apparent when Marilyn, in her 60s, points to some trees at Cardabia station and tells me that her parents planted them. Marilyn goes on to recall her holidays at Cardabia station:

My parents were coming up here for eighteen years. My eldest son used to come up and stay with Mum and Dad. I think '95 was

the last time my parents came up here because Mum got cancer. In '97, my eldest son said "let's go to Cardabia". Bob and I hadn't been here. So we came up with Sean in the tent and we've only missed one year since. All my four sons have come up here now as well, so it's kind of like a generation. I have got photos of Mum, Dad and Sean across the front section [of the campsite]. Sean is thirty-eight now and he was probably ten or twelve in the photo.

These stories, about families' relationships with the region, link time and space together into a tender narrative. The growth of trees is linked to the ageing of parents. Like Cassie's 'tinny tree' earlier in the chapter, the trees are a totemic reminder of times past, of the passing of time and of children growing up. In another one of Cassie's stories, she recalled that her grandfather would take the kids out on boating trips but would not "take us out behind the reef" when they were children. In this way, the reef is literally a barrier that can only be crossed with age. Cassie also recalls one year when snakes were "incredibly" prevalent. She remembers exactly when this happened, because her son was young at the time (4). For Dawn, walking along the beach was "bringing back some great memories of walking up the beach with Dad". Donny at the Blowholes says that his granddaughter "was raised up here. She learned how to walk up here. She couldn't crawl on the limestone so she started walking then". For Donny, the hard limestone *caused* his granddaughter to walk. In these examples, family life has been shaped by the landscape.

The interviewees expressed it as important that future generations should be able to have the same experiences, particularly those interviewees who visited the area as children themselves. Cassie says, "It'd be a shame for future generations [if they haven't got] somewhere they can go and enjoy that" (4). Liesl echoes this, saying:

I'd like to think that in 20 years my boys can be sitting here. I'd love to think that they could be sitting around that same campfire

going ‘I remember camping here with Mum and Dad when we were kids’ (15).

Boz wants his children and grandchildren to experience the Ningaloo region and Boz’s wife adds that “everyone we talk to...wants their grandkids to see the area”. Younger interviewees Tim, Brendan and Glenn say that they adhere to fishing limits because “we want our kids to be able to come here and enjoy what we enjoy” (16). In their research on urban bushland in New South Wales, Gill, Waitt and Head (2009, 190) found that:

For the interviewees the bushland is a multifaceted asset in which its social and natural values are entwined and mutually constituted. Interviewees are strongly supportive of protecting the bushland for its ecological dimensions but they do not articulate this in the concepts and language of ecological science. Rather, they articulate this in terms of their lived experiences, their emotions, their thoughts and feelings, aesthetics and the relationship of the bushland to other aspects of their lives.

I argue that repeat visitors’ statements about future generations are an example of this entwining of social and natural values. Like the bushwalkers in Gill, Waitt and Head’s research, the repeat visitors in this study are strongly supportive of protecting the Ningaloo region for its ecological dimensions. But they articulate this in terms of their hopes for their children and grandchildren. In this way, Ningaloo repeat visitors are hoping both to create a legacy for future generations and to preserve their sense of family heritage.

It is interesting that Liesl uses the word ‘ownership’ earlier in this chapter when she explains what her children have learned in the region (15). Debates about land access and ownership were briefly outlined in Chapter Three. While these battles have been playing out at a larger scale, such as pastoralists versus the state government, these anxieties about ownership are experienced at an individual level too. Having visited the Blowholes his whole life, Ben is desperate to own a piece of

land there. His uncle has an informal shack at the Blowholes and Ben aspires to something similar. He returns to this theme throughout the interview:

I'd love a little plot of land up there, just to be able to get away for a few months of the year and just chill up there [...] That is probably one of the more important things to me [...] I'd love to be able to still take the kids up there and enjoy it how I used to enjoy it with my Dad, my granddad (7).

For Ben, repeated visits at different phases of life have contributed to a yearning to own a part of the region that can be passed down through generations. It is interesting that he places such a premium on ownership over access or past experiences and perhaps this reflects a broader Australian attitude to property: if we really like somewhere, owning it is the ultimate mark of connection. Ben regards private ownership as the best way to manage land to ensure that such experiences are preserved for future generations. Similarly, when Winnie at the Blowholes says that the area should be kept "for the people" she is also suggesting that those who have built informal, illegal shacks on crown land should not be challenged. Their ideology is that land is 'safer' when owned privately, compared to owned and managed by the state. This attitude has been noted in other studies on shack owners (Selwood and Jones 2010). This desire to own land is bitterly satirised by a DEC employee, who characterises the current scenario as a land grab which had been won by "those who scream loud enough" (44). The distrust of management and the sense that the authentic experience, or even the appeal of the area, is being corrupted by those organisations who seek to 'manage' it, will be considered in Chapter Eight. However, in the context of this chapter it seems that a sense of 'family heritage' developed over generations has contributed to this desire for a form of ownership in a process that could be described as 'heritage from below' (Robertson 2012). This idea will be explored further in Chapters Eight and Nine.

6.13 Conclusion

Rather than seeing travel as something bounded in place and time, this chapter has taken a broader view to show how repeat visitation has played out over lifetimes or even several generations. By analysing these personal narratives and stories of attachment in this way, this chapter has demonstrated that repeat visitors to Ningaloo have varied their trips throughout their lifetimes to accommodate their changing circumstances. The chapter proposed seven life phases in order to illustrate these variations. It has explored repeat visitors' interactions with the region's physical and cultural environments in each of these phases. The chapter has argued that these trips are not simply holidays but that they also play important roles in personal identities and family lives. It examined the ways in which participants settled into regular patterns of visits which evolved and changed in line with their personal circumstances. It demonstrated that particular modes of travel coincided with different life phases, especially in regard to the raising of families and the demands of work. The chapter has established that the interviewees are wedded to the idea of returning to the region for as long as they are able to but that this is tempered by pragmatic considerations about ageing. Finally, the chapter indicated that the repeat visitors are concerned about the area's future and want their children or grandchildren to be able to have similar experiences to their own. The following chapter will examine the extent to which older Ningaloo repeat visitors make sacrifices, compromises and complex logistical arrangements in order to return to the region year upon year.

7. All year 'round

7.1 Introduction

The normal retiree's life back home is basically pottering around preparing for trips like this. Gen and Chris (24)

The previous two chapters have established that the repeat visitors in this study have developed close community ties in the Ningaloo region and are highly committed to returning there on a regular basis. However, the region is remote and travel is expensive. So how do they incorporate this annual expedition into their everyday lives in the off-season, when they are not at Ningaloo? I interviewed Gen and Chris while they were sitting outside their caravan, metres from the sea. The above quotation indicates the significance of the Ningaloo trip to their everyday lives. Like Gen and Chris, all the repeat visitors in this study go to considerable lengths to return annually to their beloved holiday destination. Not only is the trip enjoyable in itself, it organises and structures the rest of their year. In this way the impact of the trip extends beyond their physical presence in the region, both temporally and spatially. To paraphrase the quotation above: life *is* preparing for trips.

Tourism research often treats travel as though it is an activity that is distinct from and cut off from the rest of daily life. As Franklin and Crang note, travel activity is often compartmentalised as if it is separate from 'normal life' (2001, 6):

Studies have generally been restricted to a vision of tourism as a series of discrete, localised events, where destinations, seen as bounded localities, are subject to external forces producing impacts, where tourism is a series of discrete, enumerated occurrences of travel, arrival, activity, purchase, departure...

Since the 1990s, geographical scholarship has sought to contest this narrow definition of tourism and travel with a 'mobilities' approach that considers the broader implications of human movement. This chapter argues that the practice of 'repeat visitation' and the associated year-round preparation, sacrifice and positive anticipation, together with the memories and the contacts that the trip engenders underlines how travel permeates the respondents' everyday lives in the off-season when they are not at Ningaloo. In this chapter, I use specific examples to illustrate and document this process: anticipating the trip; preparing travel equipment; maintenance of ageing bodies; family life; decision-making about homes; pets and gardens; financial planning; work; booking in advance; and keeping in touch.

The chapter argues that our understanding of 'place attachment' is bolstered when it is understood in broader temporal and spatial contexts. Additionally, this detailed examination of the ways in which people accommodate an annual visit to a remote destination is a contribution not only to academic scholarship focussed on Ningaloo, but to grey nomad and mobility literature more generally.

7.2 Anticipation

This chapter began with a quotation from Chris and Gen about how they anticipate their journey to Ningaloo all year round. Several interviewees described their excitement as they prepared for the trip throughout the year. For example, Judy says that she and her husband "work hard for ten months and look forward to our holiday" and that "from about the first of January, we're looking forward to it because then we can say 'we're going up north this year!'" (19). Cassie says that her children look forward to the trip as eagerly as she does, with her son saying to her "oh I can't wait mum, I can't wait! How many weeks have we got to go?" (4). This excitement is compounded by the long car drive to reach the region. Cassie says that her children 'never muck around in the car' because they enjoy the journey. John describes the cathartic feeling of reaching the region after weeks of preparation and a very long drive from his home interstate:

You know when you come in through the north road? Well, suddenly you hit the hill and you can see the Ningaloo Reef in front of you, and the white sand. We always stop right at this point and get out of the car - this is after eight days of driving - and say 'have a look at that'. We pause for five minutes and say 'just have a look at that' (6).

These examples demonstrate how the anticipation of a journey to the Ningaloo region imbues the respondents' offseason with pleasure and excitement. In this way, the trip extends temporally and spatially beyond the direct experience of the trip and beyond the 'bounded locality' of the Ningaloo region.

7.3 Equipment

Embarking on a long, self-drive holiday to a remote area requires considerable planning. The interviewees worked towards their trip throughout the year by undertaking significant planning. A major responsibility involves organising and maintaining vital equipment such as a car, caravan and boat; in addition to radio, solar or petrol generators; and other sporting or accommodation accoutrements. As many of the participants attested, this is an expensive and time consuming undertaking. Harry, who is in his 70s and lives in a small unit, explained that he stores his van at a friend's house during the 'off season'. Collecting his van from his friend's house in order to start his preparations is an annual milestone indicating that the trip is approaching (5). Others described the maintenance work that they carried out on their vehicles before leaving. Brian and his wife camp at 14 Mile at Warroora pastoral station where they are required to be self-sufficient; this requires considerable advance planning:

We've got an old van that we've had for 18 years so there's always maintenance to do on that. That's been ongoing - whenever I get a chance I'm working on the van. We are planning what food, what materials, whether we need to upgrade our

fishing gear, the outboard motor [on the boat]. Those things are happening throughout the year but come to a climax before we leave late in April (3).

For Wendy, who stays at Gnaraloo pastoral station, the process of packing the caravan commences a month before departure:

I start about a month before, just getting bits of food. Filling the cupboards up. Things you know you're going to use whether it's the linen or tins of coconut milk. You know, you can start. Once all the cupboards are full I know I'm ready, because I've got everything. Everything has a spot. That's how I pack. It takes a while to get it all because you can't forget anything, really. If you leave it until the week before, you're done for [Wendy's friends laugh and nod in agreement]. (13)

Packing and maintaining the caravan is an important part of the pre-journey process for Harry, Wendy and Brian. The bulk of this work is done in the weeks prior to the journey, with a peak just before departure. This is a clear example of how the impact of the holiday is felt at other times of the year. Aside from packing the caravan, other preparation activities include ensuring the 4-wheel-drive vehicle is serviced; preparing boats; and, for those travelling to more remote areas, obtaining a radio; and either a solar or petrol power generator. This preparation is physically and mentally taxing, and is a considerable undertaking for older travellers, especially those travelling alone. Barb, the manager of Marloo Caravan Park, explains how their caravan park caters for this demographic:

We do have some of the single partners still coming along on their own, and if they can't manage their caravan then we offer them storage during the summer here. So they just have to either fly up or drive up or get a lift up, and then they've got their caravan here ready for them just to walk into, so that works quite well (57).

The existing literature on grey nomads largely overlooks the hard work and complex planning involved in organising an ambitious stay in a remote region, focussing instead on motivations for travel (Mings 1997; Onyx and Leonard 2005; Onyx and Leonard 2007). Similarly, the 'travel planning' literature tends to focus on how people decide what to do *while on* holidays, rather than the planning that goes into making a holiday possible (Stewart and Vogt 1999). Planning and servicing the equipment required for a long stay in the region extends the experience temporally and spatially, beyond the period spent in the Ningaloo region.

7.4 Ageing bodies

As explained earlier in the thesis, the Ningaloo region is a popular destination for retirees. It may not be surprising, therefore, that many alluded to health problems and other limitations imposed by their ageing bodies. In the previous chapter, Janice, 64, said that packing the caravan seems to take her longer every year as she gets older. Frank and Glenda, 82 and 80, share how their adult children help settle them into their caravan park every year, compensating for the physical limitations of their age:

Frank: Our son, he come with us and he helped me to set up things, you know, and then he flew back. We drop him off and he flied back to Perth. And then with the birthday, he flew up for the week and went back - flew. And then in September when we're ready to go back he will come up again by plane and help us packing, he comes back with us. So it works out pretty good.

Philippa: And that's a bit of a routine? Do you do that every year?

Glenda: Yes, every year. Because it's too much for us to do ourselves (31).

In the quotation above, Frank and Glenda's Ningaloo stay 'spills out' into their extended family's lives and the ways in which the trip impacts upon family life will

be explored later in this chapter. As with Brian's description of maintaining a caravan earlier in this chapter, ageing bodies are maintained and managed year-round, in accordance with the seasonal cycle of visiting Ningaloo. Janice describes how she and her husband manage their health:

It's a bit busy when we're down there [at home]. We go down for what Ron calls 'tune ups' where you go to the doctors and see how we're going. Every now and then we have to have odd jobs done (22).

Janice's phrase 'odd jobs' refers to medical procedures. Bodies are maintained as if they are travel equipment. Janice's phrase 'odd jobs' likens the preservation of her health to a household task, whereas Ron uses the mechanical metaphor 'tune up'. I heard anecdotes of people scheduling their operations, such as skin cancer removals and hip replacements, for the summer, so that they would have recovered from the operation by winter. Brian says, "it's interesting, we're all the same: when we're in the southern parts of the state we're always driving off to the doctor" (3). Repeat visitors need to ensure they have enough medication to last the duration of their trip and must stock up on prescriptions in advance. Jenny, who has ongoing health problems, explained that she made special preparations to be able to visit the region:

I actually had a letter from my specialist because of the medication I'm on - I have to apply to the Government but they won't give it to you in big batches, but I had to bring it all up with me (33).

Previous research has indicated that Australian grey nomads are inadequately prepared for travel to remote regions and that this places a 'burden' on regional healthcare services (Tate et al. 2006). However, my research suggests that older repeat visitors do indeed manage their health year-round in order to minimise their reliance on local health services while they are in the Ningaloo region, and that the 'burden' is sustained by the region of origin. Additionally, repeat visitors, especially

those staying on pastoral stations, are prepared to assist each other during health crises.

When repeat visitors experience ill health during the 'off season', they ask themselves 'will I recover in time for the trip?' By managing their health according to seasonal cycles in order to maximise their opportunity to return to the Ningaloo region, repeat visitors actively structure their year-round lives around their time away.

7.5 Family life

An annual trip has an impact on family life. For repeat visitors with young children, this might mean planning the trip around school holidays or saving annual leave in order to take the journey. The impact on family life is more notable for older repeat visitors who are going away for a longer period of time. These interviewees tended to have adult children and, in many cases, grandchildren too. Being away from family can be a source of indecision and anxiety. Returning to the Ningaloo region may require repeat visitors to sacrifice enjoyable elements of family life, as mentioned in the previous chapter. In this quotation, Joy, 73, explains her and her 77 year-old husband's attempts to juggle their family commitments and their desire to return to Carnarvon:

We're talking about going over to see [our son] in New South Wales next for a couple of months. If we had any time, we'll come [back to Carnarvon] too. It's our granddaughter's 21st in May. We'd like to do both. We'd like to see them, but Ron would like to take the caravan and I'm like 'oh' [hand gesture to indicate indecision] (58).

Joy is gently suggesting that her and her husband disagree about which is more important, returning to Ningaloo or being present at their granddaughter's

birthday. Boz tells a similar story about weighing up family commitments against their travel plans:

Philippa: You'll keep coming, will you?

Boz: Yeah, I'll keep coming. Maybe not next year because we've got our daughter and two grandchildren over in Melbourne so we'll probably tow the van over there in February next year because they'll come and spend three weeks with us in January. They'll come here and then we'll drive across and get there in March (1).

Rochelle describes being encouraged by the friends that she has met at Warroora to return to the region for another trip this year, despite the impending birth of her grandchild:

They'll start ringing us soon and saying, 'are you coming over?' and we'll be saying 'no, no, Angie's having a baby!' And they'll be saying 'come on, come over, you can fly home...' We'll get the pressure put on us, shortly! (6).

While the previous chapter suggested that the birth of a grandchild can interrupt the cycle of visits, this anecdote from Rochelle suggests that the decision to miss a year at Ningaloo, even for a positive reason such as this, can be agonising. Also, it is notable that the friends whom Rochelle has made in the Ningaloo region phone her in the off-season to encourage her to return. The ways in which repeat visitors maintain contact with each other will be explored later in this chapter.

This chapter and the previous chapter have demonstrated that family life impacts travel decisions, and that repeat visitors' families are impacted by the respondents' decisions to travel to the Ningaloo region. These family members may be the granddaughter whose birthday party is not attended by her grandparents, or the parents of young children who have come to rely on 'granny and grandpa' for inexpensive childcare, emotional support or companionship. Taking an annual,

extended visit to Ningaloo and its resultant impact on (extended) family life, especially for older repeat visitors, is another example of how such travel permeates their everyday lives.

7.6 House and garden

Leaving the home for an extended holiday is not always as simple as walking out the front door and locking it behind you: unattended gardens may become overgrown with weeds or shrivel with dehydration; pets could not survive; the mailbox would overflow; and the house might be burgled or vandalised. For repeat visitors who spend a long time in the region, especially those in life phases five and six, their permanent house, often together with its garden and pets, are therefore a major concern requiring year-round planning. The interviewees had different strategies to mitigate this problem. The most popular strategy was to 'lock and leave', meaning that the house was left unoccupied (12, 17, 24). Gill explains how this works in practice for her:

Philippa: And your house back home, do you rent it out or do you just close it up?

Gill: No, just close it up. Put an alarm on it and the kids go in there every so often... A lot of people have house sitters and I would do it, he [husband]'s not keen on it. [...] I leave a couple of thousand dollars in my daughter's account so that if any suspicious letter comes with a window in it she opens it. We trust each other... it's fine....So she takes care of the business and I don't go home to a pile of bills, they're all paid (27).

As Gill explains above, leaving a house unoccupied still requires an amount of pre-planning. Gill has her daughter collect the mail whereas other participants' arrange to have Australia Post hold their mail, or request it is redirected to Exmouth Post Office. Pets might be kennelled, cared for by family or brought on holiday. The latter, however, restricts accommodation options in the region as dogs and cats are

prohibited in certain areas at Ningaloo. A neighbour, friend or family member might still 'keep an eye on the house' for any problems that might arise. One interviewee chuckled with relief that "only one plant died" when her teenage grandson was left in charge of watering her plants (56). Winter is at least an easier time of year than summer to leave a garden unattended in the state's south west, as watering it is less of a burden than in summer.

A second option, mentioned by fewer interviewees, is to rent the house out cheaply or organise a house-sitter. This is usually an informal arrangement with a friend or family member in which the house sitter receives free accommodation in return for basic tasks such as watering plants, bringing the mail in and caring for pets. This can be a positive experience for some people. For example, Gill says that people who use house sitters sometimes say that their garden has "never looked so good" when they return (27). For Kevin and Sharon, leasing their house out helps them financially:

We're only ordinary old pensioners. I'm on a disability pension and Sharon gets the corresponding pension. So our money at present is all being absorbed by the loss of the downturn we've just had, same as everyone else. But because we let the house out it enables us to have that money to spend up here. So we migrate up here (45).

While having a house sitter was positive for Kevin and Sharon, Chris and Carol said the experience ended up "costing us money" so they abandoned this strategy (24). Regardless of whether they are vacant or not, problems such as winter storm damage, burst pipes or electrical faults can be compounded when the house is not being cared for by its owner.

A third, more radical strategy is to downsize and sell the large 'family' home and buy a smaller, lower maintenance property (5, 58) often in a retirement village. This has two benefits: a smaller home and garden can be left unattended more easily, plus it frees up capital that can be invested in a caravan and in a vehicle resilient

enough for remote travel. Some even took downsizing further, choosing to sell the house and live in a caravan year-round (1, 36, 45). Boz explains his decision to do this:

Boz: Yes, we live in an onsite caravan in Augusta. We sold up in 2003 because I had a big bowel and back operation. I was told to enjoy myself. So we sold up, and invested the money which allows us to do what we want to do.

Philippa: Would you prefer to be in a house?

Boz: Yeah. Probably. We wouldn't be able to do what we do if we hadn't sold our house. We're living off the interest. We're adding that on to the pension. It would be nice to be able to have a house for when you get home, and relax back. But this [caravan] isn't bad (1).

This last strategy demonstrates the lengths to which some people will go to, in order to continue visiting a favourite destination. It could be argued that such people have embraced mobility, disrupting the home/away binary. All three approaches to managing a house and garden during an extended time away demonstrate that the holiday can be a significant organisational consideration in repeat visitors' lives.

7.7 Financing the trip

A common refrain heard from my respondents in the Ningaloo region was 'it would be cheaper just to go to Bali'. This is possibly true for some holidaymakers; fuel for a return trip is a significant expense as prices rise with distance from Perth; and groceries are more expensive in this remote region. Equipment costs are substantial, for example, a 4-wheel drive vehicle is required to enter the region, costs several tens of thousands of dollars and must be maintained. Nonetheless, studies have shown that repeat visitors in general spend less during their holidays

than first time visitors (Alegre and Cladera 2010) and costs can be offset by living frugally in the region. For repeat visitors who are no longer working and looking to economise, a sufficiently long stay in cheap accommodation, such as a pastoral station camping area, can be almost cost-neutral because the minimal daily expenses in the region can offset the high cost of the journey.

Repeat visitors who were staying for longer periods such as a month or more adopted many strategies for living cheaply during their trips including: finding accommodation with the cheapest possible camping fees; negotiating a 'long stay' rate; buying groceries at 'home' and bringing them up rather than shopping in the region; subsistence fishing; buying directly from plantations; visiting town to replenish groceries fortnightly (rather than weekly) to save on fuel and limit the temptation to 'splurge'; and, volunteering in return for cheaper accommodation. As noted previously, some interviewees rented out their homes to afford the trip, or more drastically, sold their house altogether. Boz, who earlier in this chapter outlined his decision to sell the family home and live permanently in a caravan, explains how he and his wife economise:

We find it's the cheapest way of living. When we travel, we pull up into roadside camps. Every second night we call into a roadhouse and pay \$2 and have a nice shower and do everything. Then we move on again. If we can find a nice creek we might stay there for 4 or 5 days. That's very cheap living (1).

Dot, a widow in her 70s, saves up her 'fuel money' by propagating plants throughout the year and selling them from her home. She camps in one of the less expensive pastoral station campsites where the financial outlay for fuel is offset by her ability to live frugally in the region (18). For those on pensions, like Dot, staying in the region for a long time to off-set the cost of travel is a financial necessity.

Caravan parks are more expensive than the pastoral stations, but still attract price-conscious retirees who want to stay for long periods economically. Barb, the

manager of a commercial caravan park targeted at retirees explains how they've tailored their sites to appeal to this demographic:

Barb: Now the power is metered, and they only pay for what they use. So we encourage solar and gas, again for environmental purposes. With the fifth wheeler [motor home] sitting there using \$30.00 worth of power a week, and the guy next door to him with a little camper trailer using \$2.00 a week, we figure user pays - it's only fair.

Philippa: It keeps it fair, and do they...?

Barb: ...they appreciate it. And they know how many cups of tea they're having, and how many pieces of toast. They have it all worked out, they've got it all budgeted for before they come. They know how much they're going to pay for power on a week to week basis because we don't increase that (57).

These accounts of how older repeat visitors economise in order to return to the region are evidence of their deep-felt attachment to the region. They also demonstrate that the desire to return to Ningaloo annually structures how they think about their personal finances over longer time periods and how this has a profound impact on the rest of their lives.

7.8 Keeping in touch

Chapter Five established that the repeat visitors in this study have formed close ties with fellow campers in the region and feel a sense of community. In addition to socialising in the region, these friendships occasionally 'spill over' into the rest of the year. For many, particularly those in phases five and six of their life cycle, friendships are maintained while they are away from Ningaloo by making phone calls to friends, meeting for coffee or sending cards and emails (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 22,

27, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 48). Norm explains the various methods that he uses to stay in touch:

Yes, we're in contact. We give them a ring for their birthday, they give us a ring for our birthdays. We send Christmas cards, birthday cards, we chat, we use the internet, we email sometimes (2).

For some interviewees, the friendship is taken further by visiting or staying with each other during the rest of the year (1, 2, 3, 6, 22, 27, 31, 37). Leonard quips that 'half of the caravan park's beachfront row' have been to his house in Perth for dinner in the off-season (37). John and Rochelle are two of the few participants I interviewed who live interstate and the prospect of reuniting with friends in the Ningaloo region is one of their motivations for undertaking the return journey of over 8000km:

We've got more friends that we've met at Warroora from Western Australia, I would say, than we do in Torquay. We've had friends from over there come and visit us here (6).

Some friendships which started in the Ningaloo region have developed into strong, life-long friendships. David says that he 'virtually plans his holidays to meet certain people'. Mary, who lives interstate, describes how she and her husband have met up with Ningaloo friends in a variety of locations:

... sometimes stay with them in Perth. We went on a cruise in the Straits of Malacca with some friends from Ningaloo. Norm had his [80th birthday party] here [in South Australia], and we invited two friends from up there to give him a surprise (2).

Social occasions in the off-season can be large enough to be considered 'reunions', with three or more couples catching up at once. A reunion held in summer in Augusta, in the south of Western Australia, motivated John – the interviewee who lives interstate quoted above – to make a return journey of 7000km:

They've had a reunion a few times down in Augusta, so we've gone over to that in January just to catch up with everyone. There and back, would you believe it?! (6)

Communication in the off-season isn't only between repeat visitors, but between visitors and locals with whom they have formed a bond. A caravan park owner gives an example:

Bert: The girls in the office, they send them Christmas cards.

Philippa: The guests send the staff in the office Christmas cards?

Bert: Oh yeah, and vice versa. They tend to be a bit of a family, to some of them, I suppose. The girls in the office are like family to them. Some of the oldies are getting on a bit and haven't got anyone around. They certainly don't forget us. And we don't forget them (50).

These examples show that repeat visitors have formed bonds with each other that they maintain year-round ensuring that the impact of their trip is felt throughout the year. This impact is not confined to the temporal or physical boundaries of 'the holiday' but extends in space ('down south', interstate, the Straits of Malacca) and time (Christmas, January, 'whenever we're passing through').

7.9 Structuring the future

Because the caravan parks in the Ningaloo region tend to be fully booked in peak periods, repeat visitors who favour particular times of the year book well in advance. Several interviewees explained that they personally place their booking for two years ahead as they leave the park each year (19, 20, 22, 73). This is a standard practice amongst participants who are staying in caravan parks, ensuring that from the minute they leave the park, they have made a plan to return. To some

extent, this two-year-cycle of advance booking structures how Gaye and Bob view their future:

Philippa: So how do you get these spots, do you book?

Bob: Miles in advance.

Philippa: How far in advance do you book?

Bob: Two years. [...] So we've got them booked so when it comes around you think 'oh yeah, I'm looking forward to a holiday'. So we do it (19).

As Gaye explains below, the fact that their caravan park site is already booked is what prompts them to revisit the region:

Philippa: Why do you keep coming back?

Gaye: Habit. Because we book. We pre-book whether we're coming back or not. And because it is already booked and pre-arranged, we think 'oh yeah...may as well go again' (19).

One interviewee explained that, as they've booked for the next "few years", they will continue making the trip providing "everyone's healthy" (20). Jo and Leonard elaborate:

Philippa: Are you already booked in for next year?

Jo: The whole lot. Every winter to infinity!

Philippa: And do you think you'll keep coming until...infinity?

Jo: As long as we can. Although my husband is 72, so you have to stop somewhere.

Leonard: When it'll stop, you don't know.

Jo: You never know from one year to another what's going on. As long as we can, we'll come (37).

The need to book favourite campsites years in advance structures repeat visitors' lives, reinforcing the sense of an annual cycle. It shapes how they view the future, and leads them to evaluate their own health in relation to this annual cycle. These examples show how the respondents conceptualise a strong connection between mobility and time which are intertwined in many of these accounts.

7.10 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how repeat visitation permeates the everyday lives of the Ningaloo repeat visitors to an exceptional degree. It has focussed on the year-round preparations, decision-making and the more-than-occasional, and not-inconsiderable sacrifices that many, if not most, of the respondents make in order to revisit an area that they enjoy and relate to. Documenting this temporal and spatial permeation is important because it shows that 'place attachment' can be both more powerful and more complex than is sometimes represented in the academic literature, particularly in those studies based in the discipline of natural resource management. In this chapter, place attachment has been expressed across multiple locations, and at different times of the year. The research participants' experiences of the Ningaloo region are vastly and demonstrably more complex than the narrow model of "arrival, activity, purchase, departure," which has also been criticised by Franklin and Crang (2001, 6). This detailed examination of the ways in which people accommodate an annual visit to a beloved and remote destination is therefore a contribution not only to academic scholarship focussed on Ningaloo, but to grey nomad and mobility literature that often focusses simply on people's motivations for travel, but not on how they make such travel possible within their lives.

With the strong attachment to their trip and the region in mind, it is understandable that repeat visitors might be resistant to change at their travel

destination and anxious about the area's future. The following chapter (Chapter Eight) will examine repeat visitors' responses to the changes they have observed in the Ningaloo region, and the relationships between repeat visitors and those charged with the region's management.

8. Tense relationships and future concerns

8.1 Introduction

The previous three chapters have argued that repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region have developed a great affinity for the region. They experience a sense of community within the region, built up through a series of everyday practices. They socialise with and assist one another and have developed webs of friendships that, when combined with the region's physical environment and leisure opportunities, lure them back year after year. The boundaries of this community are patrolled, and members seek to restore social and environmental order when transgressions occur. Such attachment has been built up throughout lifetimes in many cases. For these interviewees, the region is a backdrop for pivotal moments in their lives and the region has become something of a personal heritage site. The interviewees are therefore committed to returning year after year until they are physically unable to do so. The significance of this time in the region informs peoples' year-round lives, and guides their decisions about their family lives, homes, gardens and finances. They strive and plan in order to maintain their bodies in accordance with their travel patterns.

With this strong attachment in mind, it is understandable that repeat visitors might be possessive about their campsites, resistant to change, and anxious about the region's future, even if these emotions are somewhat contradictory; after all, repeat visitors inevitably contribute to change in the region. This chapter looks at repeat visitors' attitudes and responses to the changes that they have observed in the region, and the resultant relationships between repeat visitors and those responsible for managing the region. While attention is paid to commercial caravan parks and national parks, the focus of this chapter is on the relationships associated with the sometimes controversial management regimes and practices of the pastoral stations. These have at times resulted in tense relationships and conflicts. Given their close ties to the region, repeat visitors can be vocal in their disapproval when they do not agree with management decisions. When they feel 'rubbed the

wrong way' they may self-displace by relocating to a different site within Ningaloo, or even to a different region altogether.

The chapter returns to the management issues that informed debate and conversation during the period when the fieldwork for this project was conducted (2008-09). While these matters were previously explored in Chapter Three, it is useful to highlight the pressing issues of that time. The chapter then characterises the types of management regimes that were most prominent in 2008-09, and the relationships that these engender between the various actors in the region. For example, the role of a commercial caravan park manager is markedly different to that of DEC employee or a volunteer camp host.

The relationships between regular visitors and those who seek to manage them are nuanced, running the gamut from outright hostility to admiration. While I conducted only a limited number of interviews with managers, it was possible to discern tense dynamics between some of the 'power holders', such as the pastoralists, and DEC (Jones, Ingram and Kingham 2007). Pastoralists were threatened by several state government processes, and sometimes sought to persuade visitors to lobby the government on their behalf. Conversely, a DEC representative gave the impression that pastoralists were old-fashioned, obstructive and duplicitous.

The chapter will outline these concerns and conflicts as experienced by the interviewees. These include issues such as the growing touristic popularity of the region, the limited availability of accommodation during peak periods, time limits on stays in national parks, increased camping fees, and changing rules and regulations. The chapter links these management issues back to peoples' attachment to the area and explores how some components of the management regimes can accommodate, and perhaps capitalise on, peoples' attachment to place both at Ningaloo and more generally.

8.2 Context

Chapter Three described several conflicts in the region that peaked while this fieldwork was being undertaken in 2008-09. Moves to strengthen local environmental conservation measures had proved controversial with several initiatives opposed by certain stakeholders (including repeat visitors and pastoral lease holders). The marine sanctuary zones had recently been expanded, and a regional plan on coastal visitor accommodation was open for public consultation. The World Heritage listing was imminent, and a sense of “paranoia” (Cox 2013, 118) was discernible in the pages of the local newspaper. The excision of a 2km coastal strip from the pastoral stations was being debated, and tension was evident between DEC and pastoral station operators and campers on low incomes. These tensions were apparent in a television documentary broadcast nationally (*Landline* 2009).

Academic literature on tourism often positions visitors as forms of ‘impact’ that need to be ‘managed’. This approach is prevalent in the natural resource management literature including in previous research focussed on the Ningaloo region. For example, Lewis set out to examine relationships between the level of management oversight and the variables of visitor preferences, resource use and environmental impacts at remote coastal campsites in the Ningaloo region (2013). In this study, repeat visitors camping on coastal sand dunes were regarded as an environmental threat that should be mitigated through improved management. A similar stance was taken in Moore and Polley’s work (2007) that attempted to define ‘indicators’ and ‘standards’ for ‘tourism impacts’. Similarly, the representations of grey nomads as a ‘drain’ on local resources (such as hospitals, water supplies and post offices) and as spending very little, depict this form of tourism solely in terms of economic impacts (Robinson, 2017). Interestingly, the repeat visitors were acutely aware of this discourse, and resented being regarded as ‘drains’, ‘problems’ or ‘impacts’ requiring management solutions. Instead, repeat visitors contended that they made a positive contribution to the region both

economically (1, 2, 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 24, 40) and environmentally (1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 22, 25, 37, 38). These conflicting stances had the potential to result in strained relationships and power struggles, some of which are explored below.

8.3 Possessiveness

The previous three chapters have demonstrated repeat visitors' strong feelings about the region. Some interviewees expressed a sense of ownership or protectiveness, along with a desire to continue returning to the region for as long as their health and finances allowed. In some cases, this passion was expressed as a slightly zealous possessiveness about particular campsites. One caravan park manager in Exmouth sighed that repeat visitors "think they own the place" (50) and could become attached to particular sites. This sentiment was echoed by the managers of a commercial caravan park in Coral Bay:

Richard: The regulars feel that their site is their site. They have proprietary rights over that land.

Philippa: Can that cause problems?

Richard: Oh yeah! [laughter] You certainly have times when two people have decided that the same plot of land is their home, then they slightly change their dates which overlaps with somebody else's dates (21).

It is understandable that this could pose a challenge for those tasked with corralling and coercing repeat visitors. For example, repeat visitors to Warroora pastoral station sometimes demarcated their preferred sites with homemade signs on pieces of scrap metal, signalling their intention to return to the same site the following year. These signs are neither official nor binding, yet they created complex social dynamics including the potential for conflict between campers. Conflict was more likely to occur between repeat visitors and 'blow-ins' who might

not understand the social contexts that they were entering, or between repeat visitors and site managers who must strike a balance between logistic simplicity and appeasing loyal repeat visitors. Cleo, who manages a commercial caravan park in Coral Bay, explained that she was aware repeat visitors felt very strongly about their preferred sites, and that she must handle their disappointments and conflicts diplomatically:

Cleo: If someone comes to one site every year and the people that come before them book for longer, it can be a disaster for them. They struggle to cope with it. Sometimes you have to sort-of say 'well, they're **my** sites and you have the privilege of having one of them' rather than have them thinking 'this is my site and I have to have it'.

Philippa: Have you had to say that?

Cleo: Well, in a really nice way! Generally you're booking twelve months to two years in advance. We don't guarantee site numbers but I'll do the best we can [...] The main thing is that they think that you're trying. Down the front we've got twelve oceanfront sites and thousands of people who want them. So you get a lot of bickering: 'well, I had that site last year but you've got it this year!' and we can't control all of that [...] If someone is coming for six months, we'll obviously give them priority over someone coming for two weeks. But sometimes the regulars who come for two weeks might think that they have the right to be there just as much. And they probably have, but you just have to balance it, and that's really hard.

At Warroora pastoral station, there is no advance booking system. Chris explained that he and Carol arrive at 14 Mile campsite particularly early each year in order to secure a spot on the beachfront:

We've had people come in already this year and go, "I've driven all these miles and I deserve to be on the beach!" Well, hello! [sarcastic] It is first in best dressed! If you come here early and you're prepared to set up in the stinking heat and put up with the flies and everything else so that you can maintain a spot [then you deserve it] (24).

It is ironic that Chris, who is not an Indigenous Australian, claims that those who arrive 'first' should be entitled to camp on the land. While Chris is referring to those who arrive first in the camping season, his comments appear short-sighted considering the area's original inhabitants were the Yinikutira in the north and the Baiyungu in the south (Jones 2013, 41).

In a commercial caravan park in Coral Bay, the prime oceanfront campsites are referred to as 'millionaire's row' or 'snobs' row'. These acerbic names are a mix of humour, class-consciousness and jealousy and I suspect that such phrases are used in caravan parks throughout the region and perhaps Australia in general. David and Jenny were renting a site on 'millionaire's row' at a commercial caravan park in Coral Bay. David said that other campers sometimes walk past and, only half-jokingly, say "that's my spot" (33). He goes on to recall a conversation with another camper who was located in a site that David perceived to be superior than the one that he had been allocated. David said, "I was chatting to him a) to be friendly and b) to try and find out whether he'd booked in for next year" (33). This possessiveness is sometimes linked to a sense of entitlement and national identity. Chris, staying at the Blowholes:

This is another soap box point of mine: I was born in this place and I believe I have an inalienable right to be right here [...] We feel very strongly about having the right to do and to be anywhere in Australia. We feel very strongly about our right as Australians to be anywhere we choose to be as long as we're not violating laws in Australia (24).

This rights-based discourse to coastal camping occurs several times in the interviews. In Chris's context, he feels his rights are impinged upon by the regulations in Cape Range National Park that prevent him using a generator or staying longer than 28 days. Because he feels he has a right to do these things, he has chosen instead to stay on a pastoral station where these activities are permitted. While caravan park regulars can be territorial about their sites, the same language of 'rights' and 'ownership' seems to have been subsumed by the discourse of private ownership and commercial enterprise.

8.4 Repeat visitors' concerns

8.4.1 Crowding and 'busyness'

Visitation to the region was steadily increasing during the period over which the interviews were being conducted (2008-2009). Most interviewees expressed concern about the region's future, and one source of anxiety was the region's increasing popularity and (relative) crowdedness. Interviewees repeatedly used the term 'busy' with negative connotations. They perceived the region to be getting "busier" each year and most noticeably during peak periods. For example, Ashley fondly recalls visiting Gnaraloo pastoral station when it "wasn't too busy", in contrast to now when it is "so well-known and busy these days that it isn't as enjoyable" (39). Gill described Coral Bay in particular as "hard to get into" (27) and Ben described it as "packed" (7). Mary says:

It's amazing, the amount of people that come here, considering the distance [...] More and more are coming. The caravan parks are filling up quicker. And the caravans never stop coming in, they're queuing up (48).

Some interviewees reported that they had changed their visitation habits in response to the increased 'busyness' of the region. For example, they avoided the school holidays or the town of Coral Bay entirely. It is interesting that people used the more positive (perhaps euphemistic) term 'busy' rather than the more negative

'crowded'. Perhaps this is because the region has been long regarded as having a relaxed atmosphere. As Norm says, "the attraction is that it's very laid back" (2). Increased visitation is a characteristic of the development phase in Butler's (1980) model of how tourist areas evolve. Management practices are responding to increased visitation. Examples include the introduction of 'stay limits' at the Cape Range National Park and the use of overflow campgrounds in Exmouth during peak periods. While these techniques are a response to 'busyness', they have also irritated repeat visitors, an issue which I explore later in this chapter. Repeat visitors reported experiencing the negative aspects of this development phase and, in some cases, this impacts on their relationships with the physical and cultural environments.

8.4.2 Development

Most interviewees expressed concern about the region's future, especially in relation to increased development. Popular tourist destinations in other areas of Australia, including Margaret River, Broome and Surfers' Paradise were cited by interviewees as having become the quintessence of unappealing, overdeveloped tourism destinations. Mary explains:

It's the fear of it turning into another Gold Coast kind of place. Being retired, costs come into it and you worry that it might get too expensive. When you see the marina development and the four and five star accommodation you think will it get to the stage where they only want five star people - the ones with money - coming. The character of the place will change, it has changed in the time we've been going (48)161.

John and Rochelle also used Queensland as an example:

Queensland is too busy, the caravan parks are cheek and jowl, so that [...] if the guy next door coughs you can hear him. There are very few places in our travels around Australia that are as unique as what exists in Ningaloo [...] Looking at the East Coast, or down

the south of WA, or Broome where you need to book a caravan site a year in advance [...] We don't want the north west of Australia to turn out like Surfers' Paradise (6)162.

Interviewees worried that, if coastal camp grounds on pastoral stations became managed by DEC, they would become more crowded or subject to stricter management regimes. Repeat visitors felt that this would change the character of the region, and limit or end their practice of coastal camping. Several referred to Western Australia as being 'the last place left' in Australia where they felt they could camp with such freedom. While neither Broome nor Margaret River in Western Australia are 'high rise' like Surfers Paradise, both were criticised for being 'too busy' and 'too commercial'. In particular, both destinations were perceived to have 'gone upmarket' and to have become exclusive and unaffordable destinations. Broome was said to 'cater for people with money', to be 'elitist' and not catering to 'everyday people'. Similar criticisms were levelled at Margaret River, in the southwest of Western Australia. Brent sums this up succinctly:

Margaret River transformed in ten years. They couldn't get a doctor to stay in town for years and years and years. Now they can't keep them out of town (43).

This seems like a distinctively West Australian perspective on overdevelopment considering that neither of these towns would be considered low-key by many interstate and international visitors. However, tourism development is relative, and 'mass market' destinations start from small beginnings and develop, even at Surfers Paradise. Rather than perceive this development as part of a spectrum, as in Butler's model, the interviewees tended to view it more as a binary, with Ningaloo as it was then in stark contrast to other 'overdeveloped' places, with no fine gradations in between.

8.4.3 Excision of the 2km coastal strip from pastoral leases

As outlined in Chapter Three, while the interviews were being conducted, debate was raging in the region about the proposed excision of a 2km coastal strip from

the pastoral stations. This would mean that the land abutting the coast would no longer form part of the pastoral lease, but would be made a reserve and managed by the state government. These changes were due to take place in 2015, when the 99 year leases were due for renewal, and negotiations between the state government and pastoralists were occurring in the time period when the interviews were conducted. These negotiations were fraught, and there was a general sense of uncertainty about how this process would unfold and what the impacts would be for coastal camping. While there was broad agreement among repeat visitors that the excision would change the character of coastal camping in the region and that this was a source of tension in the region, the interviewees were generally vague about their understanding of the process. For example, Gaye who was staying in a commercial caravan park in Coral Bay, had heard about the plans but was unclear about the details:

It used to be defence land. Or might still be. But it is being taken over by DEC. 250m back from the water line or something. So you can't camp there anymore. Or perhaps you can and you pay fees. I don't know (19)163.

Many others were similarly confused about the process. Even those who stayed at the pastoral stations and were passionate about the issue had to glean information through informal conversation:

There have been lots of rumours. Leonie [the pastoralist at Warroora] thought everything might go back to the way it was before, when we heard her the other day. It looks like the stations may be getting the 2km back163 (1).

Simon, a manager at DEC, explained that the excision of the 2km from pastoral leases was important to ensure "public access" to the coast for the primary purposes of conservation and recreation (44). The current system ran the risk of pastoral leaseholders creating private beaches and limiting access to the coast. However the interviewees contested this definition of public access. For Boz, the

excision of the 2km coastal strip was not being managed for public good but was “the government being greedy” (1). This theme of governmental greed was echoed by others, such as Brian:

Philippa: So, you’re not anti-development per se?

Brian: Well no. But the overall ‘taking too much’ we are against (3)164.

The phrase ‘DEC land grab’ was sometimes used by stakeholders opposed to the World Heritage listing (Jones, Jones and Hughes 2016). For Boz and Brian, the worry was that prices would increase and limits would be imposed on the length of time they could stay at a site under a different management regime (stay limits will be explored in more detail later in this chapter). Participants’ attitudes about the management of the area varied greatly. For the ‘wilderness’ campers on pastoral stations, the ‘known quantity’ of management by a leaseholder was preferable to the ‘unknown’ of management by DEC. However, interviewees staying in Cape Range National Park were more positive about the excision. For Judy, who was staying in Cape Range National Park, the plan was appealing:

If the government took that back over I'm not going to have any problem with that. We retain the two-kilometre strip as long as they provide for people to go camping for a certain amount of time and have the camp hosts [...] and set it up properly, it'd be pretty good I reckon (46)164.

In the quotation above, Judy’s opinion differed from those of the campers on pastoral stations. She believed national parks were generally well-managed, and that fragile land is best managed by the state. This excision of the coastal strip has been one of the most significant debates to occur in the region in recent years and attracted much media interest (Landline 2009). This section has demonstrated that repeat visitors felt passionate yet confused about the potential changes to the pastoral leases, and this contributed to tensions in the region.

8.4.4 Increased accessibility

Some interviewees felt that the region's appeal lay in its inaccessibility. The region's accessibility is shaped by two main factors: the cost of visiting the region; and the physical infrastructure, such as roads into and within the pastoral stations. While cost barriers will be explored later in this chapter, it was the physical infrastructure, or the lack of it, that was perceived as part of the region's appeal. Tim, who camps at Red Bluff camp site on Quobba pastoral station, says "The great thing about this area is it's inaccessible. It's the dead-end of nowhere" (16). Increased access to the region, facilitated by improved transport infrastructure, could make the area more accessible to a wider range of visitors, yet this in turn could make the area less appealing to those who have a long history of repeat visitation.

This was particularly true for those camping on pastoral stations, where campsites are only accessible by four-wheel-drive vehicles. Harry remembered visiting Cape Range National Park before the road was sealed with bitumen and felt that it made "a hell of a lot of difference" (5). He went on to tell me that he had heard rumours of a road planned to go "right up through Coral Bay into Yardie Creek and the National Park" and felt that this would 'destroy' the land. These thoughts were echoed by John:

One of their arguments was that they wanted to put in a bitumen road for better access. And we were like "hang on a minute, if you want to protect the environment, putting in a bitumen road so that every idiot can access it is defeating the purpose." It's paradoxical. If you leave tracks in, people will think 'well, I'm not going there'. The ranger told us in the Bungle Bungles that the first 10km of that track are atrocious, to keep people out. They grade the rest of the road but not the first 10km. Putting in a bitumen road is just crazy (6)165.

John believed that people who visited the region without four-wheel-drive vehicles and associated equipment were "idiots" who were less respectful of the

environment (6). Cassie echoed this and listed the equipment currently required to access and stay at Ningaloo station:

That's the thing I like about Ningaloo, there's no road [...] there's only a certain part of the population that will buy a caravan, buy a four-wheel drive, buy a generator, that type of thing. It's not a huge conglomerate of people that go. And the people that don't want to do that go to Exmouth or Coral Bay (4).

It is interesting that Cassie used the phrase 'a certain part of the population'. This 'part of the population' presumably has disposable income or assets and has been living in Australia long enough to justify the hire or purchase of expensive bulky equipment. In other words, it is a way of saying that the area should remain off-limits to international visitors or to those Australians who are unable or unwilling to invest in expensive vehicles and equipment. Ashley takes this idea further by suggesting that the issue isn't simply one of reducing numbers but of controlling the type of person who accesses certain parts of the region:

Quite a community when you go camping there. [...] Once you've got busses going in and out. Tour busses. It separates everyone out a bit. You don't have as much in common with everyone (39).

The comments by John, Cassie and Ashley imply that keeping certain parts of the Ningaloo region only accessible by four-wheel-drive means that only the 'right kinds of people' will visit the region. This research indicates that many repeat visitors to the Ningaloo Reef are not keen on improving vehicular access to the region. This is sometimes known as a 'drawbridge effect' (Selwood, Curry and Jones 1996) whereby those with access to a facility, service or region wish to block access to those who wish to follow, akin to pulling up a drawbridge after crossing a moat. The situation demonstrates a tension between tourism development and cultural heritage. Changes to access facilitate increased tourism which in turn threatens an aspect of the region's cultural heritage.

8.4.5 Rising costs

The cost of accommodation varies in the region from almost-free to hundreds of dollars per night, as outlined in Chapter Three. The most expensive options include the Sal Salis eco resort nestled in the Cape Range National Park and the 'safari tents' at Red Bluff on Quobba Station. None of the interviewees were patronising those accommodation providers. The interviewees in this research were paying as little as \$5.50 per day at the Blowholes to over \$38 per night in Coral Bay's caravan parks. At the time of the research, a campsite in Coral Bay was regarded by many interviewees as excruciatingly expensive. Boz stays at 14 Mile at Warroora and, while he thoroughly enjoys it there, one of the reasons he returns is because he could not afford to pay any more per night:

We couldn't afford Coral Bay! That's too much for low income families and pensioners. Where will they all go if they couldn't come here? \$240 odd dollars per week? That's one person's pension. [If prices increased here] I would either stay at home and rot, or go camp out in a paddock somewhere (1).

8.4.6 Stay limits

Cape Range National Park had a maximum stay of 28 days, or 14 days in school holidays. For older repeat visitors aiming for a long stay in the region, this meant that staying in the Cape Range National Park was an unappealing option. Boz explains:

That's why people don't go to Cape Range. You don't spend four or five days putting up an annexe just for 28 days. At [a particular campsite in Cape Range National Park], there were seven bays there and only two caravans, but friends of ours were still told they had to leave (1).

In the following quotation, Ken explains that the maximum stay limit in the Cape Range National Park caused him to self-displace to Warroora pastoral station.

Interestingly, Ken believes that he should have 'earned' the right to stay as long as he wants at a national park having served in the military:

Ken: We used to go and camp at the National Park up at Exmouth. We used to go there all the time but what they did was they changed it so you could only stay 30 days. So we don't go there anymore. We wouldn't stay there.

Philippa: Apart from the length of stay, you don't really mind National Parks?

Ken: Oh no, the idea of the camp hosts is great. The people you meet are great. The backpackers. Not a problem. Just the fact that on day 30 the camp host came to us and said 'Ken, you have to go'. I thought that was a bit sad. I spent 30 years in the service, the military. I'd like to use this, this is what I fought for and that was a bit sad.

Philippa: Do you feel like you'd earned it?

Ken: Absolutely. Absolutely I've earned it. I was fighting overseas. When someone comes and says that after 30 days you have to get out...! (25)

This is an example of the discourse of rights and ownership outlined earlier in this chapter. A concern for those staying at pastoral stations is the suggestion that a 28-day limit could be imposed there too. When I asked Boz what he thought of this idea, his reaction hints at the widespread mistrust between long-stay repeat visitors on pastoral stations, government agencies and pastoralists:

That'd be ridiculous. I wouldn't come here. And I know probably half of the regulars here wouldn't come here. And I was asking DEC [Department of Environment and Conservation] person

about it and they said they know nothing about it. So it's either [a DEC employee] being dishonest with you, or it's [a pastoralist] (1).

The issue of stay-length is complex. On the one hand, having a maximum length allows more people the chance to stay at a popular, yet environmentally fragile, location. It could therefore be perceived as a fair way to manage increased visitation and ensure equitable access. On the other hand, older repeat visitors on low or fixed incomes regard this as a deeply unfair system that privileges affluent and/or more able-bodied travellers who are able to travel faster in the region, or move from site to site more easily without being constrained by their finances or elaborate camp site set-ups.

8.5 Contested notions of 'environmental impacts'

The environmental impacts of 'wilderness' camping are a hotly contested issue in the region. Almost every interviewee felt they were 'environmentally aware', although their explanations as to how and why this was the case varied. Most said that they regularly picked up litter, and several proudly told me stories of when they had seen an environmental transgression (such as someone illegally fishing with a net) and had intervened. Other examples included watering native vegetation, minimising water usage and being diligent about how they disposed of their rubbish. Long-stay campers on pastoral stations vehemently denied they caused any detrimental environmental impacts, claiming that they cared for the land. Simon, an experienced environmental manager at DEC disagrees:

There are a lot more people coming out of the cities that don't know how to camp, they don't know to drive. They get a 4-wheel drive but they don't know how to 4-wheel drive; you know, we pull them out all the time. Either they get flooded out or they dig in, they haven't let their tyres down. They don't know how to drive in sand but they'll come up and [...] even though there are

signs everywhere saying, 'Don't rip out vegetation' they'll rip out the vegetation (44)

There are many more examples where visitors' notions of what constitutes environmentally conscious behaviour conflicts with 'expert' opinion. For example, one research participant who camps on a pastoral station told me that, after she has finished washing the dishes after a meal, she pours her dishwater onto the native vegetation to water the plants. For her, this was an example of her environmental stewardship and she claimed that the plants had grown during her stay. When I told this to an experienced environmental scientist, she groaned to hear that detergents were routinely being poured onto the sand just metres from a globally significant coral reef.

8.6 Relationships

8.6.1 Managers

Many interviewees had developed a relationship with 'management', when the term referred to the manager of their caravan park or pastoral station. These relationships were often described with fondness or respect. Caravan park owners and station managers were generally seen to be 'doing a good job'. On the other hand, opinions about DEC varied from 'they do a good job' to outright hostility. There are several different types of 'manager' or 'authority figure' in the region including: Federal government, state government, local government, pastoralists, managers of commercial caravan parks, campsite managers at pastoral stations, volunteer camp hosts at Cape Range National Park and the Blowholes campsites and self-appointed community leaders such as Brian who organises the 'veggie run' at 14 Mile.

The most tense relationship dynamics occurred between DEC staff and retired long-stay campers who stay for longer periods on pastoral stations, and between DEC staff and pastoral leaseholders. Campers on low incomes arguably have the most to 'lose' in this situation as they are at risk of being 'squeezed out' of the region

altogether. This cohort cannot afford commercial caravan parks and they can feel unwelcome in national parks due to the limits on stay-lengths and ideological clashes. As discussed in Chapter Six, this group are on limited incomes such as pensions and can only continue making the journey to the region if they can stay for a long time and live cheaply, to offset the cost of fuel.

Attitudes towards DEC ranged from praise, ambivalence and suspicion to outright hostility. Some interviewees were positive about the work done by DEC and praised them for doing a 'pretty good job'. Gina says that DEC used to "bloody annoy the hell out of me" but felt they were improving (13). Others were hostile towards DEC. At the Blowholes, a shack owner says he "hates CALM⁵ with an absolute passion" as they are "the biggest bunch of arseholes that ever lived":

All they're interested in is getting money off the government and doing an environmental study. They have no idea how this community works - how it's protected, how it's looked after savagely by the local people. [...] They have no idea, they are just a bunch of absolute pricks. [...] I hate them with an absolute passion, because I don't think they do the right thing for the environment whatsoever (12).

The strong language in the quotation above echoes many themes explored in this thesis so far, such as the strong sense of community that is created and 'savagely' maintained by repeat visitors. It also hints at frustrations with research processes, which will be explored later in this chapter. The following lengthy quotation from Boz gives a sense of the complex relationship between some repeat visitors and DEC representatives:

One lady [from DEC] was from NSW. About 26 - just out of uni [...] I went for a drive with her, to show her around. She drove over a couple of empty cans and I said "aren't you going to stop?" She

⁵ Conservation and Land Management (CALM) was the previous acronym for DEC.

said “we’re not paid to pick up cans, we’re just paid to hand out infringement notices.” She basically said “you haven’t done a course, so you can’t manage things as well as I can.” [...] I was thinking “the difference between you and I is that I keep the area tidy and look after the environment, you don’t (1).

While I cannot judge whether this exchange really happened, the quotation reveals several things about Boz’s relationship with DEC. Firstly, he is disdainful of the importance of university qualifications in environmental management. Secondly, he believes that his age and experience means he has a superior insight into the region. Thirdly, Boz draws attention to the DEC representative’s gender by calling her ‘a lady’, and I suspect he does this to destabilise her authority. This notion that DEC representatives are inexperienced is echoed by Chris:

One of the people I know that actually works in that department who is nothing more than a high level clerk in the State Government said, ‘I wrote the policy on all this.’ He’d never been camping in his life. But he wrote the policy about how it’s all going to be managed. And I said, ‘Come on. You’ve got to be joking’ (24).

Again, it is impossible to know whether this is true but the anecdote is a good example of how some repeat visitors regard DEC employees as bureaucratic and ‘out of touch’ with the realities of camping in the Ningaloo region.

The volunteer camp hosts were criticised by one interviewee for being “‘pains in the arse’ who get a little bit of authority and suddenly become dictators” (24). Similar sentiments were expressed by the residents of Shark Bay in the period before its World Heritage Listing (Christensen et al. 2013). This sense that camp hosts are dictatorial is evident in this anecdote from Chris about staying in the Kennedy Ranges (inland in the Gascoyne region but outside of the Ningaloo region) and an uncomfortable encounter with a camp host:

They had a communal fire because they said you weren't allowed to have your own campfires. Fine. That wasn't an issue. Not a problem. But the camp host then dictated he would light the fire at 5pm. And he had his little wheelbarrow and he wheelbarrowed like four sticks of wood over at a time. That sort of thing is not what we want. "No-one else will touch that fire because I light the fire at 5pm. I put on the wood and I tell you what's going to happen." And to me, this just isn't right. And of course - me being the person I am - as soon as he went to bed I chucked all the wood on the fire because he just annoyed me so much to think that he was telling us that he was going to light the fire (24).

In this anecdote, Chris undermined the authority of the camp host by rebelling and seeking revenge by throwing wood on the fire when it was left unattended. It is notable that these three interviewees – AM, Chris and Boz are all working-class men who have all taken offence at being 'managed' by authority figures they did not respect, or management regimes they did not believe in. I believe that their class, gender and age have contributed to their anger. All three of them now stay at pastoral stations.

DEC employee, Simon, spoke of the layers of distrust and paranoia in the region when I interviewed him. He described the region as experiencing a 'crisis' and pastoral lease holders as 'having two faces' because they have commercial intentions yet purport to be motivated by environmental or civic values (44). Simon stated that a particular pastoral lease holder "enjoys power and control, and he's got an environment where he can have total power and total control" (44).

I discussed the television documentary 'Quarrel Coast' with Simon (Landline 2009). The documentary had screened on television recently, and included interviews with pastoralists and politicians including Alannah MacTiernan, the Shadow Regional Development Minister. Simon struggled with the depiction of campers as 'battlers'.

To him, these campers were displaying an unpalatable and irresponsible 'victim mentality' (44).

Simon granted me a long interview, a stream-of-consciousness monologue that suggested that he was under considerable stress. Later, I heard Simon referred to by someone in the region as a 'dictatorial prick' who could wind up 'dead at the bottom of a canyon'. This disturbing comment indicates how fraught relationships were at this time in the region. These are powerful sentiments that illustrate the stresses being experienced by both sides.

Interestingly, this tension outlined above seemed relatively absent in the commercial caravan parks. These forms of accommodation do not purport to be providing a 'wilderness' experience but rather a leisure experience. They promote their clean and modern facilities and, provided these are maintained to an expected standard, the 'contract' between manager and guest appears more straightforward. It is accepted that abiding by rules is a condition of entry, and, while caravan park regulars can be territorial about their sites, there does not seem to be the same language of 'rights' or 'ownership' as this has been subsumed by the discourse of private ownership and commercial enterprise.

8.6.2 Distrust of authority

Interviewees would occasionally refer to decisions made by 'them', meaning non-specific authority figures. This could mean state government, federal government, the Ningaloo Sustainable Development Office or just a general sense of 'powerful people'. In these descriptions of 'them', the implication was always that the decision-makers were acting out of self-interest, or were obeying orders without an understanding of what it was like for those 'on the ground'. Some interviewees distrusted managers if they were perceived to be hypocritical. For example, Boz and his wife spent time as caretakers at a camping area on a pastoral station. Boz says that the previous caretaker used to "let his dogs run free, despite telling other people to tie up theirs" (1). To Boz, this indicated that the previous caretaker was a hypocrite who thought "rules didn't apply to him" (1). Gen and Chris, also camping

on a pastoral station, say they have “no time for government departments that try and pull the wool over people’s eyes and tell untruths to get their own way” (24). Managers, such as employees from DEC, were regarded with suspicion if they brandished university qualifications. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Boz recalled an awkward encounter with a “lady” who was “just out of uni” and was coming to inspect the campsite (1). John believed that is important to “fight the bureaucrats” (6).

Managers who were perceived to be ‘outsiders’ were perceived to be problematic. Boz implied that one caretaker was not qualified to manage a campsite because he was English; “he’d be better down at Casuarina Jail, where there are a lot of Englishmen pushing people around” (1). This is an interestingly xenophobic remark, in that it implies that only ‘true’ Australians are capable of understanding the Ningaloo environment. Considering Boz’s earlier comment about the ‘lady from NSW’, perhaps even Australian managers from interstate are perceived to be outsiders too. Similar sentiments were aired earlier in this chapter when repeat visitors spoke about their ‘rights’ as Australians to camp where they pleased. Elsewhere, this derision was directed at DEC employees who ‘have no idea how the community operates’, another criticism of managers’ status as outsiders. Ben described his family as ‘fourth or fifth’ generation in the Ningaloo region, so felt offended when those with less experience of the region “bring in rules and regulations” (7). The phrase ‘bring in’ implies that these rules have come from the outside. This is ironic and poignant considering that the Indigenous residents of the area were dispossessed of their land and that the camping culture enjoyed by the participants in this research is ultimately imported from Europe. Managers who exercised their power unduly were distrusted. Boz complained that the current manager of a campsite was “very abrupt and arrogant” and “likes to throw his weight around” (1). Excessive rules and regulations were a source of irritation for some repeat visitors. Rex found the management at Warroora ‘too regimental’ and preferred Cardabia. Another example was provided earlier in this chapter, when Boz recalled being asked to vacate his campsite in a national park after 28 days

despite there being other available sites. Boz felt these rules were being enforced unnecessarily.

8.6.3 Admiration for managers

Relationships between regular visitors and those tasked with managing them are therefore complex. In many cases, these relationships are amicable yet the power dynamics are constantly shifting. As explored in Chapter Six, these relationships are often positive and maintained over long periods and distances. Interviewees were often admiring of pastoral lease-holders and caravan park managers. The phrase 'firm but fair' was used by two repeat visitors to describe a management style that they thought was effective (4, 33). For example, Brendan and his group expressed admiration for Tim who manages their campsite on the pastoral station Quobba. This admiration was expressed both tacitly and through their happiness when Tim recognises them when they return each year. The manager of the commercial caravan park People's Park says that regulars buy her children gifts, send her cards and hug her when they arrive and leave the park. This sentiment is echoed by another commercial caravan park manager, Bert, who says that the 'girls in the office' receive Christmas cards from regulars. Another caravan park manager said that regular visitors sometimes invite him over for roasts and barbeques.

I observed that repeat visitors were pleased when this respect is reciprocated by managers, and they are, on occasion, invited to share intimate moments of the managers' lives. For example, Cleo who manages a commercial caravan park has invited repeat visitors to her own children's birthday parties. Cleo went as far as to describe the regular visitors as being 'like family' because her own extended family lived interstate:

Every second day we have people here cuddling me and crying goodbye. It is like they are saying goodbye to their family for another twelve months. It is really special and it is probably part of the reasons we've stayed here for so long (29).

Repeat visitors' relationships with authority figures are demonstrably delicate and complex, and are associated with strong feelings ranging from bitter hostility to fondness. These relationships and emotions have been largely overlooked in previous research on the Ningaloo region, because these studies have tended to focus on repeat visitors' feelings about their *physical* environment.

8.7 Involvement with research and public consultation processes

The political controversies outlined earlier in this chapter, combined with the State Government's considerable investment in creating tourism blueprints for the region, has meant that research on the region has frequently attracted funding. By the time that the interviews were conducted for this project, the region had been the subject of several, predominantly quantitative, academic and government surveys. However, many long-term repeat visitors felt marginalised and unrepresented in these processes. Some of the interviewees told me that they had been involved with public consultation processes connected to masterplans developed for the region. Jo, who stays at a commercial caravan park in Coral Bay, responded to a call for submissions:

There was a submission handed out last year, quite a few of us put in submissions about the development for the front [of the Coral Bay foreshore] here. What CALM should or shouldn't do. I put my submission in, and I know seven other people here did (37).

Leilani, a surfer, tries to stay informed on proposed changes in the region. She does not make individual submissions but her partner makes submissions on behalf of the surfing organisation Exmouth Cape Board Riders. Cassie, who stays at Ningaloo station, put in a submission but claims "we were told that our submissions were torn up and put in the rubbish bin" (4). Len and Jane share this sense of suspicion and disillusionment when it comes to engaging with the council and research

bodies. This lengthy exchange explains their disappointing encounters with the local shire council:

Len: But nothing seems to happen.

Jane: It just gets filed away

Len: That's if they see it. We've written letters to them before about things and then gone in two weeks later for follow up on it and they say 'didn't see it'. Even though I'd gone in there and hand-delivered it to the woman. Dealing with the shire, you always have two or three copies of the same letter and you just keep handing it in.

[...]

Len: They said then they'll send a letter out to tell everyone when the masterplan's been approved. Everyone who submitted submissions will get a copy of the letter.... I haven't seen one yet. [...] Sometimes I don't even know if they've read our submissions. I don't know how many went in on the masterplan. We didn't get a 'thank you' or an acknowledgement or anything.

Jane: A lot of the shack owners we spoke [to have] had the same sorts of problems with the shire. Ask for information and never received a response.

Len: To get back to your question, we don't feel empowered or anything by putting in [submissions] (17).

Others had been involved in academic research. Harry felt he had been the object of surveillance:

I asked her what she [a researcher] was doing. She was up on the hill, taking photographs. Photographing my campsite! She took

photos like this [Harry shows me photographs in a planning document]. That's my camp there [in the photo]. They went up the top of the hill and took these photos. That is my ute! And the black shade cloth around my camper (5).

Brian says that he and his wife have completed many surveys, yet believe that the masterplans never seem to accommodate their needs:

A lot of the surveys that we've done in the past, and we've probably filled in at least one survey every year for the last 5 or 6 years really haven't touched on what we think is an important subject (3).

While many research processes, including my own research, claim to consult widely and represent the views of the stakeholders, there appears to be a gulf between these noble aims and the feelings of dejection experienced by many research participants or those who make submissions as part of consultation processes. McCarron's research in a different context – regional theatre in Western Australia – demonstrates a similar cycle of ineffective community consultation:

Whenever a consultation process is announced, the same faces gather around the whiteboards and 'butcher's' paper and are carefully stage-managed through the whole or half-day proceedings.[...]The facilitator, a metropolitan expert or a local administrator, gathers these instant opinions around a pre-determined agenda and repackages them at some subsequent date as a report based on in-depth community consultation. The report makes its way to the various agencies which have some vested interest in the outcomes where it is dutifully filed, rarely read and even more rarely, implemented. When the topic is revived months or years later, the process begins again... [Community members'] skill and efficiency in mobilising sections of the community are rarely acknowledged in "community

development processes” particularly if their contributions fall outside the guidelines of the consultation process (McCarron, 2004, 58).

McCarron’s quotation is a powerful explanation of how regional residents can often be marginalised by planning processes controlled by metropolitan professionals. However, repeat visitors are arguably even lower down the decision-making hierarchy than regional residents given that land ownership and/or residency confers a much stronger say in planning decisions. McCarron’s critique of public consultation aligns with many of the repeat visitors’ observations about these processes that they see as making a mockery of their commitment to the region, and contributes to their sense that they are engaged in an ‘us against them’ dynamic.

This PhD study has aimed to address this by exploring repeat visitors’ perspectives in great detail and by quoting their views at length. Some repeat visitors were keen for me to be ‘on their side’ in what they perceived as a battle between themselves and metropolitan bureaucrats. As I outlined in Chapter One, the people I met in the region sometimes sought to position me as a ‘country girl’ who would ‘tell their side of the story’. I am ambivalent about taking sides, yet this thesis has indeed focussed on the perspectives of repeat visitors. I hope that I have acknowledged both their strong feelings and the time they invested in this research project.

8.8 Conclusion

This chapter has shown the complex, nuanced interplay between people with a strong connection to the region and those tasked with the responsibility of managing both the people and the place. These relationships and emotions have been largely overlooked in previous research about the Ningaloo region, as most studies have tended to focus on repeat visitors feelings about their *physical* environments. These insights are therefore contributions to understandings about repeat visitors’ ‘place attachment’ because they show that repeat visitors are also

attached to, or at least involved with, residents and managers within the region in ways which make them elements of the region's cultural environment. This research demonstrates the fragility of repeat visitors' goodwill in this context and indicates how insensitive decision-making has the potential to disrupt generations of cultural history and informal land management. The following chapter will discuss significant themes that have emerged from this study, and argue that the study has made a contribution to wider academic debates about mobility and emotional geographies.

9. Discussion

9.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters have drawn on qualitative data to explore the various ways in which repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region interact with each other and with their physical and cultural environments. This chapter reviews the research objectives outlined in Chapter One and considers how these have been addressed throughout the thesis.

9.2 Objectives

What are the characteristics of repeat visitors to the Ningaloo coast region? Are there sub-categories of repeat visitors?

The most discernible sub-group of repeat visitors is comprised of those who have retired from the workforce. These visitors are able to stay longer in the region because they are no longer constrained by annual leave limits or family responsibilities. These longer stays allow this group more time to develop friendships in the region, and this demographic is highly visible. Interviews with retired repeat visitors revealed that they are generally highly social. Compared to their younger travellers they negotiate a specific and different set of 'leisure constraints' including their health, finances and physical mobility. While the domestic travel habits of retired Australians have received some attention in the academic literature (Westh 2001; Higgs and Quirk 2007; Onyx and Leonard 2005; Onyx and Leonard 2007; Holloway 2007; Cridland 2008), this study is one of very few qualitative studies that considers the attitudes and values of this group.

Australia's population is ageing, and almost one in every six people is now over 65 (ABS 2016). Baby boomers – those born between 1946 and 1964 – are currently

dominating the domestic travel market since they have more discretionary time and money than younger travellers (Gardiner, Grace and King 2014, 715). Increasing numbers of baby boomers are tending to work beyond the age of 65, often remaining in the workforce to rebuild retirement nest eggs that were adversely impacted by the global financial crisis. This particular group are juggling work and travel and – unlike their older peers – may not be fully retired, but are behaving more like ‘empty nesters’ in the pre-retirement life stage (Gardiner, Grace and King 2014, 715). However, it has been predicted that, as more of Australia’s large baby boomer population become older than 75 in the coming decade, they will travel far less (Tourism Research Australia 2017). It is in the tourism industry’s best interests to keep this generation mobile, and to cater to their needs as they age. This research is therefore a timely insight into the behaviours and attitudes of a generation that have been important to Australia’s domestic tourism market, particularly in regional Australia.

Retired repeat visitors may be the most visible sub-group in this sample, but they are not the only one. Since different campsites afford varying levels of access to specific facilities and leisure activities, they attract clusters of repeat visitors who share specific demographic and social characteristics. For example, campsites near renowned surfing breaks draw repeat visitors who are physically fit enough to surf, while commercial caravan parks are popular with those travelling with pets, or those who enjoy town-based activities such as lawn bowling. The research also indicates that repeat visitors may undertake different trips with different purposes, such as a family holiday in one case or a focussed activity trip such as a ‘boys’ fishing trip’ in another. In this way, repeat visitors are not a homogenous group.

The results of this thesis provide evidence to suggest that those staying in the region exert subtle (or not so subtle) social control to downplay the differences between people and to minimise conflict. Topics such as work and politics are rarely discussed, and the emphasis on ‘community’ and ‘likemindedness’ suggests that repeat visitors feel comfortable when surrounded with people they perceive to be similar to themselves. In her research on grey nomads, Davies notes that her

interviewees describe 'fitting in' to campsites, how everyone uses their 'common sense' to get along (2011, 197). While my research participants were not specifically asked about their race, my observation, based on the content of interviews, participants' surnames and appearances, and the omission of any comments about race in the interviews, is that these repeat visitors were mostly Anglo Celtic Australians.

How do repeat visitors interact with the physical and cultural environments of the region?

Given that the Ningaloo region is remote and sparsely populated, one of this study's most notable findings is that repeat visitors value the 'sense of community' that they experience in the area extremely highly. It may seem paradoxical that people would travel to a remote area to camp near, and spend time with, others. However, this is one of the most significant themes to emerge from the interviews and it is a finding that is largely absent in previous studies on the area.

I argue that this sense of community is built and maintained through place-specific performances. Chapter Five drew on interview data to provide several examples of this, such as how friendliness is performed and perpetuated, and how this contributes to a shared belief that repeat visitors are like minded. Self-organised events including craft clubs, dinners, fundraising events, excursions and happy hours serve as recurring social rituals. These rituals facilitate mingling and unite regulars through a sense of common purpose. Furthermore, the ways in which repeat visitors customise their campsites and surrounds represents a significant form of place-making and demonstrates their sense of ownership of the environment. Repeat visitors assist each other in site-specific ways, contributing to the sense that campers 'look after each other' and are 'in it together'.

This research therefore argues that repeat visitors play an active role in shaping the construct of the Ningaloo region. This counters literature from the discipline of natural resource management that supposes destinations are pre-formed,

unchanging and are 'separate' from the people who inhabit them, even temporarily. This dualistic, bounded thinking overlooks the ways in which people shape – and are, arguably, part of – the landscape. As explained earlier in the thesis, camping on pastoral stations in the Ningaloo region is commonly referred to as 'wilderness' camping. This term is used by pastoral station leaseholders to promote camping on their stations. Warroora slogan is "Warroora: Ningaloo wilderness" and their website's home page includes the following statement:

Imagine a place unchanged for thousands of years. A place where no one has tried to improve on Mother Nature. A place where time does just stand still. Warroora Station is an ideal place to experience the Australian outback in its most natural state (www.warroora.com Accessed 2018).

Interestingly, this passage is on their home page directly underneath photos that allude to the station's history as a sheep farm. These two statements - "unchanged for thousands of years" and "sheep farm" – are paradoxical. The statement not only overlooks the areas' recent history of European-style livestock farming, but the preceding thousands of years of Indigenous Australians presence. Elsewhere on Warroora's website, people are encouraged to write to Terry Redman MLA in order to "keep Warroora Ningaloo Wilderness just the way it is today". It is suggested that writers "point out to our elected representative the infinite long term value of the *wilderness product* (my emphasis) so keenly sought by yourself and many, many others" (www.warroora.com). The expensive Sal Salis accommodation within Cape Range National Park also uses the term in marketing its 'wilderness tents' that can be rented for hundreds of dollars per night.

Human geographers have critiqued the idea of 'wilderness' (Cronon 1996; Katz 1998; Whatmore 1999; Warren 2004). They have drawn attention to "the assumption that everything we encounter in the world already belongs either to 'culture' or to 'nature'" (Whatmore 1999). They have sought to dismantle this binary thinking and to argue for new ways of conceiving the relationships between

people and environments. The discourse of 'wilderness' is uncritically reproduced in some scholarly work about the Ningaloo region. For example, Tonge's research about place-attachment in the southern Ningaloo coast refers to the "wonders of nature" and "wilderness areas". Tonge claims that for her research participants, "the beauty of the physical environment provided an opportunity to escape through the wonder of nature" (2012, 72). Tonge's work largely overlooks the fact that the region has been used for European-style sheep and goat farming for generations. In her research on remote camping on the Ningaloo coast, Lewis, by contrast, draws attention to the area's agricultural history (2013 8):

Another limiting factor was that the Ningaloo environment was not a wilderness in pristine condition. The entire study area had been utilised for pastoral purposes since the late nineteenth century and much of the study area is still being used for this purpose.

Nonetheless, Lewis' statement implies that the area was 'wilderness in pristine condition' prior to European-style agriculture, which overlooks Indigenous Australians' land use. In their work in the Ningaloo region, Shields and Moore (2014, 6-7) refer to the term's complex history and contested meanings. They reference Cronon and draw attention to the term's different uses in American and Australian contexts. But, rather than abandon the term as mythological or a product of capitalism (as some cultural geographers might), they instead seek to define and measure 'wilderness', and believe it is to be a productive term that should inform management regimes. By constructing the Ningaloo region as 'wilderness', human presence is positioned as an intrusion. Using a case study of environmental contestation focused on an area of urban bushland in NSW, Gill, Wait and Head argue that "non-indigenous people and associations are imaginatively and materially excluded from this mapping of nature." (2009, 188). The same happens in the Ningaloo context where repeat visitors are often positioned, both by environmental managers and in the academic literature, as being 'outside' nature, according to a nature/culture binary. They are regarded as a

'threat' to the environment rather than a part of it. The repeat visitors themselves sometimes gave me examples of how they perceived themselves as part of nature, such as describing themselves as 'sand people' (4). This study therefore offers a counterpoint to previous research that has positioned repeat visitors as separate from the environment, and thereby makes a contribution to the subset of environmental philosophy that questions this divide.

Nevertheless, this study supports Tonge's finding that "camping at the interface of land and sea means more to visitors than merely enjoying the physical environment and undertaking activities" (2012, 173) and provides further detail on the meanings that she outlines. However, Tonge focuses on repeat visitors camping on the 'interface' of land and sea and her research suggests that managers should be wary of relocating campsites further from the coast. My interview data suggests that this is true for some repeat visitors, as demonstrated in their propensity to book beloved sites years in advance, and their designation of nicknames such as 'millionaires row' and 'snobs row' for desirable ocean-front sites. However, this study looked at a broader range of campsites in the region including commercial caravan parks based in the towns of Exmouth and Carnarvon. Some of these caravan parks are not within walking distance of the beach, yet still foster place-attachment and rich community ties between repeat visitors, and between repeat visitors and residents. My research has demonstrated that this 'sense of community' is as much a drawcard as proximity to the ocean.

Ningaloo repeat visitors were keen to impress upon me their desire to see the area 'protected' – although this meant very different things to different visitors. Some felt the area needed to be protected *from the government* while others felt it needed protecting *from pastoralists* who may be motivated by tourism income. Many gave the impression that the area needed to be protected *from anyone who does not value it as much as we do*. Using a case study of environmental contestation focused on an area of urban bushland in NSW, Gill, Wait and Head (2009, 190) argued that:

for the interviewees the bushland is a multifaceted asset in which its social and natural values are entwined and mutually constituted. Interviewees are strongly supportive of protecting the bushland for its ecological dimensions but they do not articulate this in the concepts and language of ecological science. Rather, they articulate this in terms of their lived experiences, their emotions, their thoughts and feelings, aesthetics and the relationship of the bushland to other aspects of their lives.

While the context is different, this could also be said of the values of Ningaloo repeat visitors. Their sense that the area required some form of ecological protection was articulated through their emotions – such as a desire for their children to have similar experiences in the region - rather than through the language of ecological science or management rhetoric.

Interviewees in this study expressed strong emotions about the Ningaloo region. While scholars have long argued that people feel strongly about places and landscapes (eg. Tuan 1974), the recent ‘emotional turn’ (Anderson and Smith 2001; Davidson, Smith and Bondi 2007) has seen geographical scholars explore the link between a broader range of environments and emotions. The participants in this study expressed positive feelings such as joy, relaxation, homecoming, freedom and physical wellbeing in the region. They also expressed emotions such as anxiety about the region’s future, frustrations about bureaucratic management regimes and jealousy / protectiveness about particular camping sites. Scholars have demonstrated that the people who access “natural” areas for recreational purposes are sometimes regarded by bureaucrats or natural resource managers as an aberrant ‘disturbance’ or ‘intrusion’ (Gill et al. 2009). The interviewees in this research were aware of this discourse and felt angry that they were regarded in this way.

If we conceptualise caravan parks and campsites as ‘spaces of wellbeing’, we are perhaps better able to grasp their significance to the people who frequent them. According to the framework developed by Fleuret and Atkinson spaces of wellbeing fall into four main groups: spaces of security, therapeutic spaces, spaces of capability and integrative spaces. The latter spatial construction is described as one which facilitates “integration into a rich network of social associations, especially those that operate at the local scale” (2007, 113). The everyday rituals enacted in caravan parks and campsites, from happy hour to the veggie run, could be said to integrate repeat visitors into *a rich network of social associations at a local scale*. Health geographers have argued that such integration can have positive effects on wellbeing including health. Scholars have also argued that access to ‘blue space’ can be “affective, life-enhancing and health-enabling” (Foley et al. 2019). The interviewees in this research would certainly agree with Foley, having provided many examples of their perceived enhanced wellbeing including weight loss, relief from arthritis and psoriasis and more opportunity for exercise. So how does this shape our understanding of their management, and of environmental conflicts? Reframing the campsites as spaces of wellbeing is a powerful illumination of why some repeat visitors are so unsettled by proposed management changes that may restrict their access to the region or alter their everyday experiences in the region. Franklin and Crang have argued that tourism matters because it is enjoyable not despite it (2001). But, to take this idea further, perhaps tourism is not just enjoyable but a significant contributing factor to wellbeing, particularly to the wellbeing of those older people who comprise a substantial proportion of repeat visitors.

Repeat visitors to Ningaloo play a crucial role in generating the social capital that creates an appealing leisure destination and a space of wellbeing (Fleuret and Atkinson 2007). For example, remote beaches are rendered safer by the presence of altruistic and pragmatic campers who have extensive experience of the region. The many reported examples of assistance provided by repeat visitors to ‘newcomers’ are evidence of this. While this role has been hinted at in previous literature concerned with repeat visitors’ capacity for ‘stewardship’, these previous

studies have focused on repeat visitors' potential to care for the *environment* rather than for each other and for visitors to the area more generally. The social capital that repeat visitors generate has not been previously acknowledged. The findings of this research are therefore significant because the depth of non-residents' commitment to an area is usually overlooked in regional planning and/or community development initiatives. Repeat visitors of the type studied at Ningaloo are sometimes unfavourably characterised as resistant to change, stingy with their money, as having environmentally unsustainable habits or as being a drain on local resources such as hospitals. However, this research demonstrates that these visitors greatly value the region, play a role in the area's cultural history and even in creating a space of wellbeing.

While communities can be supportive, they can also be exclusive. Morris has said that "mateship is an everyday medium of micropolitical pressure" (1992). In the context of Ningaloo caravan parks and pastoral stations, mateship is used to include and exclude others and used to reinforce behavioural norms. This is a form of cultural capital, albeit an uneasy one. For example, a camper saying 'we're all mates up here' can be interpreted as 'we all understand the codes of conduct required here, and abide by them'. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the feeling of 'all being mates' may be achieved by avoiding topics of conversation that would signal differences – political views, social class and work, for example. Chapter Five gave examples of repeat visitors assisting each other, but also intervening when visitors broke written rules (such as illegal fishing) or unwritten rules (such as ignoring advice about how to avoid getting a vehicle bogged in sand). Managers who were perceived to be 'outsiders' were perceived to be problematic and derogatory comments were made about an English campsite manager, and a 'lady from NSW' who worked for the state government. The link between Australian xenophobia and beach cultures has been explored in relation to the race riots on Cronulla beach (Moreton-Robinson and Nicoll 2006; Johns 2008). Newcomers who are arrogant or ignore advice given to them by repeat visitors are laughed at. So, while newcomers are welcomed – this is conditional. The adherence to written and unwritten rules is

a significant element in how repeat visitors build and maintain a sense of community, albeit a community with problematic racist undertones.

How do visitation patterns change throughout a lifetime, and how do these relate to intergenerational relationships with the region?

It is apparent from the interviews with repeat visitors that generations of families have created a sense of 'heritage' for these participants through repeat visits at different stages of their lives. I argue that, for them, these trips are not simply a holiday but that they play an important role in personal identity and family life for those involved. Chapter Six drew on interview data to demonstrate how repeat visitors settle into regular visitation patterns that they continually adapt to their personal circumstances. They negotiate leisure constraints such as raising a family and the demands of work in order to maintain their connection to the region. Older repeat visitors are wedded to the idea of returning to the region for as long as they can, but this is tempered by pragmatic considerations about ageing.

Repeat visitors articulated a sense of 'bequeath value' in their hope that their children or grandchildren should be able to have similar experiences in the region. Robertson has described 'heritage from below' as being about people's "sense of inheritance from the past and the uses to which this sense of inheritance is put" (2012, 1). Robertson goes on to refer to the language and experience of a Scottish crofter to illustrate his point, and describes:

a claim to a way of life based on past practices that embody a nexus of interconnections between identity, collective memory and sense of place made meaningful by landscape. This sense of place identity does and did come from access to land and from a particular view of landscape but, crucially, it is a landscape of activity, embodying an assertion of the right to work the same land as that worked by past generations. Articulated here, then, is

a current way of life made more meaningful by a sense of inheritance from the past.

The same could be said of those Ningaloo repeat visitors whose families have visited the area for generations. Ben, who was introduced in Chapter One, is a good example of this. He describes his family as 'fourth generation' meaning that his grandfather, father, his children and himself are all repeat visitors to the Ningaloo region. Ben's current way of life and relationship with Ningaloo are made more meaningful to him by a sense of inheritance from the past. In this way, the narratives of intergenerational ties to Ningaloo could be understood as 'heritage from below'.

How do repeat visitors maintain their relationships with the region despite changes in their personal circumstances?

A key finding of the research was that many repeat visitors structure their year-round lives around their trips to Ningaloo. The interviewees provided many examples of how the trips permeate their everyday lives. When repeat visitors are not in the region, they feel a sense of anticipation and prepare for the trip in a variety of ways. Such preparations include maintaining camping equipment, making efforts to keep physically healthy and able, or adjusting their routines to account for the physical challenges that come with age even extending to timing of medical procedures so that these have the least impact on their ability to make the trip. Repeat visitors' decisions about their house, garden, pets, finances and family life are influenced by their desire to return to the Ningaloo region and they occasionally make sacrifices for this to happen. This is particularly significant for retired repeat visitors who spend longer in the region. In the 'off season', some repeat visitors communicate with other repeat visitors they have befriended in the region by sending emails or making phone calls. This maintains their connection with Ningaloo year-round. In selling their family homes to downsize or live permanently in a caravan, it could be argued that older repeat visitors have embraced mobility, living beyond the home/away binary. In this way, the trip is experienced across

space and time. These examples demonstrate how the impact of the trip extends beyond their physical presence in the region, both temporally and spatially.

This thesis is one of very few studies to explore the ways in which retired Australians negotiate leisure constraints in order to continue traveling as they get older. The concept of 'leisure constraint' is usually applied to comparatively undemanding forms of leisure, such as one's ability to play golf or walk the dog (Patterson and Chang 1999). Driving for over ten hours to a remote and isolated area and staying for an extended period in basic accommodation is a far more challenging leisure pursuit and is an unusual example within the literature. One of the few acknowledgements of the constraints that older people experience appears in Cridland's study of the travel patterns of grey nomads (2008) where he notes that for "many budget grey nomads on a pension, movement occurred in accordance with their pension allocation weeks" (2008, 315).

While there is a body of academic literature that investigates planned versus realised tourist behaviour (Stewart and Vogt 1999; March and Woodside 2005; Yiannakis and Gibson 1992) this 'travel planning' literature tends to be interested only in what visitors plan to do when on holiday and overlooks how tourists organise themselves *in order to take* a holiday. This study has shown that travel planning is a more nuanced, year-round process than the literature tends to suggest.

It is interesting that interviewees' laconic language choices consistently downplay the enormous efforts required to 'get on the road' again. Gen and Chris use the simplistic word 'trip' to describe a dramatic relocation (24) and, for others, medical procedures are downplayed as 'odd jobs' and 'tune ups'. Mick's phrase "we keep saying we're too old for the drive, but we keep *turning up*" (48) comically understates the planning involved, as if he and his wife have simply materialised in the region on a whim. There seems to be an emphasis on the 'ordinariness' of participants' lives and preparations, as if it is only natural that a pair of septuagenarians would commit to an annual expedition of thousands of kilometres.

The respondents are actively and continually normalising what is an extreme lifestyle and Chapter Nine outlined the sacrifices and complex arrangements such a journey requires.

Mobility is significant to older people, and travel and leisure experiences can act to structure, enrich and dominate older Australian's lives temporally and spatially. Gibson urges academics to find new ways to articulate the importance of leisure to older people. "Intuitively, we know that leisure is predominantly a positive experience for people" she says "but in what ways?" (2006, 399). This research has responded to Gibson's call for a deeper appreciation of the significance of leisure in older Australian's lives. In Chapter Five, interviewees explained how they felt physically healthier, more active and more social while in the Ningaloo region. They spoke about their relaxation and sense of connectedness with their surroundings and with each other. In its examination of the sacrifices, plans and decisions that people – especially older people - must make in order to remain mobile into later life, the research has responded to a literature gap. Such a detailed examination of how people accommodate their repeat visits to a remote destination is a contribution not only to academic scholarship focussed on Ningaloo, but to literature about ageing, leisure and mobility more generally.

How have repeat visitors responded to current and proposed management regimes in the region?

A key finding of the research was that repeat visitors can have strong feelings about how the region is managed. Chapter Eight outlined key types of management regimes and demonstrated how the relationships between regular visitors and those who seek to manage them are nuanced, ranging from admiration to outright hostility. This study confirms the existence of tense dynamics between powerful stakeholders in the region, notably between the pastoralists and what was then the Department of Environment and Conservation. Pastoralists felt threatened by state government processes and perceived the government as 'doing a land grab' when a plan to excise a two-kilometre coastal strip from the pastoral leases was proposed.

Local pastoralists even sought to persuade visitors and Western Australians more generally to lobby the government on their behalf. Conversely, a DEC representative gave the impression, in an interview, that the pastoralists were old-fashioned, obstructive and duplicitous. In this debate the repeat visitors were caught in the middle between the state government and pastoralists.

Management regimes that curtail perceived 'freedoms' can be unpopular with repeat visitors, and there is some indication in the literature of a correspondence between life stage and desire for freedom. In their research on grey nomads in Australia, Onyx and Leonard found that almost a third of their survey respondents mentioned 'freedom' (2005, 65). They write:

While some talked about the freedom to go at your own pace, to be independent and to make your own choices others contrasted their current freedom with the life they had left. They said that "life's too organised" "too bureaucratic" and they "do not want to be marshalled".

Onyx and Leonard found that, for many of their interviewees, "part of the motivation to retire, and especially to retire early, was the desire to escape unpalatable bureaucratic regimes in their work life" (2005, 67). It is plausible that one of the reasons that the Ningaloo region is popular with retirees – aside from the favourable winter weather – is the freedom that it has historically offered to retirees, particularly to those camping on pastoral stations where camping is less regulated.

Despite many repeat visitors' desire to be free from bureaucracy, this study supports Tonge's assertion that repeat visitors do indeed care for the environment and act in an environmentally responsible way while camping along the Ningaloo coast. Chapter 5 gave examples of how repeat visitors act to protect the natural environment. Additionally, a sense of stewardship extends beyond the natural environment: the ways in which repeat visitors respond to perceived antisocial behaviour is an important aspect of their interactions with the region's physical and

cultural environments. In Chapter Eight, interviewees gave examples of times when they had intervened after observing someone doing something wrong. These stories highlight that, while repeat visitors may be sceptical of 'top-down' management regimes, they nonetheless adhere to norms and, at times, take it upon themselves to enforce them. As Tonge suggests, those tasked with managing the Ningaloo region must "be cognizant (sic) of the potential effect of place attachment on the responses of visitors to management actions" (2012, 175). This place attachment could be accommodated or even capitalised upon, and the 'camp host' system at Cape Range National Park, explained in Chapter Three, is a current example of this. However, the present study expands on Tonge's work by arguing it is not just the *place* that repeat visitors are attached to, but each other. Therefore, managers must be aware that they are not just managing places and individuals but communities of repeat visitors.

Clashes can occur when repeat visitors 'lay' environmental understandings are challenged by the authorities, and vice versa. These contrasting understandings have been termed 'experience-based' and 'knowledge-based' (Davison and Ridder 2006) although I would suggest a more equitable pair of terms such as 'experiential knowledge' and 'formal knowledge' be used to acknowledge that these are both forms of knowledge. These differences are particularly acute when there are perceived power imbalances, such as in the example given in Chapter Eight where a 'young woman from DEC' was perceived as officious by an older, male repeat visitor. The DEC employee's 'formal knowledge' about environmental best practice conflicted with the repeat visitor's 'experiential knowledge' which had been accrued through years of visitation.

Because of their close ties to the region, repeat visitors are impacted by the region's growing popularity, the limited availability of accommodation during peak periods, limits to the maximum stay length in national parks, increased camping fees and changing rules and regulations. When they feel that their experience or 'freedom' is impinged upon, repeat visitors can be vocal in their disapproval. Tonge called for further research on whether repeat visitors 'self-displace' by moving to

stay at a different campsite (or a different region altogether) if they are unhappy with changes to management regimes (2012, 177). This study has found that indeed they do, and evidence of this was provided in Chapter Eight.

9.3 Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how this study has answered the research questions posed in Chapter One. In doing so, it argues that repeat visitors have built and maintained a sense of community through place-specific performances. Generations of families have created a sense of 'heritage' through repeat visits to the Ningaloo region, at different stages of their lives. Repeat visitors structure their year-round lives around trips to Ningaloo. This extends the impacts of their trip both temporally and spatially. Equally, repeat visitors are impacted upon by management regimes and can therefore experience uneasy relationships with those tasked with the environmental management of the region. The chapter expounds upon the implications and significance of these issues and provides insights on Australian leisure cultures and on how repeat visitors negotiate leisure constraints. Finally, it has argued that, by conceptualising these caravan parks and campsites as 'spaces of wellbeing', we are better able to grasp their significance to the people who frequent them.

10. Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

At the beginning of this thesis – and at the beginning of my own research journey – Ben explained what draws him back to the Ningaloo region. He spoke of childhood memories, family ties and the tremendous sense of happiness and relaxation that he feels whenever he returns. He takes great pleasure in taking his own children ‘up north’ to integrate them into a family tradition now spanning four generations. The themes that Ben introduced me to early on in my research process have recurred throughout the interviews and, by the time I left the field having completed over 50 interviews with over 100 people, I had come to understand that the repeat visitors lives have been profoundly shaped by their experiences in the region.

The previous chapter explored the significant themes that emerged in this research, and mapped these onto my research objectives. This chapter provides more recent information on the region that demonstrates that the management issues raised in this research are ongoing and unresolved. The chapter concludes with some directions for future research.

10.2 Current management issues in the Ningaloo region

Recent news items have demonstrated that the management issues raised in this thesis are relevant, ongoing and unresolved. Earlier in the thesis, it was explained that the Australian novelist Tim Winton had been a spokesperson for the ‘Save Ningaloo’ campaign in 2002, and had donated the literary prize money from his novel *Dirt Music* to this cause. In a case of history repeating itself, Winton won another literary prize in 2018 for his memoir *The Boy Behind the Curtain* and announced that he was donating his \$15,000 prize to help protect the Ningaloo Reef. In accepting the prize, “Winton said although Ningaloo Reef had protections

in place, the battle was far from over” (Allan-Petale, 2018). Winton’s use of the word ‘battle’ suggests the existence of ongoing tensions about how the region should best be managed.

The Ningaloo region was again in the media spotlight when new scientific research was published indicating that very little litter is present on the Ningaloo Reef (O’Connor, 2018). This media story is a cheering counterpoint to the usual grim media narrative about plastic pollution in oceans around the world. A research leader from the CSIRO, who conducted the research, said that a contributing factor to the low pollution levels was that visitors to the region are environmentally conscious. This was no surprise to me given that my research participants were proud of the region and were keen to tell me about their quotidian acts of environmental stewardship. However, it was refreshing to see visitors for once hailed as environmentally astute by a research organisation that usually positions visitors as having negative environmental impacts.

Removing the strip of coastal land from the pastoral leases had been controversial, and the subject of much media coverage including a television documentary (Landline 2009). When the leases were due for renewal in 2015, all pastoralists in the region saw their leases renewed without the coastal strip, which would be jointly managed by Department of Parks and Wildlife and traditional owners. However, there was one exception. Ningaloo station refused to cooperate with this process and did not have its lease renewed (Zaunmayr 2017). Ningaloo Station manager Phil Kendrick and the Minister for Lands took their cases for management of the coastal strip of Ningaloo Station to the Supreme Court in February 2018 (Zaunmayr 2018). At the time of writing, all parties involved are waiting for the Supreme Court decision. The uncertainty that this court case raises for the pastoral lease renewal process has slowed the development of tourism nodes on the pastoral stations, delaying the management changes that the repeat visitors fear.

This thesis has demonstrated that repeat visitors’ emotional responses to environmental conflict is a contested theoretical and critical field and it provides a

basis for further research and discussion on this issue at Ningaloo and elsewhere. It also emphasises a consistent finding in the interviews and fieldwork observations that repeat visitors' relationships with the place and with each other are a significant 'pull factor' that encourages them to keep returning to the Ningaloo region.

10.3 Significance

The main contribution of this thesis lies in its thorough examination of the quotidian and often disregarded features of camping and caravanning. In doing so, this research emphasises the crucial role that repeat visitors play in generating the social capital that can create an appealing leisure destination and a 'space of wellness'. It argues that this contribution has been overlooked in literature about the Ningaloo reef and on repeat visitation more broadly, and it cautions that repeat visitors should be valued by destination and environmental managers for this reason.

I hope that, in time, this thesis may be read by repeat visitors themselves who may be surprised that there was so much to say about leisure practices that are accepted as ordinary. Despite the temporal gap between data collection and publication, this research has the potential to contribute to ongoing planning processes within the Ningaloo region even if only to provide historical context. At a wider level, this thesis provides a cultural and historical document for Western Australian and Australian tourism studies and offers new ways of thinking about tourism in remote areas. Whilst the Ningaloo region has many features which make it unique, the insights generated in this research may be transferrable to other locations.

10.4 Further research opportunities

As a participant-observer, I have drawn on my own experiences in the analysis. As noted in Chapter Four, my role as interpreter must be emphasised. Any process of omission and inclusion may raise as many questions as it resolves. However, I trust that this thesis provides ample space for differing arguments. The research process generated such rich data that only the most significant themes could be explored, so there is scope for further research projects of this nature.

While statistics have indicated that the vast majority of grey nomads travel as heterosexual couples (Cridland 2008) and that visitors to Ningaloo tend to travel in heterosexual pairs or as family groups (Jones et al. 2009), it would be illuminating to examine the ways that more diverse groups experience the Ningaloo region, and how gender impacts upon repeat visitation. There are several directions in which this could be taken. First, this research has suggested that certain activities undertaken by repeat visitors are highly gendered, such as women-only craft clubs and the way that women often stay behind while men go fishing. This warrants further investigation. Second, do heterosexual couples perpetuate traditional gender roles in the region or does the trip facilitate departures from this, such as men's increased involvement in cooking and other domestic chores? Third, how do those travelling in same-sex relationships or platonic arrangements experience the region? There is evidence in this study that 'boys' fishing or surfing trips are a phenomenon, and this under-researched leisure phenomenon would be worth investigating further.

Another avenue for further research is older Australians' mobility. While many have written about grey nomads (Westh 2001; Onyx and Leonard 2005; Tate et al 2006; Onyx and Leonard 2007; Cridland 2008; Davies 2011; Hillman 2013; Raven 2016; Hungerford et al. 2016), few have explored this from the perspective of those who have committed to a mobile lifestyle by downsizing or selling the family home, or deciding to become permanently nomadic. As Australia's population ages, it would be useful to know more about this group, especially in terms of their health and

wellbeing. How do they negotiate the transition back to a more static lifestyle if or when their health or finances force them to do so?

Testing the extent to which these findings are generalizable to repeat visitor populations elsewhere may prove fruitful. Do other repeat visitors, such as those who spend each Christmas camping on Victoria's Great Ocean Road, experience a similar sense of community? Do they also structure their year-round lives around making such a trip in a similar manner, and do they feel equally anxious about management and demographic changes to their beloved summer destination?

While this was not intended as a longitudinal study, it would be valuable to follow-up with the research participants to see if their views and travel patterns have changed since the interviews were conducted. Have management changes caused anyone to 'self-displace' to other areas, or have any of the older interviewees been forced to abandon their travel patterns?

Another avenue of research would be to pursue the nature and levels of health and wellbeing that participants felt in the region. If caravan parks and campsites are conceived as integrative spaces that facilitate wellbeing by integrating people into rich social networks then perhaps lessons can be learned from them when it comes to creating wellbeing institutions like nursing homes, hospitals and neighbourhoods.

Lastly, as it is now a decade since I commenced the primary data for this study, it would be satisfying to return to the Ningaloo region to observe how it has changed. The modification of the pastoral leases may have caused subtle changes to tourism along the coast. And while there are presumably other changes – new businesses will have opened, some businesses will have closed – I suspect that little has changed in how repeat visitors feel about the region. It would be rewarding to test this hypothesis.

10.5 Final note

The Ningaloo region has come to mean a great deal to me. Like Ben and the many research participants who contributed to this study, I wonder and worry about its future. Undoubtedly the region will change, because that is what places do. This thesis has argued that places and emotions matter, and that our relationships are shaped by place. It has been said that “‘here’ is an intertwining of histories” (Massey 2005, 139), and I am privileged to have documented how the Ningaloo region and its repeat visitors have shaped one another.

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Appendix A - Interview Schedule 1

Interview questions for repeat visitors to Ningaloo region

Personal history of visitation

What brought you to this region the first time?

(Prompt for details such as 'what year was that?' or 'did you come with your family?' or 'where did you camp that year?')

Can you tell me about your visits to this region, in your lifetime?

(Prompt for social context, family, frequency of visits etc)

Why do you continue to come here?

Home vs. away

How do you feel when you're here?

How is your time here different to the time you spend at home?

Can you describe your routine while you're here?

Where else do you go on holiday?

Do you feel that you're 'getting away from it all' here? If so, what are you getting away from?

Can you please tell me about your relationship with the other campers here?

Interaction with town

How well do you know Exmouth/Carnarvon?

Do you feel part of the town?

Can you please tell me about your relationship with residents?

How do you think the residents view repeat-visitors?

Rights/responsibilities

Do you think camping here is an 'Australian' kind of pastime?

Do you feel you deserve your time here? Why/why not?

Do you feel that you have a right to camp here?

What are your responsibilities here? And to whom are you responsible?

The past

Please describe the changes in the region you've observed in your visits.

Do you think the changes have mainly been good, or bad?

Environment

Do you consider yourself to be environmentally aware?

Do you think most other people here are environmentally aware?

The future

When you think of the Ningaloo region's future, how do you feel?

Have you heard about any changes to the way this area is managed?

If camping here was restricted (eg. If it became far more expensive or a limit was imposed on the number of nights) how would you feel? Would anything be 'lost'?

Open ended

Is there anything you'd like to add?

Quick questions

What do you and/or your partner do for a living?

What city/town do you live in normally?

How long do you normally stay in the region?

How long are you staying in the region, this time?

Appendix B - Interview Schedule 2

Interview questions for residents of Ningaloo Region

How long have you been living here?

How well do you know Exmouth/Carnarvon?

Do you feel part of the town?

Can you please tell me about your relationship with other residents?

Can you please tell me about your relationship with repeat-visitors?

Rights/responsibilities

Do you think camping here is an 'Australian' kind of pastime?

Do you feel that visitors deserve their time here? Why/why not?

Do you feel that people have a right to camp here?

Do you feel visitors have any responsibilities to the town or the environment? If yes, what are they?

The past

Please describe the changes you've observed in the region in the time you've lived here.

Do you think the changes have mainly been good, or bad?

Environment

Do you consider yourself to be environmentally aware?

Do you think people who visit here are environmentally aware?

The future

When you think of the Ningaloo region's future, how do you feel?

Have you heard about any changes to the way this area is managed?

If camping here was restricted (eg. If it became far more expensive or a limit was imposed on the number of nights) how would you feel? Would anything be 'lost'?

Open ended

Is there anything you'd like to add?

Quick questions

What do you and/or your partner do for a living?

Do you benefit from tourism? If so, please describe.

Appendix C - Summary of Interviews

Table 11.1 Summary of interviews

Interview #	Names	Number of people	Interviewees	Repeat visitor (RV)	Interview place	Accommodation	Work status	Age bracket	Off-season residence
1	Boz & Lyn	2	Couple	Yes	Phone	PS: 14 Mile, Warroora	Post-work	45-59, 60-69	South West
2	Norm & Mary	2	Couple	RV	Phone	CP: Exmouth	Post-work	80+	Interstate
3	Brian & Marg	2	Couple	RV	Phone	PS: 14 Mile, Warroora	Post-work	60-69	Goldfields-Esperance
4	Cassie	1	Female	RV	Their house	PS: South Lefroy, Ningaloo	Working	30-44	Perth Metropolitan
5	Harry	1	Male	RV	Their house	SoC: Blowholes campsite	Post-work pension	70-79	Perth Metropolitan
6	John & Rochelle	2	Couple	RV	Phone	PS: 14 Mile, Warroora	Post-work	60-69	Interstate
7	Ben & Bronwyn	2	Couple	RV	Their house	SoC: Blowholes campsite	Working	18-29, 30-44	Perth Metropolitan
8	John & Leslie	2	Couple	RV	Site	CP: Coral Coast	Post-work	45-59, 60-69	South West

Interview #	Names	Number of people	Interviewees	Repeat visitor (RV)	Interview place	Accommodation	Work status	Age bracket	Off-season residence
9	Sally, pastoral station campsite manager	1	Female	Tourism industry	Workplace	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	30-44	N/A - Tourism industry
10	John	1	Male	RV	Eco-tent	PS: Red Bluff, Quobba	Working	45-59	Perth Metropolitan
11	Vince	1	Male	RV	Eco-tent	PS: Red Bluff, Quobba	Working	30-44	Perth Metropolitan
12	Winnie & family	3	Couple and son	RV	Shack	SoC: Blowholes campsite	Post-work	70-79, 70-79,45-59	Peel
13	Five female friends @ Gnaraloo	5	Female friends	RV	Site	PS: Gnaraloo	Retired	60-69, 60-69,60-69,45-59	South West
14	Paul	1	Male	RV	Site	PS: Gnaraloo	Working	45-59	Pilbara
15	Leilani	1	Female	Resident	Site	PS: Red Bluff, Quobba	Working / parenting	30-44	Gascoyne
16	Glen, Tim & Brendan	3	Male friends	RV	Beach	PS: Red Bluff, Quobba	Working	30-44	Perth Metropolitan
17	Len & Jane	2	Couple	RV	Site	SoC: Blowholes campsite	Post-work	45-59	Peel

Interview #	Names	Number of people	Interviewees	Repeat visitor (RV)	Interview place	Accommodation	Work status	Age bracket	Off-season residence
18	Dot	1	Female	RV	Site	SoC: Blowholes campsite	Post-work	70-79	South West
19	Bob, Judy & Gaye	3	Two couples	RV	Site	CP: Coral Bay	Working	45-59	Perth Metropolitan
20	Family group	2	Family group	RV	Site	CP: Coral Bay	Working	45-59	Perth Metropolitan
21	Polly & Richard	2	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Workplac e	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	45-59	N/A - Tourism industry
22	Janice & Ron	2	Couple	RV	Site	CP: Coral Bay	Post-work	60-69	South West
23	(Audio problems)	1	Male	RV	Site	PS: 14 Mile, Warroora	Post-work	60-69	South West
24	Chris & Gen	2	Couple	RV	Site	PS: 14 Mile, Warroora	Post-work	45-59, 60-69	Perth Metropolitan
25	Ken	1	Male	RV	Site	PS: 14 Mile, Warroora	Post-work	45-59	Perth Metropolitan
26	Gabrielle, pastoralist	1	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Their house	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	60-69	N/A - Tourism industry
27	Gill & Nick	2	Couple	RV	Site	CP: Exmouth	Post-work	60-69	Interstate
28	Gerald, caravan park manager	1	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Workplac e	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	60-69	N/A - Tourism industry

Interview #	Names	Number of people	Interviewees	Repeat visitor (RV)	Interview place	Accommodation	Work status	Age bracket	Off-season residence
29	Cleo, caravan park manager	1	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Workplace	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	30-44	N/A - Tourism industry
30	(Audio problems)	1	Male	RV	Site		Post-work	60-69	Peel
31	Frank & Glenda	2	Couple	RV	Site	CP: Coral Bay	Post-work	80+	Perth Metropolitan
32	Tuuli, hotel manager	1	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Workplace	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	30-44	N/A - Tourism industry
33	David, Jenny, Vicki & Tony	4	Two couples	RV	Site	CP: Coral Bay	Post-work	60-69, 60-69,45-59,45-59	Perth Metropolitan
34	Flora "caretaker" at Cardabia	1	Female	RV	Site	PS: 9 Mile, Cardabia	Post-work	70-79	Peel
35	Friends at Cardabia	5	Group of friends	RV	Site	PS: 9 Mile, Cardabia	Post-work	60-69	South West
36	Rex	1	Male	RV	Site	PS: 9 Mile, Cardabia	Post-work	70-79	Nomadic - lives in bus
37	Jo and Leonard	2	Couple	RV	Site	CP: Coral Bay	Post-work	60-69, 70-79	Perth Metropolitan

Interview #	Names	Number of people	Interviewees	Repeat visitor (RV)	Interview place	Accommodation	Work status	Age bracket	Off-season residence
38	Craft club at Lighthouse CP	6	Craft club - all women	RV	CP: Communal area	CP: Exmouth	Post-work	70-79	
39	Ashley	1	Female	RV	CP: Playground	CP: Exmouth	Working	30-44	South West
40	Kate & Leah	2	Female friends	RV	Site	CP: Exmouth	Working / parenting	18-29, 30-44	Peel
41	Dawn & Glenn	2	Couple	RV	Beach	Hotel: Exmouth	Working	45-59	Perth Metropolitan
42	(Audio problems)	2	Couple	RV	Site	CRNP	Work or home w kids	30-44	Perth Metropolitan
43	Brent	1	Male	RV	Site	N/A - Tourism industry	Working	45-59	Perth Metropolitan
44	Simon	1	Tourism industry	Government employee	Workplace	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	45-59	N/A - Tourism industry
45	Kevin & Sharon	2	Couple	RV	Site	CP: Exmouth	Post-work	60-69	Great Southern
46	Wayne &	2	Couple	RV	Site	CRNP	Working	45-59	South West

Interview #	Names	Number of people	Interviewees	Repeat visitor (RV)	Interview place	Accommodation	Work status	Age bracket	Off-season residence
	Judy								
47	Helene & Norm	2	Couple	RV	Site	CRNP	Post-work	70-79	Perth Metropolitan
48	Mick & Mary	2	Couple	RV	Hotel restaurant	CP: Exmouth	Post-work	70-79	Perth Metropolitan
49	(Audio problems)	2	Couple	RV	Site	CRNP		45-59	Perth Metropolitan
50	Bert, caravan park manager	1	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Workplace	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	60-69	N/A - Tourism industry
51	Women at mini-golf morning tea	4	Morning tea - all female	RV	Mini-golf café	CP: Exmouth	Post-work	70-79	South West x3, Goldfields-Esperance x1
52	Mini-golf owner	1	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Workplace	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	30-44	N/A - Tourism industry
53	Louise	1	Female	RV	CP	CP: Exmouth	Working / parenting	30-44	Perth Metropolitan
54	Cheryl	1	Female	Resident	Café	N/A - Local resident	Post-work	60-69	Gascoyne
55	Allan, Mark,	6	Group of	RV	Site	CP: Yardie Creek	Post-work	60-69	South West

Interview #	Names	Number of people	Interviewees	Repeat visitor (RV)	Interview place	Accommodation	Work status	Age bracket	Off-season residence
	Pat and friends		friends						x3, Peel x2, Interstate x1
56	Craft club @ Coral Coast CP	4	Craft club - all women	RV	CP	CP: Carnarvon	Post-work	70-79	Perth Metropolitan x3, South West x1
57	Barb, caravan park manager	1	Tourism industry	Tourism industry	Workplace	N/A - Tourism industry	Tourism industry	45-59	N/A - Tourism industry
58	Joy & Ron	2	Couple	RV	Site	CP: Carnarvon	Post-work	70-79	Peel