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The ecological evolution of public relations theories: An exploration of the Ningaloo controversy

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The ecological evolution of public relations theories: An exploration of the Ningaloo Controversy



ALLISON CAMPBELL

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

ABSTRACT

Many contemporary public relations scholars are attempting to redefine the discipline to incorporate more than the current token gesture of community beneficence into professional practice. Communication activities that perpetuate organizational privilege in Western style democracies are now considered outdated and unethical. Current theoretical research suggests that public relations suffers an image crisis from its association with liberalist ideology and is considered something of an adversary to the purpose of social movements such as environmentalism. An ever-growing endorsement of communitarian values within society signifies that public relations has the opportunity to enhance greater cohesion between diverse interests by contributing to the development of 'community'. The conceptualising of two-way symmetrical communication models is evidence of this transformation taking place within the discipline.

This thesis seeks to explore the implications of communitarianism in a theoretical context for promoting an ethical alternative to current public relations practice. Through an investigation of the Ningaloo controversy it explores how strategies of persuasion are informed from an ideological perspective.

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Allison Campbell

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"It is good to have an end to journey towards, but it is the journey that matters, in the end".

Ursula Le Guin

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CHAPTER ONE

FROM LIBERALISM TO COMMUNITARIANISM

Defending the potential ethical applications of public relations communication, contemporary scholars are making attempts to reconstruct the philosophy on which the industry is built and promote a practice that reflects greater societal expectations of moral responsibility. Liberalist ideology is credited with promoting organizational self-interest above the interests of society at large. Communitarian perspectives, in opposition, promote benefit to society over that of individual interest. The gradual shifting toward communitarian thought can be evidenced in the rise of social movements and the acceptance of the issues these movements endorse as important concerns within Western democratic society. Though public relations activities can advance the influence of social movements, they are more commonly associated with attempting to achieve organizational outcomes, typically translating to the economic bottom line.

Grunig's Theoretical Foundation

One of the most cited scholars in contemporary public relations literature is James E. Grunig (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 9; Grunig, 2001, p. 13; Grunig, J. & Grunig, L, 1992, p. 285) due to his theory of the four models of public relations, and particularly in reference to the continually evolving and thought provoking model termed 'two-way symmetrical'. According to Grunig (2001), this theoretical proposition has a number of research applications: it is descriptive of real practice, emphasizes the difference between typical public relations practice and practice from an inherently ethical perspective, and accounts for inconsistencies in practice (p. 12).

In 1985 Grunig and fellow colleagues (David Dozier, William Ehling, Larissa Grunig, Fred Repper, and Jon White) embarked on a research project, known as the 'Excellence' study, from which they concluded that effective organizations value key characteristics - understanding and trust - to develop long-term relationships with strategic publics (Grunig, 1992). Strategic publics are, from an organizational perspective, those persons or groups of persons in an organization's environment (internal and external) that are affected in some way by the activities of the organization, or whose activities in turn could affect the organization. The research also indicated that incorporation of the two-way models of communication (asymmetrical and symmetrical), as opposed to one-way models (press agency and public information), was most likely to build desirable relationships for the organization.

To briefly summarize the four models of communication, 'press agency' describes situations where practitioners seek public attention to the organization via any means, including sensationalist claims, in the pursuit of sales. The 'journalist-in-residence' is often used as another term for the 'public information' model, whereby generally accurate and favourable information is sought for the organization, invariably through mass media publicity. The emphasis is on selling the organization, rather than directly affecting sales. 'Two-way asymmetrical' refers to the adoption of 'scientific' research methods to identify common characteristics of a strategic public and hence influential factors that are likely to persuade the public to accept a sponsor's messages. 'Two-way symmetrical', the fourth model of public relations, describes the situation whereby the organization and its publics are equally likely to be persuaded by each other through communicative practices (Baskin, Aronoff & Lattimore, 1997, p. 65). As described by Grunig (2001), "practitioners use research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both their organizations and publics" (p. 11).

Whilst the two-way symmetrical model of communication provides a sophisticated approach to the study of public relations, many scholars have analyzed and critiqued the model to assess weaknesses inherent in the theory that require further evaluation and evolution. Most discussions of the public relations models in contemporary literature will propose that the models cannot be substantiated in their current format as a definitive explanation of and for public relations. As Holtzhausen (2000) states, "two-way symmetrical public relations offers an inspiring theory but little help dealing with power discrepancies in practice" (p. 98). An overarching theme pursuing values associated with communitarian philosophies can be evidenced in recent contributions to the field.

Challenging the Foundations

There are diverse issues which authors deliberate upon in critiquing Grunig's established models, the most common being that the theory represents a normative model, both impractical and idealistic. Normative theories explain how practice should be, as opposed to, or sometimes in conjunction with, positive theories that describe how practice actually is. Grunig offers a counterstatement to these criticisms that his actual conception of the two-way symmetrical model is in fact a practical combination of both two-way models, referred to as the 'mixed-motive model', similar to the 1991 proposition advanced by Murphy (cited in Grunig, 2001, p. 14).

As Heath (2001) remarks, public relations models focus primarily on the quality of the communication process. What seems to be absent from the underpinning theory is an incorporation of the quality of the actual communication, in ethical terms (which could include a determination of the quality of the communicator). Ethics, or the perceived lack thereof within the industry, has been a popular topic of debate among both adversaries and advocates. Particular attention to this dilemma has been directed at the industry from prominent persons within the environmental movement. John

Stauber and Sheldon Rampton (1995), authors of *Toxic Sludge is Good for You: Lies, Damn Lies, and the Public Relations Industry*, a best selling book for at least two years in the public relations category of Amazon.com (McKie, 2001, p. 79), write of the industry:

In the perverse world of corporate public relations, propagandizing and lobbying *against* (original emphasis) environmental protection is called "environmental" or "green" PR. "Greenwashing" is a more accurate pejorative now commonly used to describe the ways that polluters employ deceptive PR to falsely paint themselves an environmentally responsible image, while covering up their abuses of the biosphere and public health. (Stauber & Rampton, 1995, p. 125)

This harsh exposition of the industry is not unique. Other relatively recent published works which give narrative to experiences of morally-bankrupt public relations include, and are not limited to, 'Greenwash: The Reality Behind Corporate Environmentalism' (Greer & Bruno, 1996) and 'Sultans of Sleaze: Public Relations and the Media' (Nelson, 1989). Cutler (2000) writes in a book review of 'Secrets and Lies: The Anatomy of an Anti-Environmental PR Campaign' (1999) by Hagar and Burton, "it should be no surprise that in recent years some of the strongest and most focused critics of public relations have been environmentalists and ecologists" (p. 155). He cites his own thoughts on the consequential attitudes developing from "a demarcation in Western political philosophy, the practical implications of which only began emerging in the political economy and ecology of the planet in the last decades of the twentieth century" (Cutler, 2000, p. 155).

It is ironic that the very industry responsible for creating and maintaining positive images on behalf of clients attracts some of the most negative publicity. Practitioners take pride in success at managing an organization's image and yet seemingly cannot effectively manage the image of their own profession. The negative publicity given to public relations by the environmental movement can be interpreted to signify that

public relations poses one of the most challenging obstacles to the success of environmental causes. Though there are multiple leanings within the environmental movement itself (Ife, 2002; Beder, 1991), the founding ideology is that consideration of the physical environment benefits all living entities and is in the interest of the public that the environment should be given high priority. This ideology reflects a communitarian philosophy in that self-interest is given less import than communal interest.

Advocates of public relations claim that in all circumstances, the public interest should be placed at the core of all practice. Traverse-Healy (1999), a long-time practitioner writes, "The belief that whereas as professional counsellors, we had very real obligations and responsibilities towards our employers and our clients, if push ever came to shove, our duty to the public was paramount. Pro Bono Publico" (p. 16). Taking this perspective into account, the conflict between environmentalism and public relations does not seem logical.

The literature rather seems to indicate that the discipline of public relations fails to place the public interest at the heart of practice. "Scholars have noted that the field of public relations is undergoing a major paradigmatic shift ... [including] an emphasis on ensuring that the social welfare be considered in corporate practices" (Ledingham, 2001, p. 286). In the academic sphere, reasons that potentially account for this disparity extend from issues such as nondisclosure of interests and ambiguity of public relations activities (Grunig & Hunt, 1984), discrepancies in power distribution between an organization and its publics (Leitch & Neilson, 2001), corporatism, and Western managerial rationalism (Cheney & Christensen, 2001).

Alternative Worldviews

Much criticism of public relations has come from the realisation that it is an unseen force with an intent to shape society. Public relations has potentially potent power from an ability to evade recognition from the public at large that are influenced, consciously or subliminally, by its activities. An example of this evasion is the news article, by-lined by an apparently independent, third party, objective journalist, without attribution to public relations sources though almost certainly constructed with some degree of intervention (Macnamara, n.d., p. 5). Irrespective of the particular worldview or model of public relations that a practitioner or organization prescribes to, it is important to consider that public relations is primarily concerned with persuasion to achieve a satisfying outcome, mutual or otherwise.

Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive distance to facilitate attitude change in publics has been given consideration by Seitel (2001), who writes, "understanding this theory and it's potential for influencing the silent majority is extremely important for the public relations practitioner, whose objective is to win support through clear, thoughtful, and persuasive communication" (p. 55). Newson, Turk and Kruckeberg (2000) advance a view of persuasion that is intrinsically linked to power:

practitioners use power, for example, in helping promote blood donation drives, where they rely on the tactic of asking employers to get commitments from their employees. The request is for a good purpose - an honest cause, certainly - but it still involves the use of power. (p. 188)

Historically, public relations has been regarded as a powerful societal force due the fact that much practice attempts to remain invisible. A psychological understanding advances the idea that persuasion is more effective if people don't realize that they are being persuaded (McCarthy, Ferreault & Quester, 1998, p. 434). They are less likely to question communication efforts if there is no apparent self-interested sponsor behind them. As Heath (1992) notes, there is always self-interest present when a

sponsor employs public relations communications (p. 42). Grunig and Hunt (1984) report Edward Bernay's early thoughts of public relations, "the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country" (p. 40). In light of this remark, Stauber and Rampton (1995) take issue with the engineering of manipulation, as do many other public relations scholars such as those previously mentioned. Demetrious (2001) offers:

Less acknowledged is the equally powerful perception that manipulation and spin are allied to powerful elites such as large corporations, organizations and governments who have the financial budgets, organizational structures and long-term objectives to mount sophisticated communications programs. This entrenches the view of public relations as propaganda, but also taints the profession as being socially undemocratic. (p. 110)

Demetrious's comment illuminates the idea that for a properly functioning democratic society, corporations should not be the only source of power to govern society and override all other voices. Publics, in the sense of community groups, may not be completely powerless in Western democracy, but the perception that organizations pull all the strings is deeply entrenched. This misperception is prevalent in part due to the approach business interests take to achieving organizational goals, of which public relations activities are often a significant part. Yeates (2003, p. 20) writes:

public relations is predominantly associated with attempting to persuade public opinion without changing the organisation itself Public relations was initially designed as a manipulative tool but public and media hostility has influenced its methods since, and the demand for change continues.

Leitch & Neilson (2001) are critical of Grunig's focus on the four models because publics are presented exclusively from an organizational perspective. "As a result, public relations theory has been unable to come to terms with the power relationships between discourse participants or with ethical issues relating to power

differentials" (p. 128). These authors are referring to an organization-centric state (Roper, 2002, p. 7) in which publics are viewed as constructs to be conquered and coerced by the organization, and only exist if and as identified by the organization.

However, the most substantial argument of Leitch and Neilson's critique of the models of communication as advocated in the Excellence study seems to be in affirming the self-import that the organization bestows upon itself when interacting with other groups in the community. This is hardly a surprising finding given that the purpose of the Excellence study was to identify how public relations could assist *organizational effectiveness*. The research was admittedly conducted from the bias of an organizational perspective. It was designed to make conclusions that in effect would develop an appreciation of the relationship between public relations and the organization in which it is active. The motivation for the research was to incorporate values of a more ethical paradigm (Grunig, 2001, p. 29).

Although efforts to advance a worldview in which publics are more than simply a construct of an organization is admirable, the alternative views offered are not yet fully developed and therefore still lack real opportunities for the contemporary practitioner to incorporate into practice. These contributions, however, should not be casually dismissed. As a starting point for the development of a communitarian perspective, in which discrepancies of power between organizations and publics can potentially be diminished, it may be useful to consider the societal influences that perpetuate organization-centric practices and hinder the achievement of equality.

Bias of Corporatism

Further illuminating the bias of perceiving society through the organizational filter, Cheney and Christensen (2001) similarly question the subordinate status given to publics of an organization. "There is no question that public relations has been

dominated by Western technical rationalism, viewing publics chiefly as objects to be assessed and then manipulated by managers and administrators (cf Jaques, 1996)" (p. 182). Providing critique of the corporate bias of Grunig's models, they state, "we need to be aware of the potential corporatist, and therefore antidemocratic, tendencies in the communication systems that we choose to promote under the label of two-way symmetry"(p. 181). Stewart and Ward (1999) explain:

Corporatism describes the development of a pact and of formal links between government and key sectional groups. Its effect is the consolidation and not dispersal of power Its hallmark is a tripartite partnership between big business, big labour and big government to monopolise the formulation and implementation of policy. (p. 194)

The authors (Cheney & Christensen) plead for a better system, not only of public relations but also of communication, which they believe should not be located solely within the domain of the organization. The incentive for this they allude to as being the pursuit of democracy. Some scholars, it is interesting to note, champion public relations as being intrinsically democratic by its nature (Heath, 1992). Others, such as Stauber and Rampton (1995), challenge this idea with their account of situations in which public relations has been preoccupied with undermining and stifling debate in the public sphere of very real and pertinent issues.

Scholarship exploring the connection between public relations and democratic principles can be found in the 1988 text *'Public relations and community'* by Kruckeberg and Starck. Providing rationale for an argument that places community at the core of practice, rather than at the periphery of an organization's concerns, these authors crystallize their ideas in the introductory pages:

Our theory is that public relations is better defined and practiced as the active attempt to restore and maintain a sense of community. Only with this goal as a primary objective can public relations become a full partner in the information and communication milieu that forms the lifeblood of U.S. society and, to a growing extent, the world public relations practitioners do not

understand their most important role in society ... [is] to serve not only their clients but society at large Those responsible for public relations should approach communication as a complex, multiflow process having the potential to help create a sense of community. (p. xi-xiii)

Thirteen years later, Starck and Kruckeberg (2001) continue to explore the notion of democracy and how organizational interests are at present, through public relations communication, the main public agenda. The following quote in light of the arguments above raises an important consideration, that Western democratic society itself perpetuates dominance of corporate interests:

Although democracy has proven to be ideologically victorious, ironically, democracy will become increasingly threatened by one outcome of its cold war victory - increased power and influence of global transnational corporations that can challenge the power of nation-states including those that are democratically governed. Such corporations also become the primary beneficiaries of communication/transportation technology. (Starck & Kruckeberg, 2001, p. 53)

Furthering development of a non-corporate biased alternative, Dozier and Lauzen (2000) seek to encourage scholarship that perceives public relations as an interdependent variable with a host of other factors, influences, and phenomena within the broader context of society. Focusing on activist publics, they advocate multiple intellectual reconstructions of relationships from a non-organization perspective:

Instead of investigating the activist from the corporate perspective in the traditional manner, the critical public relations scholar looks at the corporate-activist relationship from behind the activist, seeing the corporation from the activist perspective and interpreting behavior in that framework. (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000, p. 19)

Support for a Community Perspective

Critiquing the predominant liberalist philosophical approach inherent in much public relations practice, R. Leeper (2001) calls for the reinstatement of community values, guided by a communitarian worldview. He states:

In Western society there are two basic metatheoretical approaches that have been competing for dominance: liberalism and communitarianism The history of communitarian thought goes back at least as far as Aristotle and Cicero (Avineri & de-Shalit, 1992) The context for the renewed interest in communitarianism is one of a loss of trust in society and a concomitant loss of a sense of community. (p. 94)

According to R. Leeper, public relations is currently situated within liberalistic thinking, valuing individualism and enterprise over principles associated with community, such as harmony, cohesion and interactivity (p. 100). The proposition is made that liberalism is represented in the two-way asymmetrical model and communitarianism in the two-way symmetrical model. It also raises the question of whether, if this is a true interpretation, liberalism and communitarianism can co-exist at the same time, or even interchange regularly. This follows Grunig's assertion that the interpretation of the two-way model is based more accurately on the theory of the mixed-motive model, combining both two-way models.

Despite this potential conflict, the essence of R. Leeper's argument is that the theory of the two-way symmetrical model benefits in moral status due to proposing a practice incorporating inherently communitarian values. As Leitch and Neilson (2001) have done, R. Leeper also assesses the evaluation of the concept of publics in public relations practice. He draws on Hallahan's (1996) research to describe the communitarian view that the idea of public is "too narrow in that much public relations is practiced without publics being aware of it, that publics are not the only organizations involved with issues, that public relations can begin only after there has been public formation and recognition" (p. 101).

To give his argument more fervour, R. Leeper draws out dualisms between liberalism and communitarianism, and constructs a rationale echoing of the sentiments of environmental advocacy:

There is evidence that we are living off an accumulated stock of public goods, such as trust, and have not found a way in which to replenish the supply of such goods (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1995) ... The dialogue process [communitarianism], as opposed to pointing to a rule [liberalism], provides a training mechanism for the development of moral sense. The notion of a public sphere as a basis for ethical decision making, as opposed to the solitary calculation or principle derivation of utilitarianism... also allows for a recognition of responsibility as a focal point in ethical decision making. (p. 103)

Organizations ascribing to practices based on communitarian ideology acknowledge the implications of their organization's existence and operations as one part of a larger system of complex relationships. The communitarian-based organization assumes and maintains responsibility for its actions within the community. K. Leeper (1996) emphasises that "acceptance of responsibility is the focus of the communitarian approach" (p. 175).

In discussion of approaches to crisis management, Roper (2002) supports the incorporation of communitarian values into practice when an organization is at the centre of public controversy. The idea is that communitarian values are epitomized when an organization demonstrates concern for the welfare of human-based society (community) before its own welfare. It is also noted by Roper (2002), however, that by clearly expressing concern for the community, the organization benefits in image and reputation (p. 38). Endorsing communitarian values in such a way suggests that this mutually beneficial action may not necessarily be inspired by a genuine overriding concern for the community, but rather is perceived as essential to the continuation of the organization.

This perspective again places the organization at the centre of concerns, not necessarily through actions but through reason for actions. Practises may not be as noticeably organization-centric, but the onus on developing sustainable relationships with the community is still not equally shared. The prime incentive to develop such relationships resembles an instinct for survival. “Essentially,” Roper (2002) offers, “what is required is a balance between an organization-centric approach and a society-centric approach” (p 37). Roper’s research suggests that, like the conclusions drawn above of R. Leeper’s argument, the mixed-motive model (depicting concurrence of both two-way models) is closest to a positive theory of public relations.

Concluding Analysis of Literature

Though not always explicitly stated in the arguments reviewed above, the common theme identifiable in these writings is movement toward a communitarian perspective. Public relations is critiqued as operating from a foundation of liberalist philosophy. There is clear expression of dissatisfaction with public relations scholarship and practice that emphasises organizational privilege to the disadvantage of publics, disrupting community cohesion, and affecting the discourse of society so as to subjugate non-corporate interests.

Contemporary public relations scholars (Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Cheney & Christensen, 2001; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988; Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; R. Leeper, 2001) are seeking alternative, non-organization-centric perspectives which may offer an ethically orientated approach based on advancing equality in all relationships. The arguments discussed here would suggest that it is now time for public relations scholarship to move beyond justifying practice of two-way asymmetric or mixed-motive models, which principally benefit the organization, and promote practice from a more community-oriented perspective. Communitarian philosophy is offered as the theoretical base on which to reconstruct public relations as a democratically

supportive communication paradigm. The following chapter will detail the research methodology used in this study to explore the issues raised within this review of contemporary literature.

CHAPTER TWO

AN EXPLORATORY APPROACH

Aim of Research

In recent years, grassroots activist campaigns such as the old-growth forest logging debate and the challenge to planned commercial development at Leighton Beach have been highly successful in shaping Western Australian public policy. The aim of this research is to:

- a) Explore the relationship between public relations and the ascribed ideology of the environmental movement; and
- b) Offer possible reasons as to why ecological rhetoric may be enjoying greater influence on the public agenda.

The proposed research is based on a comprehensive understanding of contemporary public relations as a scholarly discipline in pursuit of a truly ethical practice. Accordingly, these research aims will be discussed from this founding perspective.

Dozier and Lauzen (2000) offer of public relations based research:

As an *intellectual domain* [original emphasis], public relations is the study of action, communication, and relationships between organizations and publics, as well as the study of the intended and unintended consequences of those relationships for individuals and society as a whole. (p. 4)

Research Design

Qualitative research provides a vehicle by which an investigator can conduct in-depth study of a particular phenomenon in a specific context. Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate qualitative data as being “fundamentally well suited for locating the *meanings* [original emphasis] people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives... and for connecting these meanings to the *social world* [original

emphasis] around them” (p. 10). These authors also endorse the use of qualitative data to describe complex situations, explaining that “such data provide ‘thick descriptions’ that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader” (p. 10). Marshall and Rossman (1999) propose that investigations of a qualitative nature potentially contribute to “scholarship, policy, practice, or a better understanding of recurring social issues” (p. 38).

A case study approach is well suited to the proposed research aims, given that in-depth, descriptive and particularistic knowledge is sought. As a qualitative research design, case studies are both familiar to public relations practitioners (Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988, p. 85) and appropriate for explicating research relating to the social sciences. A case study allows numerous aspects of a subject to be investigated in comparison to “survey research, which examines fewer characteristics of many subjects. The strength of a case method is the opportunity to study a subject uninhibitedly and in depth” (Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988, p. 85).

Ningaloo: A Vignette

Explicating the Ningaloo controversy as a case for research has potential to contribute to all applications of investigation addressed by Marshall and Rossman (1999) in the citation above. It represents a social issue of escalating significance - the impact of communities attempting to interpret ecological principles such as sustainability. The Ningaloo controversy can be readily perceived as a vignette of an issue occurring as a worldwide phenomenon.

In this instance, the case study of Ningaloo is located within a specific geographic context. However it is part of an expansive social movement that encourages communities to develop greater consciousness about, and respect for, the physical environment. This suggests that findings of the study may be applicable to similar

occurrences in alternate regional settings. Furthermore, from a historical context, the Ningaloo debate is one part of a *sequence of events*. Its study suggests that it could contribute significantly to understanding the implications of the increasing trend of environmental concern identified in the preceding sections.

Modus Operandi

Collection of both primary and secondary data is valuable in the methodology of a case study approach. Primary data refers to information explicitly collected by the investigator for the purpose of the research at hand (Cooper and Schindler, 1998, p.256). It is previously undocumented data that must be uncovered from a specific source of information considered as integral to the study outcome.

In contrast, secondary data is evidential information that has been presented for purposes of a prior research study. Cooper and Schindler (1998) explain that “data from secondary sources help you decide what further research needs to be done and can be a rich source of hypotheses” (p. 257). The literature reviewed in the previous chapter is an example of how secondary data has contributed to forming this study design. It is a critical, interpretive analysis of the research findings from a number of theoretical scholarly studies.

Both of these sources of data (primary and secondary) are discussed herewith in direct relation to their applicability in this study.

Primary Data Application

The Ningaloo debate, as the next chapter details, has become a controversy due to conflicting interpretations of sustainability and the differing philosophies of the opposing groups that compose the debate. In-depth personal interviews have been used as an appropriate method in obtaining the data necessary for the aims of this

study. As the controversy has been well documented in the media, the identification of potential participants was based on the insight that could be provided by each participant within their specific context. The key informants chosen as participants for the purpose of this study have enthusiasm for the topic and an ability to provide rich, in-depth information. This kind of purposeful sampling, according to Merriam (1998), is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61).

As mentioned, a variety of perspectives were sought from persons actively contributing in unique ways with the issue under study. Marshall and Rossman (1999) identify these individuals as “elite” persons, able to “contribute insight and meaning to the interview process because they are intelligent and quick-thinking people, at home in the realm of ideas, policies, and generalizations” (p. 114). The participant sample represents knowledgeable persons both at the heart of the controversy (Alan Smith, Anneke de Graaf and Paul Gamblin) and some more distanced from the core of the debate (Giz Watson, Stuart Field and Tom Martin). This selection follows the sampling advice of Miles and Huberman (1994): “go to the meatiest, most study-relevant sources. But it is also important to work a bit at the peripheries – to talk to people who are not central to the phenomenon but are neighbors (sic) to it” (p. 34).

Discussions with participants that represent a variety of roles in the debate assists in developing a more complete investigation which leads to greater probability of enhancing understanding of the issues of concern. However it is also noted by a number of authors (Burgess, 1984; Cooper & Schindler, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994) that in-depth interviewing extracts a substantial

amount of data that can be time-consuming to interpret and potentially interfere with the validity of research findings if not analysed conscientiously.

The Interview Sample

The following list details the key informants who participated in this study:

Participant:	Representative of:	Perspective on resort proposal:	Interviewed:
Alan Smith	Coral Coast Marina Development (CCMD)	<i>Proponent of the resort proposal</i>	21/05/03
Giz Watson	Greens MLC	<i>Oppose the resort proposal</i>	04/06/03
Stuart Field	Conservation and Land Management (CALM)	<i>Neutral in terms of resort proposal</i>	12/06/03
Paul Gamblin	Save Ningaloo	<i>Oppose the resort proposal</i>	13/06/03
Anneke de Graaf	The Wilderness Society (TWS)	<i>Oppose the resort proposal</i>	13/06/03
Tom Martin	Strategic Communications Manager, Department of the Premier and Cabinet	<i>Neutral in terms of resort proposal</i>	15/08/03

In addition to the key informants listed above, three well-known media personalities were approached with requests for interviews: Tony Barrass – journalist, *The West Australian*, Liam Bartlett – talkback host, *Radio 720 ABC*, and columnist, *The Sunday Times*, and Sussanah Carr – newsreader, *Channel 7*. The participation of these persons as representatives of the local media was sought to provide a subjective view on the role of the media in complex debates such as the study in question. These potential key informants each related unavailability as reasons for non-participation.

There have also been prominent people opposing the resort development that could offer insight to the motivation that celebrities experience to participate in public

debates. Renowned Western Australian prize-winning author, Tim Winton, lent himself to the Save Ningaloo campaign as an inducement to achieve media coverage of the issue. Personal communication with him was difficult to achieve as he wishes to remain as reclusive as possible, and is not readily contactable.

Numerous attempts to contact Geoff Monck, local Coral Bay resident identified on Department of Planning and Infrastructure notices, were made during a three day field trip to the Ningaloo region. Direct contact with Monck could not be made within the time spent in the area. The main purpose for interviewing Monck was to ascertain local opinion of the proposed development at Maud's Landing. As it became increasingly obvious that Monck would not be available for an interview, several informal conversations with local community members working in the area gave insight to the opinions circulating about the issue, of both local residents and visitors to the region. The field trip was undertaken primarily for visual observation, enabling greater understanding and experience of the physical context of the Ningaloo Reef, from which the debate essentially arises.

Interview Protocol

A personal interview of between 30 and 60 minutes was asked of each participant to discuss the issue in a relatively informal, semi-structured style, which Kahn and Cannell (1957) describe as "a conversation with a purpose" (cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 108). Burgess (1984) similarly refers to this style of qualitative research interchangeably as "a conversation with a purpose" or "interviews as conversations".

All interviews conducted were audio-recorded with the permission of the interviewee. A semi-structured interview guide was followed with similar thematic questions asked of each participant, yet appropriately developed to suit the context of each individual.

The questions asked of participants included topics involving their perception of the events that have unfolded; their communication strategies; what they believe the outcome of the debate would be (for all interviews conducted prior to the Premier's rejection of the proposal); and issues relating to community involvement, for example.

The semi-formal style of "interviews as conversations" (Burgess, 1984) allowed for points of interest from the perspective of the interviewee to be elaborated upon during the course of the interview. Burgess (1984) explains that semi-structured interviewing "employs a set of themes and topics to form questions in the course of conversation" (p. 102). Topics are explored that the interviewee feels are particularly relevant to discuss, adjacent to the topics and themes identified by the researcher, which serves to balance the direction of conversation between the participant and interviewer.

Confidentiality of each interview has been respected by personally transcribing the audio-recorded interviews. This process has also enabled clarification and thorough understanding of the content discussed in conversation with each participant. The replaying of recorded material goes further to ensuring that the essence of each point raised is not stripped of the proper context in which it was stated.

All participants in the study have been provided with a duplicate of their interview transcript, in addition to a copy of their signed consent to participate in the study. This consent form includes up-to-date contact information for the researcher and for two senior academic personnel at the School of Communications and Multimedia, Edith Cowan University.

Secondary Data Applications

There are a number of resources of secondary data that this study will analyse in “triangulation” (Burgess, 1984; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) with the primary data collected. Marshall and Rossman (1999) propose that triangulation is an important element of qualitative research; “history and context surrounding a specific setting come, in part, from reviewing documents” (p. 116). These authors detail that one of the benefits of incorporating secondary sources of research is that it is an unobtrusive method that does not require the active participation of any other person (p. 128). They substantiate; “unobtrusive measures are particularly useful for triangulation. As a supplement to interviews, nonreactive research provides another perspective on the phenomenon, elaborating its complexity” (p. 129). Burgess (1984) argues that triangulation of material is used by many researchers to overcome problems associated with “studies relying upon a single theory, single method, single set of data and single investigator” (p. 144).

Noting the importance of triangulation to the outcome of research, artefacts such as the following have been incorporated as secondary data relevant to the study purpose:

- Media articles
- Electronic information (website content, online articles, online radio broadcast transcripts, mailing lists)
- Campaign publicity material
- Government reports
- Academic reports

Limitations

As noted in the sections above, there are limitations to the application of a case study approach. For one, not all persons identified in the sampling procedure have been able

to participate in the study. Incorporation of secondary data sources overcomes this limitation to a certain extent. For instance, Winton has written an article that has been published in both *The Bulletin* and *Habitat* periodicals. This article details his perspective on being involved with the campaign in the role of celebrity personality. Artefacts have also been gathered and given consideration on commentary written by Barass (*The West Australian*) and Bartlett (*Radio 720 ABC* and *The Sunday Times*).

One inescapable criticism of qualitative research approaches is the aspect of personal bias on behalf of the researcher. This applies to both analysis of artefacts and to data gathered personally. Marshall and Rossman (1999) point out that “a potential weakness ... is the span of inferential reasoning. That is, the analysis of the content of written materials or film, for example, entails interpretation by the researcher, just as in the analysis of interactively gathered data” (p. 117).

Compensating for this problem proves a greater challenge. Subjectivity cannot be completely eliminated from any study, regardless of how objective the aim of the research might be. The reader is asked to keep in mind that this study has been informed from a substantial accumulation of data, both primary and secondary, and that diligence has been used in attempting to understand and interpret correctly the meanings inherent in the sources of research during the process of data analysis. Content has necessarily been eliminated from the findings represented in this study due to the restrictions relating to the scope of enquiry. The topics discussed in the following chapters are points that the investigator has deemed most appropriate to fulfilling the aim of the study. The next chapter will give a brief overview of the issues involved in the Ningaloo controversy.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NINGALOO CONTROVERSY

A Preliminary Investigation of the Issue

You're driving through Perth's affluent western suburbs. Any time in the past two years. In front is a vehicle sporting a 'Save Ningaloo Reef' sticker. It's a late-model Volvo driven by a company director's wife, taking the kids to college. Or maybe it's a Datsun 180B complete with rust holes and belching plenty of smoke, ferrying a collective of alternative lifestylers back to the safety of Fremantle. (Murray, 2003)

The Save Ningaloo campaign, as the above quote indicates, has one of the widest ranging support bases of any environmental campaign in the history of Western Australia, a typically indifferent society (A. de Graaf, personal communication, June 13, 2003) when it comes to actively supporting community issues. Stuart Field, Ningaloo Marine Planning Officer, Conservation and Land Management (CALM) deliberates on the phenomenon:

It is interesting because it's very rare that the community would jump on something as they have done on this. Generally I think that most of our society is fairly apathetic, and it's one of our problems trying to generate some community enthusiasm for the review of the marine park, for any marine park in general. (personal communication, June 12, 2003)

The old-growth forests logging debate, at full intensity prior to the last state election in 2001, and the campaign to stop development at Leighton Beach are recent exceptions to the customary inertia of many Western Australians. These types of activist-inspired campaigns have demonstrated that people from all sectors of society can be mobilised in support of what is typically considered a passionate cause. Environmentalism is no longer a concern belonging only to devoted conservationists - it has entered the mainstream consciousness.

The Ningaloo controversy differs considerably, however, from the forests debate and the Leighton Beach campaign in the complexity of issues of concern. As a public issue, Ningaloo came to fruition in 2000 with the creation of Save Ningaloo, a small community group existing on volunteered time and resources. Save Ningaloo is an affiliation of the local chapters of established environmental groups. It receives assistance from The Wilderness Society, Australian Marine Conservation Society, the Conservation Council, World Wildlife Fund, and Australian Wildlife Conservancy. This community group formed to oppose a \$180 million, 250-hectare development comprising an inland marina, resort, and 200 residential lots (Bolt, 2003). The development proposal has been planned for Maud's Landing, a site approximately 2-3 kilometres north of Coral Bay, a coastal town in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia, and adjacent to the world-renowned Ningaloo Reef. Save Ningaloo contest the proposed development on the grounds that it is too large for the area and poses too many environmental risks to the fragile reef and marine ecosystem.

The proponents, Coral Coast Marina Development (CCMD), have had their proposal officially rejected by the state Premier, Geoff Gallop, on July 4 2003. This is the second time in 16 years that the development organization has put forth a proposal to Government for approval. They have reportedly spent in excess of \$7 million during this period of time and been through two Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) approval processes, altering the design of the first proposal on the advice of successive governments and in lieu of concerns raised by the EPA.

As an adjunct to their belief that the current proposal adheres to triple bottom line sustainability, CCMD maintain that the government of the day (1987) encouraged the organization's proprietor to develop and submit a plan. CCMD Executive Director Alan Smith explains, "We were asked to do this by the government in the first place,

to solve the [infrastructure] problems of Coral Bay” (personal communication, May 21, 2003).

The arguments of the proponent appear to have had little weight with the Premier. The Sunday Times reports that when publicly announcing rejection of the proposal, the Premier stood on the shores of Maud’s Landing and in front of a congregation of press and local residents avowed:

Today, we have drawn a line in the sand and declared that we will not accept development that threatens this precious and fragile coast. There were far too many risks involved in accepting this development. If we were to lose the integrity of this area I think that would be a dereliction of duty for any government. (Day, 2003)

The primary conflict between the two groups is readily apparent: Save Ningaloo state that the resort development and inland marina will be detrimental to the surrounding reef and ecosystem, whilst CCMD counter-state that the proposal meets triple bottom line accountability (economic, social and environmental) for the region.

A subsequent issue emerges from the debate - the question of state identity. Western Australia is widely known for its vast landscapes and natural, unspoilt beauty and Western Australians have a reputation as sand-loving beach-goers attached to their coastline. For many opposing the resort development the primary concern may not be conservation for the reef environment and inhabitants, but rather a dislike for radically altering the appearance and sensation of the region. Giz Watson, Greens MLC, emphasizes the issue of state identity:

Even if people argue consistently to me that it was environmentally [sound] ... they still don’t want Western Australia to look like the Gold Coast West Australians enjoy their coastline in it’s natural state and the remoteness of Cape Range and the appearance of that coast line is really important and I think it’s ... sparked a bit of state identity We want something that is

uniquely West Australian and the experience is about Western Australia.
(personal communication, June 4, 2003)

These two issues of environmental conservation and care for the appearance of the coastline exist concurrently, however the media tend to focus on the environmental aspects of the debate and the political machinations involved.

Ningaloo: A Political Controversy

The issue becomes increasingly complex with the involvement of politics: Ningaloo has been a hot topic of debate within the walls of parliament and amongst particular members of the 'fourth estate', the media. CCMD's claim of Government favour for their proposal and the fact that a prior proposal had been presented and rejected is just one aspect that complicates the issue and detracts from the conflicting ideological debate.

Opposing the first proposal was Environmental Minister the Honorable Dr Judy Edwards, whose party was not in government at the time. The decision over a resort proposal such as this would normally come under the portfolio of the Minister for the Environment, however due to voicing opposition on the first proposal, Edwards came under enormous pressure from other politicians to hand the decision over to parliament. Paul Gamblin, Save Ningaloo spokesperson, comments on the manoeuvre:

The developer's supporters raised concerns about her position because she put in an appeal to the previous version of this Her arguments helped to knock this thing back beforehand ...there was no technical reason why she had to do it. It was their choice, but she stepped aside and the Premier's in there now It has implications, serious implications I think for other Ministers on other issues about what they do before they become a Minister ... [it] really has implications for the way our system works. (personal communication, June 13, 2003)

Another contentious political issue the media has deliberated on is the assumption that the Premier rejected the proposal on the grounds that the Labor party would lose the preferences of the Greens party at the next election, and could not afford to do so to maintain government. It is a widely held perception that the Labor government came into power at the last election because of their promises to end old-growth logging, from which policy promise they obtained the support of the Greens party by way of directing preferences to the then opposition party. Also influential in the last election was the campaign undertaken by The Wilderness Society, whose volunteers were active in informing people how to vote to save the forests (A. de Graaf, personal communication, June 13, 2003; G. Watson, personal communication, June 4, 2003; Murray, 2003). Alan Smith speculates, "this sort of nonsense has stirred up the government, and the decision may not be made on the merits of the project, it may be a political decision to win favours from the Greens and to win their preferences" (personal communication, May 21, 2003). The Carnarvon Community News claims that Greens MLCs threatened to:

Direct preferences away from Labor at the next election if the government granted the go-ahead for Maud's Landing This is not an idle threat since the Greens were polling over 10% at the end of last year and there is a possibility that such action could damage Labor's re-election chances. (Walsh, 2003)

As should be apparent by now, this issue has a long history, which mostly stems from inadequate processes of planning and approval procedures of developments in environmentally sensitive areas. Throughout the Gallop Labor party's reign of government, the Premier has adamantly stated that due process would be followed in considering the proposal. Because the Premier announced the rejection of the proposal a few days after the Appeals Convenor submitted a report to government detailing the concerns of the community, it has been alleged that the Premier decided against the proposal a significant time prior to publicly announcing it would not be accepted.

This issue, in addition to the other mentioned above, has received considerable media coverage. In addition, the publicity event created by the Premier (flying up to Coral Bay to announce the rejection of the proposal) has attracted criticism based on the use of public funds.

The Government's expenditure on an advertising campaign has also been the source of much criticism. As part of a community oriented public relations strategy, the Government developed an options paper, *Future Directions: Sustainable Tourism and Land Use Scenarios for the Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast*. This booklet detailed several alternative scenarios developed by government to address the problems of the Gascoyne coastal region. This provided a readily accessible forum allowing people to contribute to the planning process by providing their opinions to the alternatives suggested. \$350, 000 (Gregory, 2003) was spent on television commercials and print advertisements encouraging interested people to call a 1800 number to have the options paper sent out to them. Tom Martin, Strategic Communications Manager for the Department of Premier and Cabinet, reflects on the criticism:

People just love the ad, the only people who don't love the ad of course are the opposition and they have all sorts of complaints about the use of government money on a campaign. And as the visitation to the website would indicate, it is an issue of huge, state-wide importance. You've only got to look at the number of cars driving around with bumper stickers; it is a very polarising issue. (personal communication, August 13, 2003)

The Ningaloo controversy is not simply about an environmental activist organization opposing a development. It is a complex debate that has brought to light a number of issues regarding state identity, community involvement, and political procedures and innuendo.

An in-depth study could be made focusing on any number of concerns arising from this controversy: the substantial attention given to the issue by the media, including content of published articles; the use of celebrity endorsement for the Save Ningaloo campaign; allegations of Save Ningaloo supporters lobbying for a development plan of their own; problems associated with government approval and planning processes; or any of the political matters described briefly within this chapter. A comprehensive analysis of these matters, however, is not within the scope of this study. The next chapter will detail the public relations activities employed by stakeholders in the Ningaloo debate.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BATTLEGROUND: CAMPAIGNS OF PERSUASION

Evident in tracking the issue is the adoption of different communication strategies undertaken by each respective party. CCMD relied on extensive lobbying as a direct route for communication activities to win the favour of the current Labor government. Save Ningaloo took a multidimensional approach, focusing their campaign not only on lobbying politicians, but also on eliciting the support of the West Australian community. This serves as an indirect strategy to pressure the government to reject the proposal.

Four aspects of communication strategies have emerged from fieldwork as significant for study regarding the Ningaloo debate: relations with government, the community, and media institutions, and the use of celebrities in campaign endorsement.

Government Relations

The final decision to accept or reject the development proposal was with the government. Therefore the object of each opposing side in the debate was to persuade these prime stakeholders - Western Australia's elected representatives - of the merits or threats of the planned development.

Corporate organizations typically justify their government lobbying efforts and political affiliations as strategic means to control stricter regulation that may impinge on their operations (Tymson & Sherman, 1996, p. 101). Lobbying of government is clearly a beneficial strategic manoeuvre enjoyed primarily by the business community. Stewart and Ward (1999, p. 188) stipulate that the relationship between business and government is often brought about by organizations with pockets deep enough to

appoint professionals to bend the ear of government. It is widely assumed that access to government is not readily granted without adequate funding and appropriate contacts. This presumption is encapsulated within the Ningaloo case study. Alan Smith, Executive Director, CCMD, explains the decision to switch from contracting Adlink for communication specialties to hiring professional lobbyists Halden and Burns:

We changed to them because we realised we really had to get to the decision makers - politicians, the press - and lay the truth on the table. Now, Halden is an ex Labor MLC and Burns was the ex chief political writer for 'The West Australian'. I think that has worked extremely well for us At the end of the day it is the only way we've been able to get access with politicians. (personal communication, May 21, 2003)

This statement highlights the reverence that is attached to professional lobbyists – that they are powerful because of their experience and connections, regarded as movers and shakers in the political realm. Lobbyists then, are ideal machinery to have on side. Operating as such, behind closed doors, these hired persuaders are an unseen mechanism that impacts upon society through influencing policy outcomes (Stewart & Ward, 1999, p. 191). Paul Gamblin, Save Ningaloo spokesperson, shows preference for avoiding the term 'lobbying' to be applied to the campaign's own government relations' strategies. He explains this preference for an alternative:

In terms of lobbying, I'm not even sure that's an accurate term to use Lobbyists are ex-politicians and some journalists too. And ex-politicians have almost open access to parliament Advocacy is probably a more accurate term. We don't have the access that the people on the other side have You've got people who are ex-politicians and have the networks and have the physical access to walk into parliament to have coffees. We don't have that, so we have to rely on [grass-roots lobbying] ... to get those doors opened. To get noticed, and we are noticed now. (personal communication, June 13, 2003)

Gamblin's comment points out that there are factors other than direct lobbying, which can offer opportunity to voice the arguments of concerned interest groups and gain the attention of elected representatives. Government consideration of pertinent matters is achieved not only by the push tactics of direct lobbying, but also by the pull tactics of demonstrating substantive community involvement. A call to action on the Save Ningaloo website reads:

Right now the single most effective thing we can do to save Ningaloo is to let politicians know what we think! If the Gallop Government sees that there is overwhelming community support for the protection of Ningaloo, there is every chance we can stop the resort and build a sustainable future for the Ningaloo region. (The Save Ningaloo Action Guide, 2002)

The Wilderness Society's Ningaloo Community Campaigner, Anneke de Graaf, also exemplifies the power of working at the grass roots level to achieve recognition from government of wider community dissent:

Hand-written letters, bumper stickers ... emails ... may not sound very powerful but it is really powerful When you can show that you can mobilise 15, 000 people about an issue that the government has promised to protect it does scare them. It really does whip them into line. (personal communication, June 13, 2003)

Democratically elected governments have the intricate task of attempting to represent the dominating common ideology of its constituents. Community groups that are borne of social movements desiring outcomes contra to the status quo, or wishing to challenge the business-as-usual approach to policy formulation, prove to be especially challenging to elected governments if a significant number of citizens identify with the ideology espoused by these activist publics. (Stewart & Ward, 1999, p. 182-3)

Community Relations

As stated above, the importance placed on developing relationships with the community varied considerably by the opposing entities involved in the debate. Save

Ningaloo exerted considerable effort into both building community relations and continually encouraging citizens to participate in some way. Participation could be something as simple as displaying a bumper sticker, emailing the Premier, submitting an appeal, or volunteering time to hand out fliers or paint a banner. The organization, arising in opposition to a potentially detrimental project to the ecological, social, and cultural values of the area, may not represent the voice of every Western Australian. They do however espouse a common concern of many. Reinforcing the association of Save Ningaloo within a community context, Gamblin remarks:

One of the things that is not often understood, I think, is that the community should never have to stand up and do this you kind of get used to doing it because you do it a lot, because we have to do it. We should be doing other things. We should be rehabilitating the environment. Not having to fight inappropriate developments that are created by inappropriate processes. Or no processes whatsoever. (personal communication, June 13, 2003)

The 'ought' sentiment in this statement, how things *should* be, confers ideals of a communitarian-based society. Gamblin's statement expresses dissatisfaction with the values inherent in the corporate focus of government. Western democracies are typically representative of individualistic, competitive marketplaces (Newman, n.d., p. 5). The focus is liberalistic philosophy, an emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities over community rights and responsibilities (Bell, 2001).

Exploring the government's role in the debate, deGraff offers: "I think we're doing a lot of the work for the government here, a lot of the researching, a lot of the reports and everything, and we're not funded by the government to do this" (personal communication, June 13, 2003). The belief that the government should be taking greater responsibility in community affairs is prominent.

Activist organizations typically presume an inferior status in public debates due to lack of financial resources. In spite of this challenge, Dozier and Lauzen (2000), drawing on Olsen's (1971) research, point out that what activist organizations typically lack in the way of financial resources is made up for in motivation and fervour (p. 10). They have commitment to a cause that extends beyond financial reward. This commitment fosters the incentive to work at the grass roots level. Interacting with the community at a personal level allows a campaigner to grasp more accurately the tide of public opinion, acting in what contemporary public relations scholars refer to as a 'boundary spanning' role (Grunig, L, Grunig, J, & Ehling, 1992, p. 67). Communication occurs in a personal forum. Feedback is direct. Personal interaction demonstrates genuine loyalty, nurturing relationships built on trust and respect. Campaigning in the community can also encourage an activist to continue efforts of persuasion because the knowledge of making a difference and being noticed is a satisfying experience:

It is amazing the amount of influence you can make. You can get blown away just doing a hand-out at the train station, handing out 2000 fliers in the morning you've just reached 2000 people with your message. Or putting up a banner somewhere in peak hour traffic you get 10, 000 people reading your message and it really does bring it home to people and they really do start thinking about it. (A. de Graaf, personal communication, June 13, 2003)

Grass roots lobbying, or community advocacy, is more than a means for pressuring the government, though this may be the main incentive for undertaking activities. Whilst Save Ningaloo considers the value of community an important element that is intrinsic to their campaign, CCMD accepted advice of a contrasting nature:

I think about 12 months ago we were told to forget about the public, because of the emotional thing. You can't win on an issue like this in the wider public arena. What we've done is try to inform the politicians and the decision makers on the benefits of the project. It's a very complex issue. (A. Smith, personal communication, May 21, 2003)

The two perceptions of community relations described here are diametrically opposed. Consensus was however expressed from both sides in regard to the value of publicity within mainstream media and also the inadequacy of media institutions to portray the issue comprehensively.

Media Relations

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Ningaloo controversy is a highly public affair. This is partly due to the attention given to the issue by media coverage, but also due to the highly visual campaign materials developed by Save Ningaloo (for example, the bumper stickers and turtle leaflets – Appendix 5) and the use of celebrities as spokespeople for the campaign.

Publicity is typically pursued as part of a public relations campaign. The partakers in this debate have discovered, however, that media coverage of an issue can represent as many challenges to communicating a particular perspective, as can the media refusing to cover an issue at all. Baskin, Aronoff and Lattimore (1997) discuss the findings of journalism scholars who conclude the media “set the agenda for what we talk and think about” (p. 63).

Agenda setting theory serves to explain why publicity is pursued – it is a forum for reaching both members of the community and political decision makers. It is also an unpaid medium of communication, making it especially attractive to organizations unable to purchase space to represent their views. Publicity is also sought due to the impression that journalism is objective, and coverage of an issue from an apparently objective source is more credible than formal recognition of the sponsor of a message, such as is the case with advertising.

Objective journalism however is somewhat of a contentious issue. Deliberating over allegations that Save Ningaloo is a masquerading lobby group for a competing accommodation facility (mentioned as an extraneous issue to this study in Chapter Two), Watson interprets the media's coverage of the issue:

They've also attacked Save Ningaloo for being too well funded and too professional If you're a ratbag mob of disorganized hippies that's one criticism. And if you happen to use professional websites and get donations from people who are reasonably wealthy and can put together publications and submissions then you must have some ulterior motive. (personal communication, June 4, 2003)

White (1996) discusses, "the libertarian view of the proper functions of the mass media in a [Western] democratic society was born out of the political philosophies in which the principle of individual freedom and judgement was paramount" (p. 8). White also argues that over the last century the media has taken a more socially responsible perspective to the coverage of news within society. "To a greater or lesser degree, journalists in Australia operate within the framework of the social responsibility theory although the rhetoric of the libertarian model is sometimes used" (White, 1996, p. 9).

In a three part series of articles titled 'The Battle for Ningaloo' (Appendix 6), written by *The West Australian* journalist Tony Barrass, libertarian rhetoric is underlying the premise of the articles. For example, he writes "Exmouth and Coral Bay are chalk and cheese. One has turned the corner despite some recent setbacks and is on the road to prosperity [Exmouth]. The other is wallowing in bureaucratic chaos, desperate for sensible, long-promised guidance from government [Coral Bay]" (Barrass, 2003a, p. 7). Not only is rhetoric of argument expressing libertarian sentiment, the approach Barrass undertook to investigating the issues addressed in the three double-page features demonstrates this partiality - he didn't contact Save Ningaloo at all in

researching these articles (Gamblin, 2003) but did make contact with CCMD. Barrass claims the purpose of the reports was to find out “what other people – not vocal interest groups such as developers or green lobby groups – think about important issues affecting the Cape” (Barrass, 2003b, p. 18)

Smith expresses support for Barrass’ journalism: “I think what you’ll find is Tony Barrass cut right to the heart of the problem ... he went up there, he saw for himself, and then he came back and discussed various aspects with us” (personal communication, May 21, 2003). The purpose of Barrass’ articles seems rather to be intent on excluding only Save Ningaloo’s arguments, contradicting the stated purpose above of not representing either interest group. Winton (2003) writes that the campaigners learnt to “judge the egos of the journos, for *this* [original emphasis] is the real conduit for news, not the public’s right to know” (p. 23).

Despite the sympathetic publicity granted by Barrass, CCMD experienced media prejudice in other news forums. Smith recounts two particular occasions. Firstly, the Channel 10 television coverage of the EPA chairman’s statement at the release of the report findings:

We had the press out at Hillarys and the EPA chairman’s statement was that Coral Coast Resort should not proceed unless government implements proper management. Quite correct. Channel 10 said Coral Coast Resort should not proceed full stop. That’s how it came out on tv. (personal communication, May 21, 2003)

Secondly, he relates experience of a prerecorded interview he participated in for *Stateline*:

Tim Winton was interviewed on Monday, and I was interviewed on the Tuesday The question was asked of me if the project was stopped would CCMD take legal action against the government. And I said well, that’s a hypothetical question. The interviewer pushed the point ... and I said well

obviously we have to look after the interest of our shareholders and will decide that at the time, if that happens. I heard the next day that she'd got Winton back there on the Wednesday after being interviewed on the Monday. When it came out, at the end of the thing you could see it was cut with me saying we're going to look after the interests of our shareholders and with Winton saying we are looking after the interests of the community. And that was blatant. That was manipulated. (personal communication, May 21, 2003)

The following anecdote, like Smith's above, expresses the idea that the media creates its own construction of events and reports phenomena in a specific way:

We're dealing with stuff that's been in the press suggesting that we're emotive and that the developers may have a good argument. Well actually when you look at the arguments they don't and we've made that point. But we need more than 30 seconds to do it in. (P. Gamblin, personal communication, June 13, 2003)

Though activist organizations are generally presumed disadvantaged in terms of human and financial resources, they can enjoy a transitory sense of power from the high publicity attained from their campaign efforts. Whilst this publicity is significant for activist groups, mainstream media tend to defend the status quo and resort to stereotyping activist organizations and members (Low, 1996). Jagtenberg (1996) writes about Australian popular culture beginning to address ecological themes and the subsequent reaction of "conservative media proprietors" (p. 15). He provides an example of mainstream media hyperbole: "the cover of a recent edition of *The Bulletin* can be seen cajoling one of our feral tree top protesters with the message 'Cooee ... it's OK to come down now ... we're winning the war to save the planet'" (Jagtenberg, 1996, p. 15).

Articulating the disparate stereotypes of emotion opposed to reason ascribed to each side in the debate by the media, de Graaf affirms the media's exclusion of Save Ningaloo's scientific arguments:

There's nothing wrong with getting emotional about it, but the way the media portrays it, the developers' arguments are supposedly rational and we're purely emotional. They don't really look at the information that we've got. (personal communication, June 13, 2003)

Doug Myers, former CALM manager, Ningaloo, wrote that people opposing CCMD's proposal are either ignorant of the environment in the region or have "some vested interest in not having the resort built" (Soapbox, 2002). He explains "vested interest is not necessarily a monetary one but can also relate to people philosophically opposed to any development on the WA coastline. Oversize egos and single-mindedness often interfere with rational thought processes" (Soapbox, 2002).

Jagtenberg and McKie (1997) offer Damasio's (1994) neurological research that questions Descartes's mind-body split. They write that Damasio:

attributes the fallacy of the absence of emotion to be at least as pernicious for rationality as excess of emotion and argues that rationality is less likely to come from language or intellect than from the biology of living organisms determined to survive Damasio's research is certainly worth bearing in mind when environmental groups and supporters are accused of excessive emotionality. (1997, p. 19)

Following the idea portrayed by Jagtenberg and McKie (1997), the 'rational' arguments and rhetoric employed by CCMD and supporters of the development, including the stereotyping of each perspective by the media, could stem more from apprehension of conflicting ideology than from logical thought processes. Within the Ningaloo case, both CCMD and Save Ningaloo have rational, scientific arguments as reasons why the development should or should not go ahead. Save Ningaloo however also offers emotive based arguments and represent a passionate cause -- concern for the health of an ecosystem. Emotional stereotypes and the associated negative connotations are, in this way, irrational responses, stemming from ideas that contest

“the West’s sustained commitment to unsustainable ways of living as being business as usual” (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997, p. 23). To this effect Gamblin offers:

When you look at the science, you look at the arguments, I think it’s rational to be angry. When you look at the process, the lack of proper process and planning and environmental assessments ... I think we’re entitled to be angry. I think that’s a fair response. (personal communication, June 13, 2003)

It should not be assumed however that CCMD are not emotional about the issue either. It stands to reason that after significant time and money has been expended on the project to no avail, the people involved would experience some sort of emotion. The simple fact that they have put considerable effort into techniques of persuasion (lobbying) would signify there is emotion behind the façade of ‘rationality’. However they have chosen not to associate themselves with emotional arguments.

Celebrity Endorsement

Lesson one. In order to bring the sharks, you need blood in the water. There’s next to no chance that media will cover a citizens’ meeting without a gimmick or eminent person. Lesson two. Don’t ever mention this to the media. It offends them. Similarly, even though they create these parameters, be prepared to cop criticism from them for engaging in celebrity politics and cheap gimmicks. Lesson three. Try not to take any of this personally because they don’t. (Winton, 2003)

The above quote illustrates the contentious relationship between the media and the reference to the celebrities that have publicly endorsed the Save Ningaloo campaign. De Graff offers, “It’s unfortunate that you have to play the media game to get your arguments in there. We’ve had a few articles that have been critical of our use of celebrities” (personal communication, June 13, 2003).

Barrass exaggerates the impact of these celebrities to the success of the campaign; “a celebrated writer, a multi-millionaire basketballer and a charming actress are formulating the Gallop Government’s environment, tourism and investment policies” (Barrass, 2003c). The particular celebrities he refers to are Tim Winton, Luc Longley, and Toni Collette. The majority of media mentions of Winton identify him as a writer or novelist, not in a more ‘scientific’ or perhaps pertinent role as the Vice President of the Australian Marine Conservation Society.

Celebrities and other prominent persons are often used to endorse public relations campaigns. They are also often used for marketing purposes to advertise products. The incentive for incorporating celebrities into a communication strategy is to create an association between the audience and the product (in this case an ideology) being marketed. As Winton stipulated above, celebrities attract media coverage for an issue, which broadens public awareness of an issue. Media coverage of the Save Ningaloo campaign has been critical of the use of celebrities (de Graaf, personal communication, June 13, 2003), particularly since the rejection of the proposal. This indicates the perception that using celebrities to endorse community campaigns are equally powerful, if not more so, than hiring professional persuaders. CCMD have Halden and Burns working behind the scenes, and Save Ningaloo have Winton, Longley and Collette willingly donating their time in a public forum.

Gamblin concedes the powerful influence that celebrities can contribute to broadening the issue and attracting supporters to the cause. He defends the use of celebrities and asserts their value to the campaign:

They’re citizens first. And they’re entitled to express their opinions. But we recognize that them speaking can draw people in who otherwise might not have known about the campaign We’re a little community group. We’ve built this thing into something quite powerful but we are, it’s a David and Goliath. Using the celebrity endorsements is a bit like the sling, in terms of

getting the media interested ... in the arguments that really matter [scientific and planning arguments]. So sometimes you have to use celebrities We're up against these very well resourced developers and all their connections and lobbyists and everything else and so we have to use what we can. And they're strong, positive messages from these celebrities. They're not antagonistic. (personal communication, June 13, 2003)

Smith however provides a differing summation of the celebrity endorsements. He links the influence of the celebrities to striking an emotional element with the community, which he perceives should be avoided by CCMD:

It's been struck by emotions. It's a very easy thing to stir up people's emotions on something like this and particularly when you get people like Winton, celebrities, Collette. As I said the fly-in, fly-out celebrities, Luc Longley. We have a few of our own but we haven't wanted to get involved in a celebrity challenge. We've got some big guns on our side. (personal communication, May 21, 2003)

This statement above by Smith assumes that the celebrities are transient to the cause, and have been contracted for the campaign as a gimmick ("fly-in, fly-out"). Gamblin, on the other hand, perceives the celebrities as part of the community, evident when he states "they're citizens first". This point is a pertinent one. Watson proposes that the "role of people like Tim Winton and Luc Longley, who have been spokespeople at the rallies [is to create] connection for a broader community than just the hard-core conservationists who will be out there anyway" (personal communication, June 4, 2003). Save Ningaloo is a citizen's campaign, representing diverse sectors in society. Its wide ranging supporters extend beyond the radical alternative lifestyleers that are typically the stereotyped supporters of environmental campaigns.

This chapter has sought to detail some of the communication strategies and related issues of such that have been employed as methods of persuasion in this debate. The

concluding arguments in the next chapter will draw on the research gathered throughout this project to offer an interpretation of the phenomenon under study.

CHAPTER FIVE

ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN PUBLIC RELATIONS

This research project has drawn on two simultaneously occurring phenomena: the theoretical development of potentially ethical approaches to the practice of public relations; and the increasing significance of rhetoric associated with sustainability into the Western Australian public agenda. Both of these phenomena can be explained within the context of a communitarian meta-narrative.

Communitarian philosophies endorse community over individualism, cooperation over competition, and cohesion over fragmentation. It seeks to prioritise benefits for communal interests over those of self-interests. The ideology of social movements, in this case the environmental movement, is based upon this same ideology.

Communitarianism offers an ideal basis for public relations scholars to look beyond the interests of powerful organizations and take into greater account the people who are impacted upon by public relations activities - the community. Developing communication strategies and implementing activities that are aligned with communitarian philosophy is a promising area for further research. However, communitarianism is aligned with the 2-way symmetrical model of public relations communication, which is regarded as too idealist to be practicable. Therefore, the ideal of communitarianism remains for now just that – an ideal. Because an organization cannot fully remove itself from a self-interested motive in communication strategies, an ecological approach to communication is better able to offer a more ethically aligned alternative without the charade of pure community beneficence.

This perspective [ecological] and its analogs (particularly the “symmetric” model of practice detailed by J. Grunig & T. Hunt, 1984, and refined in J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992) are “ecological” perspectives because they locate the primary context of public relations practice in the relationship between an organization and its social environment. (Everett, 2001, p. 311)

An approach based on ecological principles is a more realistic and practicable alternative. An ecological perspective allows for an organization’s prime motivating factor in developing beneficial relationships with the community to be its own personal benefit, which invariably it always will be (Heath, 1992, p. 42). An ecological interpretation of public relations ensures that, like with a model developed along communitarian ideals, an organization clearly recognizes its implications within a wider context. It is not so far removed from communitarianism, sharing the same principles of community advocacy.

Public relations scholars searching for an ethical answer to current practice that will effectively quell criticism of its manipulative and persuasive techniques encourage the process of dialogue between an organization and its publics. Dialogic, as opposed to monologic, communication, is determined to be part of a communitarian and ecological approach because the engagement in dialogue facilitates greater understanding of the meanings of messages, creating a sense of shared interpretation, and thus a participative community. Patz (2000) explains the link between language and public relations:

As a powerful means of communication, language is of crucial importance to public relations, a communication profession that is greatly concerned with the influence of public opinion, attitudes, or behaviour. The pervasiveness of the influence of language in society and on individuals is evident in many facets: language as a vehicle for meaning, language as a reflection of culture, language as a guide for thought and perception, language as an indicator of group membership; language as a social skill and as such the basis of social judgement and prejudice, language as a prime tool of persuasion. (p. 47)

In terms of the case study discussed, Save Ningaloo entered into both dialogic and monologic communication strategies. There is evidence to support that their approach to communication is based on principles of ecology in that they were effective grass roots lobbyists and communicating with community members in a personable manner. Their communication efforts seem to be more sustainably oriented than CCMD's, who concentrated on influencing the decision makers and ignoring public opinion.

This dissertation also argues that the mainstream media, as it currently operates, is unable to respond appropriately to the philosophy of communitarianism and even sustainability. Possible reasons offered in this discussion include the media's active inclusion of certain information and exclusion of others. This suggests that by not describing certain aspects of society to itself, as is the media's aim, that liberalistic ideologies continue to dominate society almost unhindered. In cases such as the one described within this dissertation, whereby principles of liberalism are challenged, the media rises up in defence of them.

Environmental organizations offer a rich area of study of ecological considerations in communication because of their founding ideology. They have had a tremendous impact on society at large, and as is demonstrated by the Ningaloo controversy, in local contexts also.

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APPENDIX 1

Map of the Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast

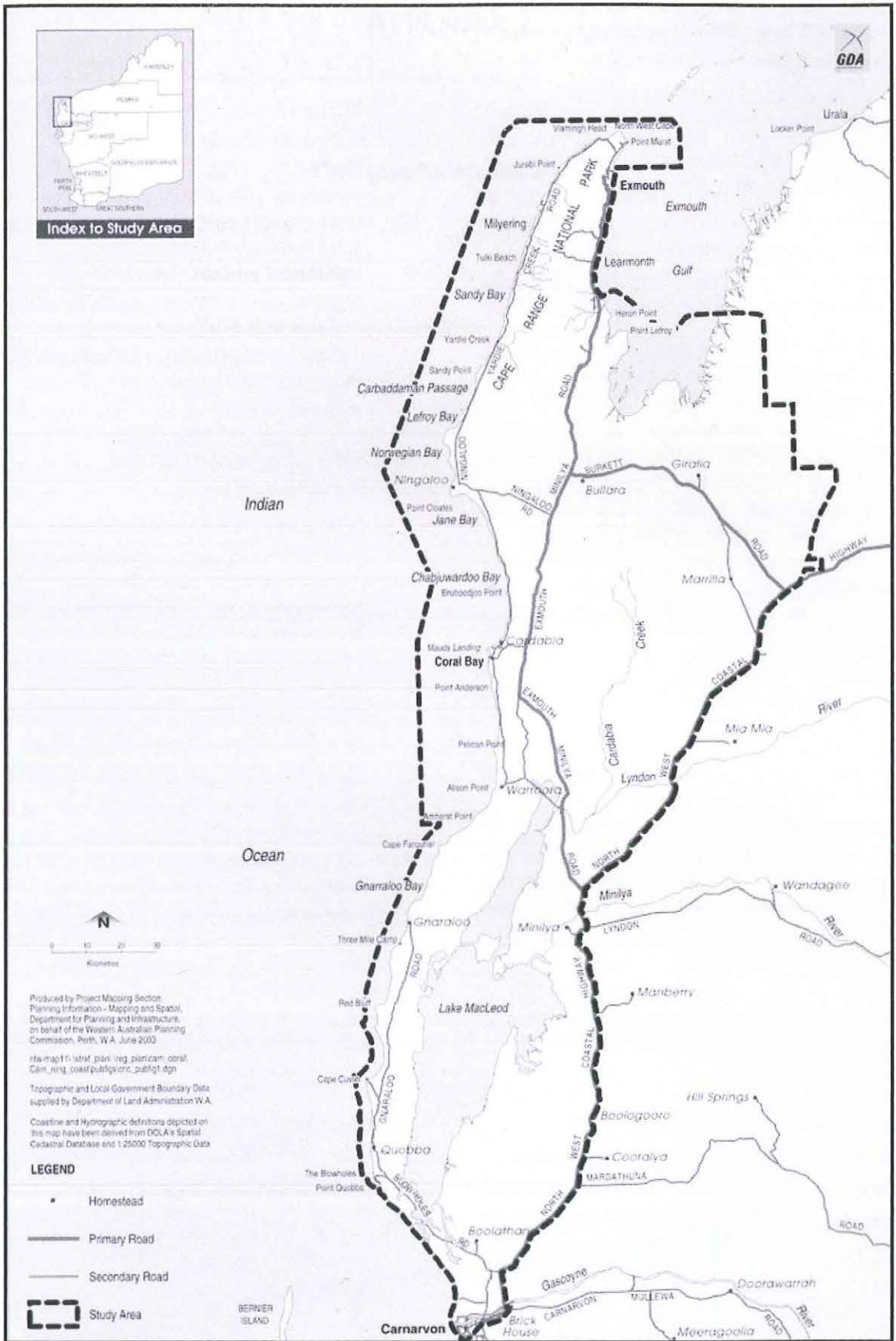


Image reproduced with the permission of the Western Australian Planning Commission.

APPENDIX 2

Photographs: August 2003

- Coral Bay
- Mauds Landing
- Ningaloo Reef - underwater



[View entering Coral Bay]



[Coral Bay residential accommodation]



[Coral Bay from beach lookout]



[Coral Bay beach from main road]



[Mauds Landing site]



[Mauds Landing beach]



[Coral and fish – approx. 10m from Coral Bay shore]



[Coral formation – approx. 10m from Coral Bay shore]

APPENDIX 3

Sketch of Coral Coast Marina Development

Sketch of Coral Coast Resort arcade



[Aerial depiction of Coral Coast Marina Development: inland marina, resort, and development lots]



[Sketch of Coral Coast Resort: retail opportunities]

APPENDIX 4

Historical profile of Mauds Landing

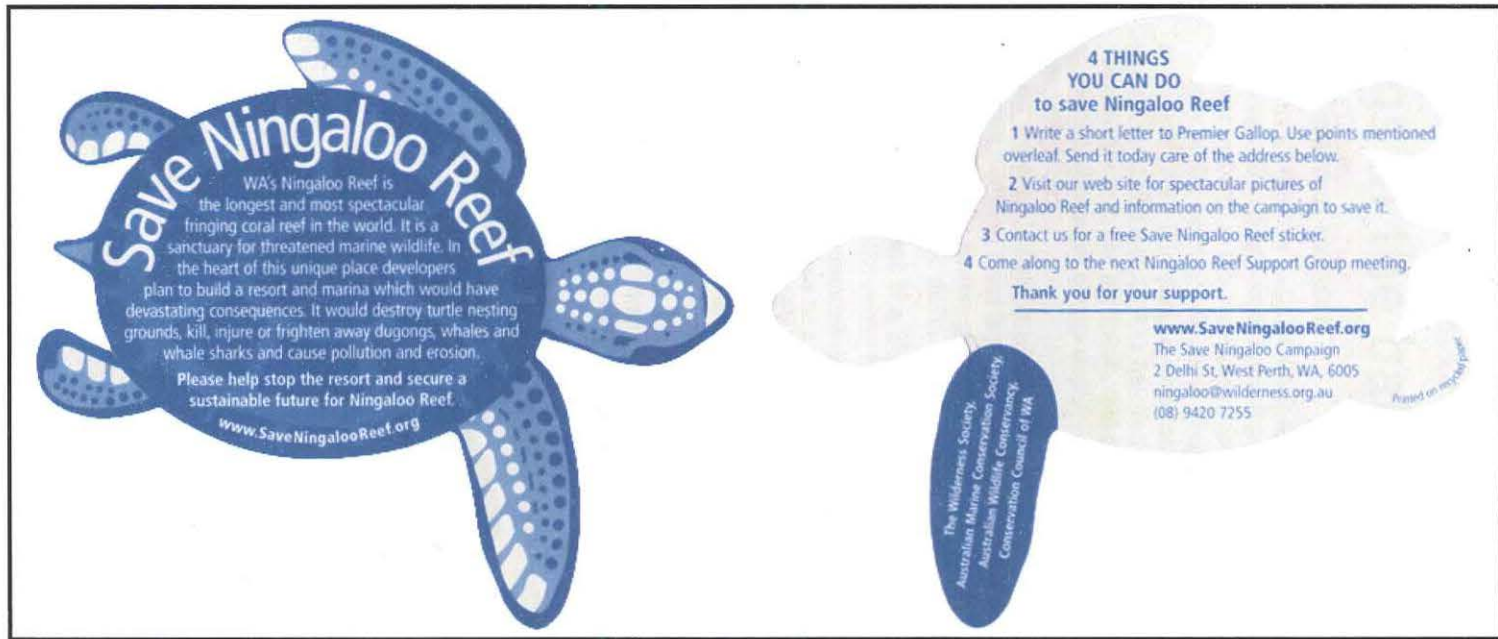
APPENDIX 5

Save Ningaloo campaign material & communications

- Bumper sticker
- Turtle leaflet - front and back
- ALP Conference Rejects Ningaloo Marina: Winter 2002
- HG Nelson - "Save the Ningaloo Reef": Winter, 2002
- Rally for the Ningaloo Reef: November 2002



[Bumper sticker]



[Front and back view of turtle leaflet]

WILDERNEWS

A campaign briefing from the Wilderness Society WA Inc

WINTER 2002

ALP CONFERENCE REJECTS NINGALOO MARINA but final decision hangs in the balance

The campaign to save Ningaloo Reef was given a tremendous boost recently when the State conference of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) resolved that the marina resort proposed for Ningaloo Reef be rejected. The Party was also applauded by conservationists for calling for a long term sustainable management plan for the Ningaloo Reef and Cape Range region.

This is fantastic news for the campaign as a decision approving the marina would now contradict the Party's own platform. However the final decision on the development still hangs in the balance and could go either way.

The government has reserved its final decision until Environmental Protection Authority recommendations regarding the proposal have been delivered to Environment Minister Dr Judy Edwards. These recommendations have been delayed for a third time and are now due late August at the earliest.

Progress on environmental concerns

In the mean time, Premier Gallop, has taken a positive step towards solving the environmental problems of Coral Bay by earmarking \$7.5 million for a new town sewerage system and \$2.4 million for a new boating facility. The new sewerage system will prevent further waste from seeping into Bills Bay and impacting on coral and the new boat ramp will minimise fuel spills that currently occur during beach refueling. These positive initiatives would not have occurred without the pressure Ningaloo supporters have brought to bear on the government to address environmental problems in the area.



'Ningaloo information packs included a free coffee at the ALP conference.'

Tidal wave of support

Support for the Save Ningaloo Campaign is still growing daily. Amazing numbers of people from all areas and backgrounds have become involved in this watershed coastal issue for WA.

Every public meeting held about Ningaloo has been 'standing room only', with 1500 packing Fremantle Town Hall and 400 people squeezing into AQWA's function room at Hillarys. Our fundraising event, The Big Splash, sold out in under a week and tens of thousands of cars display Save Ningaloo Reef bumper stickers.

And support is clearly not limited to Perth. When the Premier travelled to Coral Bay to announce funding for the towns new infrastructure, he was greeted by 300 people insisting that his government reject the marina.

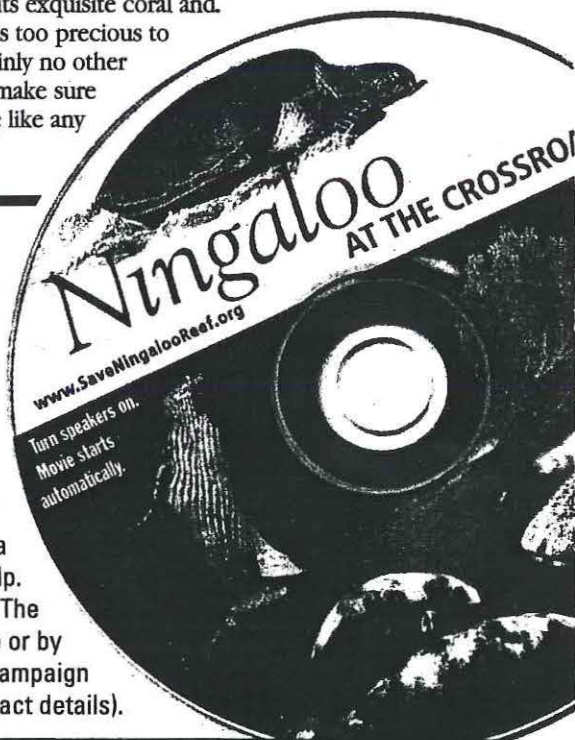
...but we can't let the tide go out!

While community momentum is strongly behind saving Ningaloo, the delay in EPA recommendations means a final decision on the marina resort could now be a few months away. This gives the developers time to intensify their PR campaign (which has already begun) and mobilise their strong political networks. With one of the world's last healthy coral reefs at stake, and one chance to get it right, we ask all Western Australians to take that extra step - write a letter to *The West* or your local newspaper or MP, put a sticker on your car and your neighbour's car, buy a T-shirt, become a member (if you're not already) or make a donation, tell your friends, and attend the next Ningaloo event.

Ningaloo, with its exquisite coral and amazing wildlife, is too precious to lose. There's certainly no other place like it. Lets make sure it doesn't become like any other place.

NINGALOO AT THE CROSSROADS ON CD-ROM

See the spectacular short movie about the campaign to Save Ningaloo Reef from award winning underwater cinematographer Richard Todd. Order your CDROM copy of *Ningaloo at the Crossroads* which plays on most computers. In 5 minutes it details the threats to Ningaloo, the opportunities for a positive future, and how you can help. Copies can be obtained for \$5 from The Wilderness Society Shop in Fremantle or by contacting The Wilderness Society Campaign Centre (see back page for contact details).



Save Ningaloo Reef

Get a custom made Save Ningaloo T-Shirt!

Check out the new Ningaloo T-shirts - available only through our web site www.wilderness.org.au. Choose either this turtle design, or a 'Save Ningaloo Reef' yellow triangle version. Your T-shirt will be delivered to you within days.

"Inside - H.G. Nelson says "Save the Reef".

HG Nelson says:

"SAVE THE NINGALOO REEF"



Roy Slaven and HG Nelson

Rampaging Roy Slaven and I love looking at fish. There is nothing weird about it. We are busy blokes and whenever we get a chance to down the tool at the coalface of sport there is no greater way to relax than pulling on

the mask and snorkel, getting wet and staring at fish. You can drop your shirt on a dud bet, you can rip your hair out with the way your team is travelling, you can have the arse hanging out of your duds but when you slip into the sea and stare at fish your troubles are washed away with the tide. Fish don't give a bugger. They just love being fish and being wet. The Ningaloo Reef is now widely acknowledged around the planet as the home of fish. It is fish central. It's downtown fish no matter what you are after whether it is gar, mullet, flathead or your larger gear like the whale shark and the manta ray. They are all on the lurk at Ningaloo. Anything that threatens fish and the magic of their world needs to be considered very carefully. After all Europeans in recent times have stuffed most of the fish sites they have got their hooks into. There are bugger all good news stories when it comes to boofheaded blokes fiddling about with fish habitats. And my very good friends when it comes to seaside developments it is hard to come up with something new and original. You have seen it all before. This as a future does not work. Why allow the world to be the same all over? If it is the same everywhere there is no reason to leave home

and then we might as well wander down to the nearest beach pull a wave over our bonce and end it all.

This Ningaloo Reef development has certainly got me jiggered.

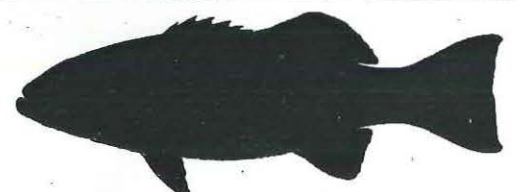
After millions of years being perfect there is just one chance to stuff it up. Are we going to allow it?

Well, from my perch in the blue two metres down it looks like we need this development like we need to be bent over the bonnet of the ute and given a swift boot up the date.

Do it for fish. SAVE THE REEF!!!

H.G. Nelson

LIMITED EDITION PRINTS BY ROGER SWAINSTON



Renowned WA natural history artist Roger Swainston has painted 'Coral Trout' to support the community campaign for a sustainable future for the Ningaloo region. These limited edition prints (200) are individually numbered and signed and available for \$80 from the The Wilderness Society.

FOREST UPDATE

It is now 17 months since the Gallop government was elected, with a strong mandate to protect WA's old growth and high conservation value (HCV) forests, and to introduce ecologically sustainable forest management.

Upon election, the government halted logging in about 160,000 hectares of old growth and HCV forests that had previously been available for logging. The government is now implementing its forest policy commitments via the preparation of a new 10-year forest management plan (FMP).

The new FMP will delineate the boundaries of the 32 new forest conservation reserves promised by Labor. It will set the volume of logs that can be extracted from State forest; and it will lay down new rules for logging operations to ensure they are conducted in accordance with the principles of

ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM).

The draft FMP is due for public comment and EPA assessment. To check on progress of the new FMP, under "Forest management" the Conservation Commission website

www.conservation.wa.gov.au

So far, an indicative map of new forest conservation reserves has been published, which will be improved following an assessment of 120 forest potentially containing HCV that should be protected. A government decision on additional HCV forests to be protected is expected in the future.

Legal protection for the new forest conservation reserves will still require specific legislation in Parliament.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON GROUND RIGHT NOW?

Although the final figure on imminent decisions on protection of additional forest

notice board

Wilderness Society Shop

NINGALOO REEF

A DISASTROUS

INA RESORT

purchases
our campaign.

Gifts • Seeds
& much more

10AM TO 5.30PM
9512
ST, FREMANTLE

Thanks to all our supporters

Thanks to all those wilderness supporters who pulled a superb effort to make our annual wilderness such a great success. Despite over 200 people attending the Ningaloo Reef and the support from the public, we need to be strong. Relying on government funding. The Wilderness Society relies on the generosity of members and supporters to continue our campaigns. A heartfelt thanks to all those who participated.

Time to spare

If you want to be more active in supporting the cause of WA and you have a few spare hours each week, you are the person we are looking for. We need volunteer wilderness guardians or wilderness rangers to help with our

RALLY FOR NINGALOO REEF

ANNEKE de GRAAF

WA's Ningaloo Reef is the longest and most spectacular fringing coral reef in the world. It is a sanctuary for threatened marine wildlife. In the heart of this unique, wild place, developers plan to build a marina and resort which would have devastating consequences. It would destroy turtle nesting grounds; kill, injure or frighten away dugongs, whales and whale sharks; and cause pollution and erosion.



Toni Collette at Ningaloo Reef. Photo: courtesy of The Fremantle Herald

AFTER YEARS OF WAITING AND INTENSE PUBLIC SPECULATION, THE FATE OF AUSTRALIA'S LONGEST AND MOST SPECTACULAR FRINGING REEF TOOK A DRAMATIC TURN ON OCTOBER 28.

The Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) released its long-awaited environmental recommendations regarding the construction of a massive marina resort at magnificent Ningaloo Reef.

The EPA identified grave environmental concerns regarding the development, and highlighted the enormous ongoing financial burden necessary to manage some of the impacts, but failed to give a clear 'no' to the proposal, leaving the way open for governmental approval.

This political 'hot potato', one of WA's biggest environmental issues in decades, has effectively been handed to the WA

Government for a final decision – which it expects to make early next year.

Unfortunately the developers are well-connected and will do everything they can to squeeze through the gap in the door that the EPA has left. The fate of Ningaloo now rests on a knife-edge – and with the community.

While news of the EPA's decision to merely put obstacles in front of the development rather than stopping it (its web site boasts that it approves more than 99 percent of developments) has shocked and angered many in the community, the public support for the campaign has been overwhelming.

The Wilderness Society's office has been inundated with offers of support and requests for information from all over the State, the country and overseas. Hundreds of activists have been galvanized into action and the activity is frantic.

Supporters of Ningaloo are being asked to show their

concern about the proposed development by attending the Rally for the Reef at 11:00am, December 1, Fremantle Esplanade in Fremantle, WA. Speaking at the rally will be award-winning author Tim Winton and retired international basketballer Luc Longley.

A large attendance at the rally would send a strong message to the Government that leadership and a clear 'no' are needed; so please bring your friends and family along to make the difference between environmental destruction and sustainable development.

The campaign, made famous through public support from Tim Winton, has attracted a depth and diversity of support rarely seen in conservation battles. Over 40,000 letters, emails and postcards sent to Premier Geoff Gallop have been supported by well-known personalities, such as tennis player Pat Rafter, actor Hugo Weaving, and radio announcers Roy Slaven and HG Nelson.

One of Ningaloo's most enthusiastic supporters is film star Toni Collette. After holidaying at the Reef and swimming with some of the resident manta rays, Toni declared her support for the natural wonders that would be at risk from the marina. Her story attracted national and international media, through which she encouraged others to take action in support of this crucial campaign.

1) Come to the Rally for the Reef (11:00am December 1, Fremantle Esplanade, WA.)

2) Visit www.SaveNingalooReef.org and send an online letter to Premier Geoff Gallop

3) Send a letter to Premier Gallop at Parliament House, Perth WA 6000.

Anneke de Graaf is
The Wilderness Society's
Ningaloo Community Campaigner

APPENDIX 6

Media clippings

- 'The Battle for Ningaloo' series: April 12-14, 2003
- New wave of disappointment: April 22, 2003
- Less-raucous voices have the right to be heard: April 22, 2003
- Ningaloo saviours rejoice: July 5, 2003
- Green glow comes at a price: July 5, 2003
- Tide of opinion brings reef relief: July 5, 2003
- Ningaloo battle is not over: July 5, 2003
- Winton's joy at Ningaloo decision: July 5-6, 2003
- Due process a token gesture: July 5-6, 2003
- Coral Bay project in danger of green ban: July 5-6, 2003
- Fiction friction on reef of grief: August 10, 2003
- How the reef was won: October, 2003

Growing pains stir trouble in paradise

Coral Bay is bursting at the seams as a political row rages over its future

CORAL BAY, the jewel of Ningaloo and one of the most promising tourism nodes on the continent, is a mess — an overcrowded, barely functioning, bizarrely regulated, inequitable, unmitigated mess.

What could be a world-class, well-managed and very lucrative precinct delicately balancing jobs with a unique environment is in reality a planning and environmental basket-case.

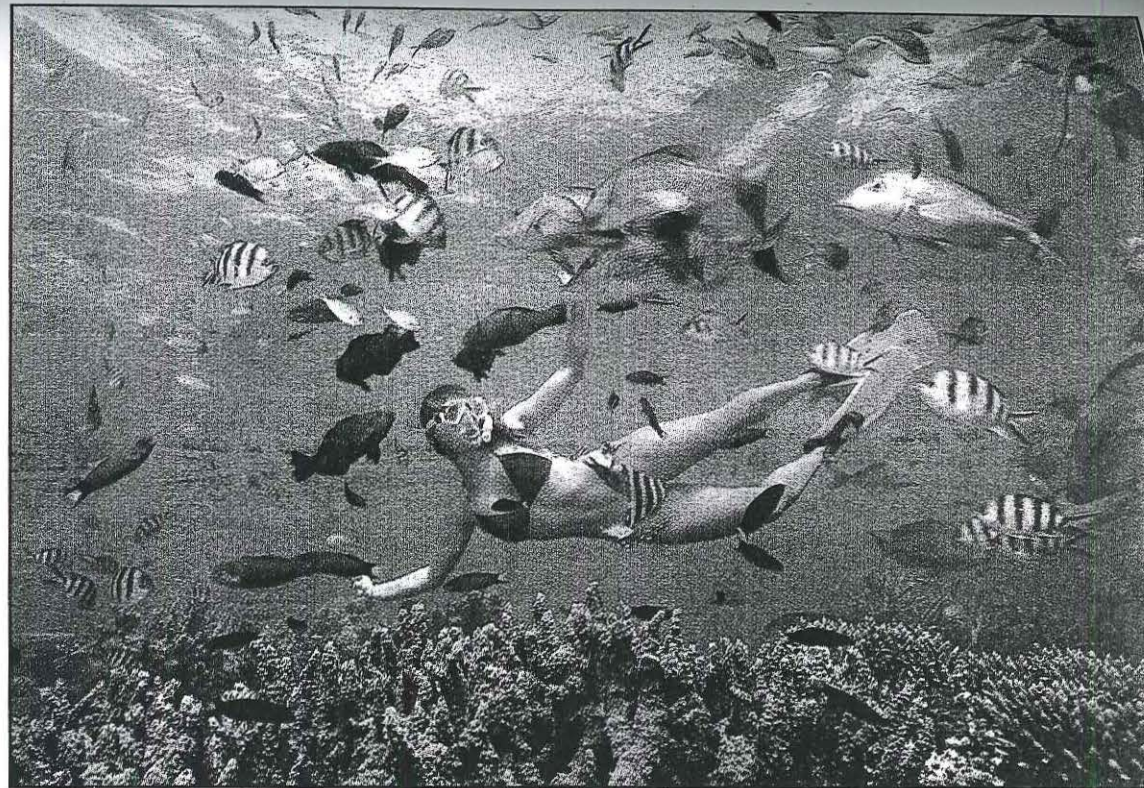
And with the Gallop Government considering the fate of the nearby \$180 million Mauds Landing marina, key areas of the North-West Cape continue to face an uncertain future through government indecision and lack of vision.

Locals are fighting land grabs by government agencies determined to

leases, working around a lack of resolve by authorities to deliver basic services such as water, power and sewerage and ironing out numerous conflicts over the Mauds Landing proposal.

The locals are also trying to resolve angry claims of unfair commercial advantages being given to business rivals through the granting of Conservation and Land Management licences while battling to end numerous arguments over which authorities should be entrusted with overseeing the most spectacular, pristine fringe reef on Earth.

Mix into that some intriguing subplots; one involving a publicity-shy, politically-savvy environmental group that champions an alternative "strategy" to Mauds Landing, the other involving pivotal Greens preferences vital to the re-election of the Gallop Government.



Water wonderland: Yasmin Hunt, 25, who works as an underwater guide with Coral Bay Adventures, swims with the fishes at a spot known as Asho's Gap. Coral Bay is dubbed the jewel of Ningaloo.



Reports:
Tony Barrass

Pictures:
John Mokrzycki

The paradox is that while many eyes are on Mauds Landing and the potential impact of such a development on the area, Coral Bay continues to pose the biggest single environmental threat to the reef through ad hoc development, lack of proper planning and rapidly expanding human habitation.

An investigation by *The West Australian* has also found that:

► Local Aboriginal groups have signed off on a jobs-for-youth deal with the Mauds Landing developers and are keen to see the project get the go-ahead.

► Archaic planning and building restrictions mean some workers and their families live in appalling conditions.

► Several family-run businesses are on the verge of collapse due to what they claim is policy-on-the-run by local authorities.

► Those same authorities admit to turning a blind eye to health and safety issues because if they didn't, "we'd have to close the whole place down".

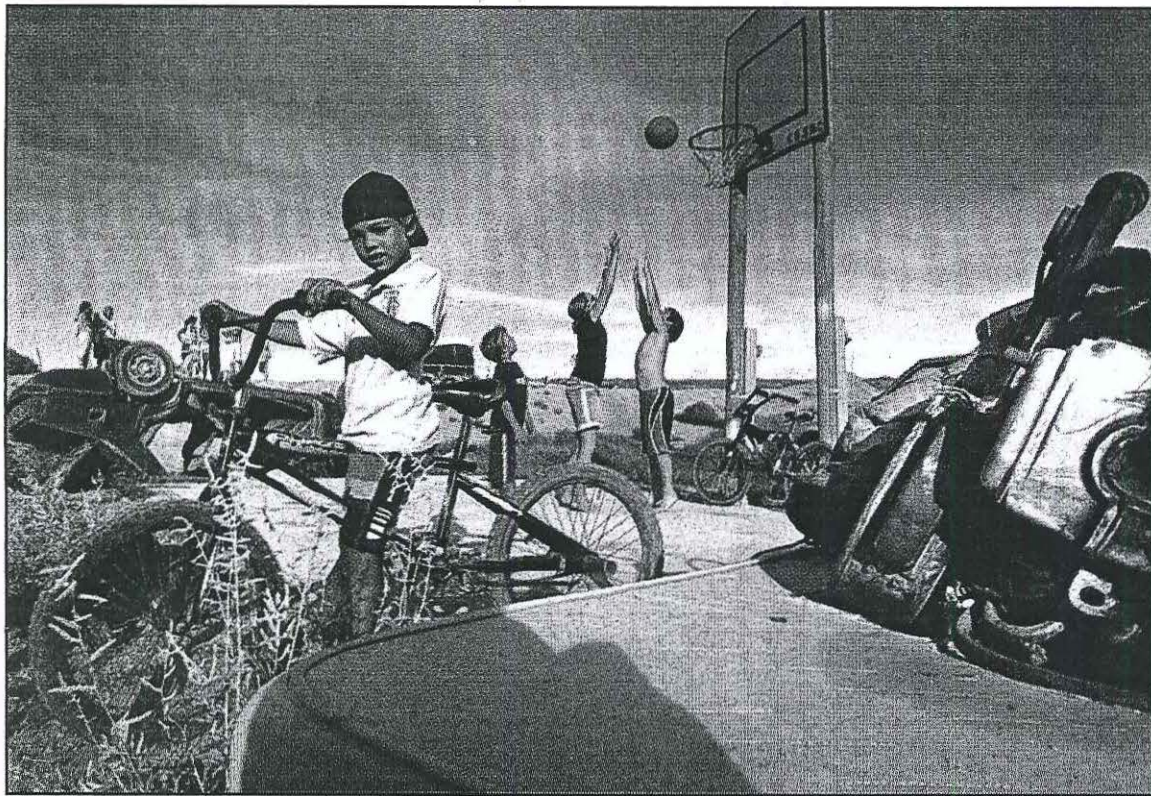
► Some Cape pastoralists have been given an ultimatum by the State — hand over a 2km coastal

strip or your lease will not be renewed in 2015.

A refusal by successive State and local authorities to implement anything other than makeshift and temporary strategies since the 1980s has only added to planning confusion in what remains one of the few privately owned communities in Australia.

Report after report, proposal after proposal, committee after committee has been unable to safeguard properly the settlement, the reef and those who live and work in and around it. The Coral Bay coastal management plan (1984); the Coral Bay planning strategy (1992); the Legislative Council select committee on Cape Range and Ningaloo Marine Park (1995); the Coral Bay task force report on infrastructure requirements (1996); the Gascoyne Coast regional strategy (1996); the

THE BATTLE FOR NINGALOO



Little Kenya: Keenan Ridley, 7, plays on the children's basketball court behind the workers' quarters at Coral Bay. Planning restrictions mean many workers live in a makeshift suburb dubbed Little Kenya.

North-West structure plan (1998); the Coral Bay settlement plan (1998); the environmental and planning guidelines for tourism development on the North-West Cape (1999) are just a few of the many.

The latest committee, made up of CALM, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Carnarvon and Exmouth shires, the WA Tourism Commission, the Department of Indigenous Affairs and other interested parties is compiling yet another blueprint for the region.

Many critics believe the State Government has abrogated its responsibilities by not providing the most basic of services, responsibili-

The Brogan family, by far the biggest stakeholders in the settlement, have freehold title over about 10ha and have invested a fortune developing their substantial commercial holdings while providing the basic services to a settlement now bursting at the seams.

THEY want to see the area grow and are as frustrated as anyone in dealing with authorities. Because they are the biggest, it's no surprise they have their fair share of detractors, but even their harshest critics admit that without the vision of patriarch Bill Brogan, now in his 70s, Coral Bay would not exist.

One farcical example of planning

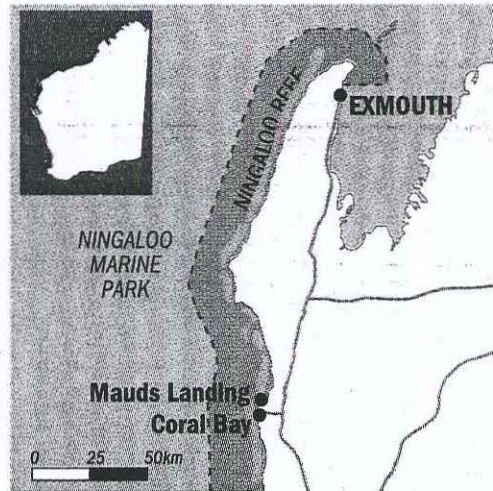
dred full-time residents living in Little Kenya do not officially exist.

These imaginary people must pay rent, water and power bills to the Brogans who, again under shire rules, want to, but cannot, provide proper accommodation for workers until the State provides Coral Bay with — wait for it — water and sewerage.

While Premier Geoff Gallop recently announced that a \$7.5 million sewerage system would be installed, locals will believe it when they see it. It's almost a year since that particular promise and not a sod of dirt has been turned — nor is it likely to until a decision is made on Mauds Landing



Crowding: CALM is trying to move boat operators off Coral Bay's crowded beach.



Marine chief under pressure

ENVIRONMENT Minister Judy Edwards faces mounting pressure to stand down Marine Parks and Reserve Authority chairman Barry Wilson.

Opposition Upper House leader Norman Moore claimed in State Parliament that Dr Wilson, already sidelined from the Government's Mauds Landing assessment because of his position with a company opposed to the project, may have leaked sensitive information.

Mr Moore said separate letters from the authority and the Save Ningaloo campaign received by the developers on the same day were almost identical.

He believed Dr Wilson had given the campaign "detailed information from within a government agency".

Dr Wilson is a director of Australian Wildlife Conservancy which opposes the Mauds Landing development and wants to create a much smaller eco-tourism facility on the 25 per cent of Ningaloo Station it owns.

He is overseas and despite numerous attempts by *The West Australian* could not be contacted yesterday. He has previously denied any impropriety.

agency doesn't have the expertise to deal with such matters, a claim denied by the department.

A handful of boat owners and professional fishermen are allowed to moor at nearby Bill's Bay while others aren't, sparking accusations by business rivals of an unfair commercial advantage. Ticketing booths organising whale shark diving, snorkelling tours and kayak hire have for years been allowed, even encouraged, to expand — but have now been told by Carnarvon Shire they must pack up their businesses and go. Where? No one is quite sure.

Other issues continue to stir local passions, from long-promised boat ramps to upgrading a basic airstrip

ties left in the hands of three Coral Bay landowners who through necessity have dug sewer pits, sunk bores and set up power supplies.

Others, including the Shire of Carnarvon, believe the State must declare or gazette Coral Bay as a town and take over the delivery and maintenance of water, power and sewerage.

To leave it in local hands would be to invite a potential environmental and health risk which could expose the supplier, most say unfairly, and litigation.

silliness. With no land being released by the State, people who move into the area — business people with a long-term commitment to the region, seasonal workers, fishermen, pilots, bar staff, tourist guides — must live in a makeshift suburb colloquially known as Little Kenya which is tucked behind the Brogans' caravan park.

Put simply, there's just nowhere else for them to go.

Under Carnarvon Shire by-laws, permanent residency in Coral Bay is banned. Therefore, a couple of hun-

But that hasn't stopped the Water Corporation sending the Brogans a bill for \$250,000 — to be paid in 31 days — for their contribution to the new taxpayer-funded sewerage scheme. They will have little choice but to slap a levy on their tenants.

Meanwhile, many government agencies have been unwilling to commit substantial funds and move staff to such an isolated area, adding to local annoyance. CALM has been singled out over its handling of several marine-based issues such as the licensing of moorings. Some say the

on nearby Aboriginal-owned Cardabia Station, from the push to secure World Heritage Listing for the area to whether one overriding authority, not dissimilar to Queensland's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, should be created to take control of all issues from the environment to tourism to land use.

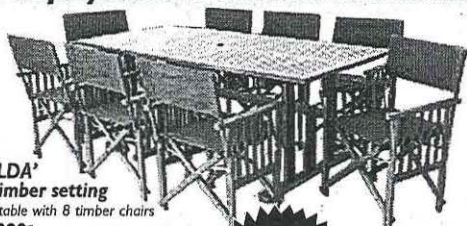
Passionately opposing opinions and rival businesses agree on one thing. Ningaloo reef is a natural gift which must, at all costs, be protected for future generations.

The big question is how.

A spokesman for Dr Edwards said last night: "All members of the authority's board are bound by a code of conduct which I expect to be complied with at all times. Advice from the MPRA has not been formally released to the public and I will be seeking further information from Dr Wilson when he returns from holidays."

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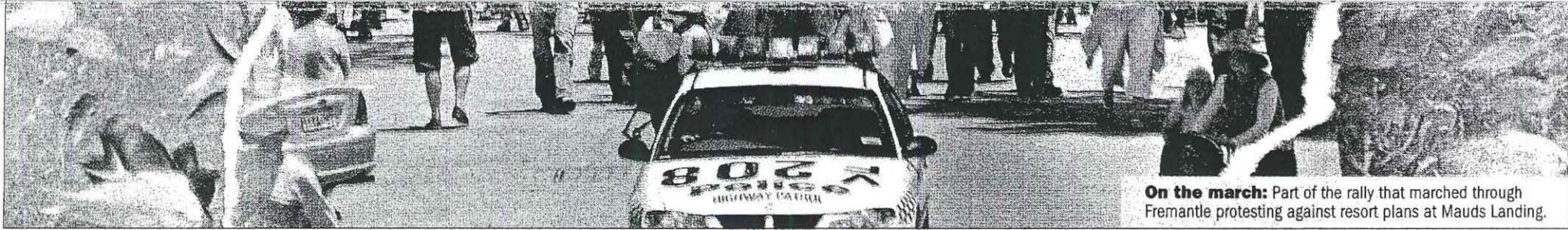
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Labor weighs costs of NW Cape chaos

The State Government faces a stark choice between opposed interests in the development of Mauds Landing near Coral Bay





On the march: Part of the rally that marched through Fremantle protesting against resort plans at Mauds Landing.

IF THE controversial Mauds Landing proposal fails to get Cabinet approval, some will claim that the decision will have little to do with developers failing to follow proper process and a whole lot to do with backroom preference deals, celebrity politics and government back-sliding.

Whether you believe that development of the remote coastline is long overdue or are passionately opposed to it, one thing is certain; Mauds Landing, if misread, could spell the end of a Government that surged to power after tapping into another delicate environmental issue, the South-West logging debate.

Just as Labor hard man Graham Richardson delivered to a struggling Bob Hawke an historic fourth term in 1990 after convincing environmental groups that the Federal Government had turned Green, the State Labor machine is desperate to get Green preferences.

Labor is fully aware of its position. On the one hand it needs preferences from the Greens — vehemently opposed to the development — while on the other it faces a considerable payout to developers increasingly fed up with the constant moving of planning and environmental goal posts.

In the build-up to the next election due before 2005, Dr Gallop and his Government have two obvious options. One is to support the development in the next few months and remove any threat of drawn-out and costly litigation and give themselves 18 months to woo back the Greens via other, less problematic issues.

The second choice is also fraught with danger: drag the issue on, knock back the development just before the next poll, get the Greens on side, tiptoe back into office and worry about court costs and com-

pensation payouts later, preferably when they're not in office.

The developer, Coral Coast Marina Development Pty Ltd, is not saying so but its intentions are clear. Its legal options are numerous and varied if Cabinet refuses to allow the development to go ahead. Even its critics acknowledge it is on solid ground to launch substantial and wide-ranging action against the State.

And who could blame it? The chronological history of the development paints a disturbing picture of government ineptitude, some strange goings-on by some public servants and general bureaucratic dilly-dallying.

In 1987, the then Labor government approached the company and asked it to come up with a plan for a marina at Mauds Landing because of environmental pressures on Coral Bay. CALM invited expressions of interest and in January 1989, the company submitted its plan of an inland marina, golf course, tourism facilities and 1200 freehold residential lots.

"CALM's view is that an effective marina and associated facilities at Mauds Landing would greatly enhance public access to the marine park and contribute to the economic development of the region while taking the pressure of Coral Bay," then CALM director Dr Barry Wilson wrote to his minister in 1989. "From CALM's point of view, the Coral Coast proposal is desirable and the 1000 residential lots acceptable."

Cabinet approved the plan as the preferred development option, subject to environmental and planning approvals. For the next three years for various reasons, including a recession and some nervous investors, the plan sat dormant.

But in 1994, Richard Court's planning minister Richard Lewis and lands minister George Cash



Reports: Tony Barrass **Pictures:** John Mokrzycki

again publicly backed Coral Coast as the preferred developer and the next year CALM executive director Syd Shea said the proposal had many environmental benefits. The Department of Land Administration wrote to the developers in 1996, saying a special lease for the project would be finalised soon.

BUT in 1997, then Labor environment spokeswoman Dr Judy Edwards raised serious environmental questions about the proposal and its effect on the fragile reef. Then environment minister Cheryl Edwardes, on split advice from her bureaucrats, upheld an appeal and yet again the proposal went back to the drawing board.

One of the pivotal antagonists in the recent fight against the development has been Barry Wilson, now the head of the Marine Parks and Reserve Authority, the same bureaucrat who as a CALM director was a keen supporter of an even bigger Mauds Landing proposal.

Dr Wilson, according to company searches, became in 1995 a director of Australian Wildlife Conservancy, a non-profit organisation which has approached the Gallop Government seeking approval for, in its words, "a pro-

posal which would form the key component of an alternative strategy to Mauds Landing".

While not suggesting that Dr Wilson has in any way acted inappropriately, his input into the debate over Mauds Landing was potentially damaging to an authority which is supposed to be independent. CALM, asked by the minister for advice, stressed that Dr Wilson had always acted within the authority's code of conduct.

Nonetheless, he was removed from the decision-making process. His minister was also removed from the debate because of her previous opposition to Mauds. Dr Gallop has now taken control.

On Thursday, Liberal leader in the Upper House Norman Moore accused Dr Wilson of leaking information to the Save Ningaloo Fund and demanded he be stood down completely. Dr Edwards said she would be seeking further information from Dr Wilson when he returned from overseas.

But back to Australian Wildlife Conservancy. Its head, Martin Copley, is an English-born multi-millionaire who has bought several WA stations for conservation programs. He is a passionate believer in rehabilitating the environment but his media-shy personality unfortunately creates more suspicion in locals than confidence.

AWC has also bought 25 per cent of Ningaloo Station, owned by the Lefroy family, a stunning piece of country that backs on to the reef. And while the organisation seems keen to see a low-level ecotourism and research facility which would be an alternative "strategy" to Mauds Landing, claims that AWC is behind a massive eco-development that would be in direct competition to something the size of Mauds are rather ambitious.

Nonetheless, AWC is a strong supporter and substantial donor to the

the Save Ningaloo campaign, which can only be to AWC's benefit.

Which brings us to celebrity politics.

WA author Tim Winton has almost single-handedly dispatched the marina proposal to oblivion. Cleverly and passionately, he has successfully painted the developers as a 1980s white shoe brigade hell-bent on stripping the reef of its beauty and peppering the Cape with palms trees and Gold Coast condos.

HE'S a formidable opponent. Who in their right mind would question Winton's love of the sea, his connection to the landscape, his ability to move people with eloquent, heart-felt verse? The developers, on a hiding to nothing, haven't even tried, keeping their heads down and saying little.

One media outlet, wanting to get both sides of the argument, once rang the developers and told them that they were hoping for Winton to write 1000 words on the subject and could they find someone to push their side of the argument.

With Hemingway dead, their options were somewhat limited.

Bring into the mix an admired sports star, multi-millionaire basketballer Luc Longley and celebrated Australian actress Toni Collette and you've got all bases covered. While some letter-writers to *The West Australian* mocked Collette as a world renowned marine biologist, it was obvious that she didn't have to be.

A film star would suffice. The debate, thankfully, has gone beyond that. The State Government is now at the crossroads and the proposal, after 15 years, will finally be judged on its merits.

If it isn't, West Australians will be paying for it, in more ways than one for many years to come.



A tale of two communities

‘Tourism at the moment is the fastest growing industry in the Gascoyne.’ — Mike Purslow

BY ROAD, there's only 90 minutes between them, but in attitude it could be light years.

Exmouth and Coral Bay are chalk and cheese.

One has turned the corner despite some recent setbacks and is on the road to prosperity. The other is wallowing in bureaucratic chaos, desperate for sensible, long-promised guidance from government.

Exmouth Shire president and Gascoyne Development Corporation executive director Mike Purslow is typical of the entrepreneurial spirit of the North-West and believes there is an urgent need for a good management system to be implemented in the Coral Bay area immediately.

Carnarvon Shire director of planning and development Steve Thompson has apparently come up with one. It's been sitting with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in Perth for more than a year. Typi-

month Airport, halfway between Coral Bay and Exmouth, was the biggest airport in Australia and could take all sizes of jets. It could service tourists from around the world not only wanting to visit the reef, but other areas in the Gascoyne and Pilbara.

The corporation was also holding talks with airlines over the movement of international freight and believed Asian markets such as Singapore were keen to take fresh produce from the area, just three hours away by air.

“At the moment, all our produce goes to Perth,” Mr Purslow said. “We don't see the Asian option as a huge hurdle. It can be done, we just need to do it together.”

IF THERE was a proper balance between development and the environment, the Cape region would blossom, particularly in tourism.

“Tourism at the moment is the fastest growing industry in the Gascoyne,” he

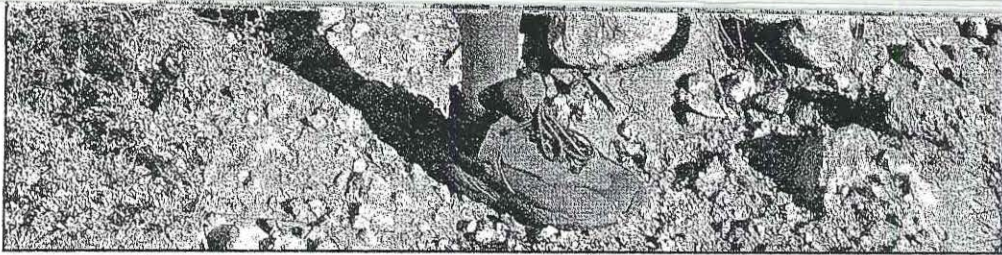
airlines.” He said remote communities faced problems but none that could not be overcome.

He highlighted the difficulties of getting Exmouth's marina and residential development off the ground after years of financial and planning difficulties and the decision by the American military to walk away from its naval communications base.

Originally, construction of the marina was supposed to have started in 1996. The project was now three years behind schedule. Throw into that last year's rush of water that ran down from the slopes behind the town and surged through a hole in a sand dune, sinking two Kailis Brothers' trawlers in the process, and you've got one troublesome project.

“But that's life, that's what happens and you get on with it.”

The Americans leaving town was a blessing in disguise, pushing the community into making a decision about its future.



Optimistic: Exmouth Shire president Mike Purslow examines plans for a canal system at the LandCorp Exmouth Marine Village. He says tourism is the fastest-growing industry in the region.

cally, no one has heard a thing.

Mr Purslow said the Gascoyne Development Corporation was supportive of Mauds Landing as long as all environmental criteria had been met. He believed Ningaloo Reef could put both communities on the world map.

He said the infrastructure was already in place. Lear-

try in the Gascoyne, he said. "And soon it will be outstripping the fishing industry and the horticultural industry. It's estimated that \$85 million a year comes into Exmouth through visitors to the area and other associated benefits.

"We need that money to survive. And I think that the key to any future growth will be closely linked to the

"I think it made us realise that we had to consider our future and in particular get serious about tourism," Mr Purslow said.

"We're going through a period of expansion. Development is providing valuable jobs and pumping money into the community and if it is balanced and sensible, everybody benefits."

Boat owner at tether's end

VIN O'SULLIVAN is not one to mince words. The former Argyle worker turned businessman, publican and pilot is at tether's end over his dealings with the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Just weeks ago, Mr O'Sullivan was fined \$4000 for a series of breaches under the CALM Act for illegally sinking a mooring at Bills Bay so his boat, the designated sea search and rescue vessel, could be reached quickly should the need arise.

He believes that when it comes to matters of the sea, CALM are good managers of land.

"To fight CALM I would have had to spend endless thousands and frankly, I just can't afford it," Mr O'Sullivan said. "It's all very well to come up with a plan for this and a plan for that, but at the end of the day these plans must work in a practical sense."

He understands there is a need to police such things properly but believes CALM just does not have the expertise to deal with marine issues that involve search and rescue, tourism, boating and commercial fishing.

Mr O'Sullivan said CALM had not properly marked channels through shallow Coral Bay and if boat users who did not know the area accidentally ran aground, they could face thousands of dollars in fines for damaging coral.

The decision to stop trailable boats mooring overnight in the



Not happy: Pilot and publican Vin O'Sullivan has problems with CALM.

bay means that people now must get their boats out of the water after every voyage which is almost impossible because of tides. Coral Bay was still waiting for a long-promised boat-launching facility.

CALM has announced that it will install 25 new moorings around the settlement as part of an overall strategy to "avoid conflict among users of the bay".

Some moorings have been allocated for commercial fishing, some for dive operators, others for coral-viewing boats. And those who have missed out, bad luck. They can move around to nearby Monck Head, about 1km south of the settlement.

That means elderly tourists have to walk down rocky embankments to get on board tourist boats and some businesses have to buy four-wheel-drives or small buses to transport people and/or the day's catch to and

from the settlement. That costs money.

Labor Senator Peter Cook believes a proper management body such as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority should be set up.

But CALM national park director Jim Sharp said there were two parks in the area that came under CALM control — the Ningaloo Marine Park and the Cape Range National Park. Managing both often came down to policing access to such areas.

"The prime issue in relation to Coral Bay is the congestion of boats, where people and boats just don't mix, the issue of public safety and the environmental impact from ad hoc moorings," he said.

"In trying to move towards a management regime for the area, people are going to be unhappy. There's a long-term plan which includes the removal of all private moorings from the bay. Why? Because you just can't have the level of private and commercial moorings in that area.

"The mooring plan is part of a wider plan and we try to be equal to all parties. But part of being an environmental manager is that you have to take a long-term view.

"Our prime consideration is to the environmental impact of human access on those parks. By establishing a mooring control area we can control numbers of boats and quality of moorings without damaging the coral."

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CALM amid a storm

Ningaloo sets pastoralists against officials, city dwellers against the bush

Leonie Horak considers it nothing short of blackmail. The Department of Conservation and Land Management wants a slice of land and has given her and other cape neighbours an ultimatum — agree or don't even bother attempting to renew your pastoral leases when they expire in 2015.

She sees it as a heavy handed approach to an issue that through negotiation, common sense and a bit of give and take could be settled for the benefit of the thousands of visitors to the pristine Ningaloo reef.

CALM wants a 2km strip east of the high water mark that runs along the coastline between Carnarvon in the south to Cape Range National Park in the north and takes in four exceptional parcels of land — Ningaloo Station, the Aboriginal-owned Cardabia Station, Ms Horak's Warroora Station and Gnaraloo Station.

It believes pastoralists are responsible for the coastline integrating to an environmental standard it contends is unsustainable. It says big slabs of country need to be rehabilitated and those who lease the properties just don't have the

expertise to do it. There are also claims that another more potent force is at play in the argument; that of revenue. Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan, whose department oversees the Pastoral Lands Board of WA, said last year: "We all know

there's an enormous amount of money to be made out of tourism up and down the coast. The question has to be asked: Should pastoralists have the automatic first right at this development?"

Liberal member for Ningaloo Rod Sweetman believes not.



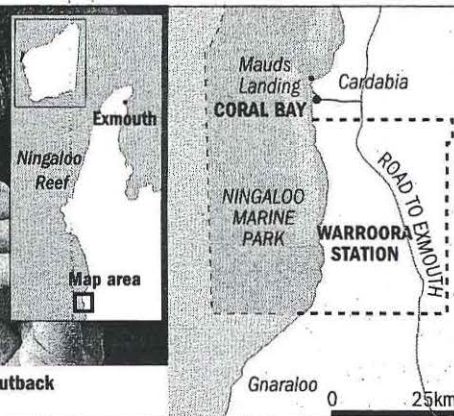
Reports:
Tony Barrass



Pictures:
John Mokrzycki



Warroora Station owner and Ningaloo Reef Outback Coast Association chairman Leonie Horak.



National Heritage Grant to erect proper fencing and signs, create four-wheel-drive tracks, set aside walking trails, initiate a code of conduct for all campers and launch a replanting program, they claim to have a better chance of properly managing the area than a cash-strapped, ill-resourced CALM.

"To me, CALM can't have it both ways," Ms Horak said. "It is constantly complaining about lack of funds and staff, so what happens if they get their hands on this land?"

"Will they be able to properly manage it?"

We don't think so, we think that they will just put a lock on the gates and close the place down under the name of rehabilitation, which I don't think is entirely fair to the large number of West Australians who visit the area and act in an environmentally responsible manner.

"People pitch in up here. Nobody wants to see this place go to ruin. Why would they? Governments need to realise that in this day and age people are environmentally aware and realise their responsibilities."

But Jim Sharp, CALM's director of national parks, said the bigger question remained about land tenure and what should be done, on behalf of the people of WA, about pastoral leases with environmental and public amenity value.

"Technically, this land is already owned by the crown and a lot of people, including pastoralists, tend to forget this fact," he said. "We are now in a process of negotiation and hopefully we can discover what really matters to keep pastoralism viable and what matters to protect those other values, such as the environment."

He disagreed that CALM did not have the resources to manage the

"I have lots of issues with CALM at the moment, but I'm behind them 100 per cent on this one," he said yesterday.

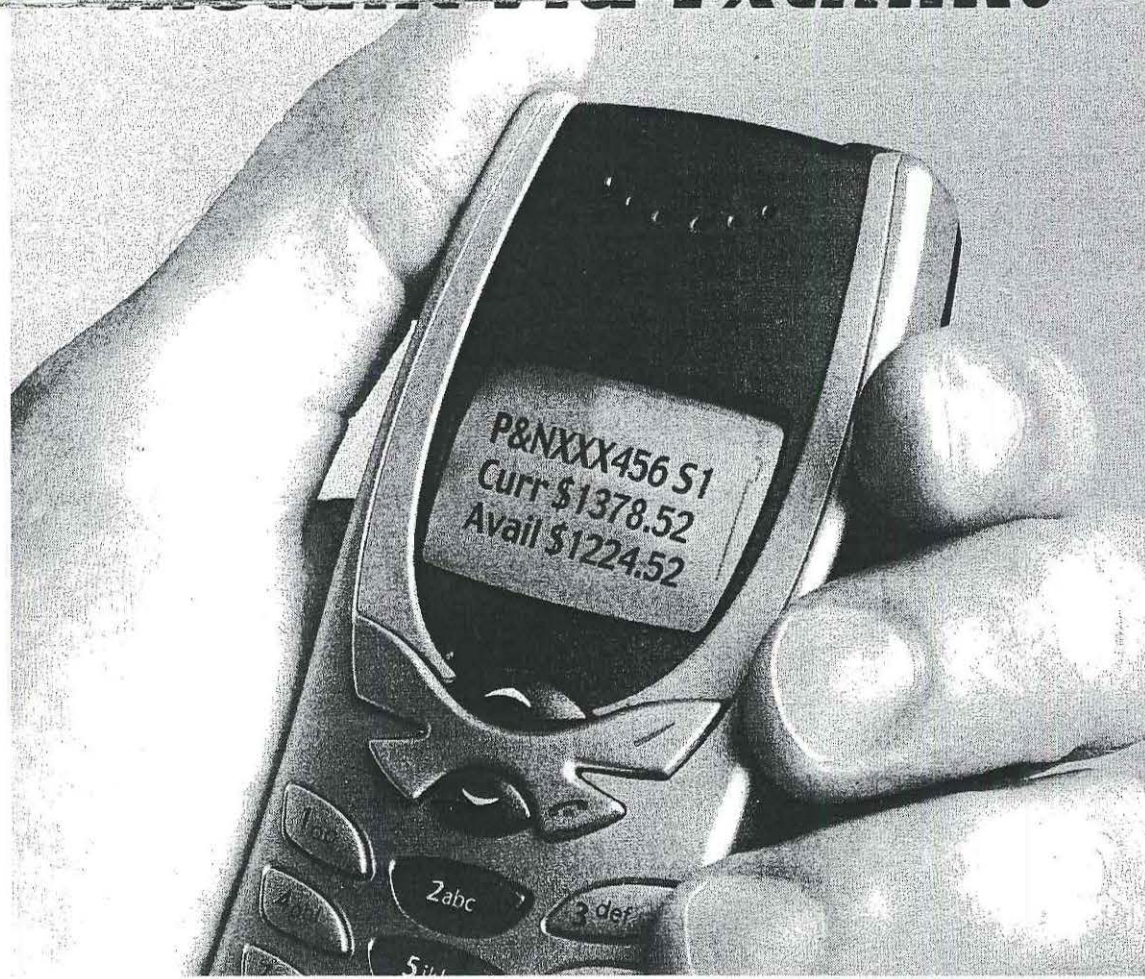
"I don't think that a group of pastoralists, who are flat out managing their land under the requirements of their pastoral leases, really have the expertise to properly manage a major tourism venture on land which is getting the daylight flogged out of it.

"You only have to see the difference between CALM-managed land and that managed by pastoralists to know which one is in better shape."

Meanwhile, the long-time practice of allowing West Australians on to pastoral land and charging them a minimal fee to camp has helped pastoralists make ends meet.

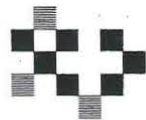
They suspect CALM intends to lock the gates and cut access to the reef for average West Australians.

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Pastoralists have formed the Ningaloo Reef Outback Coast Association and vowed to fight any land grab by the Government head-on.

Having just secured a \$250,000

land. The Cape Range National Park was proof.

"That park has been able to sustain a pretty high level of use without degradation and there's been a great improvement in the environment," Mr Sharp said.

Aboriginals press for piece of the action

WHILE many city based West Australians are passionately opposed to Mauds Landing, North-West Aboriginals hope people can understand why they are not.

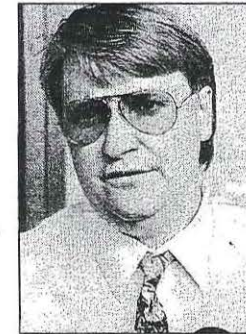
And they have found an unusual ally in Carnarvon Shire councillor Peter Blurton, who came to prominence in 1992 when his pregnant wife Margaret and baby son Shane were killed by a young Aboriginal driving a stolen car.

To the local indigenous community, Mauds Landing will mean work for their young men and women who are in desperate need of job opportunities in towns like Carnarvon where the unemployment rate of black teenagers is around 40 per cent and rising.

And they claim their voice is not being heard in this debate.

Yamatji Land and Sea Council hopes its opinion of the development will be taken into account when Cabinet makes its decision on the proposal soon.

Yamatji Council chairman Taffy Papertalk said indigenous



Mr Blurton

groups on the cape — under a native title claim from the Gnulli people — had thought through the issue.

"Aboriginal people were in that country first and have been looking after it for thousands of years," he said.

"The Native Title Act gives claimants a right to negotiate at best, but no right of veto."

He said the Gnulli had reached a comprehensive agreement with the developers some time ago after extensive negotiations. While not disclosing what that agreement is, *The West Australian* understands it is a guaranteed 10 per cent of 700 jobs expected to be created if the marina is built.

"The negotiations

took place in good faith and resulted in the traditional owners securing their heritage and sharing in the economic benefits deriving from the agreement," Mr Papertalk said. "It is the right of the traditional owners to make decisions about their own country, and, within the framework of the Native Title Act, that is exactly what they have done."

Mr Blurton, whose Margaret and Shane Foundation raised more than \$1 million for victims of crime after the tragedy, said many Aboriginal kids ended up in the city because there were no opportunities for them in the bush.

"The boy who was responsible for killing my family came from the town I now live in," he said.

"These kids aren't evil, they just don't have a future in a place like this so they head off to the city. When something comes along like this we need to fight for it. It's their only chance."

He said the debate had been hijacked by well-meaning people who had no understanding of the social impact of their protests.



On the outer: Ric and Carol French stand in the shallows at Mauds Landing, where Ric's father and grandfather used to load sheep from Cardabia Station, before the family sold the lease. After many years, the family may lose its connection with Coral Bay.

French lease a lesson in title

YOU could say that the French family are on the verge of being done over not once but twice when it comes to freehold at Coral Bay.

In 1969, more than 240ha was excised from their Cardabia Station lease with the intention of creating and gazetting two townsites, one north — Mauds Landing — and one south, now the Coral Bay settlement.

In return, they were given an option on a lease of just 0.6ha that surrounded an old family holiday shack overlooking Bills Bay. The cottage, built in 1933 by Carol French's grandfather, was used by numerous cockies around the Gascoyne as a getaway and fishing hut.

Things have changed. The Frenchs sold their Cardabia lease to an indigenous land corporation, the old shack is long gone and has been replaced by a modest holiday house for which the family originally paid a peppercorn rent.

But as Coral Bay rapidly expanded so did the cost of the lease and as the agreement nears its end, the Frenchs are worried they may soon be

without a retreat that has been in the family for generations and on land originally excised from their station lease.

The family have tried to secure freehold title and are more baffled than angry that they have been unsuccessful.

They are quietly seeking some form of security from the Department of Lands Administration and have just received a substantial bill for a sewerage system which is not yet operational.

"I think you could say our family has always done the right thing as far as Coral Bay is concerned and we will continue to, regardless of what the outcome on this place is," Ric French said.

"But we have a real attachment to this land and I think most people would understand where we're coming from. It's been in our family for a very long time. It comes down to tenure. If some people can get freehold land title, why shouldn't others?"

Jim Robinson, Ric's stepfather and a former Cardabia manager, said the current system of land title did nothing to encourage new businesses or jobs.

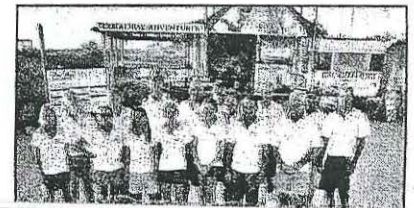
Hardship hardens family's resolve to stay

TRYING to survive in a business climate of confusion and inconsistency has only hardened the resolve of the family-owned



until December 31 to move on. Where, exactly, no one knows.

Carnarvon Shire director of planning Steve Thompson admitted that some bylaws are

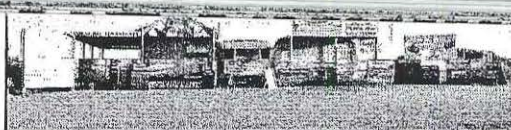


and run Coral Bay Adventures.

Doug, June, Marnie and Yasmin Hunt run one of three burgeoning businesses that may be forced out of their ticketing office by the end of this year.

Because the State Government has slapped a building moratorium on Coral Bay, many rapidly expanding businesses have been unable to rent premises. Most businessmen and women in the settlement have been forced to live and work out of caravans for years.

When the Hunts took over the business nine years ago it was a small operation boasting a coral-viewing boat, access to scenic flights and some expertise in snorkelling. It now has 22 full-time and casual staff and was the first com-



Death row: Tourist premises may be forced out.

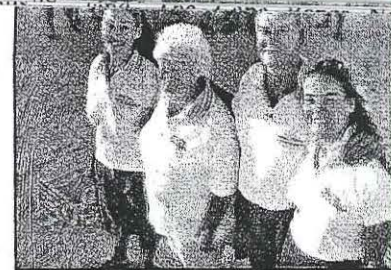
pany in Coral Bay to dive on the great whale sharks.

Until recently, the Hunts had the blessing of the Carnarvon Shire and CALM to run their ticketing offices out of a carpark, on CALM land. But after rival businesses complained about an unfair commercial advantage because of their location, it now seems the Hunts have

enforced and others are not. He understands the frustration but adds that the shire's hands are tied until the State acts. And it won't do so until the long-awaited sewerage system is operational, which could be another two years.

Meanwhile, the Hunts lobby politicians over makeshift tourism licences where some operators pay a levy of \$1 a head to dive with whale sharks while others, like themselves, pay \$20.

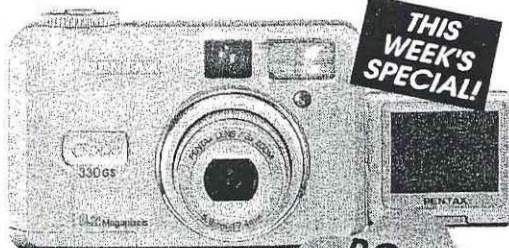
"We're here to stay and we're going to fight to change all these crazy laws," Marnie Hunt said yesterday. "We employ more than 20 people, many of whom live in appalling conditions so they can work here. Coral Bay has a future and we're going to be a part of it."



Determined: Marnie, left in the foreground, June, Doug and Yasmin Hunt outside the threatened office.

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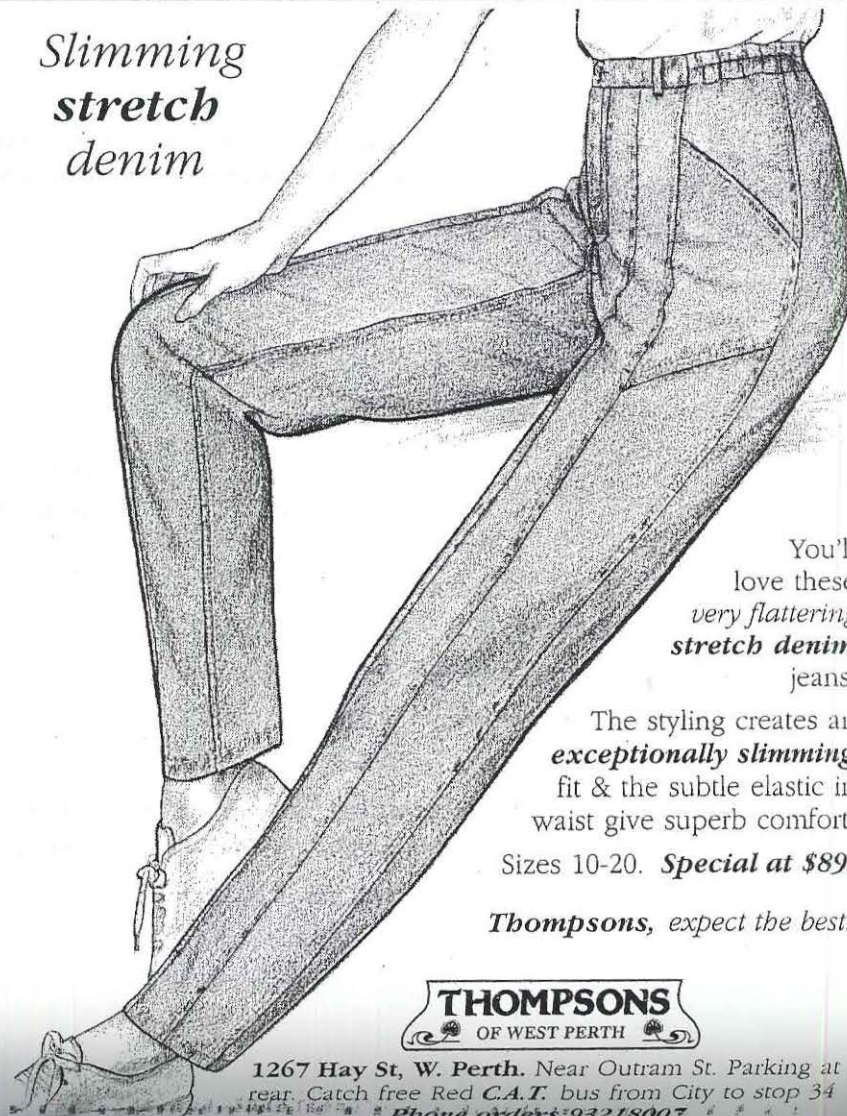
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New wave of disappointment

□ Save Ningaloo Campaign spokesman Paul Gamblin claims reef coverage has merely dredged up old arguments.

GREAT to see Ningaloo occupying so many column centimetres in *The West Australian* recently.

However, readers did not get all the relevant facts. Unfortunately, *The West Australian's* coverage contained historical inaccuracies and the uncritical rehashing of dubious claims by Coral Coast Marina Development Pty Ltd.

It also missed the main policy breakdown that caused this whole fiasco in the first place. It's disappointing, but not surprising, because *The West Australian's* editorials have, for some time, been scathing of opponents to the Maids Landing proposal.

You would think that *The West Australian* would have contacted the Save Ningaloo Campaign for a series called, "The Battle For Ningaloo". But no. Instead, the paper perpetuated the weird and bilious allegations of Norman Moore, a long-time supporter of CCMD's proposal, who has been trying to distract attention from its potential impacts by "playing the man not the ball". So much for balance.

Also unlikely to promote useful debate was *The West Australian's* characterisation of people who challenge CCMD's proposal as being "anti-development". For example, in an article on April 14, it opined: "Whether you believe that development of the remote coastline is long overdue or are passionately opposed to it, one thing is certain; Maids Landing, if misread, could spell the end of a Government."

This implies that we have to accept CCMD's proposal or have nothing — a suggestion plainly illogical and also misinformed, because some sustainable development is already at Ningaloo — and tourists love it. Yes, more is needed, but good jobs will flow only if development is guided by careful planning and backed up with sound management, as the Save Ningaloo Campaign has said over and over again.



Paradise lost: Careful planning is vital if this idyllic piece of coast facing Ningaloo Reef is to survive for the enjoyment of future generations. Maids Landing holds the key.

Understanding why careful planning did not happen is hindered by history being turned on its head: "In 1987, the then Labor government approached the company and asked it to come up with a plan for a marina at Maids Landing because of environmental pressures on Coral Bay." (*The West Australian*, April 14). Wrong. According to information published by CCMD itself, its founder entered into discussions with CALM and the EPA before the company was even formed. These conversations must have been persuasive because soon after, expressions of interest to build the marina resort were invited, and CCMD was chosen.

That's a crucial difference, particularly in light of recent reports about lobbying efforts on behalf of CCMD. This all suggests that

lobbying has been a key strategy for the company all along and seems to be reaching a crescendo as the final decision looms.

But why has CCMD needed to lobby at all? It's partly because its environmental argument did not stack up, as indicated in the EPA's recent report, and because Coral Bay's problems clearly were not going to be fixed by the development either — not that *The West Australian* scrutinised those claims.

The tactic of claiming to solve environmental problems worked in the 1980s but it says a lot that even in those heady times, an era infamous for audacious proposals, CCMD still needed a canny way to justify its proposal. Coral Bay's problems became the developer's crutch and few people questioned

the logic. Coral Bay obviously needs attention, whether or not the marina is built, and the Save Ningaloo Campaign has played the lead role in pressuring the Government to act. After making a promising start, much more effort is needed from the Government.

The other side of CCMD's need for lobbying stems from the lack of a proper planning process. In fact, CCMD cleared its own path — getting government support through lobbying when government should have been planning.

This is vital because planning must guide development, not the other way around. When good planning and rigorous scientific research are done, businesses know where they stand and the community has real input.

ATTEMPTS at planning for Ningaloo only started in the mid-1990s. *The West Australian* listed some of the documents but it did not analyse what lies within them. Interestingly, some planning documents specifically avoid the tricky subject of the marina altogether, while others — distorted by the proposal's momentum — contradict themselves; warning of the area's fragility and advocating only carefully designed, small-scale accommodation along the reef itself but then trying in vain to justify the massive marina resort. Images of the stepsister trying to shoehorn her oversized hoof into Cinderella's glass slipper spring to mind.

The lesson is clear; unencumbered planning must be done now before any developments at Ningaloo are endorsed. It is time to put, firmly and permanently, the horse back in front of the cart.

We now await the decision of the Government on a proposal the community should never have had to fight.

There is no doubt that the great majority of the people of Ningaloo and elsewhere, irrespective of political leanings, want this Government to get us out of this mess and scrap the marina proposal.

Long after the political intrigue and scuttlebutt have been forgotten, our children and our children's children will hold all of us accountable for how we treated Ningaloo.

Less-raucous voices have the right to be heard

□ **TONY BARRASS** replies to Paul Gamblin's criticism of his series, the *Battle for Ningaloo*.

THEY just don't get it. One pivotal point to the recent series of articles on the North-West Cape was to find out what other people — not vocal interest groups such as developers or green lobby groups — think about important issues affecting the cape.

Why Save Ningaloo Campaign would be suffering from Relevance Deprivation Syndrome is anyone's guess. There would be few West Australians who do not understand their message. It has been a highly successful one and this newspaper and many other media organisations have given it considerable coverage over months.

Numerous documentaries, magazines, T-shirts and websites have all been favourable and widely circulated. Bumpers stickers reading

"Save Ningaloo Reef. Stop the Resort" are plastered over thousands of Perth cars.

But the entire basis of Mr Gamblin's argument — indeed most arguments from the green movement these days — seems to be this; we know best and if you don't agree with us, you are either incapable of reaching a sensible conclusion and, by uncritically "rehashing the dubious claims" of self-serving politicians, you are in the pocket of greedy developers.

This patronising argument is juvenile, predictable and offensive.

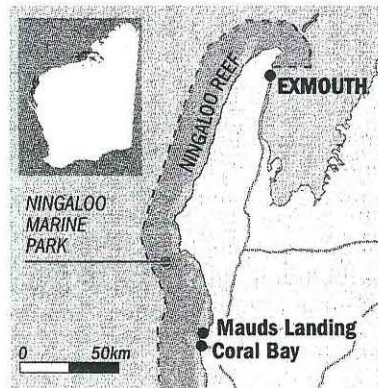
A newspaper has a public responsibility to report all sides of the story regardless of whether those opinions correspond with more powerful players, such as the green lobby and/or CCMD, both of whom seem to have a never-ending supply of money and resources.

Take the Yamatji Land And Sea Council and the Gnulli, the traditional owners of the cape and the reef, as a prime example. Both groups want Mauds Landing to go

ahead, believing the development will give some hope to a generation of kids, many of them destined for the scrap heap. Several emails I've received from supporters of Save Ningaloo were unaware of the stated indigenous position.

So are the Gnulli, who have walked the cape for thousands of years and know the reef better than anyone, also on the payroll and "uncritically rehash dubious claims" of the developers? Do we not report what they have to say because it may upset the greens? *The West Australian* thought it proper to ask their opinion. Others have obviously already asked and chosen to ignore the answers.

Mr Gamblin also contends that *The West's* characterisation of people who challenge the marina is "anti-development". Where this assumption comes from is unclear because it has been well documented that Save Ningaloo is not anti-development — it is only anti-development. It is pro *their* sort of development.



But the most disingenuous aspect to this argument centres on lobbying. Surely Mr Gamblin is being too cute by half in failing to mention the role of Dr Barry Wilson, chairman of the Marine Parks and Reserve Authority, a statutory body that has advised the State over the Mauds Landing proposal for years.

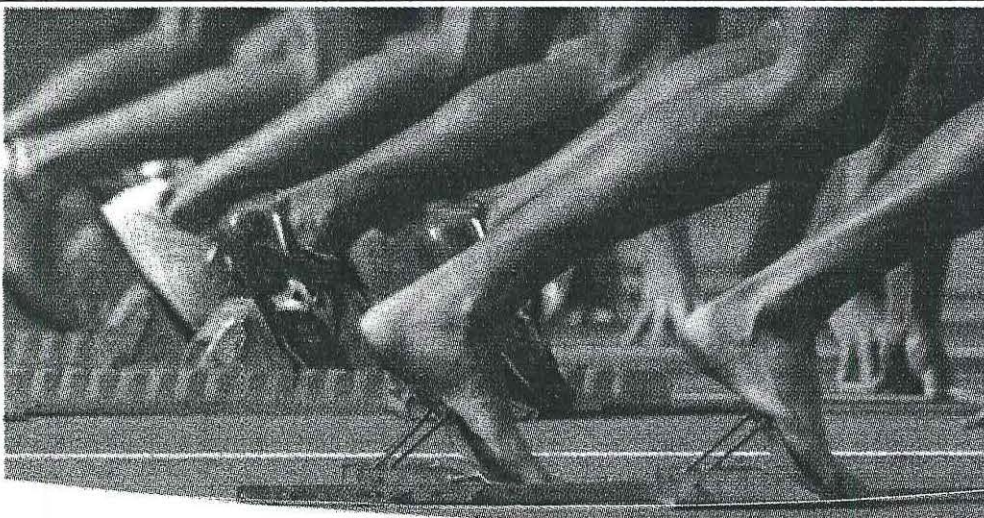
Dr Wilson is a director of a not-

for-profit but cashed-up organisation called Australian Wildlife Conservancy, a big backer of Save Ningaloo. The AWC vehemently opposes the marina but wants to build a research station and its own, smaller eco-tourism project.

Dr Wilson's influential position is part-time and does not preclude him from engaging in private interests. He bristles at suggestions he has in any way helped Save Ningaloo in his government capacity but makes no apologies for lobbying for Save Ningaloo's benefactor, the AWC.

Our series concentrated on land tenure, lack of government services, environmental concerns and other matters affecting locals from Carnarvon to Exmouth. Not people who visit the area once or twice a year and fly back to Perth or Sydney or LA, but those who actually live on the cape.

Newspapers should never shy away from publishing the views of the not-so rich and famous, regardless of how irksome they may be to those in privileged positions.



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Ningaloo saviours rejoice

A defining David and Goliath moment, says Tim Winton

By Cian Manton

KEY players in the fight to stop the \$180 million marina resort planned for Coral Bay gathered around a speaker phone in a West Perth office yesterday to hear they had won.

Someone at the beach at Coral Bay held out a mobile phone to catch the words of Premier Geoff Gallop as he said the plan would not go ahead.

Save Ningaloo spokesman Paul

Gamblin, author Tim Winton, just one of the group's many high-profile backers who helped sway public opinion, and campaign coordinator Dennis Beros still looked stunned several hours after hearing that the resort development had been rejected.

"It's amazing that every now and again the little people win," Winton said.

"Every now and then, you have a defining moment, which is a kind of David and Goliath moment."

Save Ningaloo was a movement which caught the public imagination and was marked by the 80,000 blue bumper stickers plastered across vehicles not only throughout WA but as far away as Europe and the United States. It was formed in 2000 when the WA Conservation Council, Aus-

tralian Marine Conservation Society, World Wide Fund for Nature, Wilderness Society and Australian Wildlife Conservancy joined forces to fight the development.

The campaign had celebrity power — including Winton, Luc Longley and Toni Collette — but Winton claims they were simply "the blood to attract the sharks".

The real work was done behind the scenes by people working for little or no money, the volunteers, the community members who wrote letters and signed petitions.

Last week 8000 emails were sent to Dr Gallop's office pleading with him to reject the proposal.

But now that the Mauds Landing plan has been rejected, Mr Gamblin and his colleagues fear the public

might think the fight is over. They urged people to stay involved to examine any other plans for the area.

"We see the rejection of the Mauds Landing proposal as the first step to really looking at how to plan and manage Ningaloo well for the future," Mr Gamblin said.

The group say they were not anti-development, they were just waiting for a smart, sensitive project to support.

"If you have an icon wilderness, any development that is smart puts that asset first," Winton said.

"Everything else flows on from protecting the environment."

Winton previously gave \$20,000 prize money from the WA Premier's Book Awards to the Save Ningaloo campaign.

THE FIGHT FOR MAUDS LANDING

August 1987: Coral Coast Marina Development established to develop a resort for Mauds Landing, about 3km north of Coral Bay.

May 1989: Coral Coast Marina Development receives Cabinet approval to build tourist town and marina, 400-room resort, 250-room hotel and convention centre, caravan park and backpackers hostel.

December 1995: Environmental Protection Authority approves the \$400 million resort plan.

July 1997: Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes rejects the proposal, claiming the EPA had not researched adequately its environmental impact.

April 2000: The Court government gives Cabinet approval to a revised \$180 million proposal including 710 tourist accommodation units, 200 residential blocks, 100 boat pens and food and retail outlets.

2000: Several conservation groups form Save Ningaloo coalition.

December 2000: The Baiyungu people, Coral Bay's traditional Aboriginal landowners, signs an agreement releasing 250ha to Coral Coast Marina Development.

October 2002: EPA recommends conditional approval of the resort, advising that on-site environmental impacts could be managed as long as strict conditions are imposed.

December 2002: About 15,000 people rally in Fremantle against the plan.

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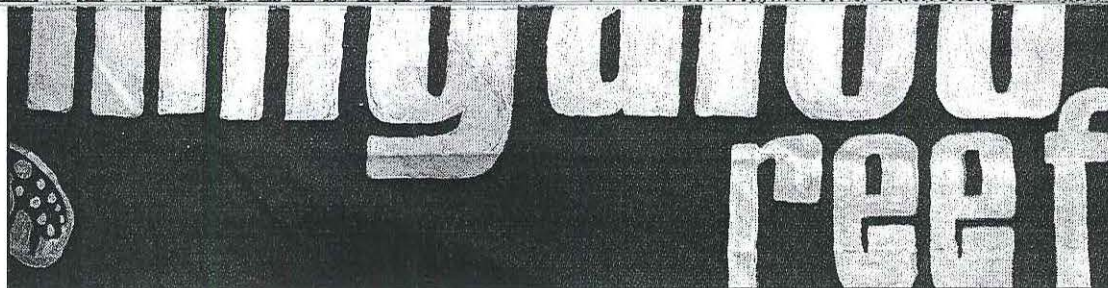
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Job done: Successful Ningaloo campaigners Paul Gamblin, left and Tim Winton answer questions yesterday over a banner altered to the past tense. PICTURE: ROD TAYLOR

December 2002: Environment Minister Judy Edwards rules herself out of process because she appealed against the proposal in 1997. Final decision to be made by Premier Geoff Gallop.

July 2003: Dr Gallop rejects the Mauds Landing development citing unacceptable environmental risks.

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Green glow comes at a price

■ COMMENT
By Steve Pennells

A HELL of a lot of money has been spent on the Ningaloo saga in the past 16 years.

About \$7 million has been forked out by developers strung along by successive governments.

There have been monthly retainers for lobbyists and thousands of dollars drummed up by opponents. And now the proponents look set to file an eight-figure compensation claim.

Imagine what that kind of cash could have done for the tiny com-

munity growing way beyond its infrastructure.

Yesterday, taxpayers added another \$6264 to the tally when Premier Geoff Gallop arranged to charter an extra plane so he could fly with a media contingent to Coral Bay to be interviewed about his decision in front of a beach backdrop.

He spent twice as long in the air as he did on the ground, but the publicity trip worked like a dream and he was treated as something of a local hero.

One of the drinkers in the Coral Bay pub summed up the

mood: "You won't need to pay for a beer at the pub up here today, Premier".

It was Dr Gallop's day to bask in the green glow, negotiate what he called the media's "sea of cynicism" and play down talk of compensation.

Yesterday's decision was the right one. But it was too long coming.

What will be interesting now is how the subsequent legal action will be played out in the courts and how much more taxpayers' money will be spent before the brouhaha is finally over.

SEEDLINGS

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Body found in river

POLICE are investigating the discovery of a body in a river near Albany.

The body of the 56-year-old man was found yesterday afternoon in the King River, near the Happy Days Caravan Park, off Chester Pass Road.

Police said the body had been seen yesterday afternoon.

It was discovered by a person walking along the riverbank.

Police said they were treating the death as suspicious.



Testing the water: Premier Geoff Gallop surveys Coral Bay yesterday after announcing the marina proposal had been rejected. PICTURE: SHARON SMITH

'This is a very precious asset. It has iconic status'

— Premier Geoff Gallop

Tide of opinion brings reef relief

Premier Geoff Gallop set to deliver new plan for region after report rules marina development too risky

By Steve Pennells and Cian Manton

THE fate of the controversial Mauds Landing development was sealed with a 23-page report which echoed what the plan's opponents had been

"This is a very precious asset. It has iconic status," he said.

"It would be a dereliction of duty for any government that would make a decision that would throw this away."

He likened the decision to the High Court decision in 1983 in favour of the Federal Government

compensation based on legal advice that only Environment Minister Judy Edwards could decide the proposal. Dr Edwards disqualified herself because she had appealed against a similar resort at the site, near Ningaloo Reef, in 1997.

Save Ningaloo spokesman Paul Gambin said the group was

WHAT'S THERE

The proposed development is 3km north of Coral Bay, 1130km north of Perth.

The Ningaloo Marine Park stretches for 260km north of Coral Bay to the Exmouth Peninsula. It protects Australia's biggest fringing coral reef.

The reef is home to more than 200 coral species, 600 different molluscs and 500 species of fish.

It is also host to the world's biggest fish, the whale shark, as well as dugongs, manta rays, dolphins and whales and is a turtle breeding ground.


First settled in the late 1800s to serve local pastoralists, Mauds

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saying for years — it was not worth the risk.

The Environmental Appeals Committee report received by Premier Geoff Gallop on Wednesday included 79 submissions on the proposed development.

Nearly all were against the marina going ahead.

"The environmental risks and management needs for the proposal have not been demonstrated to be environmentally acceptable," the report concluded.

Dr Gallop flew to Coral Bay yesterday to announce officially that the State Government had rejected the proposed \$180 million marina and residential development, saying evidence against the proposal was overwhelming.

The Government would speed up the push to have the region granted World Heritage status.

Dr Gallop said the State Government had set a development benchmark.

...of the Federal Government using its external affairs power to stop the Tasmanian Government damming the Franklin River.

Dr Gallop will release today a new land use and tourism plan for the region for public comment.

Coral Coast Marina Development executive director Alan Smith said it was a sad day for people in the Gascoyne.

"This was a one-off opportunity for something like 700 jobs to be created in the region for them," Mr Smith said.

"It was a one-off opportunity for tourism. But that would appear to be all over now."

The rejection was a decision made for political expediency.

The company had not been told of the decision, even after Dr Gallop's media announcement.

"It makes a mockery of the State's approval process," Mr Smith said.

On Thursday, Mr Smith foreshadowed a court claim for com-

merce. Landing became a gazetted town in the 1920s but has remained sand dunes.

...said the group was pleased but saw the resort's rejection as only the first step.

State Opposition Leader Colin Barnett said Dr Gallop's decision was aimed at votes and would cause problems.

He said the project was introduced under a Labor government and even though the proponents had met the requirements of the system, they had been treated poorly by Dr Gallop.

"(Dr Gallop) has now left that coastline and that reef without any proper protection," Mr Barnett said.

"This has been a great backwards step to the development of tourism in the north of the State.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive Lyndon Rowe said the decision would be seen by investors as a clear example of how difficult it was becoming to get a result from government in WA.

► Editorial, page 16



Commerce.

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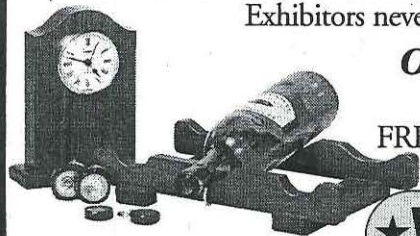
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ISSUES

COMMENT

Ningaloo battle is not over

IF THE State Government had any doubts about the environmental risks associated with the Mauds Landing development at Ningaloo it was quite right to reject the proposal. But now it must go further.

Public pressure on the reef, and on the town of Coral Bay, far exceeds the capability to deal with it. There are simply too many people using a town which has been allowed to grow in an unplanned way, from its days as a small coastal community to its present status as the entrance to an area of world renown.

The largely pristine nature of the Ningaloo Reef has made it a magnet for world travellers and local tourists alike. The challenge ahead of the Gallop Government is to ensure that the reef can cope with so many people, and to find a way to pay for it.

There is little doubt that the decision to reject the development was influenced by the weight of public opinion. Those against the proposal mounted a fierce campaign, backed by some influential public figures, in a classic David-and-Goliath battle.

Theirs was the easier argument. The prospect of losing the natural splendour of Ningaloo was enough to make many people call for a halt, out of simple

The West Australian

PERTH SATURDAY JULY 5 2003

concern that the rapaciousness of development would destroy Ningaloo and turn it into a version of the Gold Coast.

Those same people, however, must be just as demonstrative now. They must continue to apply pressure on the Government to ensure that the area comes under the environmental controls necessary to protect it from future harm.

That is not to say that there should never be development of any kind at the reef. To cater for a growing tourism market, badly needed by the State and the region, more and better facilities undoubtedly are needed.

But the protection of the reef must come first. Despite vigorous and well-funded argument by the development company, the Government was not convinced that the proposal would not harm the reef. Premier Geoff Gallop — who believed, oddly, that it was necessary for him to fly to Coral Bay to make the announcement — said the size and scale of the \$180 million plan was an environmental risk.

The proposal was approved by the Environmental Protection Authority last year, but only if the Government could ensure the protection of the reef and marine environment. Dr Gallop may well have found that clause expedient.

The disappointment of both the developers and the local communities which supported the proposal is understandable. Employment opportunities in the remote part of the State are few, and the 2000-bed resort, marina, caravan park and backpackers' facility would, according to the developers, have provided 700 jobs.

But any debate about the future of Ningaloo must come back to the reef itself. Only by sustaining its health will future generations have a reason to visit it.

And that is why Dr Gallop's decision yesterday provides him with an even bigger challenge than deciding between the benefits of development and the possibility of environmental damage.

Now that he has taken a stand against the Coral Coast Marina Development plan, he must go further and protect the reef for ever. And those electors who supported his decision must be just as strident in their demands that he takes the necessary steps.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Headline was a cheap shot

WHAT hypocrisy (So close to WA but it costs thousands to send them 1800km, 3/7). I refer, of course, to the boatload of suspected illegal immigrants. Fifty-four men, women and children caught off Port Hedland are to be sent to immigration custody on Christmas Island



BOB Santamaria founded the Australian Family Association in 1980. For this reason alone, one is compelled to defend his



AS A real estate agent who works weekends, I would be very interested to know how many of those who are against deregulating WA trading hours have sold or bought a house at a home open on a Sunday.

ALAN BAXENDALE, Duncraig.

□ □ □

COMMENTING on the threat of global



Winton's joy at Ningaloo

Belinda Hickman
Roger Martin
Kathryn Shine

LIKENING the win to the campaign to save the Franklin River, a jubilant Tim Winton yesterday described the Gallop Government's rejection of a development near an internationally renowned reef as a "David and Goliath moment".

The author, who became a

figurehead for the successful Save Ningaloo Campaign, said opponents of the resort planned for Mauds Landing, 1000km north of Perth, were not anti-development but wanted the best possible management of the Ningaloo Reef to be assured.

"I can't think of a more important fight other than the Franklin River. For us it was deeply personal," Winton said. "This is a win for us, but it would be silly to rush off gloating or thinking the battle is over."

'I can't think of a more important fight other than the Franklin River'

Tim Winton
Author

Winton said the Gallop Government decision would officially separate the Labor Party from a 1980s develop-at-all-costs mindset.

As foreshadowed in *The Australian*, Premier Geoff Gallop announced he had decided against permitting the development — to include a marina, hotel, private villas

and shops — from being built near the 280km reef, renowned for its whale sharks and pristine marine ecosystem.

Dr Gallop said the reef was an environmental icon of international significance.

"We have drawn a line in the sand and said we will not accept developments that

threaten the fragile coastline.

Winton would put importance on the Labor Party itself off.

But Coral Coast, the base of the reef, is more than an environmental icon.

"It's a place of history and significance. It's a place of beauty and interest. It's a place of life."

Due process a token gesture

Roger Martin
Comment

NO one in government will be prepared to admit it, but the decision to oppose the Ningaloo resort had been made long before Geoff Gallop flew to Coral Bay yesterday and made the formal announcement.

If it wasn't for the need to follow due process and avoid being sued by the developers, the Premier could have made the announcement a year ago.

Whether the Government did follow due process and gave Coral Coast Marina Development a fair hearing is still likely to be decided by the courts.

CCMD will try to prove the Government never intended approving its resort plan, and wasted everyone's time and money by going through the charade of pretending the project was still being considered.

All those involved in the decision have been careful to protect the state's position in the event of legal action.

But two public announcements last year made it obvious the Government was never going to let the resort be built.

First, the promise in 2001 to spend \$11.6 million on a marina at nearby Exmouth did not need to be made if private developers were offering to build one.

That was followed last year

by a commitment to spend \$7.5 million on sewerage for Coral Bay, something CCMD would also provide as part of its project.

And if CCMA still had not got the message, last year's Labor state conference put it more bluntly when its 350 delegates voted to oppose the project.

Although the resolution was not binding on the Government, Dr Gallop was hardly going to return to the 2003 conference, which begins today, and reveal he had decided to ignore their views.

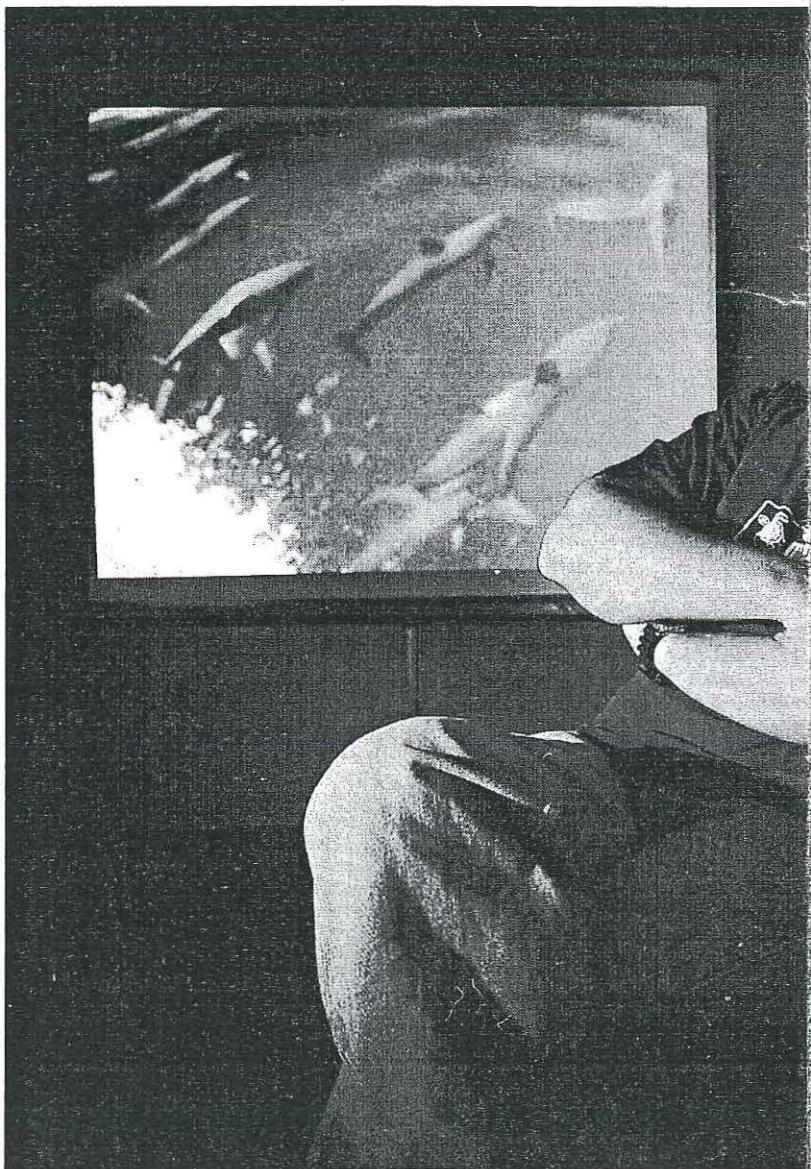
And there would have been the raw political consequences of approving the proposal.

The environmental kudos the Government received for ending the logging of old-growth forests would be forgotten at the next election, as news bulletins showed celebrities and other campaigners trying to stop bulldozers tearing up the landscape.

And what a list of celebrities there would have been — Tim Winton, Luc Longley, Claudia Karvan, Toni Collette and Pat Rafter among a long list.

The blunt political reality Labor faced was that the costs far outweighed any benefits that could be gained from approving a marina and tourist resort at Coral Bay.

Even with legal action likely, it is a risk the Government knew it had to bear.



Winners: Ningaloo Reef campaigners Winton, left, and Paul Gamblin in Perth yesterday.

Gallop decision

...this precious and fra-
...t," he said.

...n said the decision
...rove to be historically
...at. "If there is a defin-
...ment ... it is for the
...arty. It has finally cut
...from the 1980s."

...for the developers,
...ast Marina Develop-
...e rejection seemed to
...d on political rather
...vironmental reasons.
...bout political expedi-
...it's about green pref-
...CCMD director Alan
...aid.

"What has happened here
really does make a mockery of
the state approvals process.

"I think what should concern
most people is why would
people bother to invest in
Western Australia."

The company is contemplat-
ing legal action against the
Government to recover the
\$7 million it has spent in the 16
years since the state first called
for expressions of interest to
develop a resort near Ningaloo.

"We will be thoroughly
investigating this decision and
the reasons behind it before

we decide on our next course
of action," Mr Smith said.

That legal action could
include a claim Dr Gallop did
not have the power to make a
ruling. The Premier took res-
ponsibility for the decision
after allegations Environment
Minister Judy Edwards had a
conflict of interest.

The Save Ningaloo Cam-
paign — based on mum-and-
dad donations and car bumper
stickers — won support from
thousands of Australians,
including Toni Collette, Luc
Longley and Pat Rafter.

Coral Bay project in danger of green ban

Roger Martin

THE chances of the Coral Bay
development receiving envi-
ronmental approval appears
to have been significantly
"sabotaged" by the actions of
one of the state government's
agencies.

A report by the state's
environmental appeals conve-
nor handed to Premier Geoff
Gallop on Wednesday included
a recommendation the project
not proceed and noted the
Government was now pushing
hard for the Ningaloo Marine
Park to be declared a World
Heritage Area.

The state's Department of
Conservation and Land Man-
agement warned Appeals Con-
venor Fiona Keating that
controversy surrounding the
project could have a negative
impact on successful World
Heritage nomination.

"The department
considered that it is a valid
assertion that public concern
may impact on, even compro-
mise, the successful nomi-
nation of World Heritage," Ms
Keating's report said.

The report also said two
environmental benefits of the
development — the building of
a wastewater treatment plant
and the relocation of boating
activities from more sensitive
areas — had been "complicat-
ed" by Government
announcements to address
both matters. They included
the Government committing
to its own \$7.5 million waste-
water treatment plant and the
installation of moorings in
nearby Bills Bay.

The report also noted that
increasing visitor numbers to
Ningaloo would be addressed
in a new regional strategy
being developed by the state's
planning commission.

The report was critical of the
environmental credentials of
the 2500-bed development, say-
ing it represented a major
impact on an area adjacent to
a marine park.



Picture: Ross Swanborough

Fiction friction on reef of grief

WA author Tim Winton has written an account of the Save Ningaloo Reef campaign in the *Bulletin* magazine that appears to be as fictional as one of his award-winning novels.

In the piece, titled *How the Reef was Won*, Winton paints a picture of a "motley bunch of campaigners with meagre resources and the odds stacked against them in every possible way who had taken on the big end of town and won".

In a highly romanticised, stereotypical depiction of good v evil, the article raises more questions about the contentious issue than it answers, for both the Government and the developers.

Winton's depiction of his fellow campaigners as broke, inconsequential amateurs, who were hapless and out-gunned, is, in reality, a half-truth.

The state's highest-profile literary figure alongside a multimillionaire former basketball star in Luc Longley, as well as international actor Toni Collette, who's not short of a quid either, and you're starting to assemble some serious pulling power.

Add to that the lobbying and fundraising experience of the Conservation Council, World Wildlife Fund, Wilder-

ness Society and Australian Wildlife Conservancy and you're beginning to stretch the imagination by suggesting the other side should be called "Goliath".

By comparison, Tim's so-called "big end of town" is a development company that has bled \$7 million over 16 years, doing everything that was asked of it by multiple governments and departments along the way.

Politicians from both sides had encouraged the group to keep going and keep investing time and money, virtually right up until the Premier pulled the plug.

Here we had a political leader dumbstruck by Tim and his all-star band and galvanised at the thought of losing crucial green preferences at the next election.

On his relationship with Geoff Gallop, Winton wrote: "We knew we'd never have the access to government that business people routinely enjoy."

But how many of those in business get to strap on a snorkel and swim around with the Premier for an hour?

Winton added that "departmental advisers took meetings with us and then Cabinet ministers graced us with a hearing". Requests, however, from Alan Smith, executive director of the development

company, for an official meeting with the Premier were repeatedly rejected.

Winton gives the impression that his side somehow struggled to get its message across because "even the Perth media is 1200km and 15 hours' drive away from Ningaloo".

This, he claimed, meant the reef was better known in Europe, which surprised me, but was largely irrelevant given they were targeting decision-makers in St Georges Tce.

Of the public battle he said: "We watched the developers' PR company crank the spin in the press and on radio and wondered how we could counter it without money."

But it's Winton's group who refuses to detail what it spent or how much was donated.

In response to suggestions that at least one millionaire supporter donated more than \$250,000, spokesman Paul Gambin would say only that "all donors to the campaign are entitled to their anonymity".

On the other hand, Alan Smith admits to spending \$200,000 on marketing and PR.

Winton also repeated the misleading statistic that "in Coral Bay and Exmouth, local opposition to the resort ran at well over 90 per cent".

That's hardly surprising given that Exmouth locals would be worse off if business headed south to a five-star resort.

And who would expect the business community of Coral Bay to welcome quality competition that would make it look substandard by comparison?

Tim's group was pretending to protect serenity where virtually none existed.

Images and discussion about giant turtles, manta rays and dugongs were talked up constantly, but the group chose not to highlight the current sewerage problems, environmental degradation from boats dragging anchor chains across the reef and the pathetic scarcity of environmental management from the Government right now in that part of the world.

Tim's group painted a luxury resort for 2500 people as the great Satan, but it said nothing about the run-down settlement down the road that often hosted 3500 visitors.

Tim's passion for the environment is admirable and to be respected. But his view of this decision is as extreme on the green end as the mentality of the Surfers Paradise developers on the other. Somewhere in between, there is a balance that was not reached in this missed opportunity.

■ **Liam Bartlett** hosts the *Statewide Morning Program* on ABC Radio.
Email: liam@your.abc.net.au

carnage and for the families of the dead and injured, even though Amrozi's lawyers will appeal against the sentence, which might not be carried out for years.

The tough verdict and the orderly court process should serve as an example to other Asian countries who put terrorists on trial.

Amrozi is a fanatic who has repeatedly said he wants to be a martyr.

The downside of the verdict is that the death penalty won't retard acts of terrorism. It may well inspire more.

Exploring a pipedream

It is refreshing that the State Government has at last decided to examine the possibility of pumping water from the Kimberley to southern regions of the state.

The idea is not new. Raised many times, and now the target of a strong campaign led by former MP Ernie Bridge, the bold plan in the past has been rejected out of hand on the grounds of cost. It has also attracted more than its share of ridicule and indifference.

The idea was always worthy of better treatment. With Perth facing a prolonged water crisis, and much of the state's arid regions remaining unproductive, the Government should have examined the proposal thoroughly years ago.

There are huge water reserves in the Kimberley but much of the precious water that pours into the Ord and Fitzroy rivers each year is wasted.

While a pipeline from the Ord to Kalgoorlie or Perth would be astronomically costly — estimates put it at more than \$3 billion — the project would be of enormous benefit to WA.

Big tracts of arid land would turn green, making WA a far more attractive and productive place.

The Government should examine a role for private enterprise in the pipeline scheme, which some day could become essential as pressure grows on our water supplies.

Visionary projects like this are needed for WA to capitalise on its potential for future generations.

Responsibility for editorial comment is taken by the editor, Brett McCarthy, 34 Stirling St, Perth 6000.

HOW THE REEF WAS WON

Tim Winton

The true story of a remote reef, a reclusive writer, and a dedicated bunch of rabble rousers who took on the big end of town.

ON 4 JULY, WEST AUSTRALIAN Premier Geoff Gallop flew 1200 kilometres north of Perth to the tiny settlement of Coral Bay to announce his rejection of a controversial resort proposal at nearby Maud's Landing. Further, he declared that he would be pressing for World Heritage listing of the area. "Today," he said, "we have drawn a line in the sand and declared that we will not accept developments that threaten this precious and fragile coast." His unequivocal decision ended a bitter and very public battle over one of Australia's iconic wilderness areas. A day before this, Purnululu (The Bungle-Bungles) entered the World Heritage register. With Shark Bay already listed, and Ningaloo mooted, Western Australia, most traditionally seen as the nation's quarry, suddenly looks as though it could yet become a world leader in the management of fragile places and a trailblazer for sustainable eco-tourism.

The state had undergone a significant sea change. Weeks later sand-groppers are still coming to terms with this monumental decision and the public campaign that helped bring it about. For the Coral Coast Marina Development (CCMD), that morning in July signalled the end of a 16-year effort to build a 47-hectare marina and a luxury resort for 2500 people in one of the nation's last great coastal wilderness areas. But for the motley bunch of Save Ningaloo campaigners huddled around a speakerphone listening while a supporter held a mobile phone up to the media scrum on the beach at Coral Bay, the Premier's words meant something else entirely. After more than two years of full-time campaigning, with miserable resources and the odds stacked against them in every possible way, these were words they often



thought they'd never hear. The amazing fact was that a small group of volunteers, a bunch of amateurs, had taken on the big end of town and won.

People were in tears. The fax machine began spitting paper. Within minutes well-wishers and news crews descended on the tiny borrowed office. It was pandemonium.

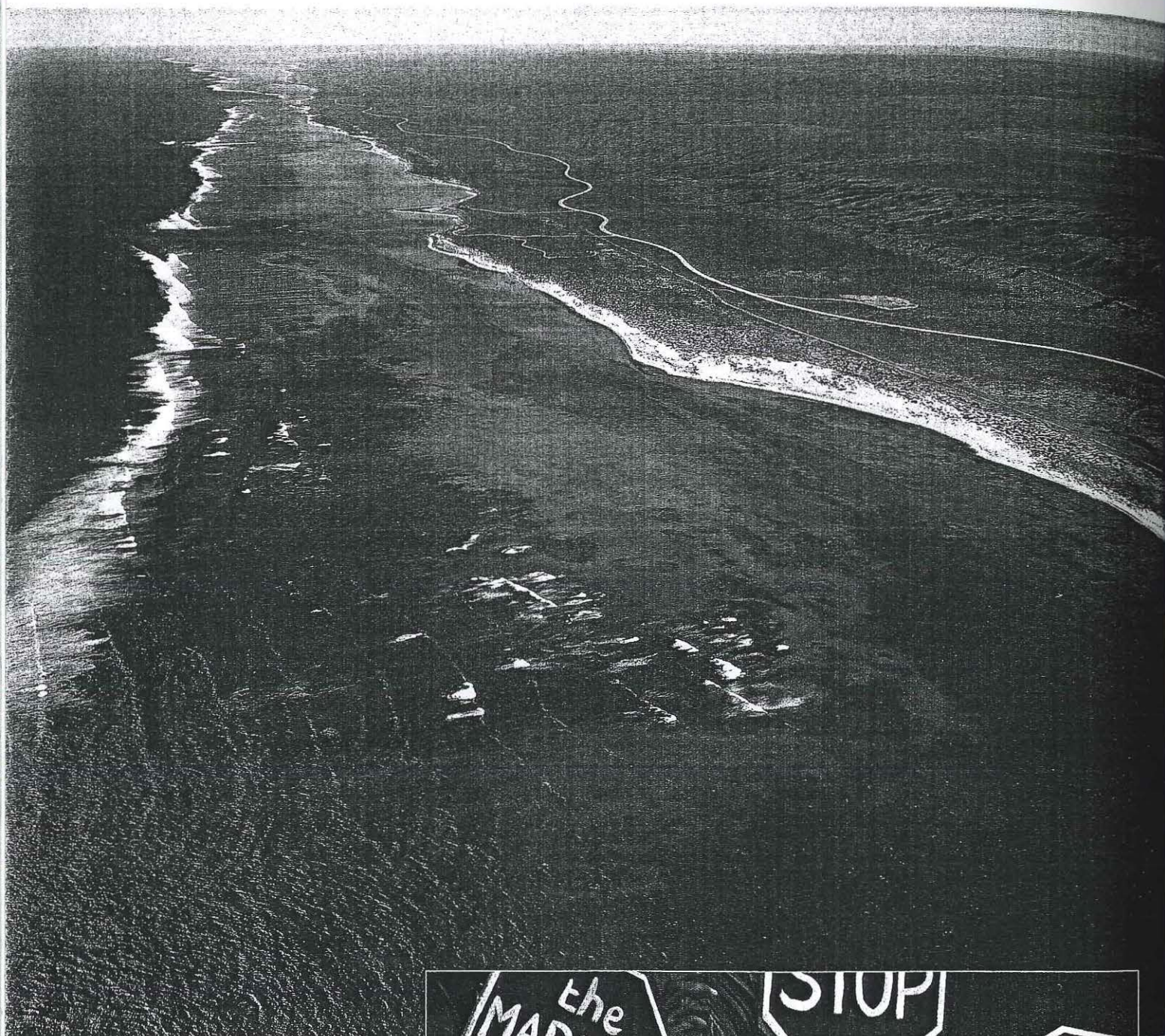
I was one of the stunned campaigners in that fetid room, but I was in a state of turmoil. I couldn't take it in. Gallop's decision and his language went much further than I dreamt was possible. He was someone I'd met and respected but, educated by the last two years of advocacy, I'd been steeling myself for some dirty trick, the usual mealy-mouthed compromise that even a genuine political leader is forced to make. I wanted to see it on paper, on

Premier's Department stationery before I would believe. And a few minutes later, there it was, curling from the overheated fax machine. The government website. The ABC news. It was real.

As part of the Save Ningaloo Reef campaign I felt like a bit-player in the low-budget movie, *The Castle*. We were the Kerrigan family, every bit as hapless and outgunned. Our hearts were in the right place, our cause was just, but the forces of money and influence were against us. We were a fart fighting with a cyclone. We had our "ideas men" but half the time we were simply dreamin'. The little people only ever win in the movies. So how did *we* fall across the line?

Well, as Paul Kelly says, "from little things, big things grow".

"How The Reef Was Won" by Tim Winton, first published in *The Bulletin*, August 2003.



ABOVE Aerial shot of Ningaloo Reef.

COL. ROBERTS/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES

RIGHT The Ninga-turtles provided colourful media imagery for the campaign. THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

PREVIOUS PAGE Ningaloo spokesperson Paul Gamblin (left) and Tim Winton share the good news at a victory press conference.

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

In 2000, plans for a \$200 million marina resort at Ningaloo resurfaced. The proposal had been looming since 1987 and successive governments had dithered about it and done little. The project, a classic '80s behemoth, pre-dated the ad hoc planning process for the region. It was a quagmire in every respect.

Unlike the Great Barrier Reef, the smaller, healthier Ningaloo is very close to shore and therefore especially vulnerable. You can wade out to it. Home of endangered turtles, dugongs, and 300 species of corals, the 260 kilometre reef is world famous for its



manta rays and whalesharks which provide locals with sustainable jobs in eco-tourism. It butts onto a terrestrial wilderness of red ranges and empty beaches. From it you'd be hard-pressed to see a dwelling along its entire length.

Ningaloo is an irreplaceable asset, but few Western Australians understood what was lurking over the horizon. Planners, architects and marine scientists had urgent concerns about the impacts of construction of a massive marina in such a sensitive area but felt their voices were lost beneath the volume of the developers' PR machine. All around Australia similar battles raged. By and large, though, it was business as usual and the develop-at-all-costs mindset prevailed.

The fight for Ningaloo was hardly a clash of civilisations but it was a battle of world views. The traditional view, the one that gave us Florida and Surfers Paradise, sees a pristine coral reef as a resource to exploit, an opportunity to engineer and improve nature for quick profit. But a new generation prefers nature unrenovated. It sees an unspoilt wilderness as a public asset to celebrate and nurture. These people are seeking a balanced approach that puts the health of the natural asset before all commercial considerations. In 2001, as part of this generational change, the Gallop Labor government swept to power on a surge of environmental concern



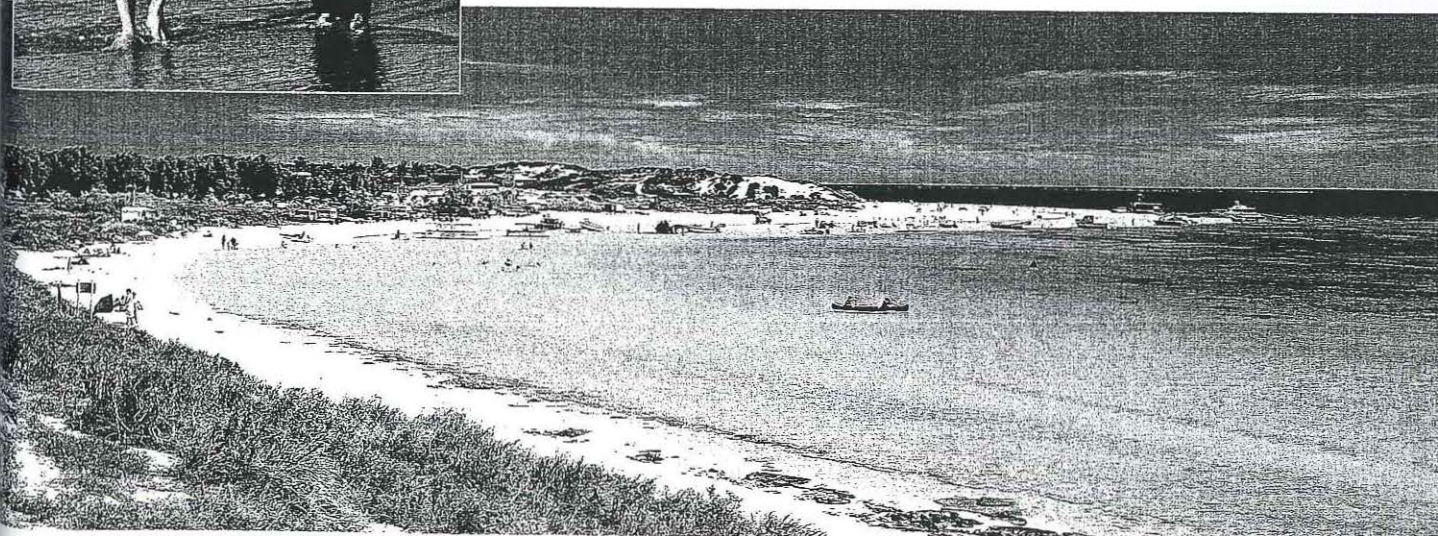
and a platform of sustainable development. It was a far cry from the Quarry State of Sir Charles Court and the Spiv State of the disgraced Brian Burke. But would it survive the grim compromises of political reality? As we were to discover, the mindsets of both the '60s and the inglorious '80s are still strong in WA.

In late 2000, before Labor came to power, six of us from a variety of backgrounds met to talk about fighting the marina resort. A wildlife cinematographer from Queensland, who knew better than most what awaited Ningaloo if this development went ahead, pleaded with us to get word out to the public. He wrote out a cheque for \$1000. With the others I committed myself to the struggle, but privately I thought it would end up being a doomed but necessary gesture.

We made the campaign up as we went along. We borrowed an office, sought the advice of seasoned campaigners and began to attract an increasingly diverse team of helpers who wrote submissions, answered phones, inspired a following. With the input of the Australian Marine Conservation Society and the imprimatur of the local Conservation Council, we formed alliances with WWF, The Wilderness Society and the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. None of them could spare us much cash but the little they found for us served as seed money for the endless grind of fundraising and their expertise was invaluable. Save Ningaloo was

LEFT Actress Toni Collette and Tim Winton get their feet wet on the pristine shores of the reef. THE WEST AUSTRALIAN

BELOW Tourists enjoy the clear blue waters of Coral Bay, not far from Maud's Landing where the proposed marina development was to be located. BILL BELSON/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES



just an idea. The sort that seems like a good idea at the time. Seven years into a book I couldn't seem to finish, I fidgeted through many meetings, struggling with acronyms and talk of political players I'd never heard of. I was the wrong man for the job. I looked for ways out.

Apart from being broke and inconsequential, our newborn outfit was truly up against the tyranny of distance.

Seven years into a book I couldn't seem to finish, I fidgeted through many meetings, struggling with acronyms and talk of political players I'd never heard of. I was the wrong man for the job.

Nobody understands this like a Sandgroper. The Australian media lives in Sydney. Even the Perth media is 1200 kilometres and 15 hours drive away from Ningaloo. For most Australians WA was mystery enough. Ningaloo *what?* The reef was better known in Europe. So there

we were, with cultural, fiscal, political and spatial distances to contend with.

On top of that our enterprise got under way in 2001 during the lowest moral ebb in our nation's recent history. Cash for comment. The Tampa election. The churches' abuse of children. The vision of public officials and business leaders drinking so long at the trough that they barely remembered to come up for air. Australia felt like a country in moral freefall. Young people I spoke to seemed startlingly contemptuous of civic leaders and politics. Across a spectrum of age and class people told me there was absolutely no point in trying to make a difference in society because nobody was listening, everything was corrupted.

In such an atmosphere of betrayal and deception you could hardly blame people for feeling cynical and disaffected, but even as a confirmed non-joiner, such nihilism and disengagement really worried me. I have no education in politics and less interest. But I feared a little for our democracy. A bumper sticker of the time said: IF WE STOP VOTING, WILL THEY ALL JUST GO AWAY?

My time with Save Ningaloo exposed me to a different view of people. In an age when the profit motive is supposed to have conquered all, I found that there are still citizens who will volunteer their time, their expertise, their car, their house. People who act selflessly. They just need to believe in something honest and real. Their trust has to be earned. They need to be respected and inspired, because when that happens the tenacity of ordinary people's optimism and the infectiousness of their enthusiasm are a mighty thing. Over two years volunteers busted their guts for Ningaloo. These people were my mid-life post-grad course in civics.

Our first public meeting filled a 300-seat auditorium. Lots of older faces. I felt sick with dread. I was, I suppose, a kind of bait to attract the crowd. I was trying to reconcile myself to the role. (Lesson one. In order to bring the sharks, you need blood in the water. There's next to no chance that media will cover a citizens' meeting without a gimmick or eminent person. Lesson two. Don't ever mention this to the media. It offends them. Similarly, even though they create these parameters, be prepared to cop criticism from them for engaging in celebrity politics and cheap gimmicks.

Lesson three. Try not to take any of this personally because they don't.) The evening was an organisational shambles. One journo turned up, got my picture and left after my little speech. He wasn't there long enough to see how passionate the audience became when scientists and planning specialists spoke. How the sudden availability of what was in the end pretty austere information, ignited them like a flame given oxygen. Afterwards we were inundated by offers of help from marine science students, pensioners and young parents. We were still an idea but at least a few hundred people shared it.

A tiny trickle of money came in. While the committee got on with the grinding

Outside every meeting there were Kombis and BMWs, bicycles and utes. Suddenly we had a movement wherein you'd find the facially-pierced and the bark-knuckled.



Manta ray (*Manta birostris*) scoops over a reef top. EVA BOOGAARD/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES

procedural business of seeking out bureaucrats and experts and sifting through masses of government papers, a few bumper stickers were printed to give the campaign a public focus. Right from the start we could never print enough to keep up with demand.

As it slowly gathered momentum, the campaign began forming alliances with people in the Gascoyne region in the communities closest to the proposed marina resort. Campaigners flew, if they could, but often as not went up four to a car and slept four to a room in motels or shared tents. In Coral Bay the public bar was the only meeting place. To some the locals may have looked like roughnecks, and even I wondered if I hadn't stumbled into one of my novels, yet these characters were passionate about the environment and they knew more about the reef and the developer than anybody.

In Coral Bay and Exmouth, local opposition ran at well over 90 per cent. We were invited to speak at chambers of commerce and progress associations and I was apprehensive about how we'd be

received, but a truly unexpected coalition was born. Rural business and urban greenies? Fishermen and greenies? Absolutely. Outside every meeting there were Kombis and BMWs, bicycles and utes. Suddenly we had a movement wherein you'd find the facially-pierced and the bark-knuckled. All preconceptions went out the door, though I was once kicked out of the Coral Bay pub for being barefoot after 6pm. There's a limit I guess. On occasion I shared a plane with one or more of the developers. We made awkward but

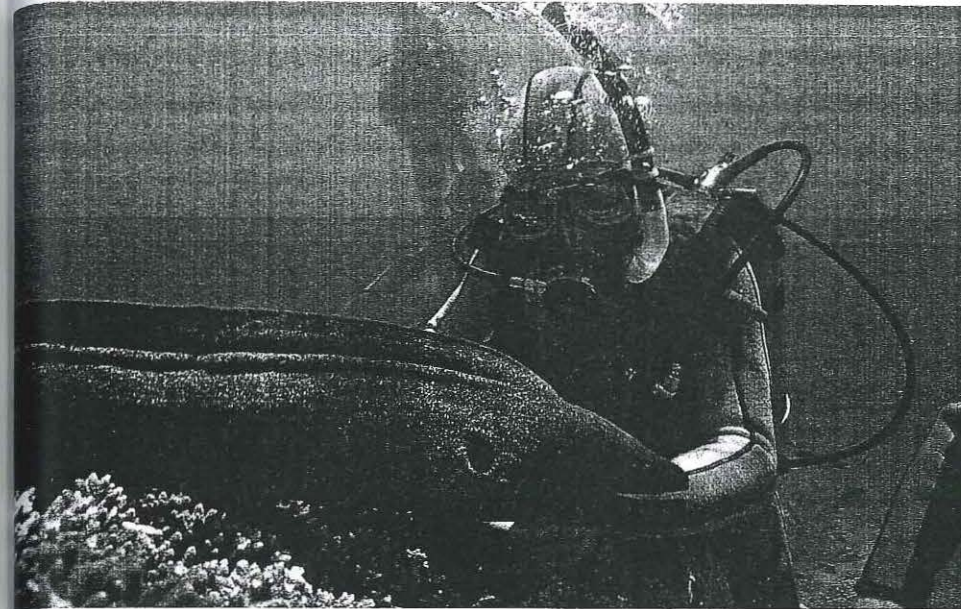
good-natured conversation and tried to make light of things. Once, one of them asked to be photographed with me at the airport. Of course I obliged.

Newspaper and television stories began to appear. Radio was excited. Even one of the shock-jocks gave us a fair hearing at first. The campaign's early success was exciting people's imagination. Sandgropers began to see Ningaloo as a piece of the family silver, a common asset. It was held in trust by government. It did not automatically belong only to spectators.

Very slowly, departmental advisors took meetings with us and then cabinet ministers graced us with a hearing. Our spokesperson, Paul Gamblin, was steely and concise under pressure. Behind the scenes, Dennis Beros and David Mackenzie agonised over every strategy and the crushing weight of detail. You could have lit the national grid off their combined intellect. We knew we'd never have the access that business people routinely enjoy, so we tried to make the most of it. I shut up whenever possible and tried to look intelligent. I avoided every meeting I could. I learnt what a PowerPoint presentation was. Later, as we pitched to curious or sympathetic civic leaders and captains of industry, I came to realise that PowerPoint is the lingua franca. The media wants grabs and so do the movers and shakers. Grabs and pictures. No details, no time!

There was a period, probably up until the moment anybody took us seriously, when local media treated us with a mild, indulgent interest. Partly because of my involvement as a minor celeb and failed recluse, and partly because it was a soft story. We were harmless.

So, we learnt to stage actions on slow news days. We learnt about timing and placement, to judge the egos of the journo, for *this* is the real conduit for news, not the public's right to know. Thankfully there were always a brave and curious few but we had to learn the



A diver feeding moray eel in the Ningaloo Marine Park. NEIL WEHLACK/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES

hard way to get a feel for editorial mood in the local press monopoly. Beware the editor under the hammer. Beware the journo trying to distance himself from the idealism of his youth. Don't wait for the reporter to actually get across the bulk of the material – she simply doesn't have time. Try to understand the links between movers and shakers, but accept that the deeper you go the more dangerous and murky the waters become.

Like a coral reef, it's all about the food chain. People are afraid to upset the big swimmers. In a city as small and incestuous as Perth these are sharp lessons. Similarly, find out who has political responsibility. Learn who the idealists are in cabinet and who will only ever jump the way the numbers fall. Don't assume that party politics is coherent. As with the media, make it your business to know who owes whom. But likewise, don't make assumptions about people based on their job or their clothes or what suburb they live in. The stockbroker in the Jag could be an ally. The lady in the twinset and pearls might be weary of being misunderstood. Don't give up on the shabby older journo hoisting himself from the company car; he might have a memory and a soft spot for the little people. Running a campaign is, I have discovered, a community-building exercise but also a short, sometimes brutal lesson in your own personal prejudice.

Our second public meeting crammed the Fremantle town hall. About 1500 people came. National newspapers, TV and radio covered it and afterwards citizens peppered the press and polities with letters. Vollies ran fundraisers, auctions and stalls. They painted banners and stationed themselves at railway stations with flyers. MPs from every party met with us and offered discreet advice. Members of unions, clubs and churches gave

quiet support. Perth streets were awash with blue bumper stickers.

But the more visible the campaign became, the cooler the response it got in local media, especially the press. Without the website that a Queensland volly set up in our name, there would have been precious few opportunities to get word out. We watched the developers' PR company crank the spin in the press and on radio and wondered how we could counter it without money. In the end we got lucky. My latest novel won three Australian prizes between May and September in 2002 and I was finally able to use the national fuss for something bigger than the lit business. It turned attention back to Ningaloo. In the case of the WA Premier's Award, I had the luck, by proxy, to be able to take the cheque from Gallop's hand and sign it over publicly to the campaign. It was a coup. A stunt of course, but by then I'd learnt how it works. The money and momentum bought the campaign a few more weeks' grace.

But for much of late 2002 we were reduced to stunts to get attention. Anneke de Graaf was our stunt-mistress and pied piper. The Ninga-turtles, volunteers in red bodystockings with plastic laundry baskets as shells on their backs, ambushed polities in friendly and comical actions which drew TV, time and again. People sculpted huge turtles on city beaches for press photographers. There were letters and op-ed pieces published but by and large we had to settle for bread-and-circuses stuff to suit the media's appetite and our non-existent budget. Thank God for young people who'll dress up as turtles

Running a campaign is, I have discovered, a community-building exercise but also a short, sometimes brutal lesson in your own personal prejudice.

and keep smiling. That's the Anzac spirit. I wouldn't do it for quids.

In the lead up to the Environmental Protection Authority decision, things reached a low ebb. We were jittery and exhausted. People's families and work lives were under strain. Several people were working 60 hours a week for nothing. We were begging for money, fed up, obsessed, not sleeping. Ningaloo dominated our lives and we were close to the burnout that the developer must have been depending on for success. A whole year had slid away. Now that a chill wind blew from the local daily, we tried to maintain the interest of the national newspaper so as to not feel entirely cut off, and they were often interested, but things were flagging. In desperation we wrote dozens of letters to prominent Australians at home and abroad to beg for moral and public support. The response was astounding. First to put his huge hand up was NBA star Luc Longley. Then other sportspeople, actors, scientists and rockers, whose faces appear even now on our website, signed up as supporters, lifting the morale of the faithful and exciting the curiosity of the public.

Toni Collette offered herself as media bait. The press came running. We took Toni north to Ningaloo and with the help of awestruck locals, gave her a long swim with manta rays a few yards from where the enormous hole would be dug if the developers had their way. Toni spoke passionately about the reef and against the resort. Images of that encounter went national and overseas. It was a great result but it was one of the toughest weekends in my life. Who'd want to be a movie star – or worse, her minder?

Within weeks, the EPA brought down its recommendation on the CCMD proposal, but its language was so choked with bureaucratic doublespeak that nobody knew whether it meant yes or no. The developer claimed victory. The *West Australian* editorialised in favour of the development and took the time to

brand those citizens opposing it as part of a presumptuous environmental elite. With the emergence of that weasel-word, *elite*, I thought we were doomed. The shock-jocks lapped it up. Finally someone was talking their language.

But the campaign now represented so many diverse people that the mud never

stuck. In retrospect, the furore over the EPA decision and the baldness of the *West's* editorial did the campaign a huge favour. It mobilised supporters we didn't even know we had. It aroused the indignation of the people. New supporters helped buy time on FM youth radio. An email campaign began and in the weeks to follow 20,000 people wrote to Geoff Gallop. T-shirts appeared and 80,000 stickers went all over Australia and abroad.

On December 1, 2002, 15,000 people marched through the streets of Fremantle. The local mayor said it was the biggest public demonstration there in living memory. This was no shadowy, mythical elite. This was ratepaying Australia, schoolgoing Australia, suburban Australia. A phalanx of marchers a kilometre long brought the city to a standstill. Famous footballers walked alongside teachers and retirees and schoolkids. The same day, hundreds of like-minded souls gathered in Coral Bay and Exmouth. In all three places, it was a peaceful, colourful, passionate gathering. The whole of the Esplanade was a mass of faces and banners. I'd never spoken to so many people at once before. I felt a terrible responsibility, that I'd helped give people hope in something I was by no means certain we could deliver.

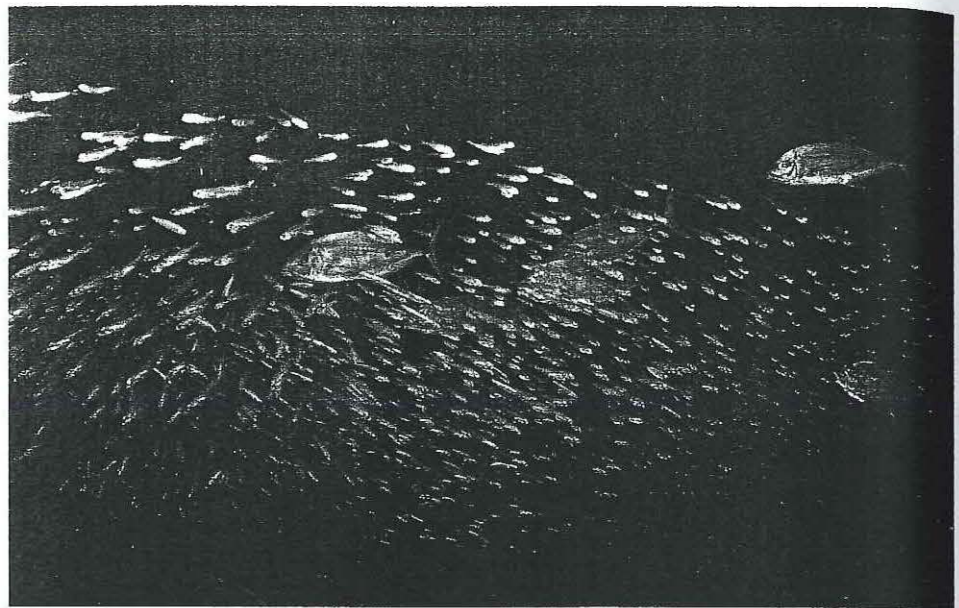
It was clear what WA people wanted, the safekeeping of their natural heritage. But would anybody listen?

In the wake of the Fremantle rally the developers' PR company went into overdrive. We read that its principals were a former ALP number cruncher and an ex-political hack for the *West*. With the public clearly lost, they prowled the corridors of parliament to work the numbers. But it was to no avail. The Labor party had left the '80s behind and begun to catch up with the electorate.

In the end, the Premier undertook direct responsibility for the Ningaloo decision. In June this year, in the space of two days alone, he received more than 8,000 emails from all over the world. Each of those letters was copied to his entire cabinet and the government's computer system felt the strain. It was bigger than anything we could have expected.

Despite vicious smears generated by the developers dwindling supporters, I began to believe we might actually win. Each of us fluctuated on this point hourly. It was torture.

With the emergence of that weasel-word, elite, I thought we were doomed. The shock-jocks lapped it up.



Trevally attacking a baitball. GEOFF TAYLOR/LOCHMAN TRANSPARENCIES

Things came to a head in a hurry. The EPA appeals process finished. The information gathering was done. The untold all-nighters by unheralded and so often unheeded scientists were over and the verdict was imminent. To massive acclaim the Premier canned the resort once and for all. The *West* editorialised approvingly. Those mythical elites were forgotten. In fact, one of the first emails of congratulation to reach our office that morning was from an outer suburban panel beater. There were jubilant and sometimes tearful calls from all over

the world, and weeks later the deluge continues. That night a stranger with a biker beard kept kissing me. There was a kind of delirium in the air. The streets were full of Camrys, delivery trucks and tradesmen's utes bearing emblematic blue stickers.

Within days the government launched an impossibly lavish advertising campaign to publicise its decision.

Something quite out of the ordinary had happened. A bunch of amateurs and battle worn campaigners had inspired ordinary citizens to get involved in a decision about their common wealth, their natural heritage. At least 100,000 people had taken part somehow, almost every one of them a volunteer.

How did we succeed when most community campaigns fail? I am not really sure. It would be naïve and foolhardy to think that this battle is won for all time. If anything, it's a promising start. Nobody can afford to gloat and I am not Kerrigan enough to tell any defeated opponent to "suffer in their jocks". All campaigns are different and there will always be more battles to fight. Our effort was sometimes

raggedy but always inclusive. It was the broadest possible church. In it we married sober science to passion. We were lucky to have a government with fresh ideas, one that was past mid-term and vulnerable.


Was it something to do with the rise of green politics? Perhaps. Could there be something emerging called blue politics? With the coastline under increasing stress and even the Great Barrier Reef in trouble, maybe so. The steady and bewildering outpouring of calls, letters and emails to ourselves and the WA government in the wake of this decision suggests that something is up. Save Ningaloo stumbled onto the only sacred site in the mind of mainstream Australia – the beach. Somehow the childhood memory of clean seas and the workaday longing for respite in salty air and the dream of retiring to a still-living coast resonate in the suburbs like nothing else.

How does a community group reach people? You need your visionaries and maniacal obsessives who'll team up with fetishists for detail, hardened campaigners and community builders. And you'll need some luck.

Not everything I learnt as a rabble-rouser was welcome news. But one thing sticks out. You can still appeal to Australia's better instincts. People do believe in the common good. They will make sacrifices. They'll blossom as comrades. They'll do things for love.

And in the face of every ugly national revelation that pours from the news every night, I'll hold onto that.

Tim Winton is the author of 15 books for adults and children. He is the WA vice-president of the Australian Marine Conservation Society. He is the winner of the Wilderness Society Environment Award for Literature and was declared a Living Treasure by the National Trust.

 www.savinaloo.org

APPENDIX 7

Government communications

- E-Newsletter: Protecting the Ningaloo Coast
- Open Letter to the People of Western Australia
- Media Statement: September 18, 2003



Protecting the Ningaloo Coast

This e-newsletter is to tell you about a new website www.ningaloo coast.wa.gov.au that allows you to have your say about protecting the wonderful Ningaloo Coast for current and future generations to enjoy.

The Ningaloo Coast is a unique and special place of enormous significance to all Western Australians as well as people from all over the world, and I am proud to lead a Government that has protected it.

This is a special e-newsletter. If you wrote to the WA Government about the Ningaloo Coast we will only correspond with you about this issue. Please [subscribe](#) if you would like regular updates about Government information through my e-newsletter.

The future of the Ningaloo Coast

We need to find a balance between protecting this fragile environment and providing an appropriate range of facilities for the growing number of visitors who are attracted to its beauty.

Western Australians have shown they are passionate about protecting the Ningaloo Coast and I urge you to have your say about its future.

You can read about our strategy for [Protecting the Ningaloo Coast](#) and [have your say](#) about future development on the coast.

Coral Coast Resort decision

I announced last week the rejection of a marina development at Mauds Landing. It is clear this development would pose an unacceptable risk to the Ningaloo Coast.

To learn more about my decision you can view my [Open Letter to the People of Western Australia](#) and [other documents](#) relating to the proposed development.

If you are not already a subscriber please click [here](#) to receive my weekly e-newsletter

Did you know?

Three species of sea turtle use the area for breeding, including the green turtle, the hawksbill turtle and the loggerhead turtle.



Did you know?

At 280km Ningaloo Reef is Australia's longest fringing coral reef and is unique because luxuriant growth of coral occurs so close to the mainland.



OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dear Western Australians,

CORAL COAST MARINA DEVELOPMENT

You may be aware from recent media reports that I have decided that the proposed Coral Coast Resort is environmentally unacceptable and should not proceed. I would like to provide Western Australians with further background in relation to my decision.

As delegated Minister on matters in relation to appeals against the report and recommendations in Bulletin 1073, I received advice from the EPA and the Appeals Committee on the issues raised in appeals relating to the proposal. A copy of the Appeals Committee's report is available on the Appeals Convenor's Office website address www.wa.gov.au/appeals.

Seventy-nine appeals were received in relation to the EPA report and recommendations for the proposal.

The proposal is adjacent to the Ningaloo Reef and the Ningaloo Marine Park. The Ningaloo Reef is the largest fringing coral reef in Australia and one of the longest fringing barrier reefs in the world. The Ningaloo Marine Park is an icon of State, National and International Significance.

Mauds Landing is located on the shores of Bateman Bay in the southern sector of the Ningaloo Marine Park. The sandy shores of Bateman Bay are used by a number of migratory birds and sea turtles. Humpback whales have been observed in Bateman Bay during their migration and aggregations of manta rays occur in the bay. The area adjacent to the project site is a Recreation Zone under the Ningaloo Marine Park Management Plan.

The large scale and form of the proposal including an inland marina represents a major environmental impact in a coastal area and adjacent to a Marine Park. Potential threats to marine environmental values of the Ningaloo Marine Park arising from the proposal include fishing pressure, boat strikes, disturbance to wildlife, habitat degradation and pollution.

The EPA's Bulletin 1073 was considered by many to recommend some form of conditional approval for the proposal and the EPA provided a set of conditions that would need to be fulfilled by the proponent if a decision was made to allow the proposal to be implemented. Subsequently, after considering the appeals, the EPA Chairman advised that the proposal should not be approved for implementation.

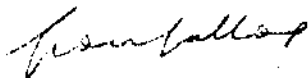
The Appeals Committee reported that there is concern about the adequacy of baseline information, the capacity for management of human-use pressures associated with the proposal and its potential impacts on Bateman Bay and the wider Ningaloo Marine Park. I share that concern.

I considered the proponent's views as to the environmental benefits of the proposal and their commitments to manage potential environmental impacts. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the potential environmental impacts were not fully defined during the environmental assessment of the proposal. I was also not confident that there are adequate management requirements to mitigate impacts arising from the proposed Coral Coast Resort.

In my view, the critical issues relating to the proposal arise from its scale and form, and its location in a sensitive environment. The environmental risks and management needs for the proposal have not been demonstrated to be environmentally acceptable. There is also uncertainty as to a suitable mechanism to achieve adequate long term management in relation to the proposal.

After considering all of the issues, and weighing up the merits of the respective submissions, I determined that the proposal was environmentally unacceptable and should therefore not proceed.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoff Gallop', with a small flourish at the end.

**DR GEOFF GALLOP MLA
PREMIER**

Government of Western Australia
Media Statement



The Hon. Geoff Gallop BSc MA MPhil DPhil MLA
 Premier; Minister for Public Sector Management; Federal Affairs,
 Science, Citizenship and Multicultural Interests



Statement Released: 18-Sep-2003

Portfolio Premier

*Official ministerial statement made in Parliament by Premier Geoff Gallop -
 concerning a community response on the future of the Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast*

18/9/03

**THE FOLLOWING BRIEF MINISTERIAL STATEMENT HAS BEEN MADE
 IN PARLIAMENT TODAY BY PREMIER GEOFF GALLOP:**

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to advise that at the end of the public comment period over 1,350 submissions have been received on the Future Directions: Sustainable Tourism and Land Use Strategies for the Carnarvon-Ningaloo.

The response is proof that the public of Western Australia is enthusiastic about ensuring we plan the future of Ningaloo correctly.

A website established for the Ningaloo Coast had received more than 439,000 hits and 19,700 visits in eight weeks.

Of the 1,350 submissions received, 240 were made on-line with the remaining 1,100 submitted in hard copy. Submissions sent on September 10 and 11 are still being received and to be counted.

Public information sessions seeking community involvement in the Future Directions paper were held around the State during the two-month submission with public information days held in Carnarvon, Coral Bay and Exmouth.

The submissions will now be analysed with a report on the submissions expected to be published in November this year. The Report will feed into future workshops and the regional strategy.

Workshops will be held in early November to further discuss the issues and scenarios, and set the direction for the Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy.

The community will be asked to register to attend workshops in Carnarvon, Coral Bay, Exmouth and Perth next month through newspaper advertisements.

The draft Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy will indicate a preferred scenario, and detail the location, nature and scale of development at tourism sites.

The strategy will also incorporate environmental and planning guidelines to guide future development along the coast and a land use plan for the region.

Detailed plans for Carnarvon, Exmouth, Coral Bay and the Blowholes, will also be incorporated into the strategy.

The draft Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy is expected to be released for public comment in early 2004.

Premier's Office - 9222 9475

[Comment](#)

[Back to Statements list](#)

Government of Western Australia
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