

## **Pilbara Local History Studies Program**

### **Some Towns in the Pilbara Region**

#### **A brief overview of 15 Pilbara towns**

<http://holiday-wa.net/pilbararegion/>

#### **Pilbara Electoral District**

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral\\_district\\_of\\_Pilbara](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electoral_district_of_Pilbara)

The Electoral district of Pilbara is a Legislative Assembly electorate in the state of Western Australia. Pilbara is named for the region of Western Australia in which it is located. It is one of the oldest electorates in Western Australia, with its first member having been elected to the Second Parliament of the Legislative Assembly at the 1894 elections. List of pastoral leases in Western Australia

#### **Pastoral Leases in the Pilbara**

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_pastoral\\_leases\\_in\\_Western\\_Australia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_pastoral_leases_in_Western_Australia)

Pastoral leases are increasingly known as 'stations', and more particular - as either sheep stations or cattle stations. They are usually found in country that is designated as rangeland. In Western Australia, all leases are up for renewal or surrender in 2015.<sup>[1]</sup>

Stations are a significant part of Western Australian history. Nearly 90 million hectares or 36% of the area of Western Australia are covered by these stations.<sup>[2]</sup> Despite the very low population involved in general management of stations, significant numbers of seasonal workers (shearers and others) have moved through the Sheep stations to shear for wool. Also more recently stations have been used as holding places of feral goats for export and meat production.

The significant distances between stations and points of transport have seen droving or 'stock routes' created in the past, such as the Canning Stock Route. Also the rail route to Meekatharra can be seen as a means of reaching into the station country to facilitate stock transport.

## About The Pilbara

### From Pilbara District Education Office

[www.det.wa.edu.au/education/deo/pilbara/about\\_pilbara.html](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/education/deo/pilbara/about_pilbara.html)

The Pilbara is a massive, remote area in the north-west area of Western Australia encompassing 510,000 square kilometres which is approximately 20% of the state's total land area. It has a population of about 45 000, the majority of which are distributed unevenly throughout the western third of the region.

### Climate

Being north of the 26th parallel, the climate is very hot and humid in summer and warm and dry in winter. Inland areas such as Tom Price and Newman can be quite cold in the winter evenings. The Pilbara is subject to cyclones during the summer months from October through to April. The summer rain pattern often leads to transport disruptions due to road flooding.

### Economic Activity

The Pilbara is rich in natural resources. The economy is based primarily on the mining and petroleum sector. Some facts and figures:

- It is the largest mineral producing region in WA.
- Other minerals include Manganese, Tantalite, Felspar and Copper.
- The pastoral industry is based on beef cattle and sheep for wool.
- Fishing centres on fin fish (snapper, emperor, cod, sea perch and mackerel), prawns, lobsters and molluscs.
- Tourism is also a major contributor to the region's economy:

## Town of Port Hedland

<http://www.porthedland.wa.gov.au/town/history.html>

### Our Town - Welcome to your Port of Discovery

Port Hedland is a dynamic town of over 15,000 people located in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia. The original inhabitants, the Karriyarra people, call the place Marapikurrinya for the hand shaped formation of the tidal creeks coming off the natural harbour.

The lifestyle is relaxed and open. The Town's location on the ocean provides for a variety of aquatic leisure activities including superb fishing. Whales and nesting flatback turtles can be seen in season. Millstream and Karijini National Parks are within easy driving distance, while Broome and the Kimberley are also within reach.



The two main residential centres are Port Hedland and South Hedland. Each has a range of community services including cultural, recreation and shopping facilities. Branches of major Banks are located in Wedge Street Port Hedland, while Commonwealth and State Government offices are mainly located in the South Hedland CBD.

The Wedgefield Industrial Area contains a variety of light and service industry premises, while the feature which now dominates the landscape of Port Hedland is the BHP Billiton Iron Ore Nelson Point crushing and shipping facility.

The Port is one of the world's largest in tonnage terms, with over 70 million tonnes of product worth more than \$3 billion shipped each year.

## **History**

### **Aboriginal Beginnings**

The Pilbara called Bilybarra by many different Indigenous groups of the region means "dry country". In the Pilbara region, before the arrival of European settlers, there were at least 28 languages spoken. Kariyarra is the language that was (and is still) spoken in the Port Hedland region and the languages Ngarla and Nyamal are spoken just north and south of the area.

There are numerous places in the Hedland area with Indigenous names that date back hundreds of years. The Kariyarra word for Hedland is Marapikurrinya which refers to the hand like formation of the tidal creeks coming off the harbour (mara - hand, pikurri - pointing straight and nya - a place name marker). Some of the other Kariyarra place names are Kartijirli for Pretty Pool and Pipunjarra for the Rock engravings.

Marapikurrinya (Hedland) as well as being the home for the establishment and maintenance of many rich traditional customs is also well known for its recent significant historical event - the 1946 Strike which was organized by Aboriginal pastoral workers attempting to improve their working conditions. Some of the strikers are still alive today and are living in the Hedland area or its surrounding communities.

### **European Beginnings**

In April 1863 Captain Peter Hedland aboard the cutter Mystery nosed his craft into the narrow entrance of a channel and discovered a magnificent sheet of water appearing like an inland lake. He named it Mangrove Harbour and two months later it was renamed Port Hedland by the Surveyor-General in his honor.

Once a port for the fledging pearling and pastoral industries today Port Hedland is a thriving centre of the Pilbara region. From the modern state-of-the-art technology required to operate the giant BHP Billiton facilities to the many and varied birds and wildlife that maintain their habitat within the salt and iron ore stock piles, Port Hedland is a unique blend of massive resource industrialization and incredible natural wonders.

Development of the iron ore deposits resulted in major changes taking place. 1965 was the year when Port Hedland's massive development program started and the small town of some 1,200 people was thrown into a frenzy of activity and expansion.

During this time the satellite community of South Hedland was established and now caters for more than half of the Port Hedland population.

With a lack of timber for building, no roads and only a small quantity of drinkable water few would have imagined that the initial tiny settlement would grow into one of the largest and busiest mineral ports in the world.

## South Hedland

### Rural Health Service

<http://www.geminimedical.com.au/index.cfm?objectId=DB38AF53-E7F2-2F96-36721096AAC7ACFA>

### Where is it

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The town of South Hedland is situated approximately 1650km from Perth along Great Northern Highway. Travel 20km further to the north and you will reach the township of Port Hedland.

### History

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### About

Port Hedland is a dynamic town of 15,000 people located in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia. The original inhabitants, the Karriyarra people, call the place Marapikurrinya for the hand shaped formation of the tidal creeks coming off the natural harbour.

The lifestyle is relaxed and open. The Town's location on the ocean provides for a variety of aquatic leisure activities including superb fishing. The main industries are iron ore processing and export, salt production, shipping of manganese and other minerals, and livestock production. The Port is one of the world's largest in tonnage terms, with over 70 million tonnes of product worth more than \$3 billion shipped each year.

### Shopping

The residents of Hedland lack nothing when it comes to shopping. All of the shops and services that one would expect to find in a modern city can be found in Hedland

## **Sport**

Port Hedland offers a variety of sporting facilities including: 2 public Swimming Pools, 2 Aerobics Centres, 3 Badminton Clubs, a BMX track, and a Horsing Riding arena. The area hosts a wide variety sporting options including: Football, Tee Ball, Softball, Baseball, Hockey, Tennis, Soccer, Cricket, Rugby, Netball, Gymnastics, Water Polo, and Touch Rugby (just to name a few!)

## **Schools**

The Hedland area has 5 primary schools one private the primary schools cater for children from Kindergarten to grade seven. The are has 2 high schools with the senior high school located in Port Hedland catering for students from year 8 to year 12. There is a TAFE college where university studies can also be accessed

## **East Pilbara**

<http://www.eastpilbara.wa.gov.au/index.php>

The Shire of East Pilbara was formed by an amalgamation of the Shires of Marble Bar and Nullagine in 1972. Upon the amalgamation the Shire became the largest Shire in the world comprising an area of over 371,696 square kilometres (larger than the State of Victoria).

## **Karratha**

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/Western-Australia/Karratha/2005/02/17/1108500208514.html>

### **Modern and expensive town catering for mine workers in the Pilbara.**

Located 1557 km north of Perth, on Nickol Bay, Karratha is a modern town providing accommodation and services for the employees of Hamersley Iron, Robe River Associates, the Dampier Salt Company and the workers on the North West Shelf Gas and Petroleum project.

The Karratha area was first settled as a result of F. W. Gregory's glowing reports about the pastoral potential of the Pilbara. In 1866 Dr Baynton and Harry Whittal-Venn established Karratha Station. The name 'Karratha' supposedly meant 'good country' in the language of the local Aborigines. The station continued to operate under Baynton and Whittal-Venn until 1879.

The modern, rather soulless town of Karratha, was planned and constructed in 1968-9 as a joint State government - Hamersley Iron project to meet the expanding accommodation needs of the mining company.

The township of Dampier, which was serving the needs Hamersley Iron and housing the people employed at the port facilities, was restricted in its ability to grow and consequently Karratha was developed on Nickol Bay. By 1973 Dampier had reached its growth capacity.

As it grew the other major mining company, Robe River Iron Associates, invested money in the town. Today it is home to over 7000 people and, as the population continues to increase, the town has taken on a life of its own and the number of service industries continues to grow. It is the only town in the north-west to have a major industrial estate servicing the needs of the community. It is planned that the town will eventually house over 30 000 people. Inevitably the administrative functions of the Pilbara have all been moved to the town.

It has simply outgrown its 'company town' status and now is the largest and most important centre in the Pilbara.

It is an 'open town' providing a variety of accommodation (albeit very over-priced) for visitors and purporting to have some attractions which go beyond the mining industry.

## **Roebourne**

<http://www.exploreaustralia.net.au/Western-Australia/Pilbara/Roebourne>

Named after John Septimus Roe, Western Australia's first surveyor-general, Roebourne was established in 1866 and is the oldest town on the north-west coast. As the centre for early mining and pastoral industries in the Pilbara, it was connected by tramway to the pearling port of Cossack and later to Point Samson. Now Cossack is a ghost town and Point Samson is known for its beachside pleasures.

### **Visitor Information**

Old Gaol, Queens St; (08) 9182 1060

[www.roebourne.wa.gov.au](http://www.roebourne.wa.gov.au)



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