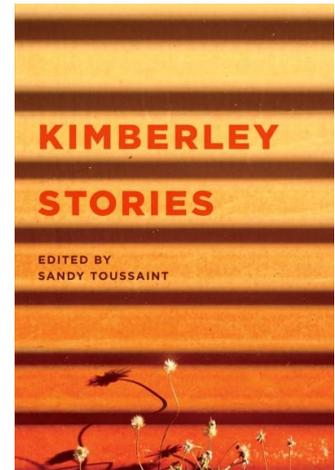


KIMBERLEY STORIES

On 4 July 2012, Sandy Toussaint, the editor of *Kimberley Stories*, joined other contributors to tell the Kimberley Society about their book. Sandy commenced the evening's discussion by thanking Kimberley Society members for their contribution to its publication. She thanked, in particular, Cathie Clement for her support, and several others present who were not KS members, such as Lynley Tucker and Deborah Denton, and Georgia Richter from Fremantle Press. Sandy explained that the idea for the book evolved on an occasion when she was driving to Broome from Fitzroy Crossing (an area she has worked in for three decades as an anthropologist) about three years ago. She was keen to develop a book that encouraged writing by new and established Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal



authors who could tell stories about the Kimberley in a variety of ways, such as via short stories, poetry, prose, and so on. With the Kimberley as a unifying theme, Sandy was keen to emphasize that the book should resonate with readers who were from or had lived in the Kimberley. It would also be of interest to people who aspired to visit the Kimberley, as well as to readers who simply liked to read good stories that were well told. Sandy also expressed the view that she hoped the book would stimulate interest in how people write or remember a place such as the Kimberley when they were some distance from it. She selected a few works to explain the variety of book content, such as Marminjiya Joy Nuggett's 'Good Luck' story about fishing for barramundi at the Fitzroy River, Pat Lowe's Seagull story about the fragility of Kimberley wildlife, Luisa Mitchell's account of being a 13 year old growing up in Broome, and Kate Auty's opening piece about arriving in, departing from, and never quite leaving, the Kimberley.

Sandy then introduced eight of the twenty-six *Kimberley Stories* contributors who joined her for the presentation: Peter Bibby, Andrew Burke, Cathie Clement, Richard Davis, Kelvin Garlett, Murray Jennings, Donna Bing-Ying Mak, and Bonita Mason. Each person spoke about contributing to the book and/or their Kimberley connection. Several read from their own work. Peter Bibby, for instance, spoke about how he had submitted several works for inclusion in *Kimberley Stories* but that it was a play extract titled *From Escapadia* that Sandy liked most, in part because it had not been published elsewhere (a criteria for publication in the book). She also liked its unusual and playful quality. A former employee of the Broome-based publishing house Magabala Books, Peter read an excerpt from the play, and later fielded questions about how it could be performed. Andrew Burke introduced himself as a former teacher at a Kimberley Community School, which is where his piece titled *By Your Students You'll Be Taught* evolved. Evoking thoughts about the Wanalirri Song around which the work was centred, Andrew read an extract from his piece in a way that stilled the audience plainly impressed by the selection of words, imagery and delivery. Cathie Clement opened her presentation by telling the audience that when Sandy asked her to contribute to the book she thought that the last thing Sandy would need was an historian who preferred research to writing! Cathie later realized that it was the lure of the Kimberley that attracted her to history and that this was the story that could be told – the Kimberley was the 'hook' that encouraged her to be an historian. Anthropologist and poet, Richard Davis, contextualized his poem by commenting on learning to ride horses at Mt Pierre Station and the influence that the Dolby family had on his understanding of the pastoral industry. A superb reading of the poem that configured this experience concluded Richard's presentation. Richard was followed by Noongar author of *Dugong Dreaming*, Kelvin Garlett, who began by acknowledging Noongar people past and present, and by thanking his two sisters and brother (who attended the meeting), as well as Deborah Denton and Sandy Toussaint, for their support. He also thanked the Kimberley Society. Kelvin explained that he had learned stories from Kimberley men he had met and that as a story-teller himself he was keen to write up

stories about Aboriginal life. Dugong Dreaming is Kelvin's first publication. Murray Jennings followed Kelvin. Murray, a former journalist and broadcaster with the ABC in the Kimberley, explained his background and how his contribution, titled Sandy's Sendoff, had developed. As Murray explained, the piece was based on an account of a funeral in Halls Creek that drew together a range of Kimberley characters, as well as sadness and sorrow, and the myriad of qualities (humour, emotion, awkwardness, cultural misunderstandings) embedded in everyday life. Donna Bing-Ying Mak, whose piece is titled From Hong Kong To Fitzroy Crossing, spoke about the profoundly rich way in which her Chinese background had, for a variety of reasons, prepared her for life as a medical practitioner and a community member in locations such as Fitzroy Crossing and Derby. In a definitive account, one not dissimilar in emphases from other contributions, Donna's narrative revealed a number of family connections and an enduring love of and for the Kimberley landscape and its people. The last person to speak was author and journalist, Bonita Mason, who also read an extract from her piece 'Leave it. It's good the way it is'. Bonita explained that she had lived in Broome for five years when working for the Kimberley Land Council and other human rights organizations. She spoke about how *Kimberley Stories* provided an oeuvre to explore contrasting Kimberley experiences, in particular her own life compared with that of those with whom she worked. In Bonita's piece, some of the more complex matters of town life, in this case, Broome are carefully interwoven. These include glimpses into social distress and sorrow, infrastructure problems, and economic inequality that are nonetheless interwoven with the aspiration and inspiration of a place that people call home.

A discussion ensued at the end of the presentations and the question consistently posed related not only to Sandy Toussaint and the other presenters, but also to the audience, which was 'Why the Kimberley ...?'. Discussion about book contents and 'Why the Kimberley ...?' continued during supper and afterward. Many people had similar things to say, whereas others had a variety, echoing the myriad of qualitative contents that constitute *Kimberley Stories*.

Published by Fremantle Press, *Kimberley Stories* is available at some Kimberley visitor centres as well as in bookshops. Recommended retail price is \$24.95.