



# Kimberley Society

## Book Note

***Knockabout Girl: A Memoir* by Pip Newling. Harper Collins (Imprint: Fourth Estate), Sydney, 2007, ISBN 9780732283261, 272 pages, RRP \$27.99.**

I don't usually listen to 6PR, let alone in the cellar on a Sunday night, but I was at the beginning of this year. Normally I would have been listening to the *Coodabeen Champions*, but perhaps that show had finished. The author of this book was interviewed that night. She immediately grabbed my attention by stating that when she started work at the Halls Creek Hotel she was told three things. They were, firstly not to drink in the public bar, secondly not to wander the streets at night, and thirdly not to have any romantic liaisons with the local Aboriginal people. She said she broke the first rule on the first day and it took her three months to break the lot.

The first half of the book is about her work as a barmaid in the Halls Creek Hotel in 1990. Most of the initial chapters are short, being only 2 to 3 pages at a time, and are really a series of vignettes. They highlight a lot of the problems of drinking and violence in a small country town, and those things are echoed in the second part of the book where she is once again a bar person at Mataranka.

The final part of the book concerns her trip back to Halls Creek some 15 or so years later. Needless to say many of the people had moved on and the police practices had changed.

This book certainly highlights the problem with drinking and violence in a small country town. This is particularly topical with the fact that Halls Creek has been in the news recently highlighting the problems of childhood abuse and sexual abuse. It doesn't take too much imagination from the description of life there to see the background of this situation.

Jack Vercoe

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