

Persuasive, multimodal

DECEMBER 2018 – JANUARY 2019

THE MONTHLY

Saving Ningaloo again

BY Tim Winton



Artwork - line drawing contrasting industry symbolised by the oil ship with the environment symbolised by the marine animals drawn below the ship. Pollution is symbolised by the smoke surrounding the ship. The animals are placed close to each other with the ship right on top to show how crowded the marine environment has become.

Western Australia's World Heritage site isn't as

protected as you'd expect

Out on the continent's north-western edge, Ningaloo Reef is Australia's lesser-known coral treasure. Home to the gentle, photogenic whale shark, and more than 400 species of fish, it's our largest fringing reef. And it's not bleaching. But if you thought it was safe, think again.

warns against complacency - tone

In July 2003, the then Western Australian premier, Geoff Gallop, famously drew a "line in the sand" on gung-ho development along the Ningaloo coast. Forced to choose between a private-business venture and an obscure stretch of coral, he ruled in favour of the ecosystem.

HOW THE REEF WAS WON.

The story ran nationwide, trumpeting the news that Ningaloo was safe. To some degree the headline reflected the story we told ourselves, even those of us who knew better, those who understood that the price of victory is eternal vigilance. But that's how it felt. Ningaloo was safer. Saved, even.

Diction of protection - saving, protected, safe, safer, saved, sparing, survival

Gallop wasn't punished for sparing the reef. In fact, his Labor government rode a surge of popular support into a second term.

Repetition: 'isn't' - warns

But here's the thing: Ningaloo isn't saved. Worse than that, its future is now in jeopardy. Because during all those years of celebration and consolidation, despite the success of ecotourism and the research attention and the prestige that came with World Heritage listing, the fossil-fuel industry was moving in.

Some Australians will be surprised to learn how influential Woodside, Rio Tinto and Chevron have become in a nature-based tourism town like Exmouth. Many more would be shocked to see what a map of offshore oil-and-gas tenements in the Ningaloo region looks like today. In some places our historic "line in the sand" looks faint indeed. Few Australians understand how close the rigs are to Ningaloo Reef already, or how hard it's been for conservationists and regulators to maintain the slim buffer between the drills and pipes

Emotive language - shows this is happening without us knowing.

Descriptive

language, anthropomorphism
: makes whale seem kind, mild: human qualities.

Attractive, desirable

target audience: value protection of environment as of highest importance

Appeals to values of environmental protection

protection

Diction - power imposed on, choice = limited options
only two options are presented positioning the audience to view this as an 'either/or' situation where options are mutually exclusive. structure & diction present a false dichotomy.

and the World Heritage area. At night, rig flares are visible from the beaches and lagoons. And this year the monstrous flame of Chevron's new Wheatstone gas project has lit up the sky like an endlessly rising moon.

simile: unnatural

The northern reaches of Ningaloo Reef are thoroughly encircled by oil-and-gas. Visitors find this hard to believe, but at night the sinister flares on the horizon are hard to miss. I suspect when tourists catch a glimpse of those flames, the sight produces only the briefest moment of discord. Because no one wants to think about leaks or explosions. And the prospect of a spill as catastrophic as the one at Montara? Well, that's quickly dismissed. The great oil disaster of 2009 happened further north, in the Timor Sea.

Adjective → frightening, ugly, evil
Adjective → harmful, threat, scary
Adjective: extremely serious, troubling, dangerous

Somewhere safely foreign-sounding. Many locals are certain something so dreadful could never happen in the oilfields off Ningaloo. But even without a spill or a blowout, the oil-and-gas industry remains the biggest threat to the reef's survival. Because the most significant acknowledged danger to the world's coral reefs is the unchecked emission of carbon dioxide. At present, and understandably, the national focus is on coal. But some of Australia's biggest carbon polluters are right on Ningaloo's doorstep. They are visible to the naked eye. Their emissions are not. But they are real and present. And they can't be ignored.

Repeating: possibility of harm

Long after the industry shuts up shop and its CEOs are buried with full honours, the dangerous emissions they've produced will still be in our atmosphere. Heating the oceans, turning them acid, killing coral. So when you take the long view, if you consider Ningaloo's fate in those terms, you're faced with more than a passing moment of disquiet, you're left deeply worried, and that's an entirely rational concern.

List of 3: unwanted effects of emissions - destruction of environment

Emotive language: feeling uneasy, anxious, upset, distressed.

But now to the good news. Although the fossil-fuel industry has managed to physically colonise the coastal landscapes to the north in the Pilbara, it has never actually established a beachhead in the Ningaloo region. For a time the prospect was inconceivable. But regulatory oversight has been slipping. And, as the gas rush intensifies, big fossil-fuel operators are seeking opportunities to increase capacity. Some local decision-makers are doing all they can to help create some of those opportunities onshore.

A multinational called Subsea 7 intends to begin building a 500-hectare pipe-assembly and launch facility at Heron Point, deep in Exmouth Gulf, by 2020. Its operation requires 10 kilometres of rail line to haul gas pipes from factories to the coast so they can be towed to offshore platforms. That means a 380-metre stone-and-concrete launchway must be cut through the dunes and laid across the untouched beach and onto the corals and sponges of the intertidal zone. Tugs will drag these enormous steel pipes 1.5 kilometres across the seabed until they reach a depth of 6 metres and begin to float. Then, in 10-kilometre lengths, and stabilised by massive pendant chains that will scour the sea floor, they'll be towed north through the gulf and out through the Ningaloo Marine Park to gas fields across the horizon. That means a lot of land-clearing, scouring, dredging and dragging. And the impacts will be cumulative and ongoing.

Verbs: removing, abrasive, destroy, change, force

So this is a terrible idea. Reckless, even. I know Heron Point well. It's a lovely, quiet beach. A great place for catching a feed of whiting or taking snaps of migratory birds. And it's a favourite weekend camping spot for Exmouth locals. I can see why it suits Subsea 7. Access to the land is relatively cheap and the terrain is conducive. But this site isn't just another scarred bit of Pilbara real estate; it's deep inside Ningaloo's refuge and nursery. The gulf is a major rest and birthing area for humpback whales, and a foraging ground for endangered dugongs and turtles and rare species of dolphin. It's an entirely inappropriate site for a heavy-engineering operation like this. It was unthinkable last year. It's unconscionable this year. And it'll still be dead wrong in 2020.

Images of marine environment: pristine important for species, untouched, place to appreciate presence.

List of 3, adjectives, short imperative sentences - strong statements. : no one could support such damage to environment, not morally acceptable, unethical

If we allow Exmouth Gulf to be degraded, if we lose Ningaloo's nursery, the biodiversity of the reef will decline and, with the entire tourism economy depending on a vibrant coral reef, recreational fishing catches will fall, dive charters will go to the wall, and associated businesses in accommodation and hospitality will collapse. In short, many sustainable jobs will disappear. Ningaloo will become just another wounded piece of the Pilbara landscape, and Exmouth will be one more desolate mining port that pays people to visit. From "eco" to "FIFO". From high-value to high-vis. That's quite a backward step. And for a region once marked out as globally exceptional it would be a tragic mistake.

Adjective: empty, barren

Diction of damage-warning environmental damage & economic damage.

Emotive: sorrow, distress, trauma

Metaphor: injured, damaged, hurt

appeal to hip pocket

Australia is such a big island: expensive to get to, costly to travel across and, even for its citizens, the distances and spaces are daunting. But there are a handful of places tourists will make epic journeys to visit: Kakadu, the Great Barrier Reef, Karijini, Uluru and, of course, Ningaloo Reef.

Appeal to values of freedom, escape, mindfulness, peace, integrity
Humans yearn for places of respite, opportunities to be free from the ugly madness of the corporate world. We need to know there are still some precious sites left intact, ecosystems whose richness, scale and enduring health afford us hope for the future, even if we never get the chance to visit them ourselves. For our own sanity and honour we want to believe there are some habitats we won't destroy, places so special they'll never be offered up to the maw of industrialisation. Not now. Not ever. I believe Ningaloo is one of those places. And I'm not the only one who thinks so. *Metaphor: greedy, sharp jaw of an animal.*

In 2002, 100,000 Australians stood up for Ningaloo Reef. Fifteen thousand marched in Fremantle to save it. Those earlier defenders of Ningaloo haven't gone away. Many have become parents and grandparents with an even deeper stake in the future. These are the people who will hold the line Geoff Gallop drew in the sand all those years ago. And there are thousands more like them, Australians who are only just hearing of the place now, thousands who are sick of watching their futures sold out to Big Gas, Big Oil, Big Business and Big Man politics. People who cry, "No more – enough of this!"

Appeals to Australian values of a fair go and supporting the underdog. 'Big' labels them as corporate focused on greed
That's why I think this can still be a good news story, why I'm determined to make sure it will be. Because that historic line in the sand remains. The era of cavalier exploitation is behind us. Ordinary Australians simply won't put up with it anymore. They'll defend Ningaloo. For love of the place, out of hope for their children, and for the enduring principle of the common good against the interests of a powerful few. *individual gain.*

Appeals to Australian values for the outdoors, for family and a fair go.
TIM WINTON Tim Winton is a writer. His most recent novel is *The Shepherd's Hut*.

Persuasive Structures

Appearance vs reality → the general public belief is that Ningaloo is safe and preserved.
→ the reality outlined here is that Ningaloo remains in danger of destruction.

Occurrence & possibility → showing how catastrophes have happened in oil spills before.
→ arguing that this could also happen in Australia.

Ubiquity → arguing that the belief that many Australians support protecting Ningaloo by reducing future oil/gas development is 'everywhere' to show this is a well-supported belief.

Case Studies → Illustrating that oil/gas could damage Ningaloo by using Subsea 7 as an example of what could happen.

Concave & Contrast → showing that the natural environment is a place to be enjoyed *not destroyed* by juxtaposing man-made destruction with freedom of natural world.
Appeals to values, attitudes & beliefs of audience

Environment, outdoors

Fear of losing something / worst case scenario

Hip-pocket, economic value

Freedom

Fair go, underdog

Family