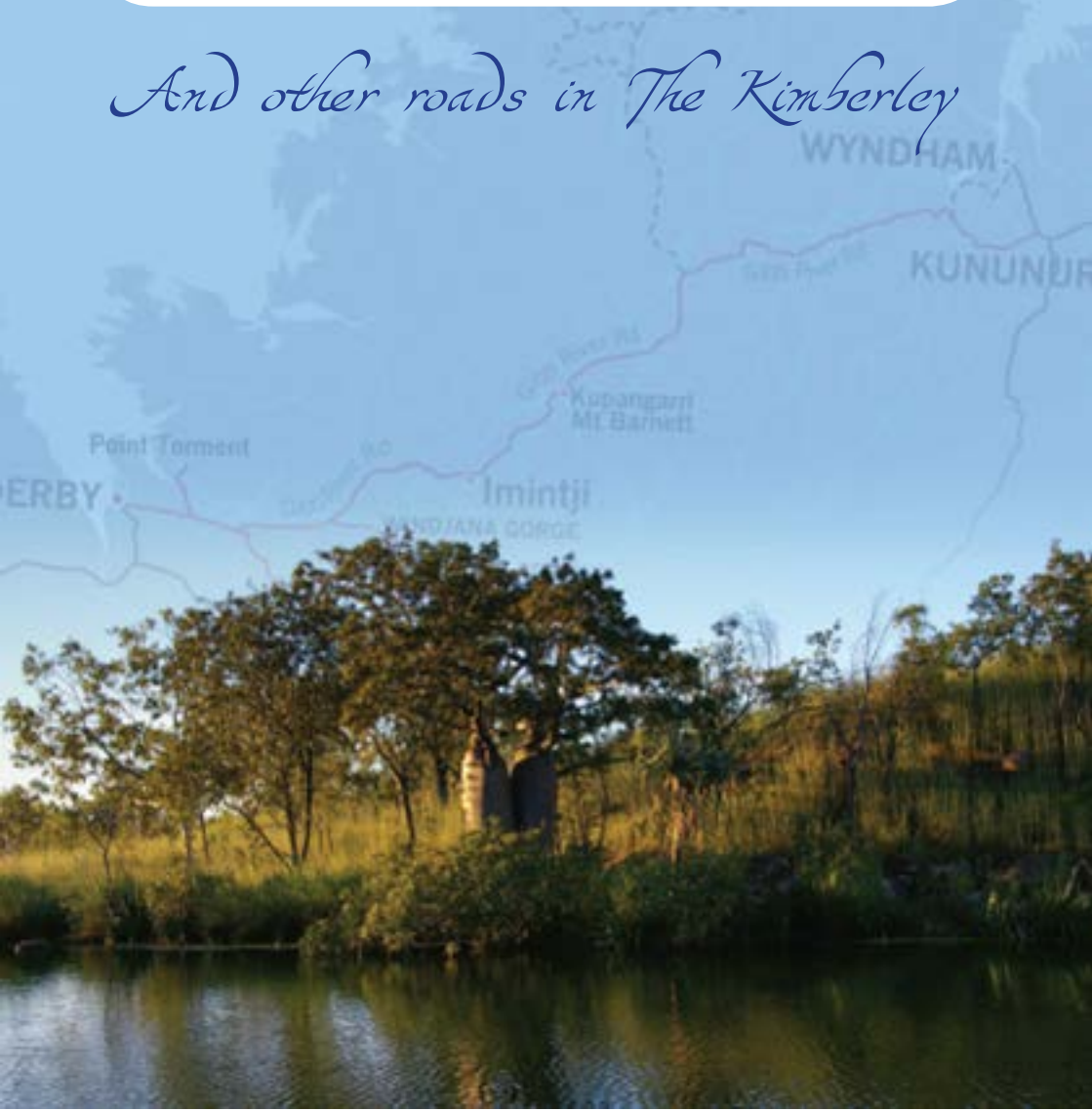


# DRIVING THE GIBB RIVER ROAD

*And other roads in The Kimberley*



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Shire of Derby /  
West Kimberley

## TOWARDS ZERO



*getting there together*



## HOW PREPARED ARE YOU?

Have you told anyone where you are going and how long you will be?

Is your vehicle in good mechanical condition?

How well do you know your vehicle?

Have you driven a 4 wheel drive vehicle before?

Do you have plenty of water and food?

Do you have at least two spare tyres?

Are you competent at driving on unsealed roads?

Do you know what speed you should be doing on unsealed roads?

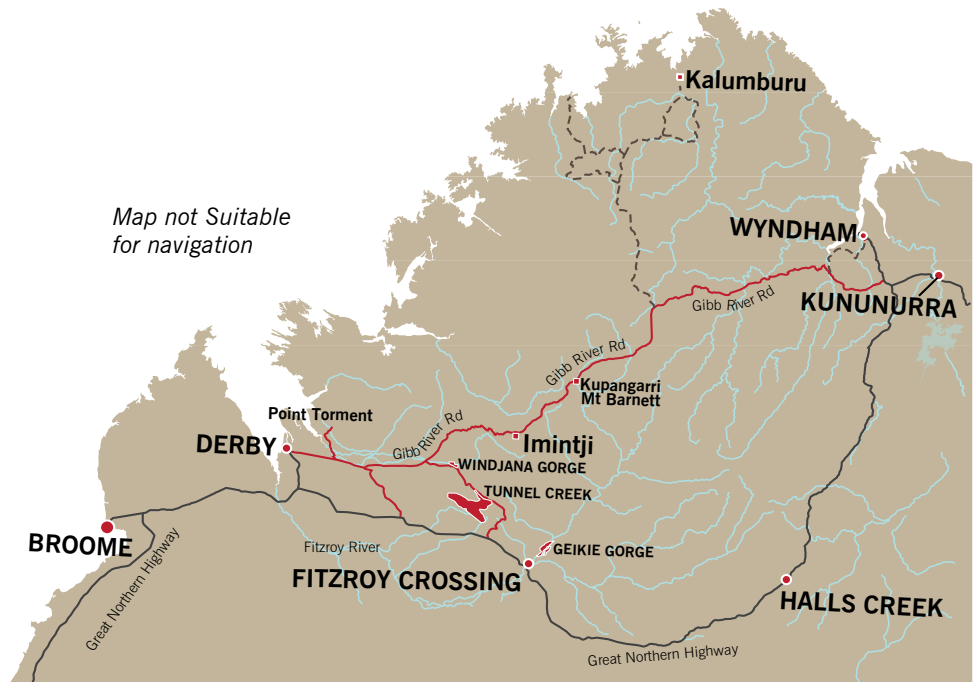
Do you know what to do if your vehicle starts to slide sideways on the gravel?

Do you know what to do when crossing a waterway?

Do you know what to do if you get bogged?

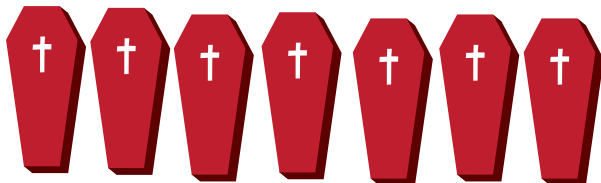
Do you know what to do in case of emergency?

If you cannot answer 'yes' to all of these questions you should read on for your own safety.....



## DON'T RUIN YOUR TRIP.

Every year in the Kimberley travellers have their holidays ruined either by a road crash or misadventure due to not being prepared.



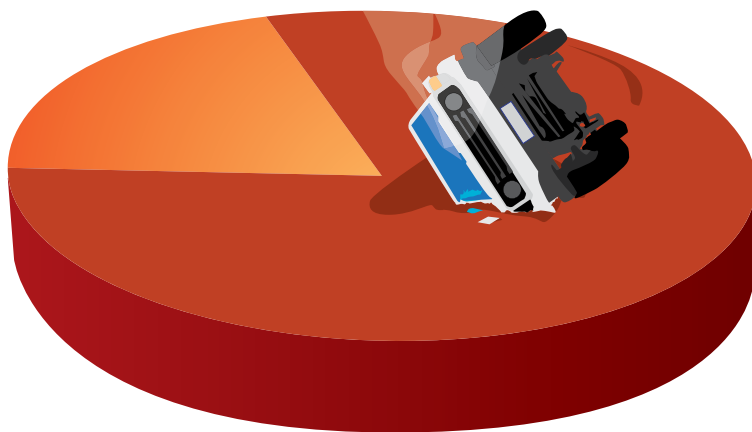
There have been 7 deaths on the Gibb River Road since 1993

### Don't you be the next!

It's worth taking the time to plan your trip before you go and to take care when driving on unsealed sections of road. You will then have a great trip and an unforgettable experience travelling through some of the most beautiful and wondrous scenery in the Kimberley.

### Road Safety: Its your responsibility

Road Safety is your responsibility. This guide provides you with the basic information you will need to reduce your road risks whilst travelling the Gibb River Road and other unsealed roads in the Kimberley. You should refer to specialist 4WD publications for further information



80% of crashes (since 1993) have been a single vehicle roll over type crashes.

## REMOTE TRIP PLANNING

### Check the Road Condition

Always check the condition of the road before departing. Phone the Main Roads Condition Report free call number below to get the latest road conditions.

 **1800 013 314**

You may also need to check with the local Shire for local road conditions (phone number found on back page).

### Let Someone Know

Always inform someone of your planned journey and estimated time of arrival. Remember that driving times vary depending upon the condition of the road, driving habits, experience and type of vehicle. Always make sure you let that person know when you have arrived safely. Do this for each leg of your trip.

### Your Vehicle

Know the limitations of your vehicle. Four wheel drive vehicles have a higher centre of gravity. Do not take 2WD vehicles on 4WD tracks. Have your car fully serviced before you leave. Take at least two spare tyres with you, as well as a current detailed and accurate map.

### Fuel

Unleaded/lead replacement and LPG is not always available in some remote areas. Check with the fuel distributors or the tourist information office before you leave. You may need to take jerry cans with extra fuel. Make sure these are stored securely and the lid is tight to avoid leakage on rough roads.

### Water/Food

Take approximately 9 litres of water per adult per day. You should take enough extra water and food to last 2-3 days past your intended travel time. - Be aware, there can be large distances between food outlets.

### Emergency Equipment

You should consider taking the following items with you, in case of emergency:

- First aid kit
- Fire extinguisher
- Recovery gear - including a snatch strap or a load rated rope
- EPIRB (Electronic Position Indicator Radio Beacon)
- Satellite Phone H.F. Radio



### Weather/Best time to Travel:

The Kimberley has two distinct seasons the wet (Dec-April) and the dry season (May-Nov). Most unsealed roads are impassable during the wet season. Plan to take your trip between May and Nov.

Always phone the Main Roads WA Road Condition Report Number (1800 013 314) before departing on each leg of your trip, even if you are travelling in the dry season. Remember, you can be fined up to \$200 under the Main Roads Act and local Shire

by-laws for driving on roads that are signed closed. Your vehicle will not be covered by insurance if you put in a claim for damage that occurred on a closed section of road.

### WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

In the event of an emergency in a remote area, such as a break down or if you get bogged, always **STAY WITH YOUR VEHICLE**. Searchers, especially aerial searchers, are more likely to see your vehicle than you. Your vehicle will also provide you with shelter from the sun and other elements.

Your vehicle is also where your stores of food and water are (you will only be able to carry enough for a couple of days if you set off on foot). Many travellers have been known to die in remote areas simply because they have left their vehicle.

# ROAD LAWS

## Seatbelts

All drivers and passengers travelling on Western Australian roads are required to wear seatbelts.

Ensure all occupants of the vehicle are wearing a seatbelt even when driving on remote bush tracks, for their own safety.

Infants under 12 months of age must be restrained in an approved child restraint.



## Alcohol

If you are going to drink – don't drive!

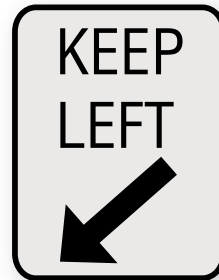
A driver cannot, by law, be in control of a vehicle with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of 0.05% or above. Even small amounts of alcohol can affect your ability to control a vehicle.

Police patrol roads regularly and can test a driver at random for alcohol consumption.



## Keep Left

All traffic on two lane roads in Australia must travel to the left of the carriageway.







## FLOODWAYS, CREEKS & RIVER CROSSINGS

At floodways, creek crossings or when water is across the road surface, you should always stop the car to check the water depth and how fast the water is flowing before attempting to cross. Always wade across to check the water depth, however, do not enter the water if there is the possibility of crocodiles in the vicinity. We recommend walking both tyre tracks to check for submerged logs and debris.

As a general rule, if you cannot stand in the water then it is flowing too fast to cross. It is not necessarily the depth of the water, but rather the speed that will cause problems when crossing floodways and creek crossings. You should also determine if the water is rising or falling. Floodways in the Kimberley often rise and fall quickly and if you wait patiently the water will eventually drop enough to cross safely.

To cross safely we recommend the water depth should be no more than 50cm (for an average adult - about knee high) for most 4WD vehicles and less than 20cm for 2WD vehicles.

**If in doubt, DO NOT attempt to cross.**



## AVOID FATIGUE

Many serious and fatal crashes are caused by driver's falling asleep at the wheel. With the long distances travelled in the Kimberley, fatigue is a very real road safety risk.

### Tips to avoid fatigue:

- Plan your trip to include regular rest stops (at least every 2 hours).
- Take water to drink along the way. Dehydration is a common cause of fatigue.
- Avoid driving at night and especially when you would normally be sleeping. Your chances of crashing are much higher at night.
- Get a good nights sleep the night before driving.
- Swap drivers regularly if possible.
- Do not consume alcohol before driving and at rest breaks and avoid drinking too much alcohol the night before.
- If you are feeling tired pull off the road and have a sleep – it's the only cure.



## UNSEALED ROADS

### Unsealed Roads

Unsealed surfaces are unpredictable and caution must be taken at all times!

- Try to drive in the tracks carved out by other vehicles.
- It is recommended that you change over to 4WD in high range (4H) when travelling on unsealed sections of road for better traction. (Remember to lock your hubs if need be).
- Remember to disengage 4WD when you return to sealed road.

### Speed

You should always drive to the conditions of the road. If the road is corrugated, has multiple potholes, is winding with many corners or soft loose gravel - reduce your speed. Remember that you will not be able to drive at the same speed as on a sealed road. It will take you longer to get to your destination.

### Corrugations

Driving on corrugations can be quite hazardous. Always be cautious and slow down when rounding curves as speed may cause loss of traction and control of your vehicle or trailer. Try to avoid overtaking on corrugations - be patient, an opportunity will arise.

### Dust

Driving on unsealed roads will always produce dust.

Always drive with your headlights on low beam, this will make you more visible to oncoming traffic and traffic ahead of you.

Never overtake someone if you cannot see what is coming the other way through the dust. Be patient, reduce your speed and stay alert-you may catch up to the vehicle in front but not see them through the dust.

Do not stop unnecessarily as there maybe another vehicle behind you. If you need to stop pull right off the road.

Do not move to the centre of the road, stay on the left hand side at all times.

Dust can linger in the air if there is no wind. If dust lingers, keep your speed to a minimum until you have clear vision and remember:

**BE PATIENT.**

**TAKE IT SLOWLY AND ENJOY THE SCENERY.**

## Turn Your Headlights On

Always drive with your headlights on low beam during the daytime so that you may be easily seen by oncoming traffic or when you approach another vehicle from behind.

## Overtaking

Use your headlights (low beam) when approaching a vehicle from behind. DO NOT overtake if the visibility is poor.

Make sure you have plenty of clear straight road in front of you and remember some road trains can have up to 4 trailers, so give yourself enough distance to pass safely.

If you have a CB radio try contacting the truck driver to let them know you are behind. After overtaking, try to get a reasonable distance ahead before moving back to your side of the road. This will avoid windscreen damage.

## Skidding

Probably the greatest hazard when driving on unsealed roads is loss of control due to skidding. A skid can develop quickly and is usually due to the driver changing speed or direction.

A rear wheel skid is the most common and can occur when travelling too fast through a curve, or when braking on a curve or a slippery surface.

To correct a rear wheel skid:

- Do not apply the brakes
- Ease off the accelerator, gently but not completely
- Steer gently towards the side the rear wheels are skidding
- Straighten the steering as soon as the vehicle straightens out
- Gently re- apply accelerator.

A front wheel skid usually occurs on a curve or bend when the vehicle is moving too fast to maintain traction with the road surface, particularly on gravel. The vehicle will continue to travel in a straight line instead of turning.

To correct a front wheel skid:

- Ease your foot off the accelerator
- Straighten the front wheels
- Brake gently to reduce speed
- When control is regained, turn the front wheels in the desired direction.

A four wheel skid is usually caused by heavy braking. All wheels will lock up and stop rotating. To correct a four wheel skid:

- Ease off the brake pedal for a moment
- Gently re-apply the brakes
- If the wheels lock up again, repeat the process.



### What to do if you get bogged

Should you get bogged try the following:

- Engage 4WD if you haven't already. (Remember to lock your hubs if need be)
- Try reversing out.
- Let some air out of your tyres and try to drive out.
- Place sticks, bushes and spinifex under the front tyres then try and drive out.
- Wait with your vehicle for another vehicle to come along and pull you out using a snatch strap or load rated rope. Do not use the tow ball as an anchor point. If you are still bogged, stay with your vehicle until help arrives.

### Tyres

Unsealed roads in the Kimberley have very sharp rocks, which can easily puncture tyres.

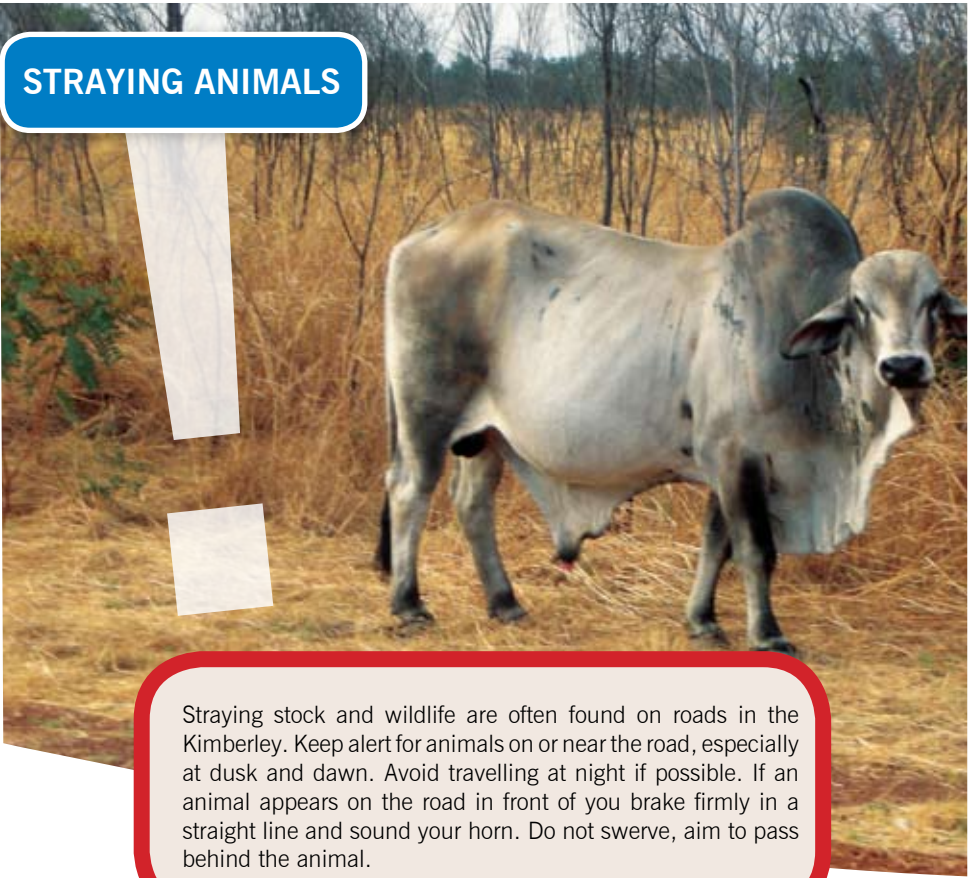
Ensure that you take at least two spare tyres, extra tubes, tyre repair kit and an air compressor. Instructions on how to change your tyre will be in the vehicle manual.

Choose a suitable place to change your tyre so you can be easily seen by oncoming traffic. A flat, straight section of road is the best place.

Pull off the road and use your hazard lights.

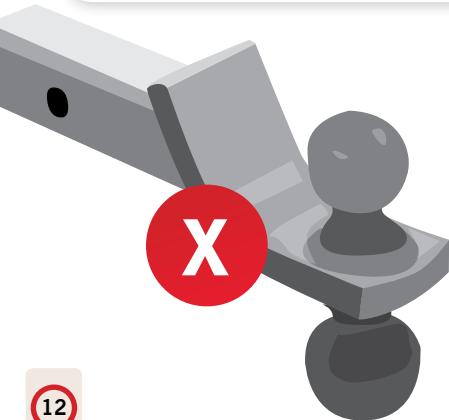


## STRAYING ANIMALS



Straying stock and wildlife are often found on roads in the Kimberley. Keep alert for animals on or near the road, especially at dusk and dawn. Avoid travelling at night if possible. If an animal appears on the road in front of you brake firmly in a straight line and sound your horn. Do not swerve, aim to pass behind the animal.

## TOWING CARAVANS/CAMPER TRAILERS



It is not recommended that you tow a caravan on unsealed roads in the Kimberley.

If you wish to take a camper trailer it is advised that it have 4WD tyres with a high clearance and be built to withstand corrugations and a rough road surface.



The background of the page is a photograph of a river with willow trees. The water is calm, reflecting the sky and the branches of the trees. The willow branches are thin and dark, with some green leaves and some dried, yellowish-brown leaves. The sky is a pale blue with some light clouds.

## FIRES AND SMOKE

It is quite common to see bush fires during the dry season in the Kimberley. The Station owners burn off the bush to encourage new growth during the wet season to feed their stock. The fire and smoke from these fires can be a hazard to the motorist.

Fires can burn right up to the edge of the road making it dangerous to drive through. The smoke from these fires is very thick and you can lose total visibility. It's a good idea to turn your headlights on low beam to improve your visibility.

Do not attempt to drive through thick smoke. Stop the car and wait for the smoke to clear before moving forward. If there is a breeze this should not take too long. Use the time to take a break and have a cup of tea or coffee.



## REGULATORY SIGNS



### Road Signs

These signs are red and/or black on a white background. You must, by law, abide by what the sign tells you to do.



### Warning/Advisory signs

These signs are black on a yellow background. They indicate hazards ahead. You should adjust your driving speed accordingly and be prepared for what is ahead. Hazards are not always signposted and road conditions can change quickly, be alert for hazards at all times.

When these signs indicate a suggested speed, the speed is set for DRY conditions - lower your speed even more if the road is wet.



## ABORIGINAL LAND/PRIVATE PROPERTY

The land either side of an unsealed road is private property, even when it is not fenced. If you wish to travel on any roads other than the Gibb River Road, Kalumburu Road, Mitchell Plateau Road, Mornington Road, Tanami Track, Cape Leveque Road, Bungle Bungle Road or the sign posted gorge and beach access roads, you will need to seek permission from the owners.

A permit is required to travel on roads over Aboriginal land. This permit should be obtained from the Department of Indigenous Affairs before your trip. Please contact them in Kununurra on (08) 9168 2550 or Broome on (08) 9192 2865 well before your departure date.

**Contact tourist centres for further information.**

## CONTACT NUMBERS

**EMERGENCY: Police/Fire/Ambulance** ..... **000**

### Tourist Information Centres

Kununurra Visitor Centre .....	9168 1177
Wyndham Tourist Information .....	9161 1281
Halls Creek Visitor Centre .....	9168 6262
Fitzroy Crossing Visitor Centre .....	9191 5355
Derby Visitor Centre .....	9191 1426
Broome Visitor Centre .....	9192 2222

### Local Shire Offices

Shire of Broome .....	9191 3456
Shire of Derby /West Kimberley .....	9191 0999
Shire of Halls Creek .....	9168 6007
Shire of Wyndham /East Kimberley .....	9168 4100

### Police

Kununurra Police Station .....	9166 4530
Wyndham Police Station .....	9161 1055
Derby Police Station .....	9191 1444
Halls Creek Police Station .....	9168 6000
Fitzroy Crossing Police Station .....	9191 5000
Broome Police Station .....	9194 0200
Argyle Police Station .....	9167 1292

### Main Roads Western Australia

Derby (Regional Office) .....	9158 4333
Kununurra .....	9168 1755
Road Condition Report .....	1800 013 314
Damaged Road Signs Report .....	1800 800 009

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

### RoadWise Officer Kimberley Region

PO Box 44 Broome WA 6725

Ph: (08) 9191 3456

Mob: 0419 192 759

Email: [roadwise@broome.wa.gov.au](mailto:roadwise@broome.wa.gov.au).

### Customer Services Manager

Main Roads Western Australia

PMB 959 Derby WA 6728

Ph: (08) 9158 4333

Email: [kimreg@mainroads.wa.gov.au](mailto:kimreg@mainroads.wa.gov.au)

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

### Local Tourist Information Office

(see list of contact numbers inside guide)

### Local Shire Council

(see list of contact numbers inside guide)

## TOWARDS ZERO



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West Kimberley



SPEED AND RED LIGHT  
CAMERA FUNDED PROJECT

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