

“Boab Science Project - First in the World”

Professor Anne Poelina



natural resource
management program



This **‘Building Indigenous Capacity in Culture, Tourism and Conservation Economies’** project is supported by funding from the **Western Australian Government’s State Natural Resource Management Program**.



In 2011, the Australia Federal Government listed the Martuwarra Fitzroy River as an iconic National Heritage Listed site. Martuwarra is also the largest registered Aboriginal cultural heritage site in WA. The boabs of the Martuwarra are iconic to this region and are of cultural, environmental, and economic significance. The unknown risks to boabs from environmental impact of climate change, increasing tides and shifting water tables could impact on the various boab habitats and ecosystems in the Shire of Derby, West Kimberley.

Why a project about Boabs?

The *Project is the First in the World*. No-one in the Shire needs to be told how special boabs are in the Shire. The properties of boabs are well known and are increasingly becoming a premium ‘super food’ that is often wild harvested for carving, food, and medicine. Indigenous to Australia, **‘Boabs’**, *Adansonia gregorii* occurs mainly in the Kimberley, with a slight NT extension. The cultural significance of the Kimberley boabs cannot be overstated. Science-based informed decision-making needs both Indigenous, traditional knowledge practice and western science as well as promoting environmental stewardship and

community-based resource management. This research is crucial in providing the foundations for wide-ranging benefits for generations to come. Currently, half of the world's eight species of boabs, also known as the *Tree of Life*, are dying and listed on the International Union Conservation Nature (IUCN) Red List as being endangered. Currently, worldwide and in Australia, due to a lack of environmental information on the hydrology and habitats that sustain boabs, as well as development pressures, the survival of many species of this iconic tree is under threat



Women in Science - Tegan Riley, Elaine Riley, Kaitlyn Buaneye

Pandanus Park Women in science volunteers

A workshop was held in March with the community to introduce everyone to the Project. There are now a group of community citizen science volunteers who monitor and record the water table monthly. Three of the 'women in science' were awarded scholarships in late September to attend the Australian Association of Environmental Education in Mandurah. We believe this Project will be making history, as it is an Australian-first. The Project will provide vital new valuation data that will fill an existing knowledge gap in relation to the economic value of environmental (biodiversity and eco-system) services on Country. It is expected to position riverside communities to succeed in the broader economic development of their land.



Where to next?



The Pandanus Park Boab 'women in science' team volunteer monthly to monitor and record changes in water tables of these sites. These culture, conservation, science, and tourism opportunities involve opening the River Country to share with national and world citizens and create 'export-quality' experiences and economically sustainable livelihoods on Country. Importantly it will provide stories and experiences to showcase and promote the National Heritage Listed Fitzroy River as a unique and globally important riverine system. Plans for a Feasibility Study are underway to develop '*Walking and Horse Trails*' between Pandanus Park and, Balginjirr (Lower Liveringa Outstation) along the 'old River Road'. If you need more information please call, 0408 922 155 or email anne@majala.com.au

If you want to know more about the WA NRM Program, please see:

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