

December 2014



Turtle Talk

E-news for members & friends of the



Our Network was formed in response to the turtle crisis caused by 2011's very hot summer, when many of Perth's metropolitan lakes dried up resulting in widespread turtle deaths and a mass rescue of debilitated turtles.

Although our official name is Turtle *Oblonga* Rescue & Rehabilitation Network Inc., or TORRN for short, we will also be using Turtle *Oblonga* Network as a trading name.

CHRISTMAS 2014 EDITION



2014, THE YEAR THAT WAS...

AND LOOKING FORWARD TO 2015

It's hard to believe that another year has flown by! It has been another busy year as we continue our core business of rescue and rehabilitation; all whilst building networks with the veterinary community, wildlife and environmental organisations, state and local government and the general public.

This year saw the departure of our founding Chair/ Secretary and turtle carer extraordinaire, Ruth Haight. The cooler climes and rural charm of Albany beckoned and Ruth and husband Thom packed their bags in April to begin the next exciting phase in their life's journey. Ruth contributed so much to the Network and it wouldn't be the organisation it is today without her knowledge, commitment and compassion. More importantly, many, many turtles owe their well-being to the care and treatment provided by Ruth while resident in her turtle hospital. Ruth's departure left big shoes to fill and we have all had to rise to the occasion taking on new responsibilities and learning as much as we can about professional and evidence-based care for turtles. Thankfully, modern technology allows us to continue to tap into Ruth's wisdom and knowledge, and whether in Albany or Timbuktu, we can still avail ourselves of expert advice.

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Founding Treasurer and member Dianne, who has taken on the role of Secretary, has lead the charge on many fronts including working with state and local government on a range of matters such as a mass turtle relocation project to allow feral fish eradication, the Floreat Drain and Lake Herdsman. As well as being somewhat of an expert in sniffing out bargain turtle-supplies, she has been at the forefront of building relationships with local government, community groups and wildlife organisations. Speaking of which, we are always on the lookout for medical supplies to assist in the care of our rescue turtles so if you have access to any please let a member of the Committee know!

Following the lead of other wildlife groups, we have created the role of Home-Care Coordinator. Membership



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Secretary Karen C has taken on this important role. With Ruth's departure and the need to diversify our skills base it became apparent that a Home-Care Coordinator would be necessary to ensure that the workload was evenly spread. As well as compiling the data from incident forms and rescues, Karen co-ordinates all home-care and liaises with our specialist veterinary centres.

This year has seen an increase in our network of home carers, a specialist role requiring training and a significant time commitment. Our band of dedicated home-carers has included Ruth, Dianne, Karen C, Pauline, Deborah, Sandy, Michelle, Barbara & Alan and Karen P. We have also been ably-assisted by former registered nurse Cathy who has helped with giving meds to some of our larger patients. Injecting pain relief and antibiotics in a wriggling 2kg female turtle is not easy by yourself... and risky when wielding a loaded syringe!

We have gained considerable experience in the care of hatchlings and for the first time we have incubated clutches of eggs rescued from high-risk situations where there was a negligible prospect of survival. We believe that our efforts have resulted in a healthy boost to turtle populations. We receive many calls from concerned members of the public about hatchlings especially in late winter and early spring. The fact is that a hatchling (or turtle) out of water is an animal at risk from predation, dehydration, starvation, motor-vehicle trauma and so on. Turtles did not evolve in a world of cars, dogs, high-kerbs and the maze of suburban fences which are now the norm. All these things significantly reduce the chances of hatchlings making it safely to a wetland after hatching; we have received reports of hatchlings in the most unusual places such as front gardens a long way from any wetland, at the front door, in laundries (through the doggie/cat door), and even falling from the sky into a chicken coop. If you see a hatchling out of water and you have any concerns call us, please do not leave it where it is.

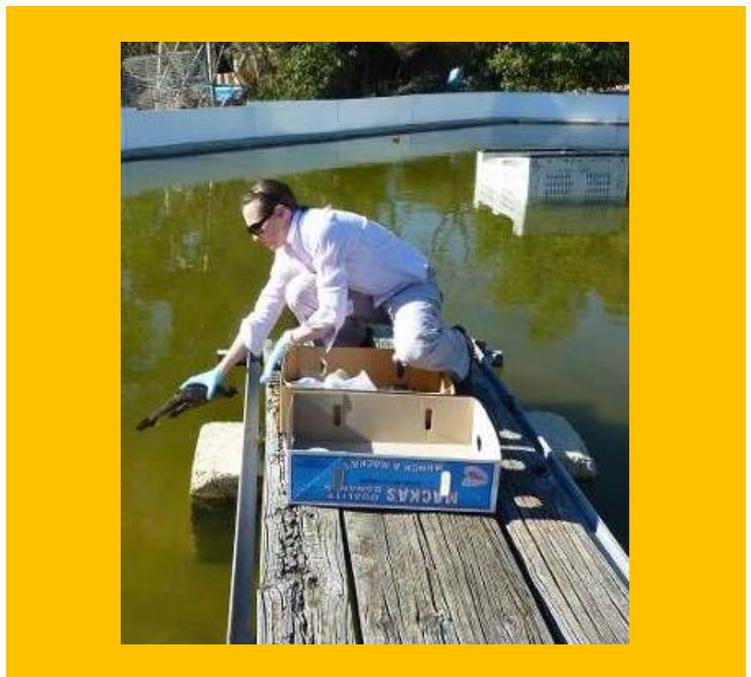
Members have been extremely busy this year getting their hands dirty (literally) in with a range of projects. Earlier this year, many members of the network were involved in a mass relocation of turtles to allow the eradication of a feral fish from a southern suburbs wetland. Dianne, Ruth, Karen C and husband Erik co-ordinated the exercise, and with military precision over a seven day period members were on hand to assist with weighing, measuring, health-checks, micro-chipping and transport.



Micro-chipping a turtle

We learnt a great deal from this exercise and it represented an important opportunity to bring members together to do what we do best - care for turtles. Who can forget the production line of members that included wildlife carers, vet nurses, vets, students and environmental scientists all co-ordinated by Erik?

We also learnt a lot about the importance of water quality and substrate when we had to reverse the process and transport the turtles back to the wetland several weeks later. The benefits of micro chipping have come to the fore and we have been able to follow the progress of individual turtles throughout the year during relocation and at subsequent trappings by the Department of Fisheries.



Continued...



Our members have also been involved in many community education and wildlife events such as the World Animal Day at Piney Lakes Environment Centre in Melville, International Threatened Species Day etc. These occasions are a great opportunity to meet members of the public, to enthuse them about all things turtle and to provide grassroots education.

Our core business is the rescue and rehabilitation of turtles and this year was another busy year with numerous patients requiring care and attention....

2014 INCIDENT STATISTICS

Notes: These are not final year counts.
Each incident may involve more than one turtle.



The TORRN stall and some of the team at National Threatened Species Day

Earlier this year, we attended the orientation session of the Swan River Trust's Ellen Brook Restoration Program and provided advice to contractors on the steps to take when encountering turtles. We were especially fortunate that our patron, Dr Gerald Kuchling was also present. The Ellen Brook Restoration is an important example of the Network engaging with State Government to preserve and restore wetland habitats and to ensure the best outcome for turtles and we enjoyed working with the professional and committed staff of the Swan River Trust.

The first port of call in any turtle emergency is one of our Turtle Emergency phones. As well as metro - east, north and south - we have expanded our emergency phones to Albany, Busselton and Margaret River. After a call is received, one of our three metropolitan operators Tanya, Dianne, or Karen C contacts one of our Turtle Taxi members to arrange patient pickup and transfer to a wetland, vet or home carer as appropriate. The system is much the same as calling a triple 000 operator who then dispatches the closest ambulance! All of our Turtle Taxis are trained - they are the ones who have a permanent stash of rescue tubs, gum boots and towels and bandages in the boot of their cars. If you are interested in becoming a turtle paramedic, please let us know - we need more people in all suburbs.

INCIDENT REASON	Number
Egg laying or disturbance	8
Found in pool or at beach	8
Found on or near road/MVA	17
Found displaced/wandering	126
Found sick or injured	16
Fish hook injuries	3
Predation by dogs	3
Predation by birds	3
Suspicious-Malicious	1
Found dead	5

INCIDENT OUTCOME	Number
In Care	3
Euthanasia	17
Died	11
Released after care	37
Relocations	92
Unknown	30

This is just a summary of the activities the Network has been involved in this year; it is not possible to cover the length and breadth of our activities in such a short space. Our central work of rescue and rehabilitation would not have been possible without the contribution of so many different people and organisations and this is our opportunity to say "thank you" and to acknowledge the important role you all play in ensuring good outcomes for our turtles.

The Network is not-for-profit and relies on donations and grass-roots funding such as small equipment grants - thank you to all who donated their time, resources or money, it is much appreciated. Our work would not be possible without the expert veterinary advice and care of the staff at Wattle Grove Veterinary Hospital and Riseley Veterinary Centre.

We also acknowledge the community of wildlife rescue and rehabilitation and environmental organisations who we work with and receive support from including Kanyana



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Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Darling Range Wildlife Shelter, SERCUL, and the 7-day Wild Care Helpline.

We have seen some new faces join our Committee this year - welcome to Sandy, Deborah and Lian and thanks to departing members Barbara and June who have left to focus on their commitments at Kanyana. Our Committee is broad and varied in its background (veterinary science, veterinary nursing, environmental science, wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, business management) but united by a passion for turtle rehabilitation and conservation and wildlife in general.

Meetings are never dull, and while our focus is western long-necked turtles this was taken to new heights when we rescued another creature of the long-necked variety at our AGM in August. A swan had become entangled in some fishing line and when members of the public came knocking on the door at the Canning Eco Education Centre where we were holding our meeting they could not have anticipated the rapid response that followed. Three members with rescue tubs, towels and wellington boots were on the scene in minutes and thanks to our well-connected members, Marg from Seabird rescue collected the patient within the hour. The story had a happy ending - the fishing hook was removed and the swan returned to its home.

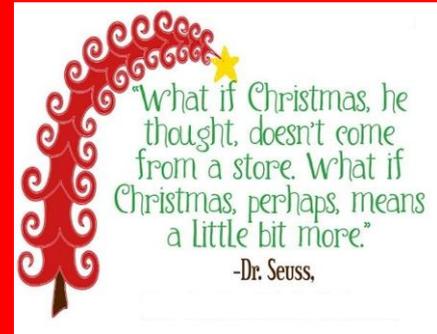
To all those members of the public who took the time and effort to step in when you saw a turtle in need - A very big thank you! Our rescues can range from the heart-warming to the heart-breaking but we never cease to be amazed at the lengths people will go to help our wildlife. There is no doubt that your intervention saved the lives of many at-risk turtles.

Most importantly, we would like to thank and acknowledge our network members - your care, compassion, and the effort you are prepared to invest is what makes this network go round.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you for your contribution to the important work of turtle rescue and rehabilitation. We wish you all the very best as the year ends and hope it brings you some time to rest, reflect and enjoy some time out; we very much look forward to continuing to work with you in 2015.

KAREN PYE

Chair, Turtle Oblonga Network



**STOP BUYING "STUFF"
DONATE INSTEAD**

In an endeavour to reduce the consumerism of the festive season, more and more people are giving charity gifts.

Why give charity gifts?

- They're super green gifts; the resources used involve little more than paper and printing
- They're usually tax deductible
- They don't involve battling the Christmas crowds and shopping centres
- They're not fattening

The donation doesn't have to be large to make a difference. The vast majority of donations in Australia are made up of small contributions, rather than the large donations highlighted in the media.

A small donation from me, added to a small donation from you, added to another small donation from someone else, added to other small donations can, in combination, make a big difference. We too appreciate donations and can issue tax deductible receipts. We are a small volunteer group; donations free us from the need to fundraise allowing us to concentrate on our core business - the rescue and rehabilitation of turtles.

You can either donate through our website

<http://www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au/donate.html>

or through *Give Now* (which charges no commission fees)

<http://www.givenow.com.au/turtleoblonganetwork>

Perhaps more important than money are volunteers. We need more members to be hands-on, so if you'd like to be involved, please let us know how you'd like to help.



VETERINARY PROFILE

DR GARY BEILBY

BSc (Vet Biology) BVMS MVS (Conservation Medicine)
Veterinarian, Wattle Grove Veterinary Hospital
Owner, Animal Happiness Mobile Vet Service



I am a vet with a passion for wildlife and conservation. I have recently started a mobile callout veterinary service for Perth, catering to behavioural problems, exotic species and end of life decisions. I live in Manning with a couple of crazy dogs, a Weiro, my beautiful partner Shannon, and her wonderful daughter.

We recently asked Gary a few questions....

Tell us a little about your childhood...

I grew up in Perth and Geraldton. Both my parents were teachers and they LOVED camping, so every school holidays they would pack up my brother and me in the Kombi van and head into the country. As a result of these early experiences I've always felt very connected to the Australian bush, and very scared of March flies.

Your Education...

I'm a proud product of government high schools. I began year 8 at Geraldton High finishing the remainder of the year at the massive Kelmscott High. I not only did well enough to get a place in Vet School, but I also learned to fight!

Why you became a Veterinarian?

I'm the typical hard case - I was always an animal nut, and I decided from when I first learned that such a job as *veterinarian* existed, I wanted to be one of them. Of course I had to be different - I knew about this totally awesome Flying Doctor Service, so I decided to be the first flying vet. Ah well, you can't have everything.

How you first became drawn to wildlife...

While it all started very early for me, particularly when I realised I shared a name with one of our enigmatic marsupials (Bilbies), a key turning point was in 1995 when I ran the Hilltop Veterinary Clinic in Kalamunda and a lady by the name of June Butcher came in and asked if I could help her with supplies to treat injured wildlife. I helped as I could, but just a year later I sold the practice to pursue a change of career. As well as being an animal nerd I am also a huge computer nerd and the Internet explosion was far too exciting to pass up. 10 years later it was becoming a lot less exciting and I felt the animals calling again. So I called June . . .

Your volunteering experiences...

After that call I spent 3 years volunteering at the old Kanyana (located at Gooseberry Hill). I was a treatment supervisor, I ran the newsletter, I built the website and I helped with fundraising. I had a wonderful time there and decided that wildlife work and the protection of Australian species was something deeply and extremely important to me. I returned to University and completed a Masters in Veterinary Conservation and then returned to full-time veterinary work. As part of the Masters I spent 4 weeks in Shark Bay volunteering at the Project Eden endangered species breeding centre where I learned that sand flies deserve as much respect as March flies.

Your turtle experiences...

I treated many oblong turtles back in my Kanyana volunteer days, but the last 6 years at Wattle Grove Vet Hospital have afforded me the opportunity to treat an enormous number of Chelodiniian challenges. From understanding their unique skin physiology, to developing new shell fracture repair methods, to learning just how fast they can charge off a table when your head is turned, I have found them to be one of the most interesting patients of all.

Gary's profile continues...



Your involvement with TORRN...

I have been treating the TORRN turtles since the organisation's inception. I hope to keep doing so in my new role as a mobile vet.

Your favourite animal (apart from turtles)...

That would be my namesake the Bilby of course!



Photo credit: G. Beilby

Your favourite holiday destination...

Any far flung corner of Australia - the more remote and wild the better. That said, I really do love to travel anywhere. Travel is a wonderful wonderful thing.

What do you get up to in your spare time?

I have been a keen wildlife photographer since the digital camera revolution, but in the last couple of years my photography has taken a back seat (for the second time in my life incredibly) to videography. Right now I'm obsessively making time lapse, slow motion and event videos, launching GoPro cameras with RC quadcopters and hanging them off my motorbike and my dogs. I love it!

What you plan to do in your retirement?

Most likely be just like my parents and simply get busier.

Contact Gary

0418 936 418

drbeilby@animalhappiness.guru

www.facebook.com/animal.happiness.vet

www.animalhappinessvet.com.au/

www.beilby.com

Click link to re-read Gary's featured article
"FIXING BENT & BROKEN TURTLES"
from our May-June 2013 edition of Turtle Talk
(see page 5).



SPREADING THE WORD

E-NEWS, ONLINE & SOCIAL MEDIA

- **PICS:** If you have any pictures of Oblong turtles (and/or stories about them) for inclusion into the next Turtle Talk OR the website/Facebook page, then **Karen** would love to hear from you.
- **OLD STUFF:** Have you been out of the loop or want to re-read something? Find previous editions of the TURTLE TALK E-News **here**.
- **UPDATES/NEW STUFF:** We recently updated the **Donate** and **Events** page.
- **WEBSITE:** We welcome your suggestions and comments about our website see: www.turtleoblonganetwork.org.au
- **FACEBOOK:** We are currently sitting on **457** likes and counting! Please **LIKE US** and share things of interest with your friends, as this may also assist us in gaining more likes and subsequent members.

AND SPEAKING OF MEMBERSHIP.....

- INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS : 121
- GROUP MEMBERSHIPS : 2

To those of you who are receiving/reading this newsletter, but have not yet officially joined us as a member - please do so! Numbers count. Just by becoming a member you are helping. The more members we have, the more supporters our turtles have which will be of benefit when we are lobbying on their behalf. Membership is FREE but you'll still need to complete a membership form. **Download our Membership Form**.

CHANGED ADDRESS, EMAIL OR PHONE?

Remembering that we might need to mobilise our forces in the event of emergency, it would be great if our lists of members were always up to date.

Email **Karen** any changes to your contact details.



RESCUES, REHAB & RELEASE

DID YOU CATCH ANYTHING ?

If when fishing you catch a turtle (or a bird), please *do not* cut the line! Call for help and advice. If it's a turtle call us, if it's a bird of any kind call **WA Seabird Rescue on 0418 952 683**.

If possible use a landing net to land the turtle - avoid reeling it in if possible as placing additional pressure on the hook and/or entangled line will cause further damage to the turtle. Once the turtle has been landed, place the "catch of the day" into a large container without water. It is extremely important that the fishing line not be cut at any point. If the line is cut, the turtle may swallow the hook even further rendering removal more difficult, if not impossible. The same applies to birds, and fish.

Hooks don't "dissolve"; they must be surgically removed. Rusting is a slow process during which time the hook works its way through the upper parts of the digestive system before it perforates the stomach and slowly, painfully kills the turtle.

TURTLE-FRIENDLY FRESHWATER FISHING

- *De-barb all hooks*
- *Use a de-barbed circle hook*
- *Use lures instead of bait (there is anecdotal evidence that lures are less likely to catch turtles)*
- *Add our turtle rescue numbers, along with those of WA Seabird Rescue, to your mobile phone*

A circle hook is designed so that the point is turned perpendicular to the shank to form a circular shape. It's said that a true circle hook snags nothing at all, even if placed in your pocket - this is also the same when it enters a fish's mouth. The advantage of using circle hooks is that fish are almost never deep-hooked as a result of swallowing the hook. Circle hooks are more likely to hook a fish in the mouth rather than the gut, making them easier to remove and reducing harm to the fish. The same applies to turtles.

The picture shows a standard "J" hook on the left, and a circle hook on the right.



OBLONG TURTLES & SALTWATER DON'T MIX !

Two members of the public were enjoying a Sunday afternoon at Floreat Beach when they came upon a sight that we encounter all too often. Two freshwater oblong turtles on the beach that had been ejected via the Floreat Drain, a large outlet pipe that runs from Lake Herdsman and along the way collects large volumes of water from Perth's network of drains. Sadly, one of the turtles had succumbed to the effects of saltwater immersion but the other was still alive and was taken to Balcatta Vet Hospital which cleared the turtle of serious injury before contacting TORRN. We never know just how long these turtles have been trapped in Perth's underground drain network or immersed in the saltwater and this male turtle looked underweight and was very fatigued. It was decided to take him into Stage 3 care for some rest and nutrition. He was placed in an outdoor pond enclosure and immediately demonstrated a healthy appetite and a great love of sticking his head out of the pond in the morning light; it may be that he had spent a long time in a dark drain and was making up for lost time in the sun. Five weeks later, and having increased in weight from 715 to 820 grams, a vital and much healthier turtle was released into a metropolitan wetland. If you ever see a long-necked turtle on the beach, please remember that they do not belong there and will not survive; even if you are not sure if the turtle is dead or alive, please don't hesitate to contact one of TORRN's emergency phones (numbers at the end of enews).

LADY NINJA'S STORY

We have recently admitted three fish-hooked turtles. Two came to us via Perth Zoo, the other direct to TORRN. This turtle was accidentally hooked by a family who did all the right things - they didn't cut the line, took the turtle straight home and called us immediately. The victim was one of the biggest turtles we've admitted - 1.7kg and with attitude to match. She was in beautiful condition and has been named (aptly as it turns out) Lady Ninja by one very excited little boy-dynamo.

As is the way with these things, Lady Ninja's accident occurred outside vet hours, late in the day on Sunday. Lady Ninja was taken into care, given pain relief and had the fishing line taped to her neck with a stretchy bandage before being admitted to the vet the next morning where she underwent surgery to remove the hook. She had a



small, neat wound at the base of her neck with purple stitches. Fortunately, the hook didn't travel into the stomach, or the outcome may have been very different.

Her story continues from, Alan, her carer's perspective...

As the Lady was shredding her food but not eating, I thought she may have had a throat problem as a result of the surgery. After a vet check which found no problem in her throat, she immediately began to eat.

Her weight was dropping by about one gram per day but due to her size, 1600 grams, she was difficult to weigh until we worked out a method to keep her in the vicinity of the scales. Her surgery repaired well both, internally and externally and she was anxiously waiting to return to her home. This Lady was released in the Canning River in the vicinity of her accident with a fish hook.

The attached photo shows her grief-filled departure from our care, indicated by the speed and direction of travel to the river where she entered the water in a straight line for two metres and then took a dramatic and sudden left turn before diving out of sight. This action was a decisive *thank you* for the food, care and attention for two weeks she was with us and even with the episodes of growling and pushing our hands away from her body, she was very grateful . . . we think ?

We now have in our care another well-built girl called attractively, Bridget from Bridgetown, who also swallowed a fish hook and needed abdominal surgery, her incision is much more dramatic but she is also gentle but decisive, no growling yet but being a country girl her manners may a bit better honed.

More on Bridget later...

Alan (& Barbara)

LADY NINJA - GOING, GOING, GONE !





HATCHLING RESCUES

Spring time is hatchling time and this year was no different to many others where we received calls from members of the public about hatchlings found in all sorts of weird and wonderful places, many nowhere near water. Young Joanna was playing in her front garden when she came across a tiny little hatchling (which was also named Joanna) on some gravel near the front door. No-one really knows how she got there, but this tiny hatchling (2.8cm and 4.38grams) was about to have a couple of very interesting days. The next day, Joanna took the hatchling to school thinking that her teacher or the school principal might know what to do. Thankfully, the principal knew about the Wildcare Helpline and TORRN was subsequently contacted. Joanna (the hatchling) was taken into care to ensure that she was able to feed and to gain some weight before release. Very shortly after rescuing Joanna, little Frankie (pictured) was found on a pathway near Lake Joondalup. His rescuers reported that he was dehydrated and not particularly active. A Turtle Taxi member was despatched and Frankie was taken into care to ensure he would be strong enough to survive when released. Fortunately, he was a reasonable weight at 5.67grams with a carapace of 3.2cm. Frankie and Joanna were housed together and both showed a keen interest in mosquito larve and bloodworms. After a few days of care and having gained several grams in weight each these two lucky hatchlings were released. Thank you to all those caring members of the public who have assisted in rescues this year!



Baby Frankie pre-release

EVENTS PAGE

SAVE THE DATE !!!

Our next long awaited **TURTLE REHAB Course** will be held on **Sunday 15 March 2015** at the **Canning River Eco Education Centre!!!!**

The 11th annual **WA Wetland Management Conference** will be held on **Monday 2 February 2015** at the **Cockburn Wetlands Centre.**

GENERAL MEETING

Thanks to everyone who attended our last general meeting of the year at the Canning River Eco Education Centre on 7 December !!!



Alan playing Santa



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MISCELLANEOUS STUFF

It's not just about stamps . . . these cute critters are available from Australia Post . . .

Assorted Emtec
Animal 8GB
USB Drives

\$9⁹⁹
ea

67249

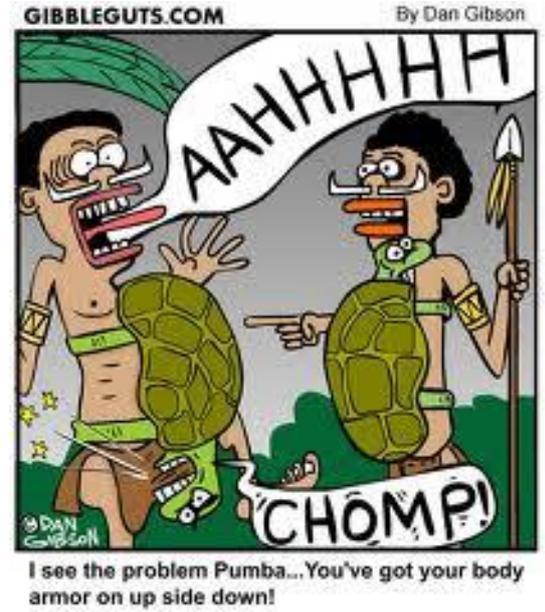


JUST FOR LAUGHS...





JUST FOR LAUGHS...



CONTACT US

If you have some spare time and would like to get more involved - please get in touch with us ...

TORRN COMMITTEE MEMBERS & CONTACTS



TORRN COMMITTEE

<u>Chair</u>	Karen Pye
<u>Secretary</u>	Dianne Hunter
<u>Treasurer</u>	Carla Tassone
<u>Membership</u>	Karen Cavanaugh

Committee Members

Michelle Hazelwood
Deborah Lavigne
Dr Amy Northover
Sandy Shailes
Dr Lian Yeap

EMERGENCY MOBILES

PERTH METROPOLITAN:
0424 727 411 - East Metro*
0424 727 624 - South Metro*
0414 476 867 - North Metro*

**If, for any reason, the number in your area doesn't answer, please call one of the other numbers.*

REGIONAL WA:

0428 984 445 - Albany
0438 813 919 - Margaret River
0437 910 054 - Busselton