

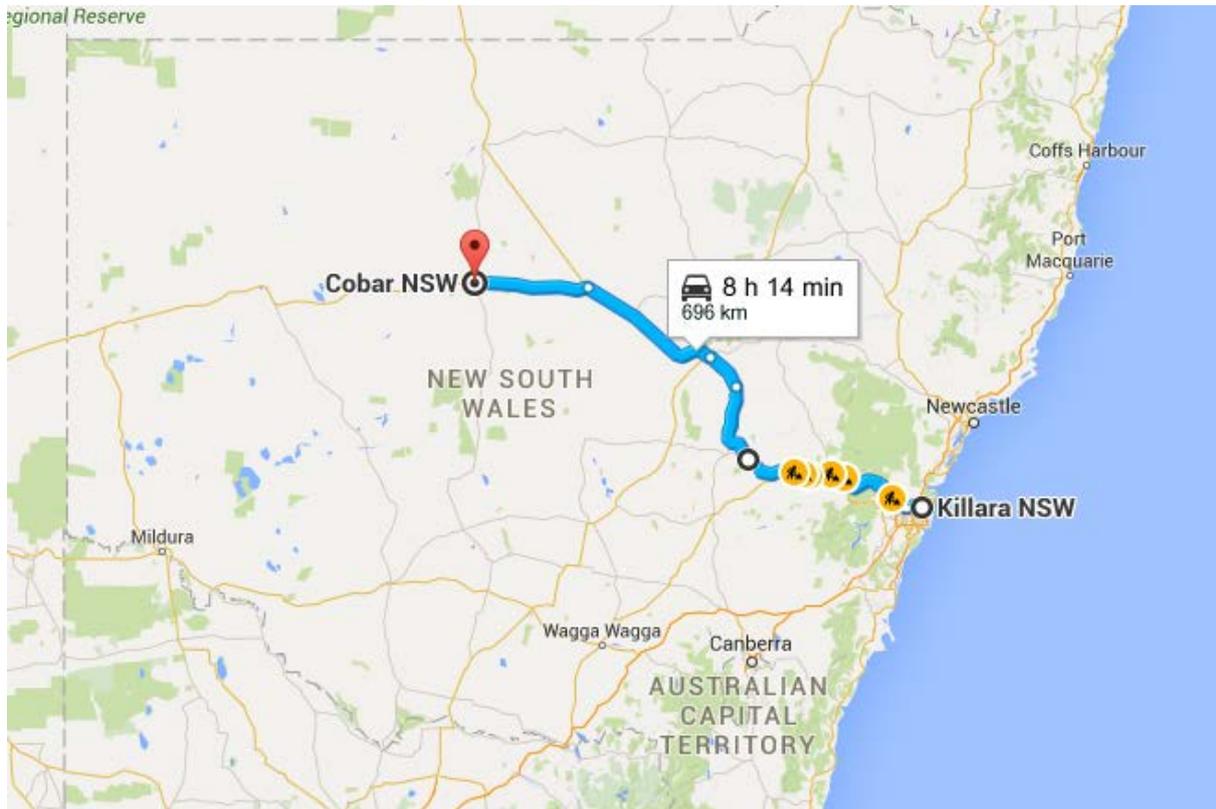
Perth Trip!

Day 1: Sydney → Cobar

6:15am – 5:30pm

We left in the dark on a cold Sydney morning. A cold front had moved over NSW the night before so it was cooler than usual. We set off, naturally with Uncle Rob driving. Our first plan was to get to Lithgow and use the public dunnies. To get to Lithgow we took the M2, onto Richmond road and then Bell's Line of Road through to Lithgow. It was 2 degrees when we got there at 8:15am. After we used the toilets we decided it was appropriate to turn the heater on in the car. Obviously, since the car is from 1950 and was not manufactured with any form heater, this meant covering ourselves in blankets. I have never seen someone drive a car with a blanket comfortably over their legs, while they operate all the pedals, but it wasn't an issue and in fact it was a very suitable solution to the cold as we motored on out of Lithgow with Rob still at the helm. Our next stop was Bathurst and, of course, Mount Panorama. With the dash camera rolling and the sun out, we lapped Bathurst twice. Each lap took about 6 minutes in comparison to the average v8 super car's 2 minutes and 10 seconds. But it is important to note that the race track is in fact a residential road with speed limits hence why the FX could not do a similar time...! After we had finished our laps and Rob had given his sermon on Psalm 24 ("Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?") we set a heading for Orange. However on our way to Orange the temperature dropped further and hit freezing. At this point, the rain we had encountered shortly after leaving Bathurst turned into sleet and then into snow. It was a nice feeling driving through the snow with our "heater" to keep us warm! Upon reaching Orange it was morning-tea time, and it was still snowing. We parked right out the front a café (Benny's Bakery) and enjoyed coffee and hot chocolate over some scones as we continued to observe the snow falling outside. When we finished up an incredibly exciting moment occurred, one which would define the road trip to come. Rob, in his confident voice, said "right" as he then held the keys to the car in front of me and dropped them in my hand. I was, as of that moment, his official secondary driver and very excited (on the inside of course, I totally played it cool on the outside). As we got into the car and I assumed the driving position we proceeded to calibrate our heaters as is necessary every time we re-enter the car. My level of excitement remained with me but a brief moment of nervousness crossed my mind as I realised I was now going to display my driving skill to the master himself, in no less than his own car! With only one false start of the engine we were off, motoring out of Orange and onto Dubbo, which was our designated lunch destination. On our way to Dubbo we needed to make a much needed fuel stop in Molong. Into a 40 litre tank we poured 37.60 litres of petrol... like I said, it was a much needed fuel stop. I continued to drive us the rest of the way to Dubbo where we stopped for lunch. We went to a bakery where Rob got a sandwich and I got a potato pie and a cinnamon donut. It was a very nice pie and it passed the "Ed Test". I had been driving for around 2 hours at that point so it was time for a change over. Rob drove us to our next stop which was Nyngan. There, we had afternoon tea which consisted of cappuccinos and a caramel slice. It should be noted that the caramel slice was also very nice! It was then down to me to take us into Cobar which was another 130 kilometres from Nyngan. Then sun was setting during this leg, so extra attention had to be given to look out for kangaroos and goats. I cruised the car into the sunset at a comfortable 60mph with an occasional increase to 65mph. At 5:30 in the evening, we pulled into Cobar City Motel. After carrying our bags into our room we went to have dinner at a Thai restaurant. We shared some deep fried fish cakes for an entree and then for mains I ordered a beef massaman

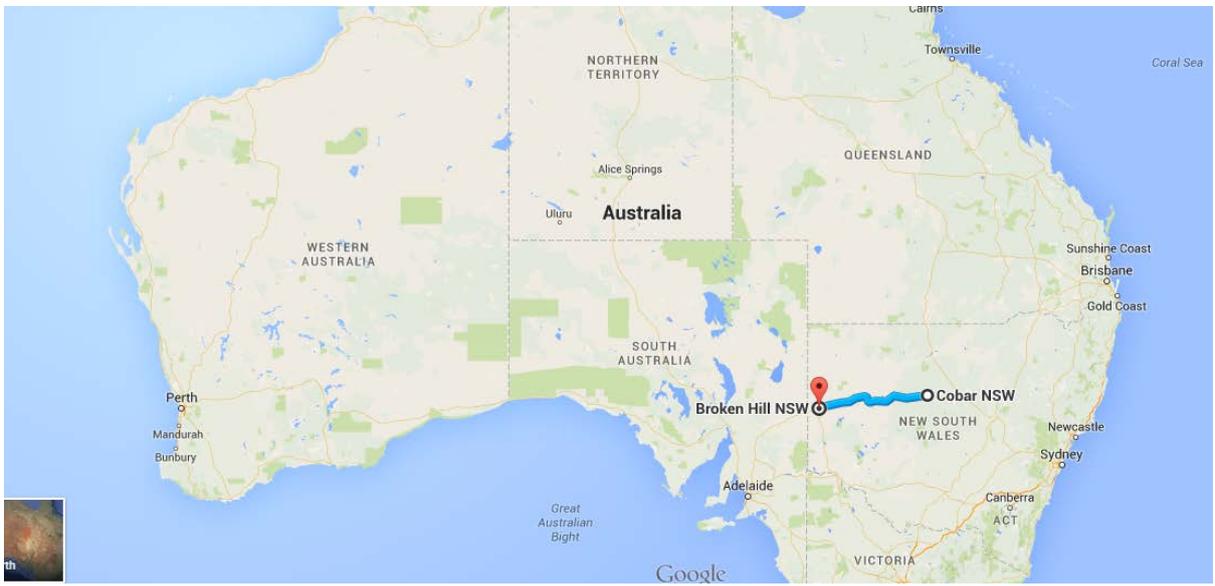
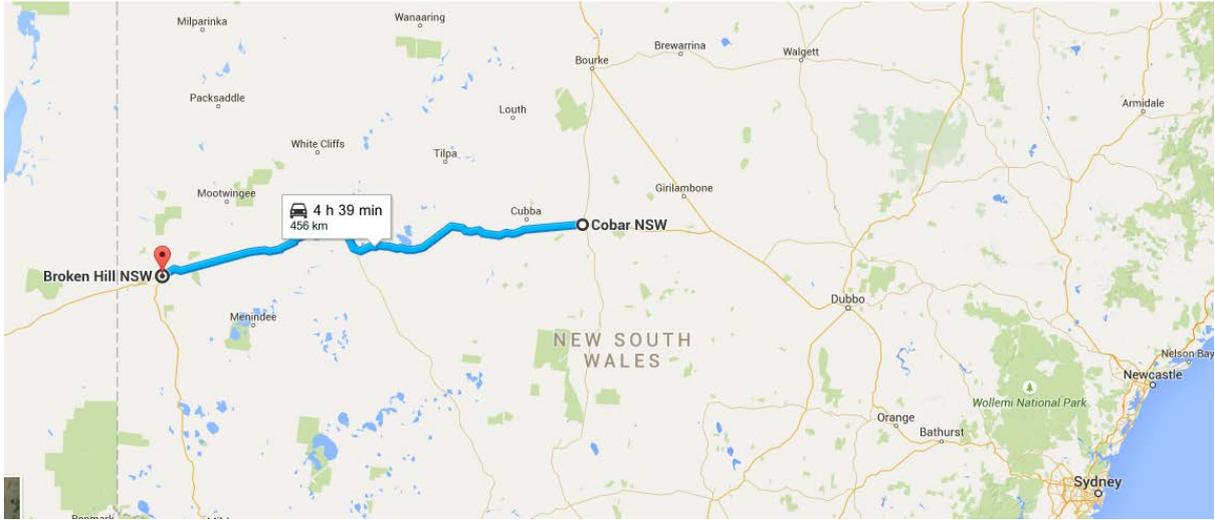
curry and Rob ordered BBQ beef. It is now 8:30pm and I am sitting up in my bed writing this entry with a satisfied stomach. Enjoy this picture of where I am:



Day 2: Cobar → Broken Hill

8:30am – 2:30pm

Having woken up from the earliest night of sleep I have had since 2013, we completed our morning tasks of acquiring petrol, breakfast and lunch (for later) before setting off for Wilcannia. In Rob's words, "this section of the trip does your head in." Rob was not wrong, and if my memory serves me correct the only time in my life where I think he ever has been wrong about something was the Christmas of 2014 where to his surprise I said "you can play O Come O Come Emanuel in a minor key." Anyway, this section of road is very long and very straight. The kilometre countdown signs until the next town started at 260km. So for almost 3 hours we rounded approximately 7 bends, saw two sheds and watched the kilometre countdown signs go down by 5. The landscape I observed was not like any other I had seen in Australia before. I enjoyed the thrill of seeing new parts of my own country. Due to the recent rain over the last couple of days, dormant grass had been woken up which neatly and cleanly covered the ground. Rob pointed out that if the grass was not there then all we would see would be rich red dust. When I imagined travelling to the outback of Australia and the animals I would see, the main ones that came to mind were kangaroos, sheep, cows, camels and more. However what I did not expect was the most frequent wild animal I have seen so far has in fact been goats! So many goats. That wasn't the only unexpected part... Rob's reaction to them was also somewhat unpredictable. At one point we passed a family of goats where I spotted two very cute baby goats. I proceeded to tell Rob and point them out to him to which he replied (awww, kids! Shoot the bastards." I told him I thought that was kind of harsh but he said he prefers animals to be where they belong. In this instance I think Uncle Rob would prefer that the goats stayed in Arab countries. Moving on, our plan was to use the dunnies at Maccullochs Rest Area. It was also where we switched drivers. I noticed when I was driving today that I was experiencing driving fatigue a lot sooner than I normally have in the past. I have driven 3 hour legs in the past with no problems. I was definitely noticing some tiredness before I could even get us to Wilcannia, which was only 60km from where I started driving. I conclude that my fatigue is arising from two new factors: firstly, the roads here are mesmerizingly long and without changing landscapes or features to keep your mind stimulated. The other factor is the car; the steering has a rather large dead zone in the middle, meaning that the steering wheel moves without affecting the wheels of the car. This means that keeping the car in a straight line while going 60mph is very challenging, and by that I quote Rob himself "don't even try, it's impossible". What is possible is to keep the car on the road and without too much swaying from side to side but this, I believe, is requiring a lot of extra effort than what I am used to and therefore is tiring me out faster. Not to mention the strong cross winds were not helping. Regardless we made it to Wilcannia and I continued driving to Dolo Hill Rest Area, a further 60km. There, we stopped for lunch where we ate our rolls that we purchased with our breakfast this morning. It was sunny but the wind made it chilly! Rob then drove the rest of the way to Broken Hill. The total distance between Wilcannia and Broken Hill is 200km. Once at Broken Hill the history lesson began! Broken hill was and is a massive mining town known for lead, zinc and silver. The Shaws lived, for a short while, in Broken Hill in the mid to late 1960s. Grandad worked in the youth hostel, Dad went to kindergarten at Alma Public School and Rob went to a day care. Rob was only 3 years old at the time but his memory was disturbingly accurate and we found his day care. We also found the classic and unchanged milkshake café called Bells where I enjoyed a chocolate milkshake and for Rob a coke and raspberry spider. We continued site seeing in Silverton which is a very small neighbouring town about 15km from Broken Hill. On the other side of Silverton, is the most amazing vista of the Mundi Mundi Plains (photo to follow). It was a fine way to end the day before heading back to our motel in Broken Hill.



Day 3: Broken Hill → Whyalla

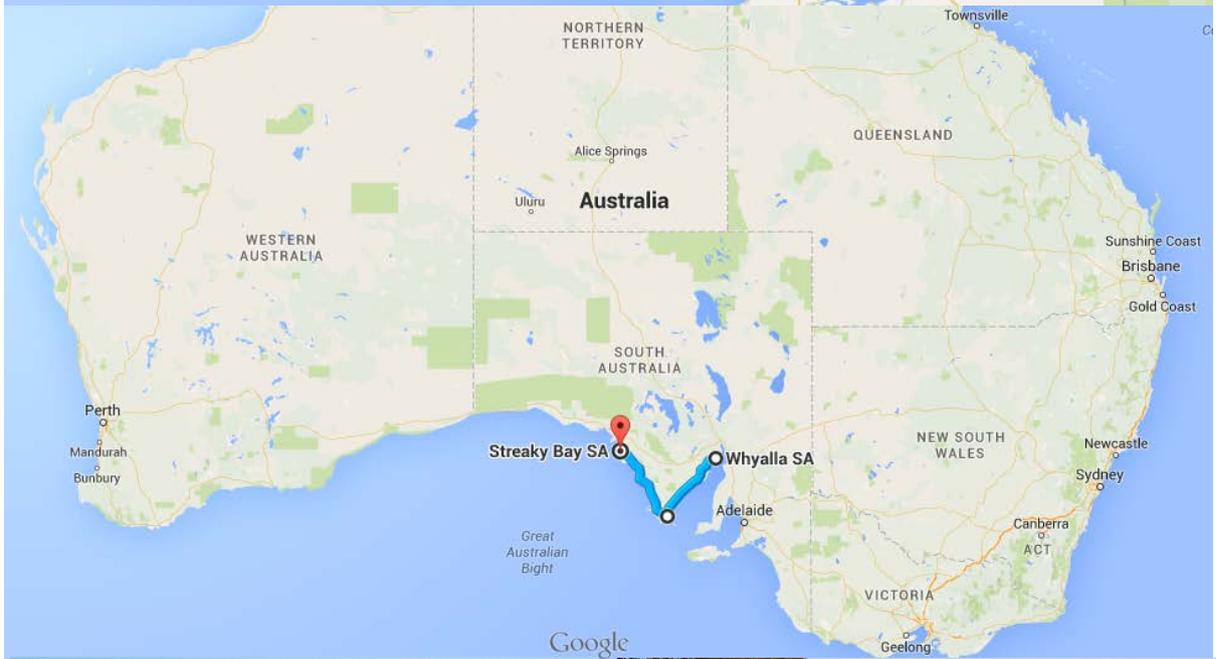
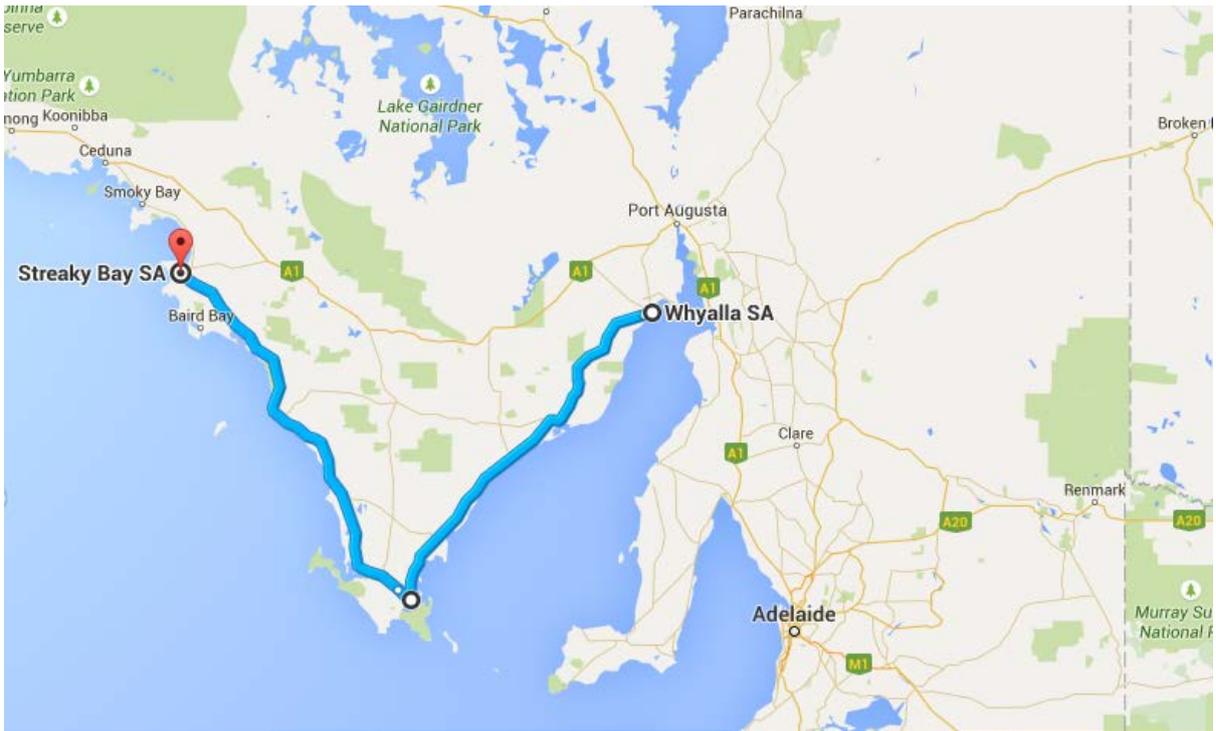
9:30am – 5pm

A rather long sleep in this morning until about 7:46am! For breakfast I enjoyed a very nicely cooked bacon and egg roll in the local café. Rob ordered muesli and was given half the box, naturally for Rob it was “challenge accepted” and proceeded to eat the entire bowl. This, humorously, put him on the back foot for meals to come later in the day as I will explain later. Our first planned stop was the quarantine station at Oodla Wirra. It is illegal to bring fresh fruit into South Australia. When we were about 80km from the station we pulled into a dried up creek bed for a “tree stop” as well as to swap drivers. The wind was significantly lower today which made driving and steering very pleasant and not very challenging... at all actually. Upon entering Oodla Wirra we quickly found out that the government had scaled back operations and had adopted the honesty system which was excellent news for Rob’s dried fruit and nut mix! I drove the rest of the way to Peterborough, the town famous for its steam engines. We stopped for lunch where Rob was still feeling the after effects of his muesli and only needed a chicken wrap. After we had eaten, filled up on water and explored the steam engines on display Rob was back behind the wheel as we moved on. Our plan at the start of the day was to drive to Melrose, about two towns on from Peterborough. However, since we were going well for time we thought that Whyalla was a better choice and use of the day. This means we are now slightly ahead of schedule, so tomorrow we will take a longer route to our next stop over. This will be a much more scenic drive along the coast. The landscape has been subtly changing throughout the day. Not long after entering South Australia the ground moved from a rich red to beige. The vegetation progressed from dense shrubs to grass with the appearance of trees. After Peterborough, we encountered farming land for crops which included wheat, barley and canola oil. The canola flowers are an amazing bright yellow blanket that covers the ground. We are now driving through grassy hills and tall gum trees. Some gum trees are so tall they warrant a sign on the side of the road reading “Giant Gum Tree This Way”. Throughout our drive in South Australia so far we have also encountered a somewhat higher standard of road side infrastructure. Rob stated that “you know you’re in South Australia when even the utility boxes are housed in stone sheds.” I suppose it’s only the best for the free people. It would also seem that we aren’t the only travellers heading west; some familiar faces and vehicles pass us throughout the day beeping and waving as they overtake. We then reach Port Augusta, about 80km from Whyalla. Rob starts explaining his prejudices to me when it comes to Port Augusta. Basically in warmer weather it is stinking hot... it literally stinks. Something to do with the water it is situated next to. Rob was able to sum up Port Augusta to me in one sentence: “Some say, in a rather crude fashion, that basically Port Augusta is essentially Wilcannia, only it’s on the coast.” Now having only been to Wilcannia a day earlier, that town is still fresh in my mind and let me tell you... that is quite the insult! Regardless we made our way through the town and then along the short trip into Whyalla, where its industrial workings are quickly visible. Huge plumes of steam rise into the air from the steel factory. Whyalla was a ship building town back in the day but also possibly still is. For tonight, I picked the accommodation and actually I had already booked it a couple of hours prior to arriving. I took it upon myself to look on trip adviser (a service my driving colleague is only still coming to terms with) and found the Sundowner Motel, a four star motel that is practically brand new and rates the highest on trip adviser. I booked the deluxe room with a king bed, single bed, free Wi-Fi and breakfast included all for only \$110. It turned out that if I booked online I could get the deluxe room for the same price as the others and also the same price as all the other motels in the area. Needless to say that I am now sitting in a very comfy bed and Rob is very pleased. Oh, and for dinner Rob was of course still feeling the effects of the muesli so he just spent \$10 to have access to the salad bar... and yes I will clarify that this is MY Uncle Rob.

Day 4: Whyalla → Streaky Bay

8:30am – 6pm

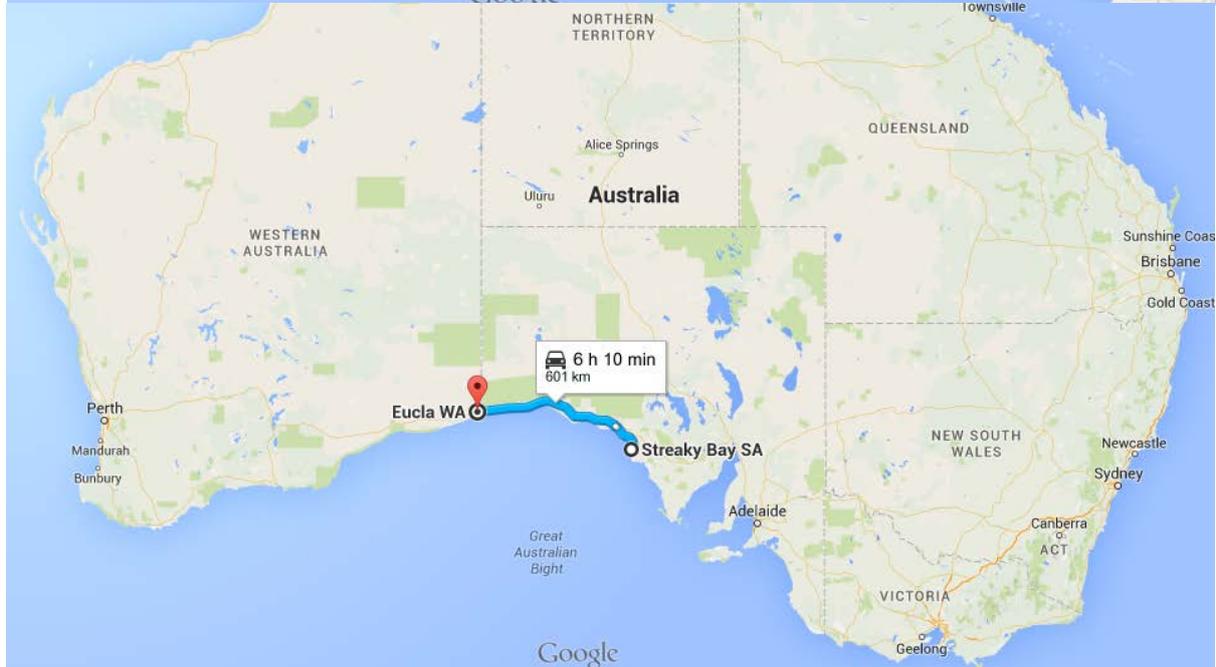
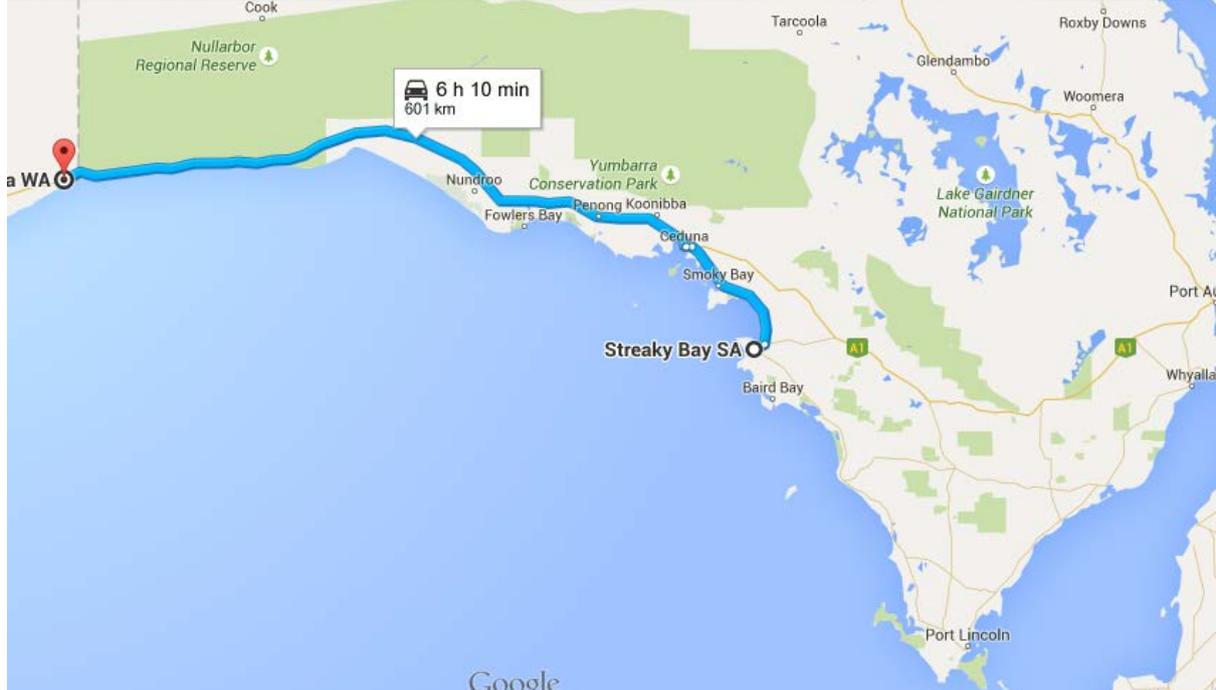
Today was a lovely scenic drive along the Eyre Peninsula. The road doesn't strictly follow the coast line, so we followed the road as it took us through farming land and every now and then we would see the ocean. The ocean is quite a sight after chasing countless horizons of land over the past few days. Probably about 100km into the drive was where the edge of viable crop growth began. It was the usual suspects consisting of wheat and canola. The car is travelling very well to this point with no trouble at all. Once we arrived at our accommodation yesterday Rob crawled under the car with a grease gun to pump into the suspension pivots. Other than that it has been smooth sailing. The task for today was to enjoy the drive down to Port Lincoln and back up the other side to Streaky Bay. We drove down to Port Lincoln without stopping, with the exception of swapping drivers, twice in fact! It was less than 300km to Port Lincoln which can usually easily be accomplished with two drivers however after about an hour into my shift I felt I was too tired to keep going so I asked the big guy to swap back to the wheel, which he didn't mind. I then had a light snooze as the sun shone through the clear sky into the windows of the car, it felt wonderful. And when I say light snooze I mean that I shut my eyes and from that point on I don't really mind whether I doze off or not, either way it's relaxing and peaceful. Often when I snooze Rob turns the radio on, amplitude modulation of course, and so as I drift in and out in the sun I pick up bits and pieces of the radio conversations that play through the central speaker. The further south we go, the more trees that grow. I would describe the landscape as bush, in comparison to the bare and desolate areas we have been travelling through. When we arrived at Port Lincoln we first went to the Woolworths. Our task was to stock up on breakfast, lunch and dinner for the next two days for our desert crossing. We are travelling to where civilisation is not... and so we must prepare accordingly. Then we went to fill up on petrol and air for the tyres before finding some lunch. We took a brochure from our previous night's accommodation which recommended a fish and chips shop. We were not disappointed! We both enjoyed large wraps filled with salad and seafood. When we were on our way again, we headed for Coffin Bay. It was a very picturesque place as we spoke to a man who told us about how the car he learnt to drive on was an FX. We have encountered countless locals who have taken an interest in our piece of rolling history. Rob notes in his book every Holden story we hear about. Rob set us off driving again as we aimed for Elliston, another coastal town. This side of the peninsula is even nicer with tall trees surrounding the road as we weaved through the countryside. I should also note that since entering the outback we have been passing the various safety and driver fatigue signs. Back home you might observe a sign that reads "STOP – REVIVE – SURVIVE". However out here they become somewhat blunter as they read "DROWSY DRIVERS DIE". Anyway, in Elliston we each enjoyed a cappuccino before it was my time to drive us the rest of the way to Streaky bay, about 150km. On the way, we drove through a town called Colton. Now, Colton is clearly a very special town because the sign that sits on the outskirts outlines what it has to offer – and among other things it read "peace and tranquillity"! Colton is the first place I have ever been to that has peace and tranquillity so I must stop there if I am in the area again to observe. Sadly for the next town, Talia, they did not contain any peace or tranquillity although Rob was happy looking for either one as he stated "I was more looking for the tranquillity." After that was Port Kenny, I pulled over to take a picture of the sign to send to Georgia, for obvious reasons. When we were about 40km out from Streaky Bay we took a turn off that took us to Murphy's Haystacks. Murphy's Haystacks contains some very strange rocks, and that is all. Just as the sun set, I drove us into Streaky Bay where we pulled into the town's only Motel for the night. We both enjoyed some good pub grub.



Day 5: Streaky Bay → Eucla

8:30am – 5:30pm

Today we woke up to a very windy Streaky Bay, and it was blowing from the west. This meant strong headwinds, which did not calm for the entirety of our journey today. This morning was a normal start with the exception of the fact that it was the first morning that Rob opted for my wake up alarm. Every other morning the rule has been we get up when we get up, obviously that means get up when Rob gets up because otherwise we wouldn't be eating breakfast until midday. So at 7am this morning we both pleasantly woke up to Sticky Fingers "Gasoline Can Man (Bonus Track)". Once on our way our first stop was Ceduna. Getting to Ceduna was somewhat interesting because our fuel gauge began showing some grim readings. The strong headwind was hurting our fuel economy more than we had anticipated. Nevertheless even though we had a jerry in the boot we both decided it would be good sport to see if we could make it without filling up. I started to learn the tell tale signs of the black car running out of fuel. Basically if the needle is still moving then no worries, it's when it lands dead still on empty that you need to pull out the tricks. This, of course, happened so Rob began fuel saving trick number 1 of turning the engine off and coasting down hills before turning the engine back on. Every now and then we would need to check how much is still in the tank which requires more of an imagination given the gauge reads empty. So Rob would sway the car from one side of the road to the other to see how much that action would make the needle move. This gave us a good idea of how much fuel was left because when we did that trick and the needle wouldn't move at all, Rob knew at that point there was only about 2 litres left. We were just over 5km out of Ceduna so Rob employed trick number 2 which meant turning the engine off at 45mph and wait while the car slowed to 25mph and then turn the engine on again to speed back up back to 45mph. This process was repeated until, to our surprise, we rolled into the shell in Ceduna. It was only a short stop at Ceduna before pressing onwards to Eucla. Ceduna is effectively the last town that resembles civilisation for the next two and half days. This was it, time for the Nullarbor Plains. Unfortunately due to the strong headwinds we could not comfortably control the car above 50mph so our cruising speed was limited. It was a long drive. After Ceduna the Nullarbor does not start instantly, we cruised through grassy hills and farm land. After about 40km the farm land ended and the road was surrounded by dense bushland and trees. As we had been driving we noticed dark clouds bringing rain towards us. The rain was moderate but not enough to warrant "drum brake holidays" so this was good news for us! The rain only lasted 10 minutes and then the skies cleared up to bring nothing but sunshine and 60km winds for the remainder of the day. Once we were about 300km from Ceduna, and I was now driving, the trees suddenly became sparse... and then there was nothing as we passed the sign "Here ends the Eastern Treeless Plain". There was vegetation that reached knee height and that was it, for miles... and miles. The strong headwinds still buffeted the car, even travelling a measly 50mph the car was still getting pushed around. Luckily there were not many cars on the road so we were able to make use of both lanes. We then reached the Nullarbor Station where we enjoyed our packed lunches and braved the outside as we ate at a picnic bench. Rob took over driving again after lunch while I snoozed in the sunlight. We raced the sun to Eucla and won. There is not much else to say about this leg of the journey because the only thing that changed was the sun's position in the sky. Eucla contains a petrol station along with a motel with a restaurant attached. For dinner I thought the sign on the counter summed it up nicely; "Sunday night is schnitzel night". And those were some schnitzels alright; when we were served Rob exclaimed "goodness me, these are the remains of a dinosaur". Although neither of us had any trouble in polishing up our plates. Tomorrow is an even bigger day; we need to cover about 700km so it's an early night of sleep before more Gasoline Can Man at 7am, Eucla time. Oh yes, Eucla decided to invent its own time zone, unofficially. It runs 45 minutes after Adelaide and before Perth.



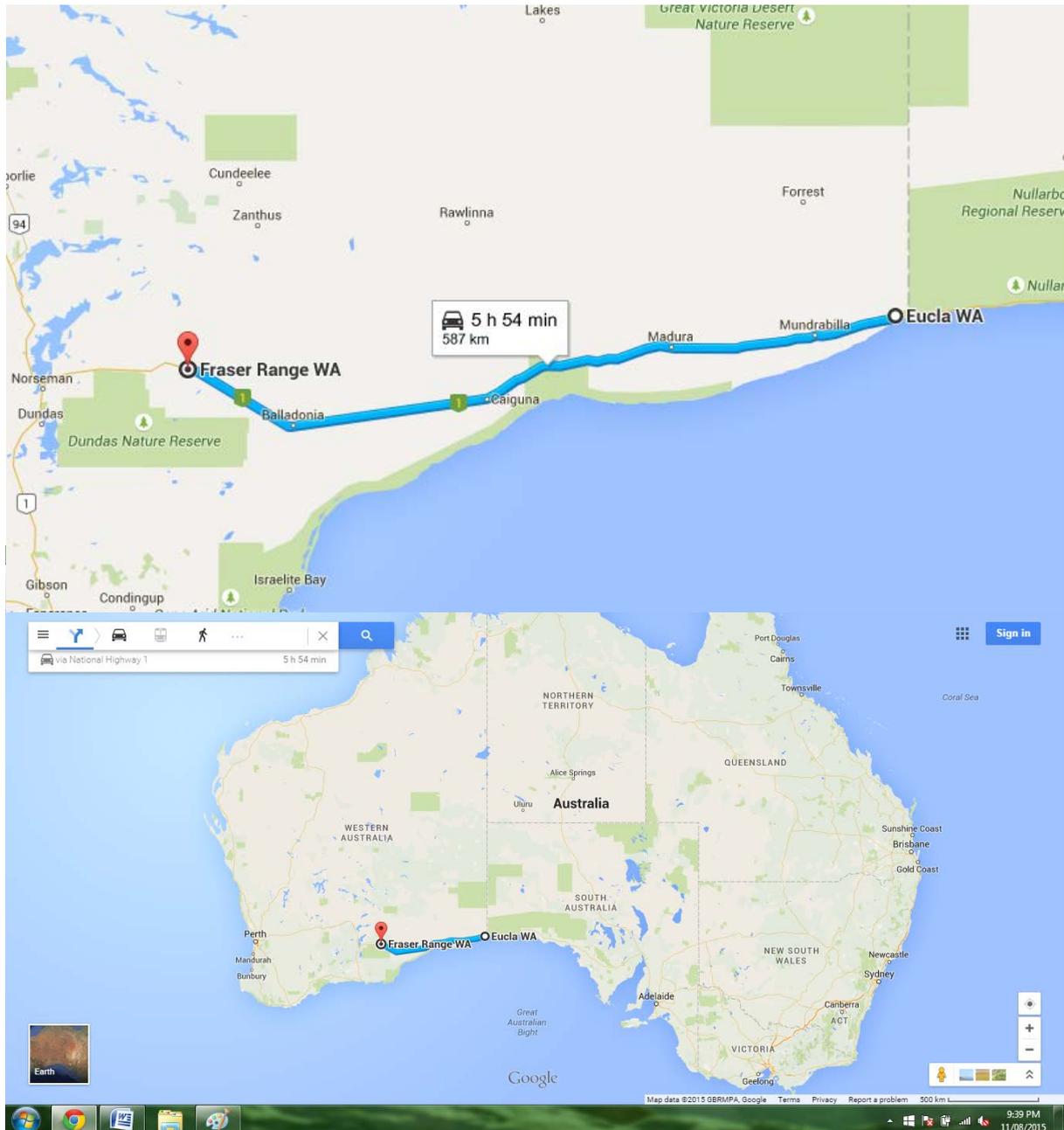
Day 6: Eucla → Fraser Range Station

7am – 4pm As we have moved into the treeless plains of nothingness, the standards of living have remained luxurious, considering the environment outside. Comfortable warm beds every evening and nice hot showers every morning. However, out here breakfast is a little harder to get your hands on. Luckily we prepared for this when we visited the Woolworths back in Port Lincoln. So for breakfast today I enjoyed a croissant (cold but still nice) with some strawberry jam while Rob tucked into his beloved muesli. Although, for Rob to eat, the muesli packaging had to be opened and as I gather from Rob's remark, it was not easily done... "I can see why packaging defeats the elderly." Before not too long we were off, driving down a dirt road away from the Eyre Highway towards the coast. Eucla used to have a port, the jetty of which was built in 1885 and still remains down on the beach. As we approached the sand dunes, we passed the Eucla airport and arrived at the service station, a building that is now in ruins but still has most of its walls still standing. Rob said that as the winds blow over time the building becomes both less and more covered with sand. He said last time he was there you couldn't see much of it at all. After enjoying the historical sight, we set off, not back to the highway through Eucla, but alongside the sand dunes along the old highway that used to take you to Perth. It was ideal conditions for dirt road travelling so we were able to power along at 50mph which is as good as it gets for dirt roads. It was quite a feeling driving along that road as I imagined Dad and Rob in the back of the FJ as Granny and Grandad sat up the front driving. The old highway, after about 15km, rejoined the Eyre Highway and we were buckled in for the long haul to Fraser Range Station. Now it is worth mentioning at this point that since we are now driving in Western Australia it was in fact my Great Uncle Jeff who was the engineer responsible for sealing the road from the Western Australia border all the way to Perth. Our first port of call today was Madura, where we stopped briefly to take on fuel and swap drivers before setting off again. I then drove us to Caiguna, where we stopped for lunch, swap drivers and take on more petrol again. Rob drove us to Balladonia and on this leg I really started to notice the trees coming back as well as rocks becoming a common sight. The treeless plain was over and even though we are still in the middle of nowhere, at least there are trees! On the way I should also note that we drove "Australia's longest straight road." This stretch of road literally did not have a single bend or curve in it for 90 miles. Now, Balladonia is well known because the first orbiting space station crashed not too far away. NASA intentionally brought it back to earth but instead of it crashing in the Indian Ocean, like they had planned, Skylab instead came down in Balladonia in what Rob described as "NASA had a bit of an oops". While we were in Balladonia we swapped drivers again back to me because today's drive was significantly long and also because driving 90 miles without turning the steering wheel can be quite tiresome! I drove us through to Fraser Range Station. This place in my opinion really ought to have the peace and tranquillity sign! It is so pleasant. Since we arrived at 4pm, we decided to go for a walk along the old highway which ran through the station and which also brought back more childhood memories for Rob. During this walk we climbed one of the hills on top of which I could receive a mobile signal.

There is no signal down at our accommodation. I took advantage of this brief summit and called Georgia. I apologise to Mum and Dad who will read this and know that they didn't make the cut today! It was hard to only be able to talk to Georgia for about 5 minutes this evening as all the other



nights I have had ample signal, but not long now until I arrive in Perth. After we returned from our hour and a half hike, we went into the camp kitchen where pots and a stove top were available. I proceeded to cook Rob and myself my famous tuna pasta sauce. Needless to say it passed the taste test as we ate in front of the fire which burned away inside this wonderfully old kitchen. It was a very hearty meal

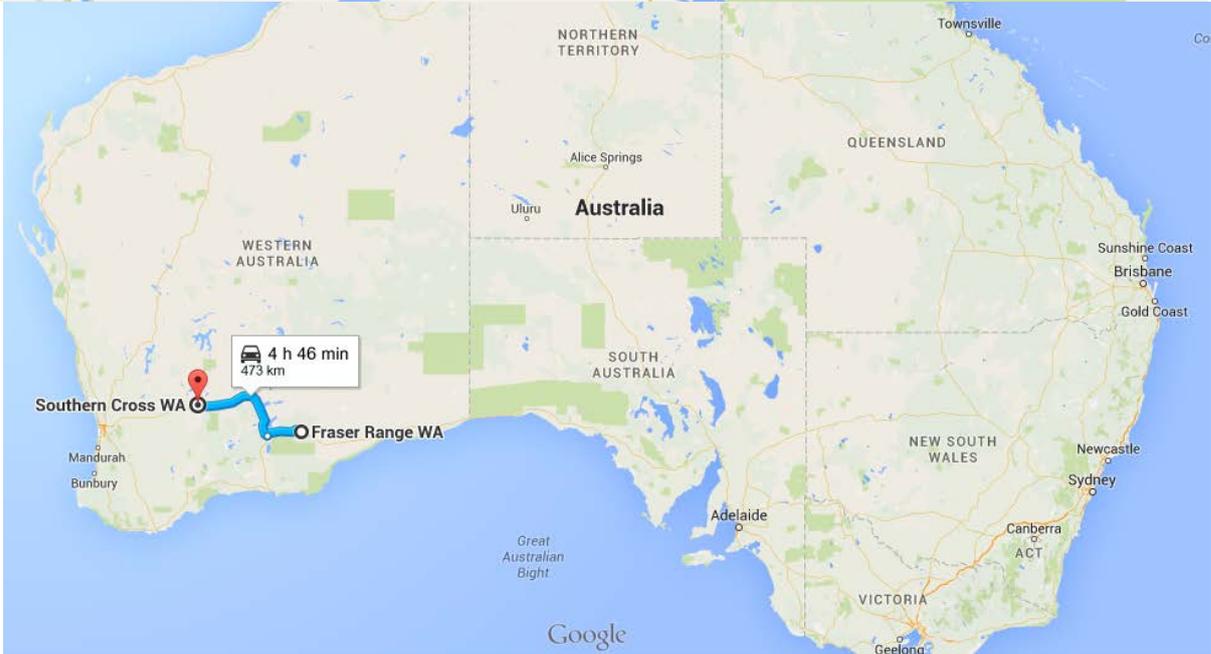
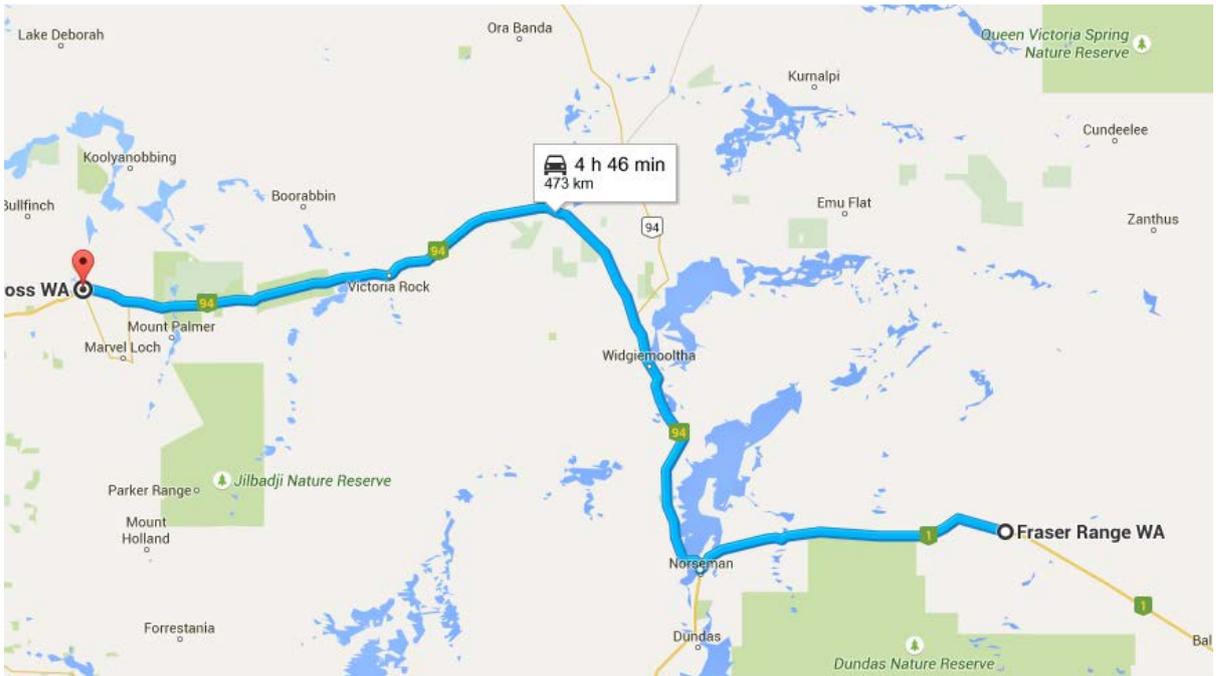


Day 7: Fraser Range Station → Southern Cross

8:15am – 5:30pm

After a night of heavy wind and rain, were able to enjoy more of our packed breakfast by the fire in the camp kitchen. I was even able to toast my croissant which was a bonus. We soon moved on and began motoring towards Kalgoorlie. Norseman was the first stop and only about 100km away. We stopped there for morning tea at a cafe and also to take on fuel. “You stopped at a café?!” I’m sure is

what you all must be thinking in your heads. And the answer is yes, we have now returned to civilisation. It has been an interesting two days out in the wilderness with the occasional petrol station, but it is nice to see a town again and for Rob to get his real coffee fix. Once everything was in order Kalgoorlie was the next stop, however, we did make a brief stop in Widgiemooltha to recreate a photo that was taken back in the 60s. The photo had Grandad with his FJ and Fritz with his FJ pickup out the front of a house that is still there. The black car was a fine car to recreate the historical photo. Now onwards to Kalgoorlie. Kalgoorlie was where Grandad was born. His father, Ted, worked as a mine prospector. The first thing we did when we arrived was go to the lookout at the super pit. I have to say, that pit did bring back memories of when I saw the Grand Canyon in America... that should help give you readers some context as to what I saw. It is a colossal hole in the ground, and a functioning one at that. Rob pointed to where Ted’s house used to be and it was somewhere in the vicinity above the super pit itself so that made it rather hard to pinpoint its exact location. When we left the lookout we ate some lunch and then went to the museum. The museum, among many things, contains a vault below it that visitors can go down into during the day. It contains pieces of history made out of gold. There were gold cubes that were sent to the Bullion Markets in the UK, gold jewellery and then various minerals in their raw state that you could see contained gold. After going through the museum I got a sense of how hard it was and still is to be in gold mining. Now our initial plan was to stay in Kalgoorlie for the night but once we had done everything we wanted to do it was only 2:30pm. So we decided to continue driving towards Perth and aim for a town called Southern Cross. You can’t aim for anything less because there is literally nothing in between, apart from Kalgoorlie’s older sister Coolgardie. Coolgardie was a town created for the purpose of gold mining however it was not long after that everyone realised it was in fact Kalgoorlie that was really sitting on the gold. Coolgardie became somewhat obsolete, but it is still there. I drove the black car from Kalgoorlie to Southern Cross. It was my longest nonstop drive of the trip. I drove a total of 225km and I didn’t feel overly fatigued afterwards, I guess I might be getting used to handling the car. Rob told me that when Grandad was a boy he rode his bike to Perth from Kalgoorlie, which back then was on an unsealed road. It is a long road to Perth from Kalgoorlie! That being said, yesterday we happened to pass two cyclists who were going to ride across the Nullarbor; they have a long and tiring way to go. Upon reaching Southern Cross we pulled into what is essentially the only Motel, the only alternative being the caravan park. Now I should mention that I have noticed that on the sign out the front of every town we have gone through, they all have their own slogan under their name. Southern Cross was no exception: “Southern Cross – A Five Star Town”. Definitely one of the wittier slogans I have seen. There were no camping kitchens available tonight so we had to go to the town’s only restaurant which turned out to be quite nice. All up it was a very interesting day, seeing the super pit and the large scale operations being undertaken was definitely the highlight. The gold mine in Kalgoorlie has produced nearly 2000 tons. It’s hard to believe that any amount of precious mineral can pay for and also produce a profit on top of the equipment and labour required for the job, but apparently it does. One more day to go until this journey comes to a close. It’s only another 400km to Perth.



Day 8: Southern Cross → Perth

8:30am – 5:00pm

Well this was it, day 8 of 8, our “big tatars” (as Grandad would say) was now to be completed upon arriving to Perth. I have been thinking about what things I would say in my final report but I figured it was best to start with what I did today, as always. With no alarm set we had a sleep in until about 7:30am. To save ourselves paying \$16 for a bowl of cereal at the Motel we dug into the remains of our Nullarbor crossing supplies. There was still a lot of muesli and also a microwaveable red curry with rice. I went for the curry for breakfast while Rob, as always, indulged in the muesli. I wonder if Rob is starting to catch onto the fact that I avoid muesli like the plague... I haven't felt the need to tell him given the alternate meals that have been available throughout this time. We set off heading for Merredin, about 100km away where we stopped to enjoy some very nice coffee and cake. After that our next stop was an old General Motors dealer now turned showroom/restoration shop in Kellerberrin. Rob visited this place and the owner, Richard, last time he passed through the town about three years ago. Richard gave us a tour through the whole place where we were able to see some completely restored old vehicles and some others in a rather less restored fashion which were on his to-do list. It was an awesome place which made me want to buy so many cars, which I don't think I needed any more encouragement for! Once the tour was concluded Rob had to sadly leave his paradise of old cars and bits to take us both to our next stop which was Cunderdin. Now I should note that since leaving left Kalgoorlie we have been driving with a massive water pipe next to the road. This water pipe brings water to the mines from Perth. In order for this water to reach its destination, it must go through a series of pumping stations which are strategically situated between Perth and Kalgoorlie. When the water pipe was originally laid, the pumping stations were powered by huge boilers and steam engines to push the water through. These stations have since been upgraded however a couple of them still remain in their original state. For example, the old pumping station in Cunderdin which has become a museum. We explored the museum and got a taste for the incredibly large operation that it was to firstly lay the pipe line and then to push the water through it, quite the enterprise. We then moved on with our sights set on Perth, our final destination. As we approached the city, we began entering more populated areas. More cars were on the roads, little towns became closer together and after not too long we entered suburbs. There was a picture perfect moment when we literally drove over the crest of a hill that revealed the entirety of Perth city. We had not seen a sight like this since leaving Sydney 8 days earlier, it was a surreal feeling. Over the 8 days we have travelled an approximate total of 4,303 kilometres over an approximate 70 hours of driving (rest stops included). This has been an amazing trip to experience from both the humble passenger seat as well as from behind the wheel in nothing less than a Holden FX from 1950, the “Black Car”. I have attempted to soak up as much as I can from Uncle Rob as we drove the countryside together. He knows so much from his own experience but also from what his father told him when they did the trip together, multiple times. I should mention that the actual point of this whole trip was to transport some of Grandad's ashes to Perth so they could be scattered on the Swan River. Why drive 8 days across Australia in a 65 year old car to scatter ashes? Well it just seemed appropriate. If my memory serves me correctly, Rob did actually tell at least a couple of people that his dad was in the boot of the car, and then waited for their face to scrunch into confusion before proceeding to explain why... classic!

