Outback Queensland Education Handbook | Australian Curriculum Factsheets

**Quirky fact:**
Eromanga, in the Quilpie Shire, is the furthest town from the sea in Australia!

**Background Information**

“Cattle Kings ye call us, then we are Kings in Grass Castles that may be blown away upon a puff of wind” Patrick ‘Patsy’ Durack, pastoral pioneer, 1878.

Patrick Durack was born in Ireland, the eldest son of eight children. His family, having survived the great famine of the 1840s, emigrated to New South in 1853 in the hope of new prospects and a better life. However, tragedy struck when Durack’s father was accidentally killed only weeks after their arrival, leaving the young man to support his large family. Durack worked hard and within two years purchased a small holding near Goulburn, where he continued to build his assets.

By the early 1860s south-west Queensland was opening up and in 1863 the ambitious Durack, along with members of his family, set out with horses and cattle to establish a property in the emerging region. The undertaking almost cost his life. Overwhelmed by drought, all the stock perished and the men survived thanks only to the help of local Aborigines. Despite this initial setback, Durack returned in 1868 to establish Thylungra and Kyabra stations on a tributary of Cooper’s Creek. He pegged out claims across 17,000 square miles (44,030 km²), stocked and then sold them to friends and new settlers. Profits paid for other ventures – a butchery at Roma, holdings at Thargomindah, Adavale and Windorah, and hotels to service the influx of opal miners and Cobb & Co. services. By the close of the 1870s Durack was a wealthy man with substantial business interests in both New South Wales and western Queensland.

Always in pursuit of new opportunities, Durack was keen to explore exciting prospects in the Kimberley district of Western Australia. In 1881 he and a long-time friend launched an expedition to the area. Durack’s brother, Michael, travelled ahead by ship with provisions for the mob’s arrival. Soon after 7,250 head of breeding cattle and 200 horses began the gruelling 3,000 mile (4,828 km) trek. At a cost of £72,000 the journey was the longest cattle drive of its time, taking the mob almost two-and-a-half years to reach its destination.
Inquiry Questions

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>What environmental challenges did the early settlers have to deal with?</td>
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<td>How has settlement and management of spaces affected these places?</td>
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<td>7/8</td>
<td>Why did people move to such remote places?</td>
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<td>What were the lifestyle challenges they had to address?</td>
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<td>How has development of services changed the lifestyle for people?</td>
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<td>History</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>What was the contribution of families like the Durachs, and why were they so successful?</td>
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<td>Science</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>How do people in the Outback respond to extreme weather? Provide current examples</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>What features of the water cycle are most significant in the Outback?</td>
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<td>How do people use science understandings to manage this resource?</td>
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Points of Interest

- Ray Station, via Quilpie
  Experience what life is really like on a working Cattle Station in Outback Queensland
  Diamantina Development Road (between Quilpie and Windorah)
  Quilpie QLD 4480
  Cost: Fees apply
  Hours: 7 days by prior arrangement with management
  Contact: Sandra and Mark Tully
  Phone: (07) 4656 4737
  Email: raystation@bigpond.com
  Website: www.raystation.com.au

- The Australian Stockman’s Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage Centre, Longreach
- Qantas Founders Museum, Longreach
- Australian Workers Heritage Centre, Barcaldine
- Waltzing Matilda Centre, Winton
- Blackall Woolscour, Blackall

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Kings in Grass Castles
  Australian biography
  Author, Mary Durack
  First published 1959
  www.amazon.com

- Kings in Grass Castles
  TV mini series 1998
  Available in DVD format
  www.amazon.com

REFERENCES

Quilpie Shire Council
www.quilpie.qld.gov.au

Australian Dictionary of Biography
Select Bibliography
M. Durack, Kings in Grass Castles
(Lond, 1959).
www.adb.anu.edu.au/biography/durack-patrick-3457

Lure of the Land: a brief history of Quilpie Shire
Lesley Jenkins (2001)

FURTHER INFORMATION

Quilpie Museum and Visitor Information Centre
51 Brolga St, Quilpie QLD 4480
Phone: (07) 4656 0540
www.quilpie.qld.gov.au
Open weekdays 8.00am – 5.00pm