# Railways in WA

- How railways have been essential in Western Australia's development

- WA – the first railways

- How railways have changed over the years – and why

- Railways today

First public railways

- The first public railways in WA were the first government railways :

  - Geraldton – Northampton 1879

    - Connecting a mine to port

  - Fremantle – Guildford 1881

    - The start of our passenger network, around Perth and even across Australia
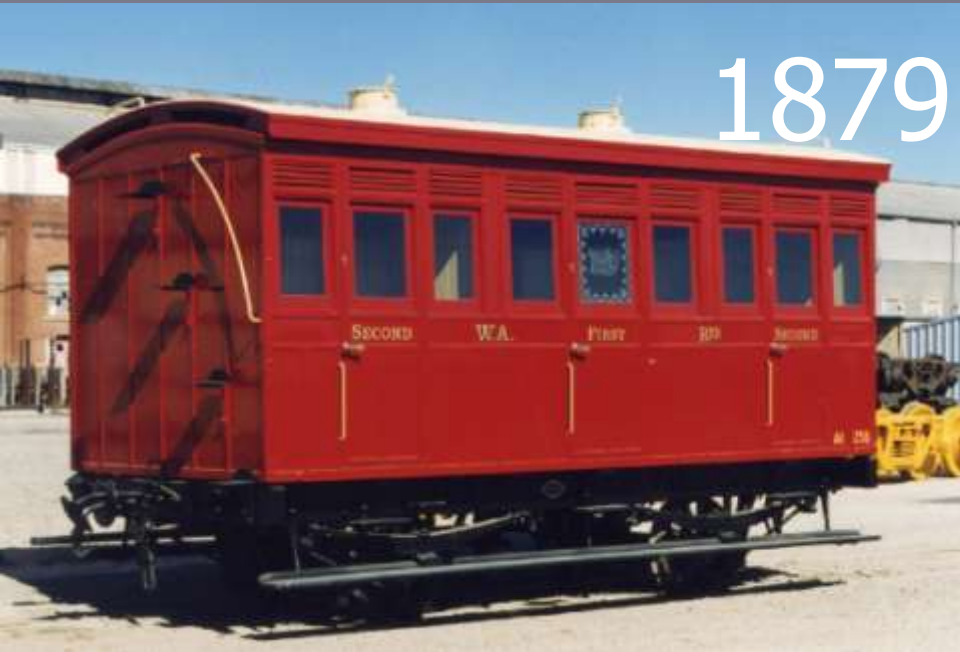
Opening day, Perth, 1881
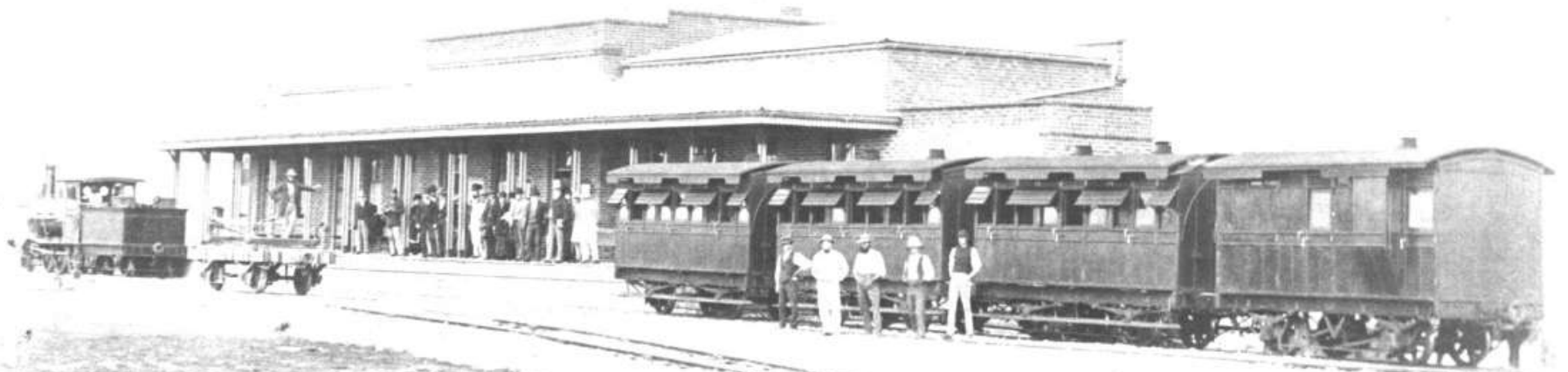
- # Railways - 1881

  - Railways – hardly started

  - More than 50 years after settlement at Perth, the official population of our whole, vast state was still less than 30 000

1881
Two short government lines join the Busselton timber line

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KALGOORLIE

PERTH

BUNBURY

ALBANY

# We are lucky – we have some of the very earliest WA trains intact and restored

1879

1881

Railways - 1890

- Before the gold rush
- Railways from Perth serve agriculture around York, Northam and Beverley
- Population still only 48500
- Private line connects Perth to Albany, which was the main port before C.Y.O'Connor worked out how to open Fremantle harbour

1890
-
(Before gold boom)
Serves agriculture
and connects Perth to port

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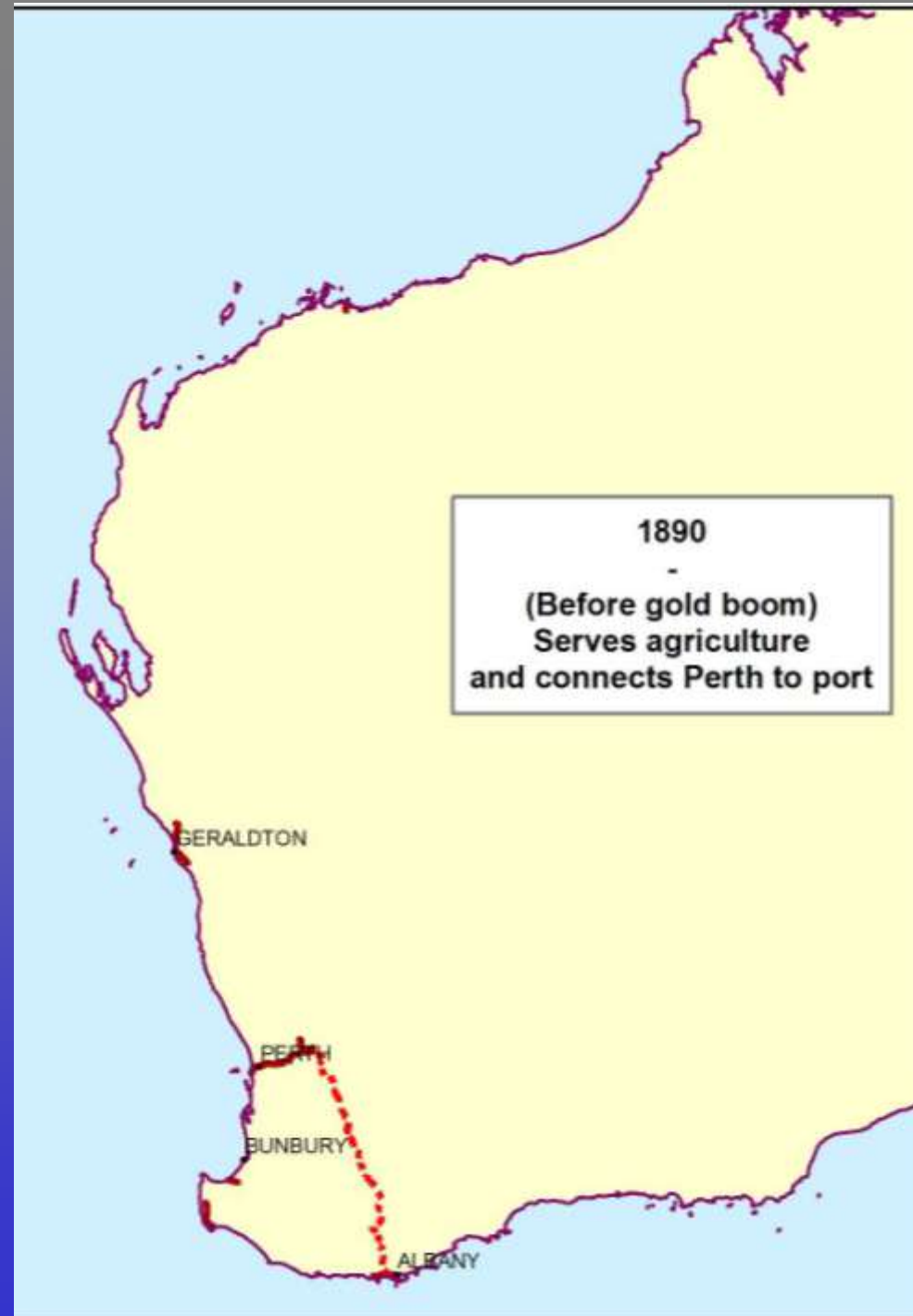
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Railways - 1900

- Gold rush has come!
- Effects of gold strikes in Eastern Goldfields and Murchison
- Albany line sold to government, but Midland private line opened (the red dashed line)
- Population now 180 000

To end of 1900
-
Effects of gold strikes in Yilgarn & Murchison

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ALBANY
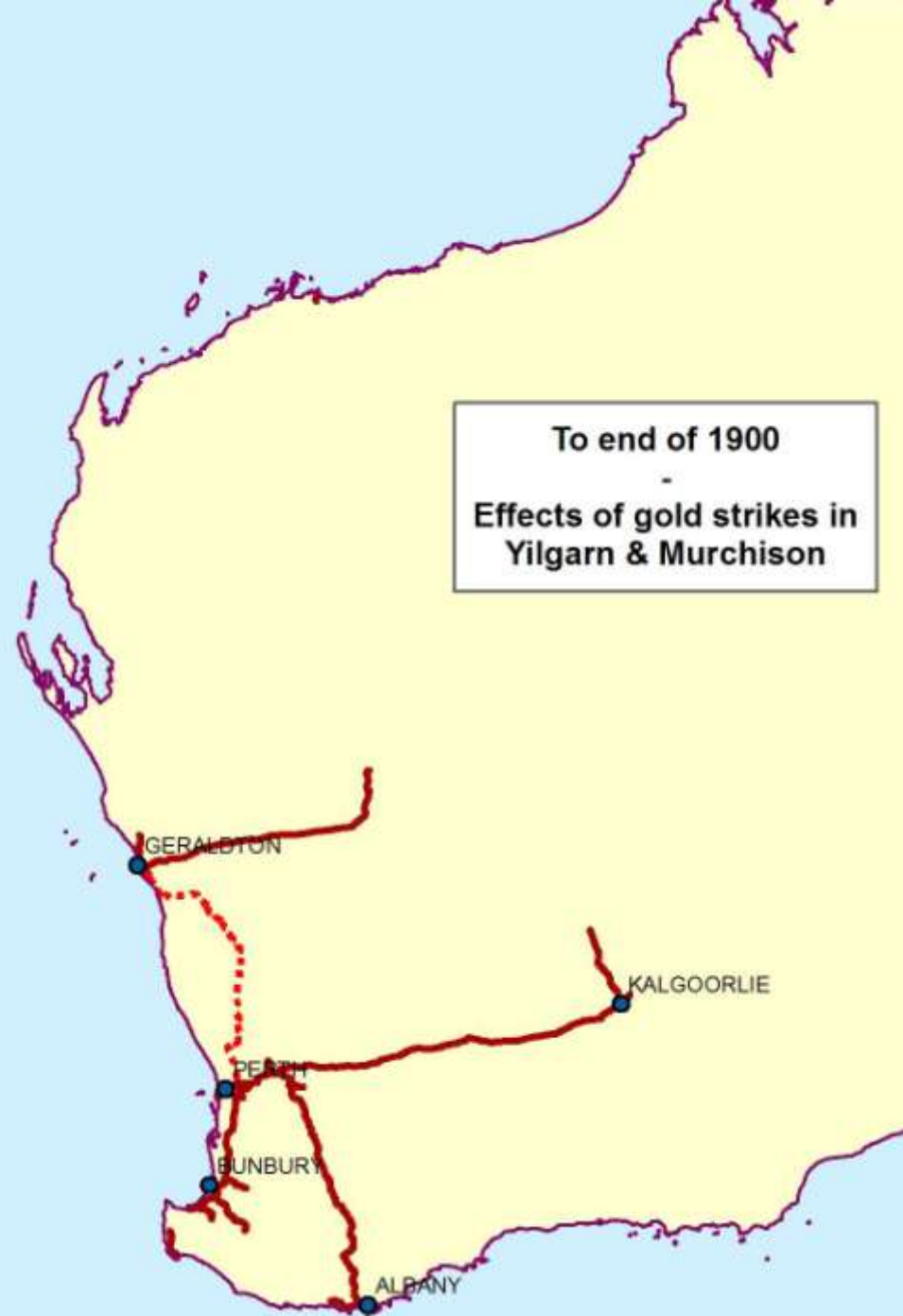
Railways - 1915

- Enabling development of Western Australia:

- Forestry in south-west
- Land settlement in what has become the wheatbelt

To end of 1915
-
Forestry in south-west
Land settlement in wheatbelt
More mining

GERALDTON
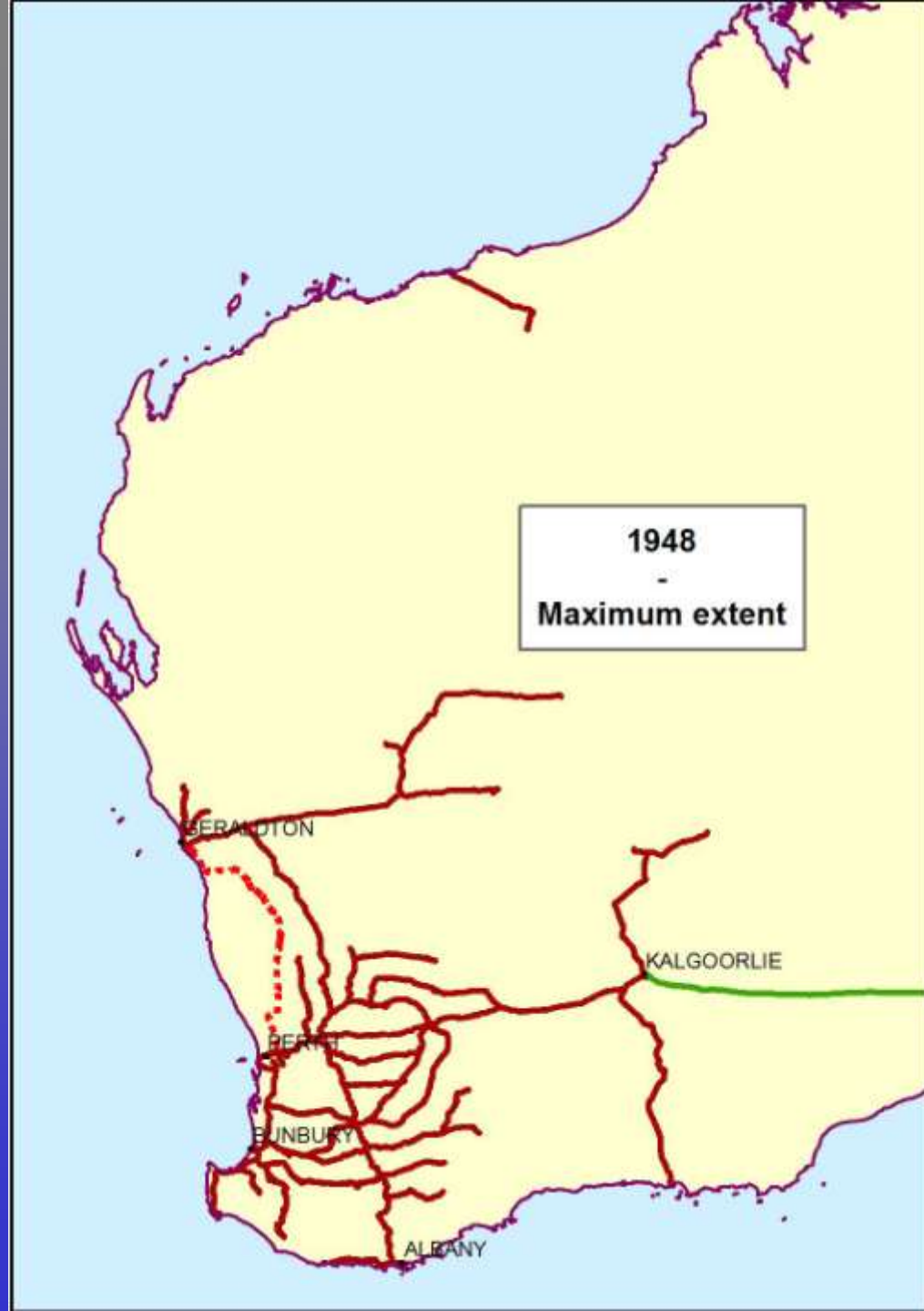
KALGOORLIE

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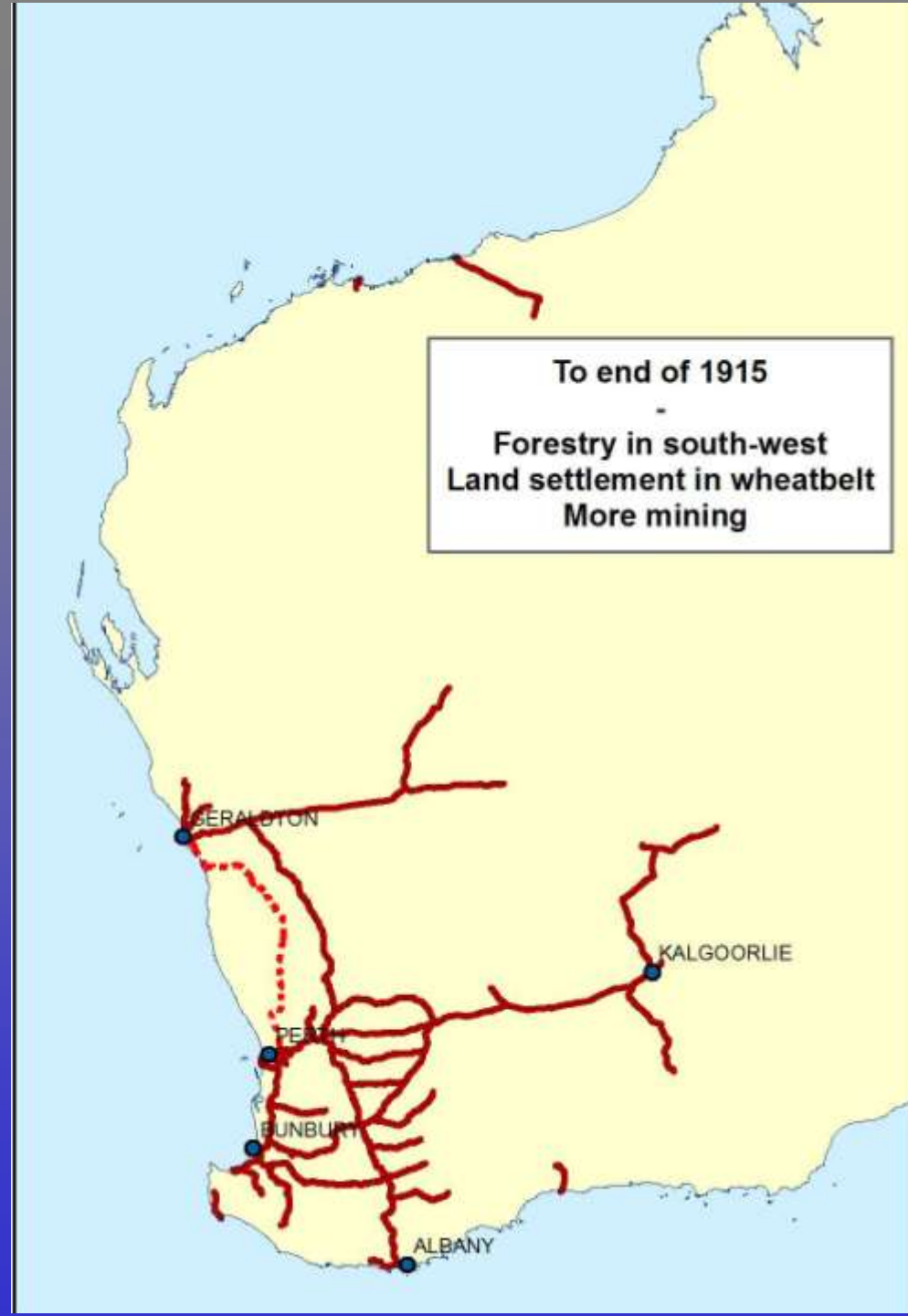
Early train in the country

Railways - 1948

- Railways have been built throughout the agriculture areas – the only way to get wheat and other produce to markets

- Before we all bought motor cars, trains also carried people ,to many small towns in country areas

- The green line is the trans-Australian railway, connecting Western Australia to the rest of our nation – but on a different gauge

1948 - Maximum extent

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Connecting WA to the rest of Australia

- From 1917 you could travel to Sydney by train, BUT
  - Change in Kalgoorlie
  - Change in Port Augusta
  - Change in Terowie
  - Change in Adelaide
  - Change in Melbourne
  - Change in Albury
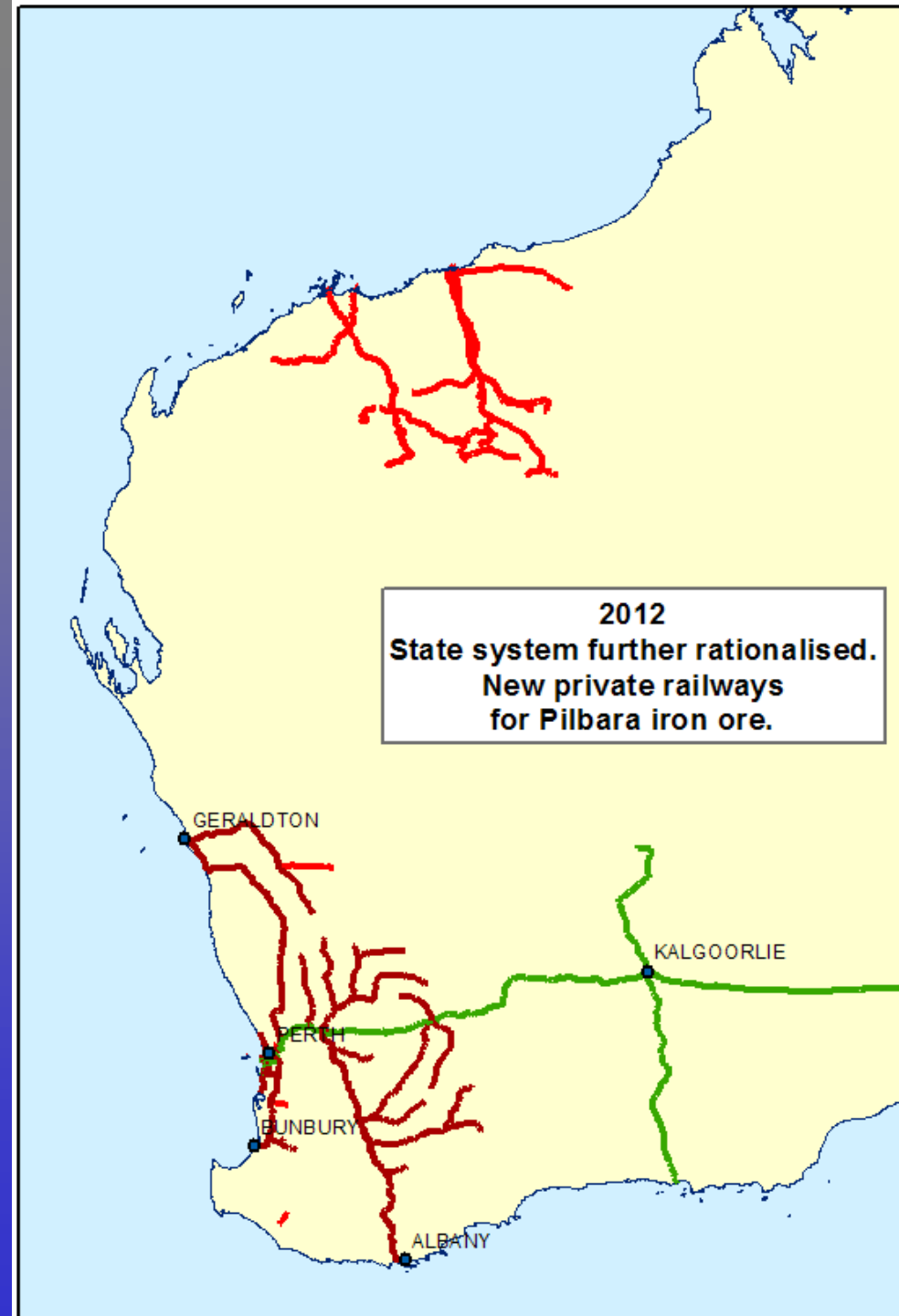- Why was that necessary ?

1917

Think of the weather – crossing the middle of Australia without airconditioning
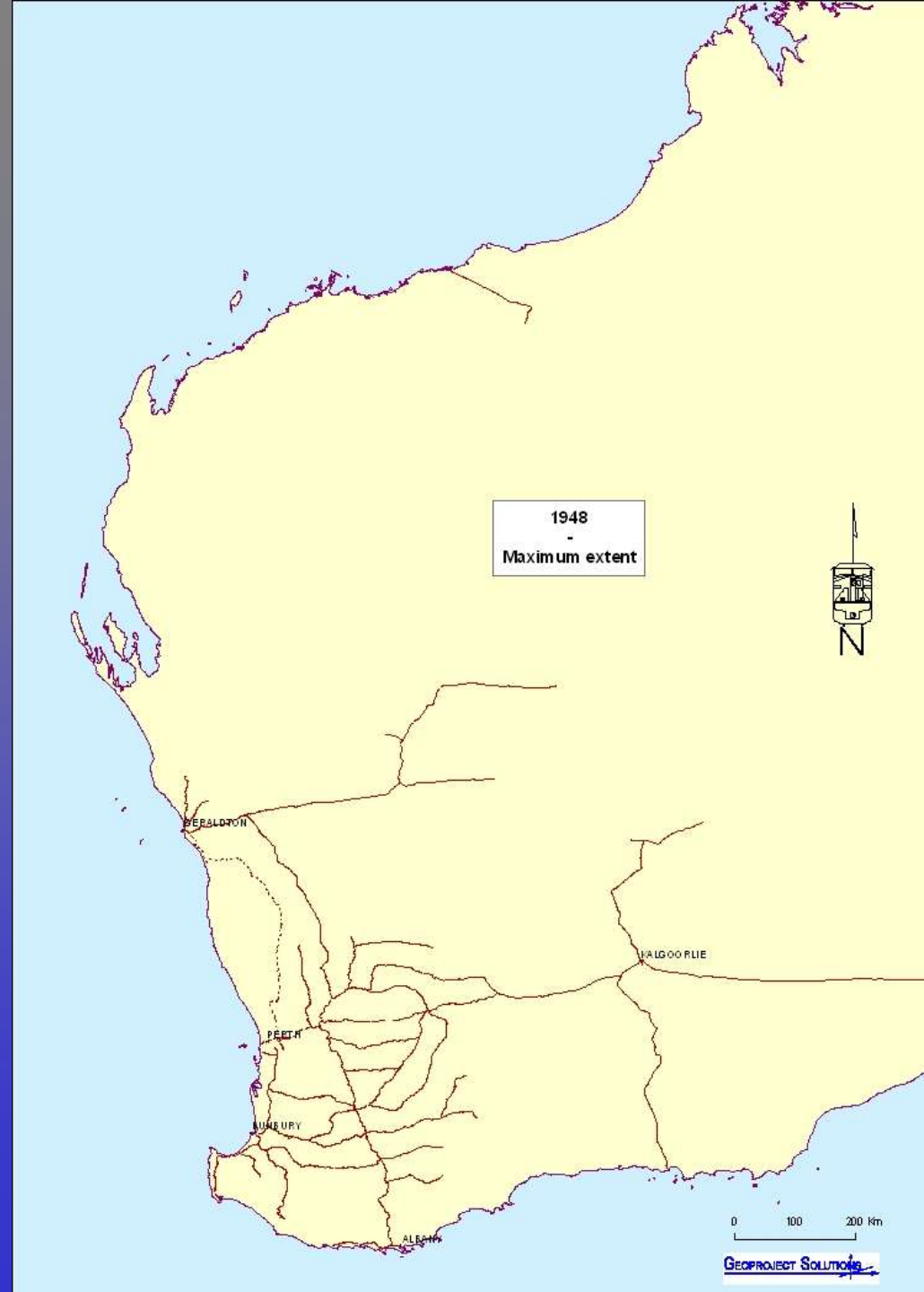
- # Railways – now

  - Standard gauge interstate line very busy
  - Iron ore lines carry millions of tonnes of exports to ports

  - Green lines are standard gauge (1435mm)
  - Brown lines are narrow gauge (1065mm)
  - Red lines are private railways for iron ore transport

2012
State system further rationalised.
New private railways
for Pilbara iron ore.

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- **What were all those railways doing in WA ?**

- Look back at 1948, when government lines throughout agriculture areas

1948
-
Maximum extent

Apart from passengers, in 1948 the other main responsibility of railways was goods movement – especially wheat

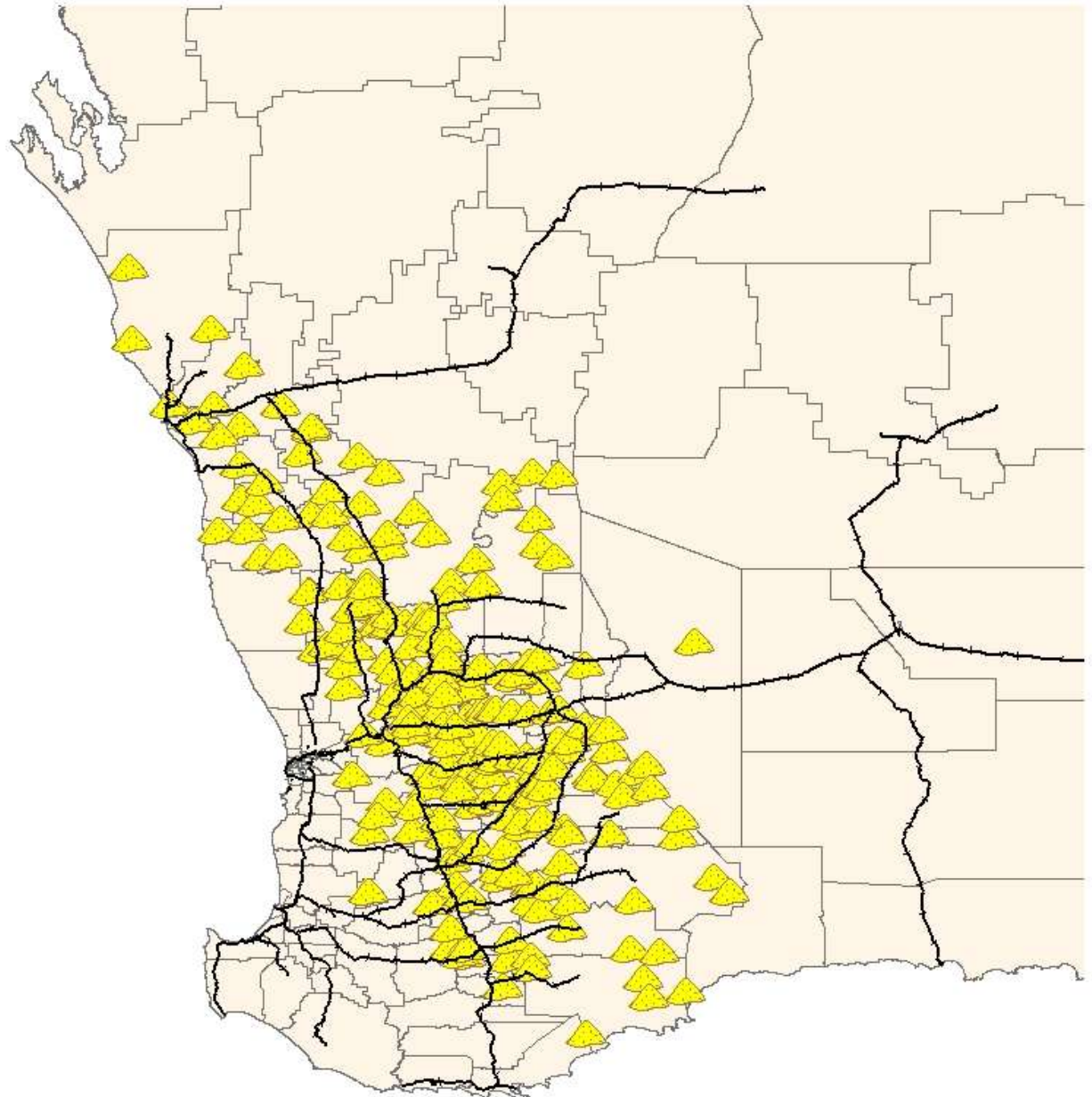See how the railways had opened up country for agriculture

**Grain production
Western Australia
1949**

Grain growing by LGAs

⚠ 5000 tonnes grain grown

┼─┼ Rail open in 1949

Total WA grain production 1949: 1.1m tonnes

Grain distribution calculated
from wheat and oats bushels for
Local Government Areas,
as at 1949

Notes:

Grain production for 1949, per LGA, from
Little, R.J. (Government statistician):
"Statistical Register of Wetern Australia for 1948-49", Perth WA, Government Printer 1952.

Grain production
Western Australia
2006

Grain growing (tonnes)

△ 5000 tonnes grain grown

┼─┼─┼ Rail open in 2006

Total WA grain production 2006: 12.143m tonnes

Grain distribution calculated from
Cereal crops - Cereals for grain - total production (t)
for Statistical Local Areas,
2005/06

Notes:

Grain production for per LGA, from
ABS publication
"71250DO028_200506 Agricultural Commodities:
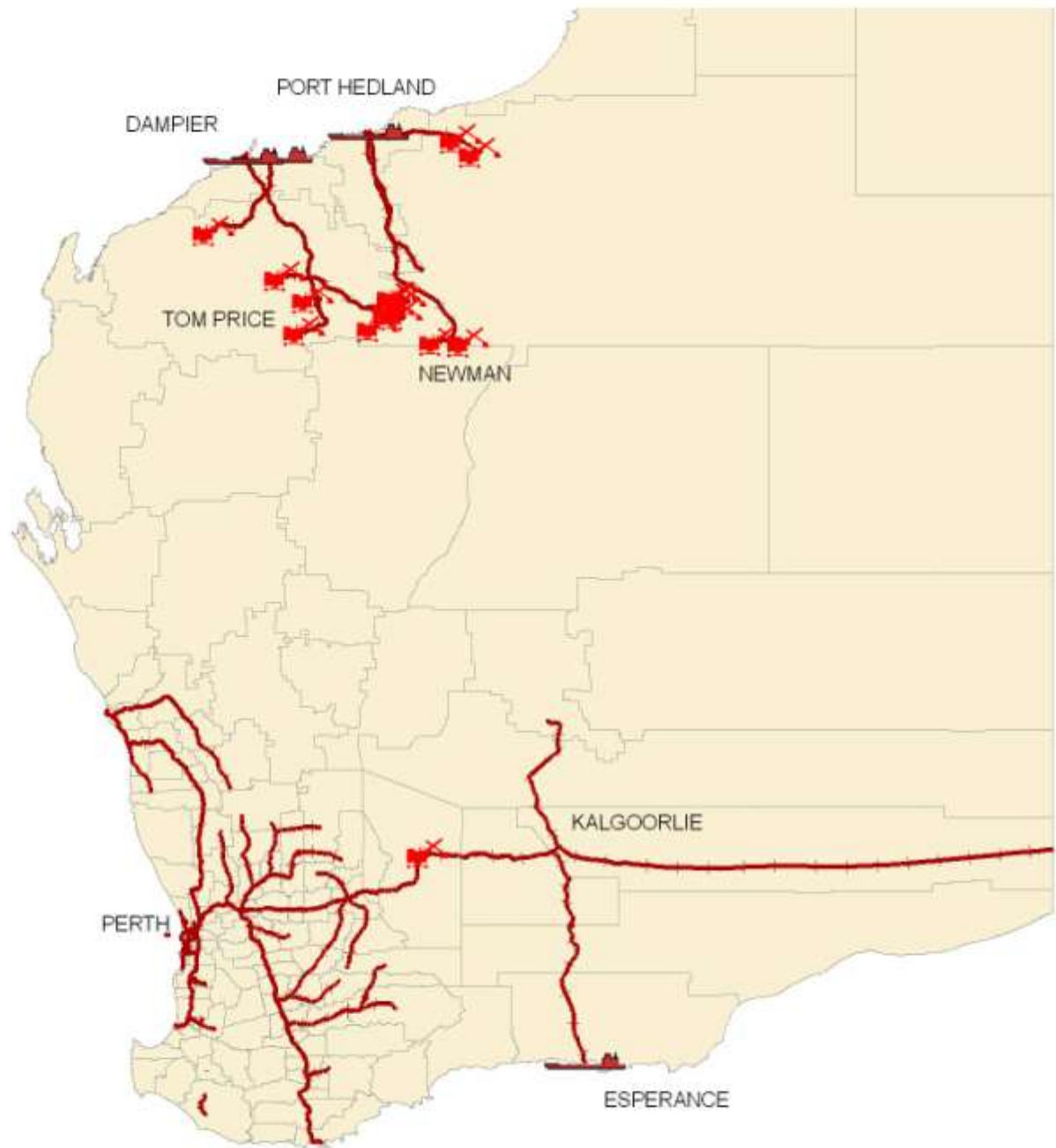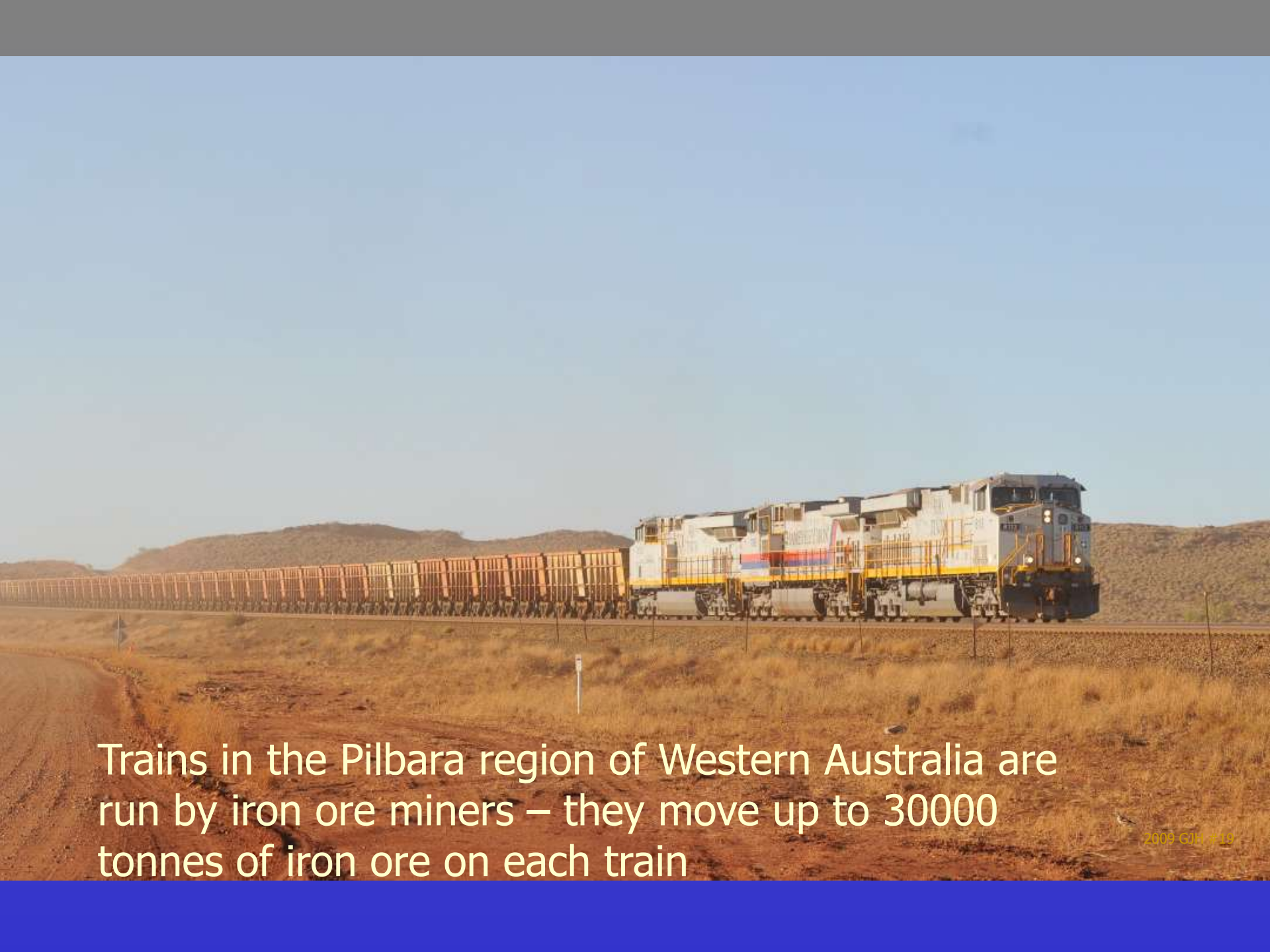Small Area Data, Australia, 2005-06"
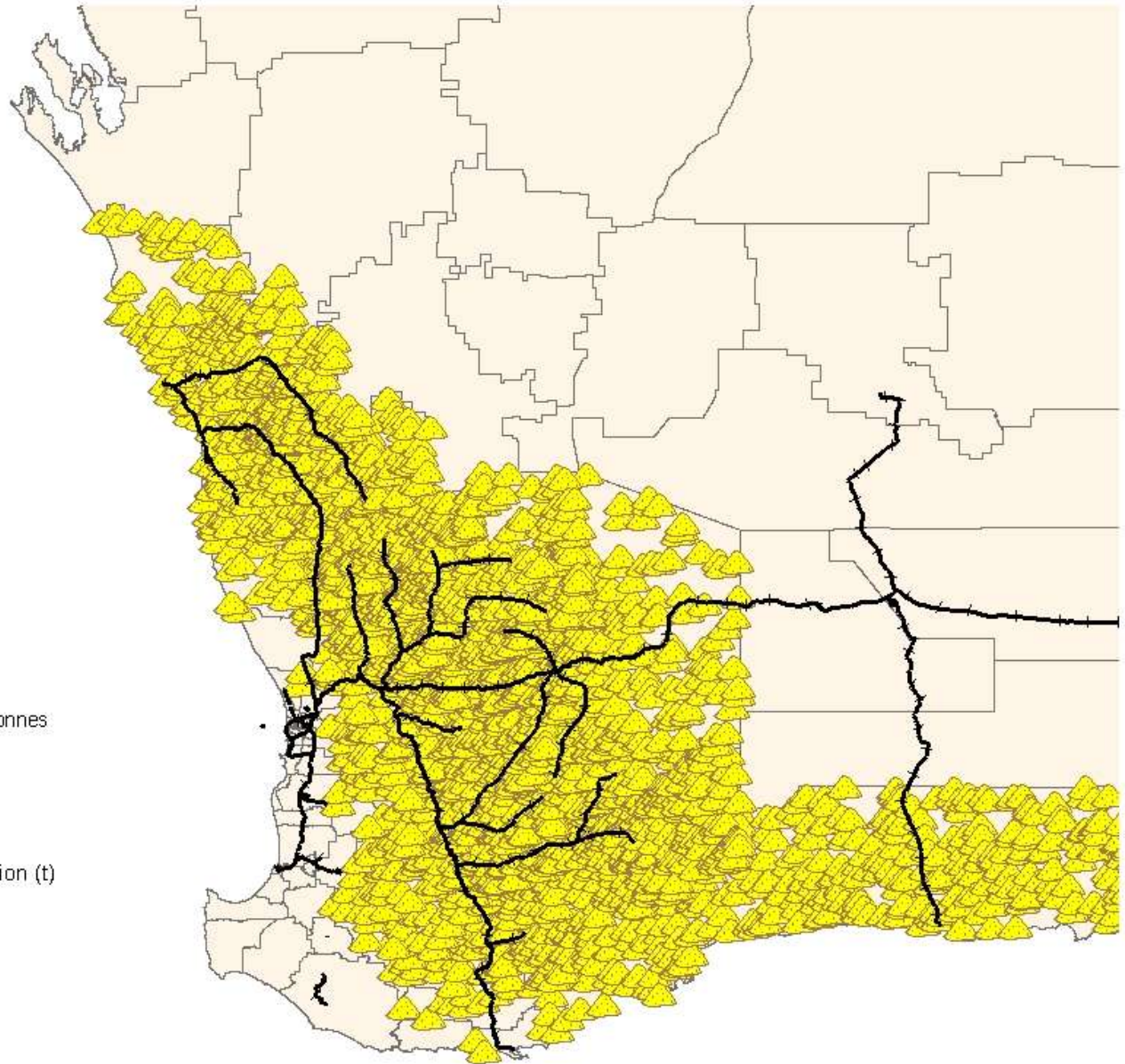
IRON ORE MINING AND PORTS

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Mines and ports

Iron ore mine

Port

Rail_major

PORT HEDLAND
DAMPIER
TOM PRICE
NEWMAN
PERTH
KALGOORLIE
ESPERANCE

Trains in the Pilbara region of Western Australia are run by iron ore miners – they move up to 30000 tonnes of iron ore on each train

2009 GJH #19

Come out and see us some time!

Thank you

Railway Museum
136 Railway Parade, Bassendean

www.railheritagewa.org.au