

## MEDIA RELEASE

# UNDER A BILARI TREE I BORN

BY ALICE BILARI SMITH

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Alice Bilari Smith lived in the Pilbara, on stations and in the bush, on government reserves and in towns. Narrowly avoiding removal from her family by 'the Welfare', life on the stations taught her to cook and launder, sew and clean, shoe horses, chop wood and milk cows. As a young married woman she added mustering, dingo scalping, shearers' assistant and sheep-yard building to her skills. Alice also grew up in the ways of her country, hunting, cooking and building in the traditional manner. As well as a large family of her own, Alice played an active role in caring for other Aboriginal children and initiated the establishment of a Homemakers Centre in Roebourne. This is Alice's insightful and inspiring story – the story of a life that is remarkable and yet typical of Australia's strong country women.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alice Bilari Smith was born at Rocklea Station in the Pilbara in the 1920s. Her mother was a Banyjima woman and her father a white teamster. She was raised by her Aboriginal family and narrowly escaped being removed to Moore River. After her marriage, Alice spent most of her adult years living in the bush and raising a large family. They retained their language and many of their customs, and it was not until 1969 that Alice settled in Roebourne so that her children could attend school. Living in Roebourne, she was a foster mother to fifteen children and a valued member of the community. Alice died on 1 February 2012 at Roebourne District Hospital.

### NOTES

- This inspiring story is suitable for secondary schools under the cross-curriculum priority area of: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The book is liberally illustrated with 35 photos, maps of the West Pilbara (both geographic and showing the Pilbara language groups), plus a comprehensive appendix with letters from the Department of Native Affairs and genealogies remembered by Alice.

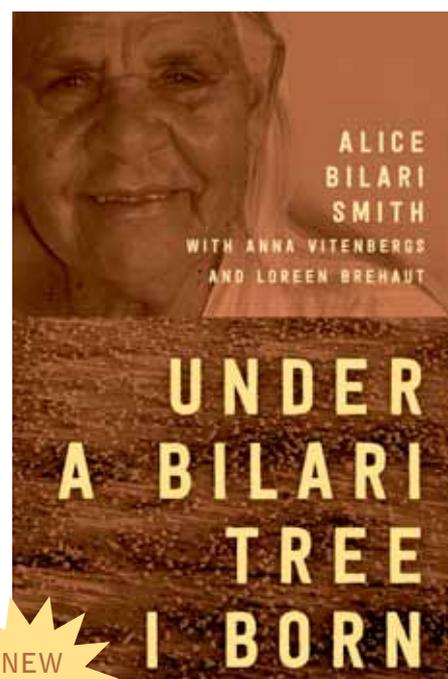
### PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

'... an evocative and powerful Aboriginal voice.' *Aboriginal History*

'The description of Alice's life in overlapping Aboriginal and European worlds provides ... a unique view of how this Aboriginal woman lived and survived in each.' *JAS Review of Books*

'... a splendid piece of Indigenous oral history.' *Canberra Times*

'... a fascinating insight on an indigenous life lived between the black and white worlds of the North-West.' *The West Australian*



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