



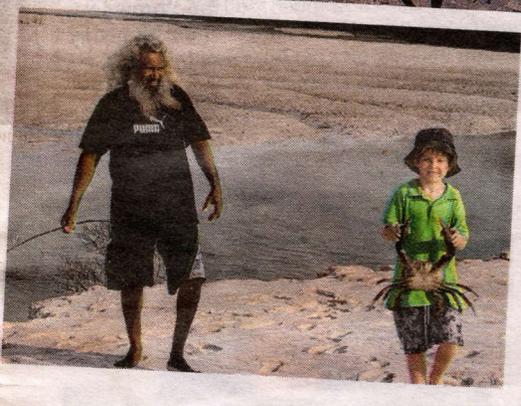
left, main and inset  
**Finnegan Bodey at Point Sinclair, where 11-year-old Wade Gray Shipard was taken by a shark in 1975; Michaela Boland, left in main picture, with her family camping on the Eyre Peninsula; Cape Leveque tour guide Brian Lee with the author's son and a mudcrab**

house, where the attendant smirked in response to my request for fresh fruit and served us half-metre long hot dogs instead. After that, Ceduna was always going to be a culinary highlight.

My Ceduna-raised friend Robyn had advised us to order King George whiting and oysters at the Ceduna Foreshore Hotel, so we did, and were so impressed that as we left town the next morning, we stopped at Baldy's, one of two seafood barns on the outskirts of town. There, my husband, Michael, bought the sweetest, plumpiest oysters we had ever tasted, and more whiting, just because we could. The oysters he shucked that night at our campsite on the sand at Perlubie Beach were so good that when our seven-year-old — a hitherto oyster virgin — spat one out, not quite sure what to make of its salty creaminess, I flirted with the idea of washing off the sand and eating it myself.

Baldy's assistant manager Kerri Warren says their oysters come from Smoky Bay and Denial Bay, and other local produce including salmon trout, garfish, flake and snapper and prawns come from Ceduna and Venus Bay.

Baldy's, like Streaky Bay Marine Products and other retailers in the region, provides keys to fishermen who drop off their catch at the shop each morning. Proximity to the ocean, however, doesn't necessarily mean the seafood will be cheap. I paid capital city prices everywhere. That's because, as Port Lincoln's McCathie explains, Australia's industry operates in a global market. "A lot of people expect cheaper tuna here but we've got



MICHAEL BODEY

## Our absolute seafood highlight in the region was at Ceduna

swimmer crab I bought from Streaky Bay Marine Products were sweet, firm and slightly salty.

Our absolute seafood highlight in the region, however, was at Ceduna.

Maybe it was because we had driven 18,000km to get there, taking the long way from Melbourne through regional NSW and Queensland via Darwin and then exploring nearly every nook and cranny of the West Australian coast to Perth. Just before arriving in Ceduna we had driven across the Nullarbor with no fresh food of any kind, let alone fish, for four days.

Our desire for fresh seafood had been piqued weeks earlier in WA when at Cape Leveque, two hours north of Broome by dirt road, we feasted on mud crabs freshly pulled from the mangroves with local tour guide Brian Lee, and northern bluefin tuna pulled hours earlier from the ocean.

Driving along the Nullarbor, taunted by the pounding blue ocean smashing against the soaring Bunda Cliffs, we perched awkwardly at the Nullarbor Road-

to pay the same prices as consumers in Japan," he says.

The road out of Port Lincoln is lined with big processing plants bearing names such as Kinkawooka, Western Abalone, Valente trawling, Australian Bight Seafood and Cleanseas, among others. Port Lincoln is such a large fishing port that visitors cannot easily interact with it. That's why McCathie, a former fisherman, is expanding his shop with plans to hold seafood cooking demonstrations. He wants to capitalise on the expansion in food tourism, driven partly by the new Lincoln Hotel and more flights into the area.

Visitors to the Eyre Peninsula should not, however, expect to be able to "roll around in \$20 crayfish", as one friend put it. Those days are gone. You can, however, swim with the tuna in Port Lincoln, if you wish (swim-with-thetuna.com.au). And the really adventurous? They can go shark cage diving (sharkcagediving.com.au). Maybe next time.

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