

# WA's hundred years of gold

Joanna Sassoon writes of books celebrating the centenary

Gold was first discovered in the Kalgoorlie-Boulder region of WA in 1851. Its centenary has provided renewed impetus for books on the myths and romance of prospectors and the gold mining industry in WA, including Geoffrey Blainey *Paddy Hannan: a claim to fame* (Kalgoorlie: Thomson Reward Pty Ltd, 1993 \$25.95) and Martyn and Audrey Web *Golden destiny: the centenary history of Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia* (City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, 1993 \$125).

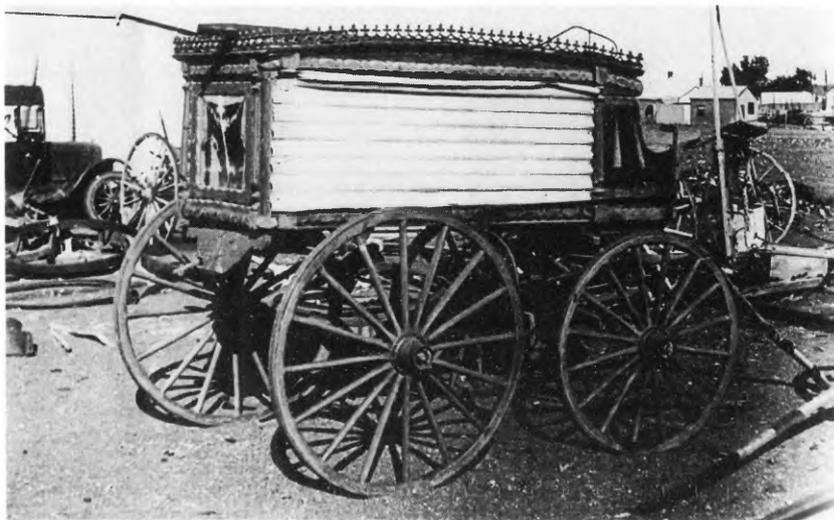
As a sober contrast, the *Kalgoorlie-Boulder miners' Book of Remembrance* has been created within a community which has lost 627 named men in mining accidents on the Golden Mile in its first hundred years of existence. The book, which is based on a British tradition, was born from the personal grief of Kalgoorlie resident Sue Cumming, whose brother Mark 'George' Turich was killed in a mine accident.

The *Book of Remembrance* has been compiled to ensure that ordi-

nary people whose lives have been sacrificed in pursuit of the nation's wealth will not be forgotten. Biographical information, occupations and the place of death of those who died in mining accidents were gleaned from many sources and collated for the first time—details in themselves which will add to the scant records of this transitory group of people. The rag paper was made by the community to archival standards and stained to the

greens and reds of Kalgoorlie. The information was inscribed by Goldfields residents after a series of local calligraphy workshops.

The twenty-centimetre-thick book was funded by the Trades and Labour Council of WA along with individual companies and unions and is now on permanent display at the Museum of the Goldfields, Kalgoorlie—a graphic reminder of important but oft forgotten aspects of the mining industry. ■



This hearse was still in use in the Kalgoorlie region in the 1930s (picture courtesy of the J S Battye Library of WA History).

## The First National Book Summit

Frank Thompson, Chairperson of the ALIA Press Board, at the Summit

The First National Book Summit was held in Melbourne under the auspices of the National Book Council with 100 invited participants including librarians, authors, publishers, printers, and booksellers as well as academics, lawyers, and others involved in the book industry. The theme was 'Planning for Action: The Book in an Era of Change'. Over 30 speakers delivered papers of varying length and content, contributing to a plethora of ideas which, with the broad conference theme and the variety of participants meant the summit was not as sharply focussed as it might have been.

If there is a second summit, it should certainly narrow its objectives somewhat, allow more time for the participants to debate the

issues, and hopefully arrive at some coordinated action plans. There is no doubt there are a number of major issues facing everyone involved in books, issues which will not go away and must be addressed urgently. This means such conferences are very important. They must not be allowed to become so diffuse that they lose their power to be agents of change.

The opening address by Senator McMullan, Minister for the Arts, particularly excited the audience because he indicated he was looking for ideas for increased funding for Australian literature. He was not talking of squillions, but was prepared to think in terms of a modest percentage increase in the draft budget of the Literature Board of

the Australia Council. It was not clear whether this increase would actually go to the Literature Board or would be available to other groups involved in Australian literature. In any event he urged participants to submit ideas directly to his office.

Brian Johns, Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Authority, gave a brilliant keynote address, pointing out how rich Australia is in cultural resources because of our multiculturalism. We needed to promote more non-English leaders to positions of power in order to develop a structured approach to exports. We needed to focus on customers not countries because the markets for literature and books and ideas would be borderless and more focussed on languages ▶