

# Island exiles remembered

■ Geoff Vivian

A group of Carnarvon locals and visitors trudged for an hour over dusty red dirt and mangroves late last month, to remember people imprisoned for the crime of carrying venereal diseases.

The walk from Carnarvon's Town Beach to One Mile jetty ended at the place where many of these Aboriginal people last stood on mainland Australia.

Government policy dictated they be placed at the "Lock Hospitals" on Dorre and Bernier Islands, after they were forcibly removed from 84 known places from Wyndham to Albany between 1908 and 1919.

Records show the prisoners had been "diagnosed" with venereal disease, often by police or pastoralists, with little or no evidence of a medical examination to support the claims.

Many never left the islands and it is conservatively estimated more than 200 people died there during those years.

Kathleen Musulin, whose Yawuru great-grandmother was forcibly taken from Broome, described the walk as a very emotional experience.

"For the first time in nearly 100 years, the history and the people that experienced that history were



Shire acting chief executive Mark Dacombe worked with Bob Dorey and community members on the project.