A groundbreaking presentation, in a revised edition, of Indigenous Australian storytelling as it actually sounds; these stories provide a fascinating picture of the life of the people of the west Kimberley after colonisation. Paddy Roe was a legendary figure in the revival and maintenance of law and culture in the Broome area in the mid-twentieth century. In this book he continues and revitalises one of the great literary traditions of Australia.

Gularabulu, ‘the coast where the sun goes down’, stretches from Bidyadanga (La Grange) in the south, through Broome, and north up Dampier peninsula as far as Ardyaloon (One Arm Point). Goolarabooloo encompasses a song-line or dreaming track and includes language and dialect groups such as Karajarri, Yawuru, Jugun, Ngumbal, Jabirr Jabirr, Nyul-nyul and Bardi – dialects that shade into one another, sharing about half their vocabulary from one end of the peninsula to the other.

In the 1970s, storyteller, author and elder Paddy Roe shared his Gularabulu stories with anthropologist Stephen Muecke, who drew on the oral traditions of Homer and an interest in French narrative theory in his work with Kimberley storytellers:

Presenting the stories as narrative art is a way of justifying a writing which tries to imitate the spoken word. When language is read as poetic, it is the form of the language itself, as well as its underlying content, which is important. Just as it would be unjustifiable to rewrite a poet’s work into ‘correct’ English ... so it would be unjustifiable to rewrite the words of Paddy Roe’s stories.

And it’s about a new way of listening:

Reading is a little more difficult for those who have never sat down with such a storyteller. If you have heard stories like this, reading it from the page will be easier. Otherwise, work on the part of the reader is probably a necessary part of gaining a better understanding of Aboriginal cultures.

And in listening you should also try to hear what he is saying: that things have always been the same, but that they are different now; that as long as his people can speak out clearly, their culture will live on.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Paddy Roe was a legendary figure in the revival and maintenance of law and culture in the Broome area in the mid-twentieth century. In Gularabulu he continues and revitalises one of the great literary traditions of Australia – stories which represent the continuation and reassertion of an Indigenous oral narrative tradition.

ABOUT THE EDITOR
Stephen Muecke is a leading Australian academic whose work has encompassed a number of disciplines in the humanities. With Paddy Roe, Muecke is co-writer of the prize-winning Reading the Country.