

Our Ref: DEP23/2
Your Ref:
Enquiries: Andrew Campbell

13th November 2009

Ms Cassandra Stephenson
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Public Administration
Legislative Council, Parliament House
Perth WA 6000

Dear Cassandra,

**SUBMISSION OF THE SHIRE OF MANJIMUP TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY –
RECREATION ACTIVITIES WITHIN PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SOURCE AREAS**

On behalf of the Shire of Manjimup, please accept this submission to the current
Parliamentary Inquiry.

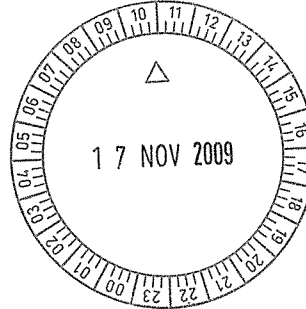
A) SUBMISSION AGAINST THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The social, economic, and environmental values and costs of recreation access, where possible, to Perth Hills and South West drinking water catchments including the costs and benefits to public health, water quality, recreation, indigenous culture and management options.

The social and economic benefits of providing recreational usage in significant public drinking water sites must not be underestimated. As an example, the water supply for Pemberton is Big Brook Dam within which recreation is managed by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) who have invested considerable financial resources into developing recreational infrastructure. The recreational use of Big Brook dam not only provides social benefits through exercise activities, interests and social gathering areas for the local and wider community but it also assists to sustain the economy of both Pemberton and Manjimup by attracting many tourists to the region.

Unfortunately public drinking water supplies are known to be incompatible with recreation for fear of contamination and the general degradation of water quality so it is important that this Inquiry strikes an acceptable balance between recreation and public drinking water sources by providing some meaningful and achievable recommendations as part of this process.

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2. State, interstate and international legislation, policy and practice for recreation within public drinking water source areas including information relating to population health benefits and impacts.

It is understood that the Western Australian obligations under the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) and Drinking Water Source Protection Plans (DWSPP) focus on a multiple level approach for the protection and treatment of drinking water supplies. Of the multiple levels, the barrier requirement is probably the most significant in terms of the conflict between public drinking water supplies and recreation.

From the experience of the author as a qualified Environmental Health Officer, Licensed Water Service Operator (for the Windy Harbour water supply) and the knowledge acquired through representing the Shire of Manjimup as a community reference group stakeholder in the development of DWSPP for Quinninup, Walpole and Northcliffe water supplies, it is very clear that direct human / animal water contact with public drinking water supplies is incompatible and will be excluded as part of any robust DWSPP on the basis of public health risk.

Non water contact recreation in public drinking water catchment areas is also minimised based on the parameters established by the ADWG and DWSPP. Any activity that poses an unacceptable risk to public drinking water supplies is generally precluded from public drinking water catchment areas which leave very few permissible low risk recreation activities available. An example of this is the permission for only walking tracks around Karri Lake (water supply dam) in Quinninup under the DWSPP whereas prior to the introduction of the DWSPP a whole range of recreational activities were permitted.

The removal of the preventative barrier protection to be replaced by a higher level of treatment of water has previously been questioned with the statutory authorities and whilst this is a possibility through processes such as reverse osmosis treatment (eg. the treatment of sewerage for drinking water in Singapore), often cost is a significant prohibitive factor. If cost was excluded from the consideration prescriptive requirements such as those found in the ADWG would also prevent deviation from legislative standards curtailing any attempt to combine significant recreational usage with public drinking water sources.

It is recommended that the Parliamentary Inquiry obtain technical evidence from Mr Richard Theobald, Manager Water Unit - Department of Health in relation to the incompatibility between recreation and public drinking water supplies from a public health based legislative perspective.

3. The range of community views on the value of water and recreation in public drinking water source areas.

The community in the Shire of Manjimup have previously indicated very strong opposition to the removal of any entitlement to recreate in a public drinking water supply catchment area. Unfortunately as DWSPP are slowly introduced into drinking water source catchment areas within the district, it was inevitable that the majority of pre-existing recreational uses were removed also.

Within the Shire of Manjimup only the Pemberton water supply, being Big Brook dam, does not have a current DWSPP imposed over it. As will be explained further on in this submission, Big Brook dam has a major recreational component provided by DEC who has invested several million dollars in capital works to elevate Big Brook dam to a significant recreational area. It is very likely that if a DWSPP was introduced for Big Brook dam the recreational component would be diminished to such an extent that Big Brook would undoubtedly lose its very important recreational status. If this was to happen it is likely that the local and wider community would be outraged.

4. The costs and benefits of alternative water quality management strategies and treatment for water catchments containing recreation.

The only comment from the Shire of Manjimup in this regard is that, as a matter of priority, protection of existing recreational use should occur in public drinking water source areas at the same time as providing the technology or an alternative to protect public health in the drinking water provided to communities. To achieve this, the State will need to identify how to overcome economic or legislative constraint caused by incompatibility between recreation and public drinking water supplies in order protect iconic recreation sites in public drinking water catchment areas.

5. Possible recreation sites/opportunities available outside the Perth Hills and South West drinking water catchments.

It is considered that where public drinking water supplies are replaced by alternative water supplies in order to protect significant recreational uses, the State, having the greatest technical ability and expertise, should take on the role of managing dam infrastructure retained for recreational purposes. If responsibility is transferred to Local Government it is possible that, due to the lack of technical expertise in addition to financial resource constraint, the recreational use will be lost due to Local Governments' inability to maintain the asset in a sustainable manner. Local Governments could choose to remove a dam wall for example.

B) WATER SOURCE AREAS WITHIN THE DISTRICT OF THE SHIRE OF MANJIMUP THAT HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF COMPETING INTERESTS BETWEEN PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES AND RECREATIONAL USE

Manjimup

The water supply for the Manjimup town site is obtained from surface water catchment and capture in the Manjimup dam (1581mL capacity) and the Phillips Creek dam (269mL capacity). Both dams are located to the west of Manjimup. Currently no recreational activities are permitted in the Manjimup water source area. It is understood that non water based recreational activities occur within the water catchment area such as motorbike riding, horse riding, bush walking and bicycle riding however these recreational uses are prevented where possible by water catchment Rangers.

Pemberton

The water supply for the Pemberton town site is obtained from surface water catchment captured in Big Brook dam (627mL capacity) and then released to a small weir approximately four and a half kilometres downstream. Big Brook dam is located to the north west of the Pemberton town site. Currently a variety of seasonal recreational

pursuits are permitted in the Big Brook water source area including swimming, fishing, marroning, walking, cycling, camping, BBQ's and unpowered boats. Public ablution facilities are present in close proximity and dogs are permitted to be walked around the area but are not permitted to enter the water (although this is a frequent occurrence).

The Big Brook dam water source area currently provides both a water source for Pemberton and is a significant Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) managed recreation facility utilised by many people throughout the year. Interestingly a DWSPP has been previously talked about by the Department of Water but has never been addressed. Any talk of introducing a DWSPP has previously been met with strong Council and community opposition and the argument that the four and a half kilometres of natural filtering processes between Big Brook dam and the weir is sufficient to destroy harmful pathogens and other contaminants that may be present in the water as a result of human contact.

It is considered by the author based on experience with other DWSPP, the natural filtering argument as described above is based on unsound technical logic as whilst there would be some potential pathogen filtering, the probability of pathogens travelling from Big Brook dam to the weir is still highly probable. It would be expected that if a DWSPP was introduced for the Pemberton water source area it would exclude human water contact as part of recreational activities. Given the significant economic investment by the State (through DEC) in Big Brook dam and the economic and social values generated by such an important asset to the community of Pemberton and the district as a whole, any diminution in recreational activities at the site could have significant and damaging consequences.

The Water Corporation has recently indicated their medium to long term vision of providing an alternate water source for Pemberton through the Yaragadee aquifer although no indicative timeframes have been proposed.

Quinninup

The water supply for the Quinninup settlement is obtained from surface water catchment captured in Quinninup dam (713mL capacity). Only low impact non water contact recreational activities such as walking on defined tracks are permitted at the Quinninup dam. The Quinninup dam is owned in freehold by the Water Corporation and is located right in the middle of the settlement.

The Quinninup dam water source has a DWSPP currently in place and operating. The DWSPP prevents recreational activities to low impact walk trails around the area. The DWSPP also acknowledges the risk from onsite wastewater disposal systems in addition to other perceived risks from the established dwelling purposes inside the water source area and specifically adjacent to the stored water source. On this basis the DWSPP had recommended a new water source due to the perceived incompatible conflict and the Water Corporation are currently attempting to address this through exploratory drilling works for new water production bores.

If the water source is relocated, the potential for the Quinninup community to regain their historical recreational entitlement is high. However, one issue has arisen where the control and management of the recreational water body is likely to be given up by the Water Corporation leaving another agency to pick up the responsibility. Council has previously considered this matter on 12 April 2001 where it unanimously resolved:

“That the Council advise the Waters and Rivers Commission and Water Corporation that it is not prepared to assume ownership of Karri Lake or current Quinninup dam when a new water supply is provided as it believes that this is the responsibility of the State Government”

The reasons given for the resolution were:

- The Shire has no expertise in maintaining dams or lakes and has no other similar facilities under its control;
- There is concern at the possible high annual cost to the Shire to maintain the dam and lake; and
- Previous commitments were made by a former Minister recognising the previous historical significance of recreation on the lake and that recreation would not be lost due to the provision of a water supply to Quinninup.

Northcliffe

The water supply for the Northcliffe town site is obtained from surface water catchment from the Gardner River and captured in a weir to the east of the Northcliffe town site as well as being supplemented during the drier months by a groundwater bore on an adjacent private property. Recreation is permitted to the immediate west of the site however contact with the water supply is not permitted.

The Northcliffe water source area is the subject of a DWSP and is considered to be characterised as unreliable with significant contamination potential. The Water Corporation have recognised these issues and are now embarking on a solution that will provide water from the Pemberton water source area to the Northcliffe town site. Once this system is in place any conflicting recreational uses and the drinking water supply will be eliminated. Whilst the Northcliffe weir has less potential for recreation than the Big Brook or Quinninup dams, potential still does exist to develop the area however Council needs to consider control and management issues similar to Quinninup albeit on a much smaller scale.

Walpole

The water supply for the Walpole town site is obtained from surface water catchment from the Walpole River and Butlers Creek dam to the west of Walpole. Recreational activities are not permitted within the water source area and Water Catchment Rangers regularly patrol the water catchment. Similar to the scenario in the Manjimup water catchment area, recreation in the Walpole water catchment area is desired by some of the community but is clearly restricted under the requirements of the applicable DWSP.

Windy Harbour

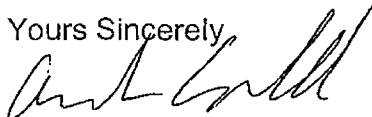
The water supply for the Windy Harbour settlement is obtained from two groundwater bores operated by the Shire of Manjimup. The bore fields are located in the D'Entrecasteaux National Park and no recreation activities are permitted nor generally occur in the immediate catchment vicinity.

Finally, in response to the Parliamentary Inquiry, Council resolved at the meeting 12 November 2009:

1. That alternate water sources are implemented for the Pemberton, Quinninup and Northcliffe water source areas as a matter of urgency to protect established or reinstate historical recreational pursuits;
2. The due to the strong Council and community belief that the economic and social significance of recreational activities involving human water contact at Big Brook dam in Pemberton, those activities are permitted to continue indefinitely irrespective of locating a new water source;
3. That treatment options for the Big Brook water source are enhanced to a higher level of treatment to offset any potential contamination resulting from human contact from recreational activities; and
4. If the recreational restrictions in the Pemberton, Quinninup and Northcliffe water source areas are eliminated through the implementation of new water supplies, that the State manages the existing infrastructure assets for recreation where appropriate.

Please accept the submission of the Shire of Manjimup to the Parliamentary Inquiry – Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas and if you have any queries please feel free to contact me by email at andrew.campbell@manjimup.wa.gov.au or by telephone on 9771 7777.

Yours Sincerely,



Andrew Campbell
DIRECTOR STATUTORY SERVICES