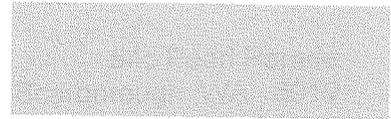
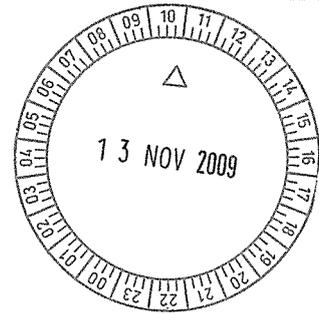


**PUBLIC**

12th November, 2009



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



Dear Ms Stephenson,

**Re: Inquiry into Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas**

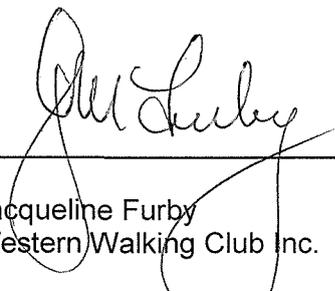
I would like to make a personal submission to this Inquiry, however I would not like to attend a committee meeting in this regard. I do not have any expert knowledge, however I speak from experience of being a keen bushwalker. I have been a member of organised bushwalking clubs in the Perth area since 1992 and for the last 15 years a member of the Western Walking Club Inc. Western Walking Club Inc is affiliated with the Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc and I strongly support their submission to this Inquiry.

Western Walking Club was formed in 1937 and has continuously been providing recreational programmes for members and guests since its inception. Of all the organised bushwalking clubs in the metropolitan area, it is the one with the more senior members – people with a lot of experience of walking in the forest and catchments. Initially members relied on public transport to access bushland areas. We now drive the central meeting points and car pool from there to take as few vehicles as possible to the start of the walks. Attendance at events varies, but would average about 15 people on each walk.

Our club had agreements with the Water Authorities allowing access to catchment areas for our walks programme. This evolved into agreements between the Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc and the Department of Water which ended in 1998. Since then, the Department of Water has refused to re-negotiate an agreement with our Federation.

As a member of an organised walking club, I have gained invaluable experience, a great appreciation of the natural wonders around us and would not in any way knowingly cause harm to the environment. As bushwalkers, we are there because we care passionately for our environment and its conservation.

Yours sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jacqueline Furby  
Western Walking Club Inc. Hon Treasurer



## Summary of Main Points

1. Bushwalking, particularly by clubs who require their members to adhere to agreed principles for responsible bushwalking, causes very minimal, if any damage in the water catchment areas, while at the same time conferring considerable health benefits.
2. Walking is a simple, basic form of exercise. As bushwalkers we benefit from participating in weight bearing, often strenuous exercise, so important for our bones. Healthy people are less of a drain on our state's ever increasing health costs.
3. Like-minded people experience social benefits from their love of the bush and bushwalking. Our environmental awareness is increased through shared knowledge of flora and fauna in the bushland terrain where we walk. We gain team building and navigation skills when participating in bush walks.
4. Bushwalkers do not require any additional facilities to be provided in order to participate in our chosen recreational activity.
5. Towns adjacent to the catchment areas can benefit economically from the activities of hikers and bushwalkers.
6. We have unique flora and this must lead to eco-tourism opportunities for overseas visitors to see this in its natural environment in our catchment areas.
7. I believe the 2km Reservoir Protection Zone is excessive and could be reduced.
8. I am unaware of any evidence showing that responsible bushwalking activities would necessitate any additional costs to the treatment of water in our reservoirs.
9. The Water Authorities require the support of reasonable people. Allowing bushwalkers access to catchment areas could be beneficial in that we could report on many of the illegal dumping activities we come across on our walks.
10. Due to our geographic location and the urban sprawl along the coastal plain, there are no opportunities for bushwalking or hiking, other than in the catchment areas, and this too is becoming increasingly restricted due to mining leases and mining activities.
11. Due to the ever increasing costs of fuel, we do not wish to drive long distances for recreation. Being environmentally aware, we are concerned with the detrimental effect of carbon emissions. We would like exercise opportunities close to where we live.
12. Impediments to exercising, lead to a sedentary population and greater health problems.

## **A Submission to the Inquiry by the Standing Committee on Public Administration on Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas**

- (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.**

I believe I gain a tremendous benefit socially by participating with like-minded friends, walking in the bush. Most of our walks are on a Sunday and it really "re-charges the batteries" for the coming week to be out walking either on or off track through the bush. It is an uplifting experience. I personally have gained considerable skills - map reading, following a compass course, GPS navigation and team building, by being a member of an organised bushwalking group.

We are all aware of the health benefits gained through exercise. This is re-enforced with the "Find 30" campaign, The Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce and "Stay on your Feet" messages. Walking is a very simple basic form of exercise and long, strenuous walks, wearing a back pack, helps to build strong healthy bones, so necessary to avoid osteoporosis problems in women of my age group.

Apart from health and social benefits, I believe we have economic benefits by allowing eco-tourism opportunities in our catchment areas. Our flora is unique and in the spring time the hills around Perth can be a blaze of colour with our wild flowers. Towns adjacent to catchment areas could benefit from more tourists on day walks in the catchments. Our Bibbulmun Track and Munda Biddi Trail already attract many overseas visitors. This too must lead to increased benefits from overnight stays and re-stocking of food supplies in adjacent towns.

I acknowledge that a cost to more open access to the catchments is the need for more facilities such as picnic areas, toilets, car parking places and provision of rubbish bins. However, as responsible bushwalkers, we have no need for such requirements as our policies are "carry in, carry out". We bring all of our rubbish home.

However, not all people are mindful of the environment unfortunately. When walking, particularly in the catchment areas along Brookton Highway, we have come across all manner of dumped rubbish along the tracks. This ranges from building rubble, old household items, garden waste, toys, clothing and rusting car bodies. Bushwalkers can have an important role in reporting on this illegal dumping and give exact locations with GPS co-ordinates.

Bushwalking clubs have rules covering toilet needs. This waste must be buried in cat holes at least 20cm deep and more than 100m from any water source, causing little, if any, damage to our drinking water supplies.

As our groups are relatively small and we seldom walk in the same areas more than say once every few years, I believe we cause minimal impact to the vegetation, and there is no resultant damage to the catchment. We try to alleviate the spread of weeds by cleaning the soles of our boots and the ends of our walking poles after each walk.

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

As a club member, I am aware that there are other jurisdictions in other states and countries where less restrictive policies are in place in relation to bushwalking (or hiking or tramping) in water catchment areas. Our members who have previously walked in the United Kingdom are amazed at our restrictions. I believe, fishing, sailing, hiking and camping are allowed in catchment areas in Great Britain. Fish stocks are said to be added to reservoirs for angling purposes.

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

There can be no question as to the value of good quality drinking water to the human being. We are indeed fortunate in having water which apparently requires minimal treatment for human consumption. There is also no question that the opportunity to be close to streams and water bodies is important, in a less easily definable way, to the human spirit. As with so much in life we need to balance the requirement for good water with the requirement for access for activities which are unlikely to have a negative impact on the water quality.

It is my view that the 2km Reservoir Protection Zone is excessive and encourages reasonable people to break unreasonable laws. I would inadvertently be breaking the law by entering into this protection zone. Therefore club members would be in breach of their insurance should an accident occur. The only maps that I am aware of that show the Reservoir Protection Exclusion Zone at the moment are the Munda Biddi maps.

The club with whom I walk makes the point that the Water Commission needs the support of reasonable people because it is unlikely that they will ever have sufficient enforcement personnel to cover the areas in question. They are unlikely to have that support if the regulations are seen to be unreasonable.

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

I have no knowledge of water quality management strategies, however, I don't believe there is any evidence showing that responsible bushwalking activities cause any water management problems which would necessitate additional costs to the treatment of water in our reservoirs.

**(5) Possible recreation sites or opportunities available outside the Perth hills and south west drinking water catchments.**

In my opinion, there are no alternative recreation sites for bushwalkers outside of the catchment areas due to our geographical location. The urban sprawl and low scrub along the coastal plain don't allow bushwalking opportunities. Increasing fuel costs inhibit travelling long distances for recreation purposes. With limited time for recreation, I don't want to spend a lot of it travelling to or from a walk, so I very much appreciate the opportunity to walk with friends, in catchment areas, in reasonably close proximity to where we live. Another consideration is that we should be cutting down on our vehicle use to reduce our carbon emissions. This too is an argument for recreation reasonably near to the city.

I believe a lot of our catchment areas are under mining lease agreements. This also is a restriction on the areas in which we can walk.

A further consideration is that with our expanding population, there will be more and more demand for recreational areas and opportunities. Increased access to our catchment areas would to some extent alleviate that. For walking, hiking, cycling and camping, the only reasonable option is in the catchments, as further to the north and to the east the land is generally privately owned farming properties.