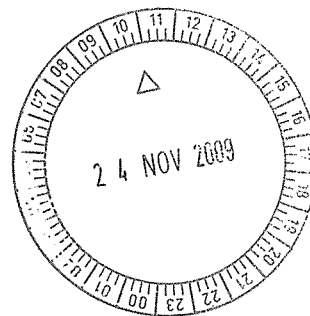


# PUBLIC



For the attention of the Standing Committee on Public Administration

Re **Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas**

November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2009

From Hal Harvey

Dear Sirs,

I write regarding the possibility of allowing recreation activities within public drinking water source areas in Western Australia. I am the proprietor of the Bluewater Tackle-Surf-Dive-Marine stores in Scarborough, Morley and Myaree, and am the Chairman of the Tackle World group for Australia. I have been involved in the recreational fishing industry literally since birth, with my father and grandfather having been in the same business. I have also written magazine articles for Australian fishing magazines for the last 33 years, and wrote the fishing columns for the Western Mail newspaper, and the Sunday Times for many years.

In this context, I offer the following submission.

Re TOR1: *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.*

Beyond the recreational fishing industry that I am involved with, there exists a plethora of recreational opportunities (and the accompanying facilitation businesses) that are denied us as West Australians, particularly in the south-west. Water skiers, kayakers, swimmers, bushwalkers and so on are commonly excluded from much of the most desirable environments in our State. We know from thousands of examples and other scenarios all over the world, that this is fundamentally unnecessary. It is recognised by the public as our own Government denying us the freedoms to enjoy our own greater backyard.

The south-west, and the Darling Range, is the most urgent section of WA to be addressing here. Whatever else happens in WA with regard to population distribution, there has been and will continue to be significantly increasing population density in greater Perth. Recreation demands increase proportionately, and the opportunities with a day or a weekend's excursion time from the metropolitan area are the ones that matter most to the most people. The social importance of allowing healthy outdoor recreation opportunities should not be ignored, or directly obstructed, as the Water Corporation has done in the past.

However it should also be recognised that, due to smaller population bases, the smaller regional centres are also often limited in access to recreational areas, particularly those with water sports opportunities. The socioeconomic benefits of providing access to freshwater where it has not been easy before, are massive. However by way of example, a playground alongside Harvey Weir does not cut it; such facilities are not the crying need. Access is what we need. People will use a playground once or twice and then go looking for something different. Let them water-ski or fish, and they'll use Harvey Weir dozens of times each year and support all the associated businesses and economies.

**Re TOR2: *State, interstate and international legislation, policy and practice for recreation within public drinking water source areas.***

The pain of the existing local restrictions is further felt when we look east, and see NSW and Queensland dams attracting angler tourism from all over the world, as they support a recreation, sportfishing and charter industry that we in WA are largely denied. Similarly, our anglers and those of many other countries travel to Tasmania and New Zealand, even South America, to participate in their freshwater fisheries, seizing opportunities that are absent in Western Australia largely through the choice of bureaucracy, and evidently not through any necessity.

**Re TOR3: *The range of community views on the value of water and recreation in public drinking water source areas.***

Having been involved with the recreational fishing industry in Western Australia for over 40 years, it has become very apparent to me that access to water – whether it be ocean, coastline or freshwater – has been steadily decreasing over the years. Unfortunately, this can only be expected to continue with the current fashion of MPAs and reduced coastline access. While this occurs for a variety of reasons, only in WA's freshwater regions is it perceived to be an arbitrary decision of bureaucracy, with little or no basis in reason. We would very much like this bureaucratic attitude to be addressed by your inquiry. As offshore and coastline access to anglers diminishes, the importance of freshwater access increases; not least because there exists an enormous opportunity to 'spread the load', reducing the pressure on ocean fishing and coastline use.

**Re TOR4: *The costs and benefits of alternative water quality management strategies and treatment for water catchments containing recreation.***

Creating a recreation area by filling a pit with water that results in a 'lake' so acidic it will eat an aluminium boat, is absolutely undesirable. Lake Kepwari is a good example of what is not wanted. If the many taxpayer millions that had gone into that project – already proved unsuccessful everywhere else it had been tried in the world – had been put into utilising natural water sources and managing the associated drinking water, we would have had a win for everybody concerned, in social, economic, environmental, sustainability and management terms.

The real benefit to the population of Western Australia will come from managing water quality while allowing general recreational access to drinking water catchment areas.

**Re TOR5: *Possible recreation sites or opportunities available outside the Perth hills and south west drinking water catchments.***

As a standout starting point, North Dandalup dam, east of Mandurah, is probably the most perfect catchment for use as a true recreation area. At present it purports to be so because it has a barbecue area. This massive expanse of water (over 500 hectares when full) has no boating facilities, and excludes fishing, but has no native species of fish and could be, relatively easily, turned into a world-class recreational facility and tourism destination with managed fish stocking, access and minimal facilities; all only 150km from Perth city.

However this Term of Reference, unless mis-worded, appears to refer to the value of water catchments outside the south-west. This would appear to relate solely to Lake Argyle; which is enormously important as a recreational facility to the population of Kununurra. If there is any suggestion that the use of Lake Argyle should be downgraded, I would be strongly opposed to it, as I am sure would be the entire population of Kununurra.

What is required in Western Australia is a fundamental change from a 'management by exclusion' philosophy, to a 'management with inclusion' philosophy. Allowing recreational access to drinking water source areas will be an excellent start.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hal Harvey', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Hal Harvey