



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Environment and Conservation**

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Dr M D Nahan, MLA
Chair
Economics and Industry Standing Committee
Parliament of Western Australia
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Attention: Principal Research Officer

Dear Dr Nahan

INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION, USE AND REGULATION OF CARAVAN PARKS (AND CAMPING GROUNDS) IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Thank you for your letter dated 19 March 2009 inviting the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) to make a submission to the inquiry by the Economics and Industry Standing Committee of Parliament.

1. Caravan park industry structure, conduct and performance

Pursuant to section 100 of the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act), seven caravan park sites are leased by DEC to private operators, as follows:

- Savannah Camp (Karijini National Park);
- Coalmine Beach (Walpole-Nornalup National Park);
- Dwellingup (State forest);
- Hamelin Bay (Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park);
- Logue Brook Dam (State forest near Harvey);
- Lake Navarino (State forest near Waroona); and
- Woodman Point (Woodman Point Regional Park, Coogee).

The terms of the leases vary according to location, scale of development and financial investment by the lessees. The majority are for 20 or 21 years from the date of issue. Lease fees are paid as a proportion of annual gross revenues.

The purpose of DEC engaging with the private sector to provide these facilities is in recognition that these businesses have the financial capacity and the expertise to provide these types of visitor facilities more efficiently than the Department. DEC is not closely involved in issues related to the structure, conduct and performance of the caravan parks industry.

Many of the nature-based camping facilities provided and managed by DEC, whilst providing only basic facilities, are designed to accommodate caravans also, such as at Karijini National Park, Kimberley parks and Cape Range National Park.

2. Demand, supply, costs and trends related to caravan park sites and services

The demand for, supply, costs and trends of the caravan park industry are not the principal concerns of DEC. Whilst aware of the trend for freehold caravan park sites to be sold for alternative development, DEC has not sought to compensate for or balance the loss of established caravan park sites by developing new CALM Act lease sites. Rather DEC seeks to provide camping and caravanning opportunities through management planning processes that apply to the various categories of land that DEC manages, consistent with the statutory purposes of those land categories.

3. Supply and demand for long-stay and short-stay sites including camping sites

It is likely that the CALM Act lease caravan parks have significantly fewer long-term residents than the industry as a whole. This may be due to factors which include wording of the CALM Act leases to encourage an emphasis on short-term recreational stays, the predominance of nature-based parks and the generally more basic facilities provided, which may discourage long-term stays at CALM Act lease caravan parks. The location of many of these parks is distant from resources industry employment and urban centres where a significant proportion of long-term occupants is now common. The exception to this is the Woodman Point caravan park which is on the outskirts of Fremantle. This caravan park was not developed by DEC, however it accommodates a proportion of long-term occupants.

There are about 140 nature-based camping areas on CALM Act land, predominantly on national parks and State forest. These camping areas mostly have only basic facilities which may include toilets, barbecue areas/fireplaces and levelled tent sites. The basic facilities are not attractive to long-term residents, particularly those who are working and require power, shower and laundry facilities at the minimum. The occupants of CALM Act land camping facilities are almost all short-stay visitors. An authorised DEC officer is able to direct a person to vacate a camping site when the person has occupied the site for more than 28 consecutive days or 14 days during school holidays. These powers are stated in regulation 67(1)(b) and (c) of the *Conservation and Land Management Regulations 2002* and are to maximise access by the public to highly sought after nature-based camping areas such as those in Cape Range National Park adjacent to the Ningaloo Marine Park.

DEC has concentrated on the recent provision of nature-based camping sites in areas where there are few, if any, nearby towns or alternative camping facilities, particularly in the north of the State. Camping sites recently developed or expanded by DEC include those in the Devonian Reef Conservation Park (west Kimberley, inland from Derby), Mitchell Plateau conservation parks and national parks (north Kimberley), Cape Range National Park (Exmouth) and Kennedy Range National Park (inland from Gascoyne Junction). Works on campgrounds on DEC-managed land in the more populated south of the State have largely been to repair and improve existing camping facilities as there are often alternative camping facilities provided in nearby towns or on rural private land accommodation enterprises.

4. Impact of existing caravan parks legislation and policies on the industry, the rights of operators and users and the provision of an adequate mix of facilities

DEC is not in a position to comment in any depth on the ability of existing legislation and State and local government policies regulating caravan parks to be able to maintain a viable caravan park industry. The Department believes that the limited facilities provided for camping within the areas that it manages meet a demand by visitors for this style of experience.

DEC offers tourists the opportunity to enjoy natural areas with a different style of facilities to most caravan parks operated by the private sector or local government. The Department strongly believes that a broad mix of caravanning and camping experiences is of considerable benefit to the public and that such experiences encourage recreation and an appreciation of the State's natural environment.

Yours sincerely



Keiran McNamara
Director General

18 May 2009