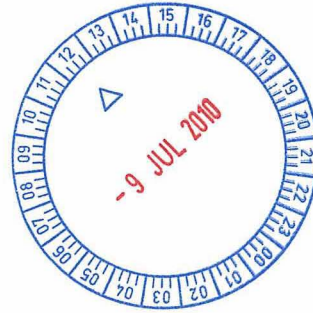


Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council, Parliament House
Perth, Western Australia.



1 July 2010-07-01

Re Shack Sites in Western Australia submission by Stuart Donnelly, lease holder of shack G111, Grrey Western Australia.

Dear Committee members.

In 1993 my wife and I along with other family members purchased a shack at Grey.

The submission I would like to make is for the committee to consider the value of the retention of the shacks and alternatively the economical, heritage and cultural costs of their removal.

Economic value

Currently there are 350 shacks at Wedge island and 150 shacks at Grey.

Conservatively each shack within the two communities provides accommodation for 6 people. That equates to tourist accommodation for 3000 West Australian, interstate and overseas visitors, available every day of the year.

- If the shacks are removed is this government or any future government willing or capable of providing West Australians with this quantity of tourist accommodation?
- What would be the cost of providing this accommodation and infrastructure?
- What impact on the local economy would the removal of this holiday trade have, particularly on small townships nearby both Wedge and Grey?
- Will existing tourist destinations be able to cope with the additional demand placed on them if the shack accommodation were to be removed?

The shack communities at Wedge and Grey have been constructed and maintained by the lease holders at no cost to the Government or taxpayers of Western Australia. Likewise the infrastructure within these communities. In fact under the current lease arrangement the shacks provide the government with a positive income.

With the retention of both shack communities an immediate and ongoing economical stimulus will be provided to the local economy thru the upgrading of the shacks to meet an agreed level as per similar agreements reached with shack communities interstate.

Better access to the communities via the completed Ocean Coast Rd will see an increase in usage of the shacks and the ongoing economical benefit of this.

The retention of the shack communities will provide a significant economical benefit to the state of Western Australia by retaining 3000 tourist accommodation positions along with supportive infrastructure at no ongoing cost to the government or taxpayers of Western Australia. Additionally the positive income stream through a long term lease arrangement will be maintained. The state and local economies will benefit from ongoing support by visitors and the upgrading of buildings and infrastructure.

The communities at Wedge and Grey provide a valuable security and surveillance presence for our national parks, coastline, marine parks and rescue services. On many occasions community members have provided assistance to emergency services, local government and state authorities and marine search and rescue services.

- What would be the cost of providing this service if this volunteer presence was removed?
- Would our states natural assets become more vulnerable if this presence was not in place?
- Would people requiring assistance in the area be placed at additional risk if this presence was removed?

Cultural and Heritage Value

The submission on heritage and cultural value is more difficult to place a monetary value on but I believe to be as important an issue.

It has been well documented about the origins of the shacks at Wedge and Grey. Both communities were founded in the early half of the 20th century by fishermen in the then fledgling rock lobster industry and local farmers seeking low cost holiday accommodation. Over the years the communities have grown to their current size and provide a culturally diverse cross section of our community.

The shack communities offer a lifestyle and culturally rich way of life that has been lost in the modernisation of this state and country.

All lease holders have purchased their shacks to retain and share this way of life with their children, friends and visitors.

The sense of community and social interaction provided at Wedge and Grey is a tangible and valuable commodity. This community spirit defines who we are and how we conduct ourselves in our everyday lives.

The basic values of respect and consideration for those around us, the environment and the willingness to assist those in need has been passed down from generation to generation of shack dwellers. The shack communities provide this education to adults and children alike. The communities have been built on it and could not exist without it.

All of the necessities that the shacks have have been provided by members of the community. This instils a sense of spirit and cultural pride that rarely exists in today's society.

Most importantly the benefit to our youth who visit the shacks cannot be underestimated. The exposure to a way of life and sense of community that in many cases no longer exists provides them with a moral and social grounding that leads them into adulthood capable of making sound and informed judgements and decisions. This was a major factor in our and many others decision to purchase a shack .

The Heritage value of the shack communities is as significant as any other early 20th century development. Consider the fact that most coastal communities along our coastline and in particular the metropolitan area were initially settled with shacks and you can see that shacks have played a significant part in the development of Western Australia. The shacks at Wedge and Grey are now the last remaining significant shack communities within Western Australia. Their isolation and remoteness have allowed them to retain a heritage value that is unique to this style of development. The heritage value of retaining these sites is of importance to all West Australians and one that should not be lost.

In conclusion I urge all committee members to consider the points I have raised in this submission. I believe the communities at Wedge and Grey have played and will continue to play a significant role in the development of Western Australian both culturally, historically and economically. I believe the social and economic benefits these communities provide to West Australians justify their retention and ongoing management. I urge the committee members to explore all options and examples that have seen similar communities throughout Australia retained and managed in an environmental and sustainable way.

Yours Truly,

Stuart Donnelly.