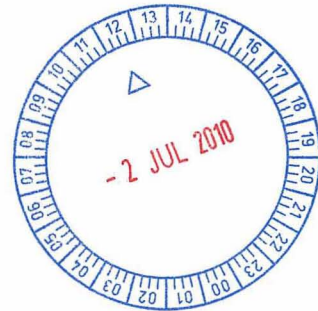


PUBLIC

Ms Linda Ornar  
 Committee Clerk  
 Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
 Legislative Council  
 Parliament House  
 PERTH. WA 6000



## RE: SHACK SITES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

I Patrick Gray would like to forward this submission to the Standing Committee addressing Shack Sites in WA with specific reference to the **Donnelly River Shack Sites**.

In the sixties our family's passion for recreational fishing and an affordable coastal holiday led them to the Donnelly River. Here we established a small shack, which we will refer to with pride as a cottage.

Along with other families, we built individual structures whereby we could stay out of the elements and enjoy the beauty of the river and its surroundings. Since then four generations of people have enjoyed this unique spot **Hut 27** on the Donnelly River.

The Donnelly River has grown to become a settlement of ~~over~~ 43 cottages, the cottages being well maintained with low impact on the environment. All the materials used to originally establish and still now maintain these cottages, has to be transported via boats on the river as there is no road access. This uniqueness to these cottages makes us passionate in fighting to restore them for the future of our children and their children.

This area has been a source of education for our family and friends, a place to learn to swim, to learn safety boating skills, to fish and learn about the interaction of the environment and its flora and fauna. It is a place of interaction on a basic level with nature and from that we gain a respect. This is a place where family values can be taught and it is a pleasant respite from the technological arena we are living in which sometimes undermines family time. We are able to learn about the consequences of our actions by teaching to respect fishing restrictions, plant habitat and safety. Often the same respect is not shown by all day trippers and campers that frequent the area, and we have on occasion picked up and removed litter that they have left behind.

There are a variety of people who come to the Donnelly River for its uniqueness. We, as the cottage occupants have been vital in our efforts to working with existing authorities to help maintain the environment. As an incorporated body we formed the Lower Donnelly River Conservation Association which acts as a liaison between the hut occupants and the governing bodies. It is a vital forum for the gathering and dissipation of all information in both directions.

We have been an integral part of assisting with control burns in the area, as required over the years with DEC. We have assisted in the spraying of noxious weeds and helping identify areas of outbreaks. We have even assisted with the transportation of wooden slats to form the walkways for hikers at the river mouth several years ago.

Among those visitors, day trippers and campers alike we have assisted when they themselves have got into difficulties as we have a sense of community. Many a time, we have assisted towing exhausted canoeists, or even broken down motor boats back to the safety of the landing. Having a presence of people is also a vital deterrent to those that threaten the security of our coastline. We have had guest speakers from customs at our AGM advising us of ways in which we can be observant and help them.

Our incorporated committee have been instrumental in obtaining grants which have allowed a purpose built wharf at the landing as well as aiding in car park renovations to make access safer for all users.

Our family's original Occupancy License – D'Entrecasteaux National Park to occupy our cottage was obtained via the Department of Conservation and Land Management in 1991. This license was formed after consultation between the hut owners and the department began in 1988.

As the focus in recent years has moved towards the environment, so has that of the cottage dwellers. Our Committee has liaised with authorities (mainly DEC) to ensure we are meeting all requirements for the settlement thereby maintaining our individual annual leases. Improving hut conditions, ensuring low impact in all facets, not only visually, but physically as well helps to lower our environment footprint. Safety has become a major focus.

We ask that you look at the lower Donnelly River Settlement cottages as a unique part of our Western Australian coastline that should be retained, not only for its historical purpose but also as a manageable association between the environment, those environmental and government departments that manage it and the undeniable benefits that having such a community to liaise with promotes.

We ask that you accept our submission and the relevant information that it contains to aid development of a policy that will help to retain the Donnelly River settlement for the future.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Gray', written over a light blue horizontal line.

PATRICK GRAY