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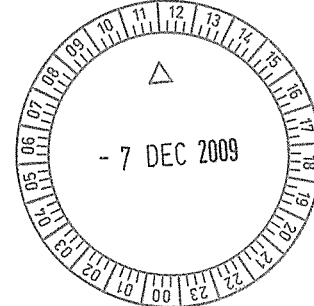
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Cassandra Stephenson
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Public Administration
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Ms Stephenson,

RE: Inquiry into Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas

The Western Walking Club (Inc) takes pleasure in making a submission to this Inquiry. It should be noted that we are also a member of the Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc and as such we are fully in support of the more detailed submission from that organisation. That submission represents our Club's views very well, however we wish to amplify several points in a separate submission and to provide information about the activities of our own Club. Through our membership of the Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc we are also affiliated members of Bushwalking Australia Inc.

Since our inception in 1937 the Club has developed guidelines for bushwalking which cover risk management, safety issues, environmental matters and public liability concerns. Furthermore the Club continues to seek improvements to the way in which it operates in these areas without at the same time stifling the sense of adventure and accomplishment which our members experience from our bushwalking activities.

We understand that managing the Public Drinking Water Source Areas, and particularly the Reservoir Protection Zones, is of great importance for the health of the public of Western Australia and we support sensible management policies and regulations. However we are concerned that in the view of the Water Corporation 'protection' is equated with 'exclusion' in instances where this may not be necessary and where it really has not been shown to be necessary. We are aware that at times well-meaning public servants can hold up the banner of 'public safety' as a reason for limiting all activities without sufficient justification and we will take up this point in our attached submission.

We have attempted to speak to the terms of reference of the Inquiry and have made some additional comments which we trust will be useful.

Yours sincerely,

Terry Mahoney
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Background

The Western Walking Club was formed in 1937 and has operated continuously since then. The Club has a library of walks used by members over that time and can demonstrate a genuine claim to having access to the areas under question over a period of about seventy years. It is run wholly by members with no paid personnel and exists purely to promote safe, environmentally sustainable bushwalking to anyone interested in this activity. Although it has not always been the case the club presently caters largely for persons in the 50-80 years age bracket, rather by default.

The club compiles three programmes of day walks per year: an Autumn/Winter Programme, a Winter/Spring Programme, and a Summer Programme. The Summer Programme offers walks in parks and along beaches in the metropolitan area. The Autumn/Winter Programme and the Winter/Spring Programme generally cater for two walks each Sunday, ranging from easy, mostly on track to more challenging. The focus for these walks is the forest area of the Darling Ranges from Julimar Conservation Park to the Serpentine area. The most challenging of these walks are likely to be 15-20km long, with a good percentage off-track with several hills and a duration of 5-6 hours, possibly in rain. The easiest of the walks will be all on track, with one or two moderate hills, not more than 10 km – and possibly in rain.

Our autumn, winter and spring walks require our members to meet at one of several car parks in the metropolitan area from whence we carpool to the start of the day's walk. We carpool to conserve fuel and to reduce our use of motor vehicles as well as to minimise our impact in parking areas in the bush. Bushwalking by its very nature implies walking in bush. An important consideration is that the less distance from Perth we have to travel the less carbon emissions we generate in the pursuit of our bushwalking.

There are many desirable bushwalking areas throughout the Perth hills (Darling Ranges). The areas most attractive to bushwalkers because of the nature of the terrain, the quality of vegetation, the views, and the relative remoteness from civilisation tend to be found within drinking water catchment areas.

The range of these walks helps to ensure that we are not walking the same routes regularly so that it is likely to be an average of say fifteen walkers on a different route each week, and often the walks will only be repeated every two or three years.

In 1997, the Water Corporation undertook a project with the following objective:
"...to list the recreational activities in Perth Metropolitan drinking water catchments managed by the Water Corporation which have current approval in the form of an agreement or have been approved in the past ten years by the Water Corporation or its predecessors." Policy 13, 3.1.2

The Water Corporation then engaged consultants to undertake a qualitative study 'to determine: the frequency of different recreational activities; the current impact of the activities; whether the activities could impact on microbiological, physical and/or chemical water quality; and whether the activities could result in the spread of noxious weeds, soil-borne diseases, the destruction of endemic flora and fauna, the destruction of habitats, the introduction of rubbish and/or the introduction of feral animals...'

...Activities identified by this study as having a relatively low potential for impact on the catchment environment and water quality included bushwalking, formal walk trails and club-based orienteering and rogaining (Emphasis ours).

Our club makes this submission for your consideration.

Summary of main points

Recommendation: The Western Walking Club recommends that the RPZs be reduced to 200m.

1. Bushwalking, particularly by clubs which require their members to adhere to agreed principles for responsible bushwalking, causes very minimal, if any, damage to water catchment areas whilst at the same time conferring considerable health and cultural (one could say spiritual) benefits.
2. Bushwalkers do not require any additional facilities in order to carry out their activities.
3. Likeminded people experience social benefits from sharing a love of the bush and of bushwalking.
4. Towns adjacent to the catchment areas can benefit economically from the activities of bushwalkers.
5. Bushwalkers can be of assistance in reporting on activities such as illegal dumping of household rubbish, car bodies and garden plants in the catchment areas and giving exact locations with GPS co-ordinates.
6. Bushwalkers from overseas can see some of our unique flora in its natural environment in the catchment areas.
7. Walking is a simple, basic form of exercise. As bushwalkers we benefit from participating in a weight bearing (and often strenuous) exercise, so important for our bones. We also gain team building, navigation and map reading skills.
8. The environmental awareness of our members is increased through shared knowledge of flora and fauna along the walk routes.
9. The 2km Reservoir Protection Zone is excessive.
10. 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
11. There is no evidence that responsible bushwalking activities would necessitate any additional costs to the treatment of water in our reservoirs.
12. Our geographic location and the urban sprawl along the coastal plain means that there are no opportunities for bushwalking, hiking and camping other than in the catchment area and this too is restricted by areas set aside for mining. East of the catchment areas private land and farming properties preclude bushwalking.
13. Western Walking Club members would rather not drive long distances for recreational opportunities – more fuel use means more carbon emissions. More participation means more people are exercising. More people exercising leads to healthier people and healthier communities as stated in the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce literature.

A Submission from the Western Walking Club Inc
to the Inquiry by the Standing Committee on Public Administration
on Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas

We refer to the terms of reference in this submission.

- (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.**

It is our contention that bushwalking, particularly by clubs which require their members to adhere to agreed principles for responsible bushwalking, causes very minimal, if any, damage to water catchment areas and/or water quality whilst at the same time conferring considerable health and cultural (one could say spiritual) benefits on those members who make the effort to participate.

Cost of recreation access: As bushwalkers we do not need additional facilities as our major requirement is the opportunity to walk on existing tracks and off track through the bush improving our navigation skills. Bushwalkers use a range of trails from grade one trails (suitable for wheel chair access) through to grade six (through virtually unmodified terrain). These different trail standards are set by the Standards Association of Australia. The Bibbulmun Track is mostly grade three. It is therefore not necessary for any additional infrastructure in the catchment areas to cater to bushwalking needs.

Social Benefit: Like minded people gathering to share a recreational opportunity as well as a love of the bush and of bushwalking within driving distance of the metropolitan area is a social benefit.

Economic Benefit: Towns adjacent to the catchment areas can benefit economically from overnight stays through the sale of food, drink and transport services. There are also tourism opportunities when overseas walkers see some of our unique flora in its natural environment in the catchment areas.

As bushwalkers, we believe we can be of assistance to reservoir and park managers in that we can report on activities such as illegal dumping of household rubbish, car bodies and garden plants in the catchment areas and give exact locations with GPS co-ordinates.

Benefits to health: Good quality drinking water is of great importance to human health. Further, the opportunity to be close to water bodies and streams is beneficial to the human spirit. Walking is a simple, basic form of exercise. As bushwalkers we benefit from participating in a weight bearing (and often strenuous) exercise, which is so important for our bones. Bushwalkers also gain team building skills, navigation and map reading skills.

Environmental benefits: The environmental awareness of our members is increased through shared knowledge of flora and fauna along the walk routes.

- (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.**

The Club is aware that there are 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 the severity of

our restrictions. Fishing, sailing, hiking and camping are allowed in catchment areas in Great Britain. Fish stocks are added to reservoirs for recreational anglers. This is backed up by our research via the internet which reveals that water utilities such as Welsh Water, Yorkshire Water, and Scottish Water encourage some or all of these activities (see Appendix 1). Similarly in California the Department of Water says that 'while the California State Water Project's main purpose is to store and transport water, many of its facilities were designed with recreation in mind'. Its large Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in the Yosemite National Park allows hiking and overnight back country backpacking (albeit with a permit) with no limitations on how close to the reservoir hikers can walk. Fishing is allowed but swimming and boating are not. In Santa Clara County, California, the Lexington Reservoir provides drinking water and is used for a number of recreational purposes including hiking.

We question a policy that finds that such innocuous activities as amateur astronomy, bird watching, photography/painting and research/environment study are 'incompatible' within an RPZ – particularly one which is 2 km wide. Bushwalking is likewise deemed 'incompatible' by the Water Corporation within 2 km of the top water mark - but on what grounds? (See Policy 13, Table1, page 8).

(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 our view that the 2km Reservoir Protection Zone is excessive. We are unable to find any evidence which supports an exclusion of 2km for bushwalkers. It may influence the way people choose to walk in the bush. Walkers may choose to walk outside the controlled club environment.

We make the point that the Water Commission needs the support of reasonable people. **This is particularly so when we take into consideration the fact that the authorities are unlikely to ever have sufficient resourcing and personnel to enforce the regulations over quite large areas.**

We accept that bushwalking activity in a water catchment area may pose some risk. We believe that this risk is low. Walkers are required to observe the club rules. These include packing out what they pack in, leaving nothing except footprints, not picking wildflowers - and in the unlikely event that they need to defecate (given that they are mostly daywalkers), of digging a cathole 20cm deep not closer than 100m from any stream or water source.

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

The Western Walking Club does not believe that there is any evidence that our bushwalking activities would necessitate any 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.

Because of our geographic location and the urban sprawl along the coastal plain, there are limited opportunities for bushwalking, hiking and camping other than in the catchment area in state forest (including RPZs) and this too is restricted by areas set aside for mining and forestry operations. East of the catchment areas is private land and farming properties which preclude bushwalking.

As the population increases higher density housing and more bushland being converted to housing developments means further reduction in land available for recreation, particularly for those such as bushwalkers who place a high value on being able to access 'wild' or 'semi-wild' areas

Further, it is possible that with increasing population and the possible difficulty in supplying water to maintain suburban parks there may be more pressure for recreation opportunities in natural forest areas and around, and on, reservoirs.

The most desirable bushwalking throughout the Perth Hills tends to be found within drinking water catchment areas. Western Walking Club members would rather not drive long distances for recreational opportunities – more fuel use means more carbon emissions. Lower travel costs encourage more participation. Increased participation leads to healthier people and communities as stated in the Premier's Physical Activity Taskforce literature.

Conclusion

The Western Walking Club has provided continuous bushwalking activities since 1937. The club has been a member of the Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers since its inception and supported the five-year agreement from 1993-1998 between the newly formed Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc and the Department of Water. The Water Corporation has, since 1999, refused to renew that agreement – which, **based on our historical activities**, allowed bushwalkers to walk within 200m and to camp within 500m of the reservoir edge. This is difficult to understand given that the Water Corporation's qualitative study referred to previously found that '... Activities identified by this study as having a relatively low potential for impact on the catchment environment and water quality included bushwalking, formal walk trails and club-based orienteering and roganing'.

The Club is concerned that policy has been produced by the Commission and the Water Corporation that does not acknowledge the historical activities and interests of bushwalkers and other groups and does not take into account the likely low-impact nature of some recreational activities. This concern is deepened by reports that all approaches by the Federation to renew the aforementioned agreement have resulted in further restriction.

We are unable to find any evidence which supports an exclusion zone of 2km for bushwalkers.

We understand that managing the Public Drinking Water Source Areas, and particularly the Reservoir Protection Zones, is of great importance for the health of the public of Western Australia and we support sensible management policies and regulations.

Recommendation: Recommendation: The Western Walking Club recommends that the RPZs be reduced to 200m.

Appendix 1

The Western Walking Club recommends to members of the Inquiry that they visit the websites of the following organisations in the United Kingdom and in the United States in order to read about what appear to be much more accommodating approaches to recreation associated with drinking water sources than that shown by the Water Commission or the Department of Water in WA.

Welsh Water says:

Welsh Water owns 81 reservoirs situated in some of the most beautiful parts of Wales. Where practicable and safe, we actively encourage visitors to share these resources with us and, at a number of our principle reservoirs, have developed facilities for a range of activities including fishing, sailing, canoeing, windsurfing and diving. Some of our larger sites also have Visitor Centres, bird watching hides, picnic areas and marked pathways and nature trails. At a number of our larger reservoirs we have appointed on-site rangers, dedicated to managing our facilities and for looking after the special wildlife areas that are in our care. The rangers also play a key role in encouraging visitors to our sites and regularly host a range of fun and informative activities including fly-fishing courses, charity 'bikeathons', boat trips, guided nature walks and wildlife tracking events.

<http://www.dwrcymru.com/English/community/recreation/index.asp>

and: Sharing Water Supplies - Llandegfedd Reservoir, South Wales

The Countryside Council for Wales's website reports that "This reservoir is the largest inland open water habitat in the County and since its formation in 1963 has developed into one of the three regionally important overwintering wildfowl refuges in Wales. The site is particularly important for the overall numbers and variety of wintering wildfowl, with large numbers of wigeon, pochard and mallard. Other notable species include goosander, teal and goldeneye." Llandegfedd Reservoir is a water supply reservoir (174 ha) managed by Welsh Water's leisure and conservation company – Hamdden. It is in peaceful countryside close to major centres of population and has important conservation, trout fishing, watersports and informal recreation values. At peak periods, the Reservoir may be used by 100 dinghies, 30 fishing boats and 50 bank anglers.

Yorkshire Water says:

Only available in Yorkshire.

Yorkshire has an enormous amount on offer with sweeping valleys, tranquil waters and woodlands teeming with wildlife.

As one of the region's biggest landowners we think it is only fair that such areas of natural beauty are made accessible to everyone.

To help you get out and get active we've introduced an assortment of exciting activities at sites across the county for adults and children of varying abilities.

Lace up your walking boots, pump up the tyres on that bike and brush the dust off that old fishing rod and come and experience the great Yorkshire outdoors.

yorkshirewater.com

Dee Catchment Partnership says:

Access and recreation

Recreation has an important contribution to make to the local economy of Deeside. Many thousands of people visit Deeside each year - from elsewhere in Scotland and from further afield - to walk, climb, camp, orienteer, cycle, horse ride, canoe, ski. The hills and glens of Deeside are also working estates and the activities they provide - hunting, shooting and fishing - generate significant income for the local area.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act (LRSA)2003, which was enacted on the 9th February 2005, establishes a statutory right of responsible access to land and inland waters. To help encourage responsible use of the countryside the Scottish Executive, in association with Scottish Natural Heritage, have produced a Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC); SOAC gives detailed guidance on the responsibilities of people who are exercising access rights and of those who manage land and water. The LRSA sets out where and when access rights apply. The Code defines how access rights should be exercised.

www.theiverdee.org/population.asp

Scottish Water's Loch Katrine 'supplies the city of Glasgow with drinking water. It is also used extensively for recreation, and has a resident steamboat, the SS Sir Walter Scott, with strict health and safety precautions in force'.

http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/restoration/fris/documents/CS_Loch_Katrine_Nov06_HR.pdf

Department of Water (California) says:

While the California **State Water Project's** main purpose is to store and transport water, many of its facilities were designed with recreation in mind. Tent and RV camping, boating, fishing, swimming, waterskiing, horseback riding, picnicking, hiking, photography, and many other activities are available at DWR facilities. You can visit our many recreational lakes and reservoirs, from the upper Feather River lakes in the North to Lake Perris in the South. Each is unique in the scenic beauty it offers and the recreational activities available. More than 4 million visitors enjoy recreation of all kinds at SWP lakes and reservoirs each year. While the operations of the lakes and reservoirs are under the California **Department of Water Resources**, the recreational facilities are operated by state and private concessionaires.

<http://www.water.ca.gov/recreation/>

Santa Clara County, California says about its Lexington Reservoir:

Welcome to Lexington Reservoir County Park. This beautiful and scenic 914-acre park and reservoir is just minutes from the urban centers of Santa Clara County. The park includes the 475 acre man made reservoir available for non-gas powered boat use and fishing. The County park is also part of a chain of parks and open spaces connected by the Bay Area Ridge Trail, which, when completed, will connect Sanborn with Almaden Quicksilver County Parks as well as Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve and other parks in the greater San Francisco Bay region.

Lexington Reservoir County Park is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains above the Town of Los Gatos. The reservoir and park are accessible from State Highway 17. From Santa Clara Valley, take the Bear Creek Road exit and proceed over the overpass and re-enter Highway 17 north. Take the Alma Bridge Road exit. From Santa Cruz, take the Alma Bridge Road exit. Follow Alma Bridge Road to reach the dam, boat launch area, Rowing Club, and Miller Point picnic area. To access the trails, please park in designated areas only. Public transit is available to Lexington Reservoir County Park.

Activities

Activities at the park center around the reservoir and trails. Visitors to Lexington Reservoir may access the water in electric powered boats, on sailboards, or rowboats. However, swimming is prohibited. The designated staging areas are located off Alma Bridge Road at the boat launch ramp and Miller Point day use area. The boat launch is located about 0.3 miles from the dam. Non-gas powered boats may launch from the ramp when the reservoir water levels accommodate use of the ramp. Portable toilets and first come first serve picnic tables are also available at the boat launch area. This area is also used to access the Jones Trail and Saint Joseph's Hill Open Space Preserve.

The Miller Point day use area is located approximately 1.3 miles from the dam off Alma Bridge Road. A parking area is available for access to a picnic area and trails. This is also a popular fishing access.

The park area west of Highway 17, between Beardsley and Montevina Roads, is not accessible and is currently closed to the public. Future development is planned to open this area for recreational use.

Hours and Fees

The park is open year round from 8:00 a.m. until sunset. Boats must be off the water one half hour before sunset. No fees are required.

<http://www.sccgov.org/>