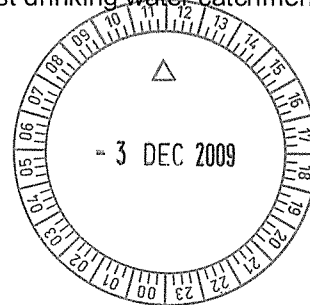


sub 190

Stephenson, Cassandra**PUBLIC**

From: Peta Townsing
Sent: Thursday, 3 December 2009 6:10 PM
To: Stephenson, Cassandra
Subject: Investigating Recreation access to Perth Hills and South West drinking water catchments



To the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Administration,

I refer to the following investigation and wish to make a submission:

That the Standing Committee on Public Administration investigate:

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.

State, interstate and international legislation, policy and practice for recreation within public drinking water source areas, including information relating to population health benefits and impacts.

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

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

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

I am making a submission as a concerned citizen with a long interest in water and water supplies.

I have lived in Western Australia for most of my life arriving here in 1946 from Victoria at the age of two. My father was a West Australian who was born on the Kalgoorlie goldfields in 1914. His father had arrived on the goldfields at the beginning of the 20th century when disease, including typhoid, was rife. I learnt very early on about the work of C. Y. O'Connor and the goldfields water supply which, in providing potable water to the goldfields, did more than any medicine in combating disease.

Sound drinking water meant that my grandparents and father survived living in Kalgoorlie. Much later when I did my science degree at the University of WA the role of having clean water and sewerage systems was emphasized as having a major positive effect on public health outcomes, even before modern drugs or vaccinations.

I remember going for picnics to Mundaring Weir as a child in the late forties and the fifties and was well aware that the catchments were off limits to keep the water drinkable. We were very impressed with the Goldfields pipeline and the amazing engineering feat in transporting water all the way to Kalgoorlie.

A century ago planners, health experts and engineers valued having dams and weirs that were protected from public access in order to ensure that the water was safe to drink. Even though the mechanisms were not fully understood there was enough empirical evidence to ensure that catchments were off limits to the general public in order to have safe drinking water.

More recently, in March 2005, a group of local gardeners, including myself, from the Bridgetown area went on an escorted tour of the Water Corporation's Millstream Dam, west of Bridgetown. There had been severe water restrictions and the Corporation was able to show us how low the dam levels had become and why waterwise gardening made more and more sense. This dam provides water to Bridgetown and other nearby towns including Balingup. It was interesting to see how well the catchment was protected – locked gates, a winding, narrow road to reach the dam – to ensure that the water was not contaminated by human activity. It was reassuring to see that the dam and the catchment were protected and that our drinking water was safe.

Having potable water from the dams both in the Perth Hills and for us here in the South West is very important. In many other countries you often can't drink the water from the tap, but here we can with confidence.

I consider that catchments need to be protected from intrusions by people. Once human waste enters the dams, then it is very costly and energy intensive to remove and bring back the quality of the water.

Recreation – camping, water sports, swimming – all bring the prospect of contamination (often in an unstructured and unforeseen way that may be difficult to trace) and the introduction of water-borne diseases.

Catchments and recreation don't mix. For over one hundred years we have had safe drinking water supplies. Let's not go backwards.

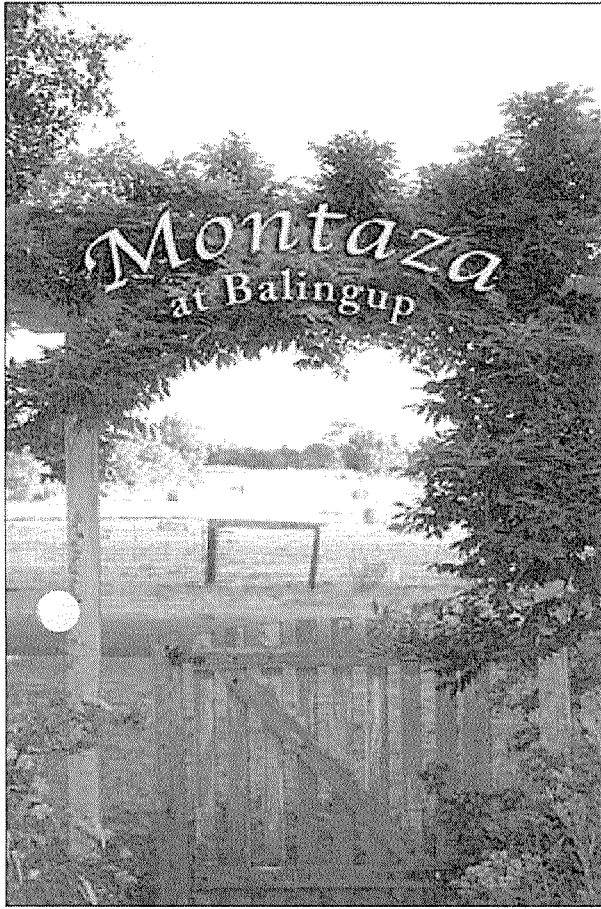
Yours sincerely

21/12/2009

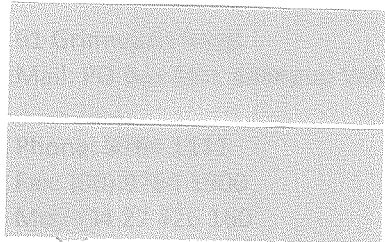
Peta Townsing

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Peta Townsing (Ms)



Balingup, South West , Western Australia



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<http://www.montaza.com.au>

Stephenson, Cassandra

From: Peta Townsing
Sent: Thursday, 3 December 2009 7:19 PM
To: Stephenson, Cassandra
Subject: FW: Investigating Recreation access to Perth Hills and South West drinking water catchments



To the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Public Administration,

Further to my earlier email today,

In writing the earlier submission where I mentioned:

“Recreation – camping, water sports, swimming – all bring the prospect of contamination (often in an unstructured and unforeseen way that may be difficult to trace) and the introduction of water-borne diseases.”

Allowing entry into catchments in an unstructured way made me think of the opportunity that this could create for sabotage of the water supply.

Two years ago there was an unfortunate and distressing incident in which a heavy haulage vehicle carrying timber was hijacked in the main street of Bridgetown. An extreme environmental group carried out the operation in which the driver of the truck was misled by signs purporting to be from road workers to stop his vehicle. Once stopped one of the highjackers chained himself to the rear of the vehicle and the driver was constrained from moving his vehicle for fear of injuring the protester. The hold up lasted half a day with extensive use being made of emergency service personnel, both paid and voluntary, to bring the incident to a close without damage to any of the parties. The protesters were charged. I am not sure of the final result.

I mention this incident as an example of what can happen, even in WA. There are extreme groups who have threatened those in the timber industry and these or other groups may attempt to threaten water supplies and for this reason, as well as those of public health, I consider that access to catchments should be carefully controlled and limited.

I can provide further information and photos of this incident if required. This issue has to be treated sensitively because, by its very nature, it is not a good idea to publicize it because of the potential for copycat actions.

Yours sincerely

Peta Townsing

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Peta Townsing (Ms)