

PUBLIC



Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs inquiry into shack sites in western Australia.

To the chairman and committee,

I wish to highlight the plight of the remaining shack communities in WA. This inquiry is now the mechanism to discuss the retention of all remaining shack communities in WA. Other states have addressed this issue successfully and I see no reason why this committee can't determine a way forward for the remaining WA shack communities; the largest of which are in the Dandaragan shire at the Wedge Island (350 dwellings) and Grey (135 dwellings) locations.

Since the current shack removal policy was approved in 1989 most of the smaller shack settlements have been demolished by the Shires; especially in the Dandaragan shire. The current leases at Wedge and Grey expire in June 2011 and current policy does not provide a mechanism to extend them further. Despite the stated aims of the shack removal policy many shires in association with state government agencies have in fact found mechanisms to retain shacks. There are thriving communities at a number of locations in WA.

Personal involvement:

My family shack is at Grey and two other shacks are leased to family members. Many shacks now have their fourth generation visiting for what are increasingly rare low cost Family oriented stays where there is a true sense of community and place.

There are no 'on tap' services or facilities yet some thousands of relatives and friends are welcomed annually by owners to these unique locations in a natural bush setting. My shack has hosted family, friends, international visitors and a research team for Macquarie University wanting to continue their seal research program with the colony on a local island. My shack features solar hot water; solar power; enough battery storage to run a fridge and freezer all year; 30,000l of fresh water storage; safe 12V lighting and refrigeration and a modern toilet with a sealed sewerage tank & leach field. The only outside energy used is gas for the BBQ and gas stove. Many a visitor to Grey has been engaged in debate about the pros and cons of my setup and others.

When the minister Donna Faragher visited Grey last year I had the honour of giving her and the speaker, Grant Woodhams a personal tour of Grey. In the allotted 30 minutes I escorted them not to the beach but specifically to our self managed rubbish tip as a prime example of how a community can organise and manage its own issues and maintain this natural environment for future generations to enjoy.

We also have a vested interest in protecting these locations and have active programs involving rubbish collection (mainly day visitors/campers), controlling tracks and in recent years I have successfully revegetated the rouge sand dune to the south of Grey. This involved DEC and Commonwealth government approval and sponsorship; Envirofund grant of \$6,700 supplemented with over 1500 hours of volunteer labour. There is nothing more community minded that the have a rollup of over twenty volunteers to help when asked. Two children

have received Cub Scout awards for helping with this project and as recently as 22nd of May twenty Duncraig SHS bushranger cadets assisted by planting out thousands of seedlings that I have nurtured during the previous summer at my Perth property. See <http://www.duncraigshs.det.wa.edu.au/brwa/> for more details of their activities. This was the second year in succession that they volunteered their time to work on this project and we will welcome their return in 2011. As expected there was no shortage of shack owners offering to billet these students.

With the near completion of the Indian Ocean Drive I acknowledge that things will change in the future. What I want is a chance to demonstrate that shack owners and their families want to be partners in the future development of these shack sites while maintaining their heritage and cultural values. My view is to keep any development low key to preserve the essential nature and atmosphere of Wedge and Grey. This satisfies a niche requirement for the preservation of an unsophisticated way of life at these unique hamlets.

I believe that very little needs to change to create a pathway that will allow the co-existence of these communities and more mainstream developments.

I look forward with optimism to the next step in this process

Regards

 7/7/10.
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