

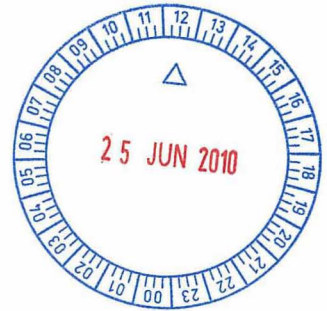
To: The Environment and Public Affairs Committee.

PUBLIC

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From: Jean McVee,

Contact Details: Jean McVee



Terms of Reference:

1. Information and issues to help inform the government in the development of policy and the regulation of shack sites on public land in Western Australia; and
2. Any other relevant matter.

Submission;

I would like to make a submission on behalf of myself and my family:

- a) To retain my lease at Donnelly River for an extended period of twenty years;
- b) For the state to consider the extension of leasing of all the Donnelly River Huts Community;
- c) To formalise this area to allow all lease holders to progress the area and define management principles in light of increased lease terms rather than the uncertainty of year by year tenure;
- d) For the committee to acknowledge that we are not squatters, had both the permission to build and stay on the land before DEC and have leases with DEC since DEC acquired the land;
- e) The state squatter policy does not apply as we were in lawful possession; have DEC leases and pay fees;
- f) The committee should consider the unique circumstances of each shack community as has been applied for in other states of Australia; and
- g) Urge the committee to visit the site, to consider the remoteness and understand the heritage and love this area has for my family and friends.

Our History.

In the early 70's my husband Harry McVee and my father Gordon Murdock first visited the Donnelly River for some recreational activities. It was from there that they were introduced to the local community of hut owners along the Donnelly River.

My husband fell in love with the Donnelly River and the unique life style of other hut dwellers and their families and then after verbal confirmation from the pastoralist we proceeded to build what is now hut 34 or Stubby Alley.

The building of hut 34 required many trips down the river with building materials over a fair period of time. Every weekend & school holidays we would bundle the kids in the car with the boat fully loaded with materials and head from the small farming community of Donnybrook to the Donnelly to build the hut and mix with family & friends. All materials had to be transported by boat only as this is and still is today the only means of getting down the river. At times due to being a little overloaded with materials and family, some of the other hut owners were more than helpful in getting our materials and gear down the river. This could be hampered at times due to river levels and I often had my children in knee deep mud carrying brick by brick. Most trips back to the landing still had a full boat load on, as we have always, as do other hut owners return all our rubbish and excess building materials back home or to a waste disposal site. Any debris seen floating in the river is also picked up and taken to the correct disposal sites and in the case of floating logs after a storm these were picked up and placed on the banks of the river so that boats wouldn't be in danger of hitting them.

During the building stage we only cleared the land necessary for the actual building leaving all natural flora to the best of our ability but at the same time creating a fire break through raking so as to protect the hut. These fire breaks are still kept in place today as well as a water pump & tanks. In the event of a fire which there have been a few over the years all family friends & acquaintances who utilise the hut volunteer to go down and help with the fire breaks and fire control that is required.

During the building stage of hut 34 we originally had the thunderbox as the toilet system which we then replaced with a septic sewage system that has been upgraded to comply with health standards. Our power generation started out with large motor generators which have since been replaced with small compact generators to lesson the effects of noise & emissions. Our fridges were the original kerosene so as not to engage a power plant during the day. These have now been upgraded to gas fridges. All wood used for the inside fire is brought down the river from our home.

Over the years a committee was formed and a code of conduct for all hut owners was made. This code of conduct is still adhered to today so that we all respect the environment that surrounds us.

The benefits to my family which is now into its 4th generation have been many with the first instance of my children mixing with the other children on the river which have resulted in life time friendships. As there was no electricity my kids along with the others learnt how to use their imaginations to amuse themselves with swimming fishing, beach combing, bush tracking, canoeing, water skiing ,scurfing, beach games such as cricket & footy and board games. I can tell you now that my children were never bored and often brought down their friends from school who didn't want to go home after being down the Donnelly. I found that the kids learnt a lot from the river in its flora & fauna as these kids had to learn how to respect the environment if they were to continue enjoying the river.

My husband and I also taught the kids how to drive the boat in a responsible manner so that should a emergency happen they could get help from one of the other dwellers on the river. They were taught the safety aspects of the boat as well as how to handle the passing of boats and driving in the area of the river where it is quite narrow and could cause concern if a larger boat was coming down.

Close friendships were born with other hut owners and their families. Many enjoyable barbecues and social activities took place and when a occasion like OZ day or Xmas came around it was a congregation of all the families on the river enjoying the celebrations. Many a time we have had extended family & friends join us on these celebrations.

In the 37 years the hut has been there we have had over 200 visitors being family, extended family, friends & acquaintances to the hut with many placing their comments in a visitor's book and to this day there has never been a bad word said. Everyone that has visited the hut is in awe of the river and beach and how well we all interact & respect the environment. We have also respected day trippers and campers as well and it has not been uncommon for them to utilise the jetty, barbecue or veranda.

More recently on a trip to the river my grand children got introduce to the river. I was concerned with today's modern technology that they would not enjoy themselves and to my delight they fell in love with the river as my own children have. I never heard one whinge or Iam bored. They like my children made friends with other kids on the river at the time and if anything we were lucky to even see them. They also had to respect the river and the environment and got involved with raking of fire breaks and picking up of any litter they came across.

Over the years since DEC have had control we have abided by all regulations & stipulations that have been put in place so that we can live harmoniously with the environment and that is very evident today when you travel down the river. The hut owners all tried to abide by DEC directions but it is always hard when you have the hangman's noose hovering. We as hut owners never really receive any blatant notices and keep our chins up to keep the area clean and friendly as pre DEC directions.

I can't imagine not ever being able to go to the Donnelly with my family & friends which has been and still is a very large part of my life. Many happy memories & friendships have been born thanks to the Donnelly River.

The Donnelly is a little piece of heaven in Gods own country.

JEAN McVEE & FAMILY

J McVee

21/6/2010