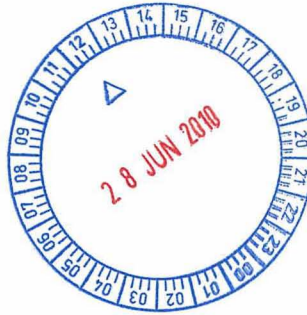


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**Submission to the Standing Committee Environment and Public Affairs
*Shack Sites in Western Australia.***

by

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We would be pleased to talk to this submission should the Standing Committee so request.

Contents

1. Summary
2. Why should shacks remain?
3. How best to deal with remaining shacks.
4. Proposal.
5. About the owners.
6. Why did they buy?
7. About their shack.
8. What changes have occurred since 1987?
9. Conclusion.

1. Summary

This submission is prepared with a view to offering a proposal for the future and a brief insight into the proposers' life and shack ownership. The authors of this submission are long term owners of a shack at the Grey Settlement south of Cervantes.

2. Why should shacks be encouraged to remain?

Shacks are not about wants, they are about needs!

Ever since we were children we were told to obey the law and conform.

However in every society there are misfits.

Shack owners are, to a degree misfits.

They do not crave a little box with a four or five star rating that fits in with every by law and official requirement that governments can think of.

They need something that can be a part of their creative spirit and a shack is just that.

Shack living and ownership is, and must, by its nature be different.

Diversity of habitat and environment is not only important to wildlife. It is equally necessary and important for humans!

3. How best to deal with the remaining shacks.

Many other Australian States have come to terms with the real need for shacks and shack communities to kept alive and well.

Some have gone out of their way with financial support and administrative assistance.

It is our view *that if it isn't broke, don't fix it*. The shacks at Grey have been looked after by their owners for more than 50 years. The current system, while far from perfect, is working well from the shack holder's viewpoint. The Governing authorities have had little input over the years always believing that the eradication policy would prevail.

With appropriate determination and support, we are sure that Grey can continue in its current form and be of benefit to all, including the general public.

Given adequate consultation and negotiation the simplest solutions are usually achievable and least costly.

All shacks create a human footprint in their vicinity.

Removal of shacks and return the area back to its original state is expensive and, gauging on efforts elsewhere, not necessarily successful in either terms of usage or complete and proper clean up.

4. Proposal

On the assumption that eradication of all shacks is not a justifiable course of action we would like to offer the following model for consideration. Its aim is to create the opportunity to, retain the pride and sense of place of the current shackies, retain the maximum number of shacks possible at minimum cost, maximise continued financial benefit to the governing authority and increase usage by the general public.

It is not a grand plan to enable a developer make a lot of money, nor is it a gift to the current shack owners. Public access would be further enhanced

This is not meant to be complete but is meant as a guide to be expanded.

- i. Set up a body which includes shack settlement representatives to determine the minimum basic attributes that a dwelling must achieve to be retained. Examples could include: Electric and gas fittings, Structural integrity, Effluent disposal etc.
- ii. It may be that a maximum shack size should be established. Lease cost could be based on the footprint of the shack to discourage Taj mahal edifices.
- iii. Determine what additional infrastructure is absolutely necessary and estimate its cost. One of the delights of Grey is that there is no bitumen. Tracks are just tracks and, if loose sand is a problem the surface has been firmed up using marl.
- iv. Determine what additional facilities are required eg toilets, public parking, beach access, caravan/cabins/camping sites etc, who is to pay for their installation and who runs them.
- v. Advise shack owners of the requirements.
- vi. Offer the shack owners a 1+1+1+1 year lease, renewal each year being conditional that required standards and improvements have been achieved.
- vii. Guarantee a 21 year lease at the end of this period if all requirements have been achieved. The current lease is inadequate for this purpose. A new lease preferably with **consultation prior to its drafting** would be required. It would need to clearly spell out what measures would be taken if the conditions were not met and, **the governing authority would need to be both able and determined to enforce such measures**
- viii. Sale of shacks prior to the commencement of the agreement should be encouraged. This will allow those who do not wish or cannot afford to comply to sell to someone who does and compensate them for the loss of their shack. No doubt some will profit from this but so, in the end will the Government in the form of stamp duties and revenue flow to the governing body.

5. About the owners:

Retired aged between 59 and 65

Been married 40 years with one grown up child.

6. Why did we buy?

We discovered shacks on the coast some six years previously but had not realised that they were traded.

Being busy running a small business, we used the usual getaways and conventional holiday destinations.

We also had spent time camping along the West Australian coast and noted that tents in wind and hot summer sun did not make great living conditions. Unfortunately, the West Coast between Perth and Geraldton, is not suited to long stay camping from either a weather, available facilities or an environmental point of view

Then by chance we visited Thevenard Island resort.

This was fairly basic shack style accommodation in the mid 80's and the life style offered made us realise that the so called squatter shacks along our Coast would satisfy our needs and offer the special something that was missing in normal accommodation along the coast.

Prior to purchase, enquiries of the then Shire clerk indicated that they did not approve of shacks but that the land that they were on was not under their control and shacks were the then Department of Land Developments (DOLA) problem.

Enquiries to DOLA revealed that the problem was not theirs but that of the Shire.

Discussions with our soon to be neighbours at Grey led us to the conclusion that no authority was prepared to deal with the shack situation, particularly as the Professional fisher shacks were legally erected.

Additionally, at that time, Grey was a Gazetted and surveyed town site. It seemed it would be many years before the area could become a viable town site as even Cervantes was struggling.

It has since been de gazetted.

7. About their shack

Purchased In 1987 for \$12,500. from joint owners (a Pharmacist and butcher)

Probably the best \$12500 we ever spent!

Price included a dinghy with outboard motor and a 3Kva petrol generator.

Over the years we have installed solar power with substantial battery backup, a septic system, shared bore for the toilet and sufficient rainwater storage to ensure we, our many guests and their friends can get through even the harshest of summers in an environmentally friendly way.

Visitors learn very quickly how not to waste water and electricity! With no TV it is amazing how kids learned to enjoy the simple forms of entertainment (cards, board games, sport etc)

The shack can now sleep 14 people and has done so on numerous occasions.

8. What changes have occurred since 1987?

When we first purchased our shack, the settlement was somewhat smaller than today.

Access was via Cervantes and an exceedingly rough track.

Trees were few and far between, wildlife in short supply and break ins commonplace.

Professional fishers deckies were the cause of much disruption and many shacks were occupied by male only groups looking to go fishing and have a good time.

Over the years this has dramatically changed.

The professional fishermen have sold their shacks to the general public and moved to regular townsites.

Draconian Leases have been introduced but many of the lease conditions have been ignored by the governing body. In some cases this has been to the benefit of lease holders but in others to their detriment. Shacks have increased in numbers to the current 140 or so (building of new shacks ceased in the mid 1990's with the advent of lease arrangements) and the shack owner demographics have changed to more family orientated occupation.

The Grey Shack Association supplied trees for planting and with protection from the wind by the shacks and regular watering during establishment, many have survived.

These changes appear to have had a dramatic effect on the local wildlife.

Carpet snakes are now commonplace with many shacks proud of their resident snakes and king skinks. The small bird life has seen a similar increase and overall the area that is occupied by shack dwellers has considerably more native fauna than the surrounding national park.

Many shacks now rely on solar and / or wind power with battery backup.

Along with newer quieter generators nights are much more peaceful than in the past, although wind generators can be very noisy.

The Grey tip is both well run and as clean and tidy as any shire tip we have ever seen.

A new road from Lancelin to Cervantes has now carved its way through the Wanagarren and Nambung Nature Reserves and the Nambung National Park. It and its bitumen cut a divisive path separating most of the park from the coast. Through dry periods, it is destined to be responsible for the death of much wildlife as animals and reptiles alike try to reach the coastal fresh water springs.

It is worthy of note that no provision has been made to keep the wild life off the road. It is also worthy of note that if all the shacks at Grey were placed side by side they would occupy less than one Kilometre of the roads 75 Kilometre length.

All shacks on the central coast north of Jurien (other than those belonging to professional fishers) to the north of us have been demolished with several of these shack owners buying into shacks at Grey.

In summary, in our view, the settlement has become a family orientated self sustaining small village where the roads are not bituminised, fences few and far between and children roam with a freedom that only Rottneest or camping can come close to.

9. Conclusion

The proposal offered in this document (Section4) should be affordable to the current shack owners and could result in a markedly upgraded self sustainable village with both residential and tourist potential.

While the Tasmanian and South Australian shack solutions have been successful, it clearly took a courageous political will and determination to bring the outcome that has been achieved.

It is our belief that opposition to any such proposal in Western Australia from local shires and, in our case DEC would make achieving a successful outcome equally as difficult and time consuming.

This is not to say it could not be done.

It just requires the political will to set the rules and demand that they be applied by the relevant local and Government authorities.