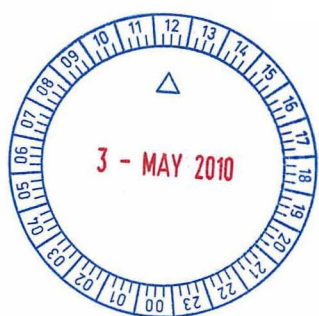


PUBLIC

P. Marr

The Hon. Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Chairman

Re: Petition No 50 – Shack Site Communities

I hereby make a submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in response to the petition on Shack Site Communities tabled on 24th March 2010 in the Legislative Council.

The reason for generating the current Shack Site Communities Petition is to convince the Government to undertake a policy review.

Enclosed is a two page written submission. I also respectfully seek permission to make personal representation to the Standing Committee in my capacity as President of the Wedge Island Protection Association (WIPA).

I believe a review and subsequent amendment of the current State Squatter Removal Policy should be recommended by this Standing Committee. This policy was introduced without any consultation with the negatively affected stakeholders. An amended Policy could establish a framework where longstanding shack communities are afforded a pathway to present their case for retention and can be assessed against established criteria.

I would appreciate access to any public documents that become available in relation to this matter and to be kept informed of the progress of this petition.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Peter Marr", written over a horizontal line.

Peter Marr

27th April 2010

Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Petition No 50 – Shack Site Communities

Promoter – Mr Peter Marr ,

(This issue has not been presented to the Parliamentary Ombudsman)

This petition was generated to initiate some action on a pre-election commitment that an incoming Barnett Liberal government would re-activate the Wedge & Grey Taskforce convened in July 2008 to investigate how the settlements at both Wedge and Grey Reserves could be integrated into any future management plan.

The Minister for the Environment, Hon Donna Faragher, has indicated , she “was not willing to reconvene the taskforce”.

The 14,000 people who use the shacks at Wedge & Grey were clear as to what was intended when the commitment was sought and endorsed. In addition, the 20,000 people who have signed the petitions being presented to both the Upper and Lower Houses, endorse the course of action proposed.

The Taskforce was a mechanism, an open process, to review how other States have incorporated retention of conforming shack site communities into long-term site management plans to better utilise these areas to enable traditional family ‘way of life’ holidays to coexist with emerging tourism and broader public access needs.

Should the Taskforce not be activated may I make recommendation to this Standing Committee that consideration be given to a review and amendment of the existing State Government Squatter Policy. The existing Policy is primarily focussed on the removal of physical structures and does not allow any consideration of social structures or other values worthy of retention. The implementation of the policy did not involve any consultation with the target users other than the land managers.

A policy framework could be established where shack communities are afforded opportunity to present their story , the benefits they provide the State and proposed site specific plans.

An assessment for retention could be made against such criteria as below :

- Formal heritage assessment
- Remote community recreation need
- Tourism servicing

Previous representation has been made to this committee by my fellow community members, where they have outlined the clear possibility that the Wedge community can be retained and co-exist within any future development. The Wedge Island Protection Association Inc. has developed a Wedge Shack Settlement Model concept that provides for a range of needs, including commercial tourism operations, that are integrated around a central tourism theme.

I promote this petition in order that the Wedge Island Community and our “sense of place” be retained. I wish to outline in this promotion the community value that exists and the direct and positive impact this community has had on my family and how I wish for that positive impact to continue through generations to follow.

My children represent the third generation of our family that have enjoyed Wedge, they have grown up in the Wedge community. My wife spent her childhood holidays playing around the shacks, swimming at the beautiful beaches and establishing enduring friendships.

My wife's father fell in love with the surrounds and had the drive and foresight to understand that Wedge was a place to be enjoyed and a place his family could create lifelong memories. Long before 4WD vehicles opened up the hard to get to areas, these pioneers spent weekend after weekend building a shack in their piece of paradise, nail by nail. Driving up in the old Holden, the whole family pushing it up and over sand dunes building all weekend in between a swim and a fish with the kids before the long journey back to Perth on a Sunday night for work next day.

They not only built shacks, they built a community and they established the Wedge Island Protection Association with a vision for the protection of the Wedge Island environment and the enjoyment and safety of the people that chose to make Wedge a part of their life.

I believe Wedge provides for each of the three generations that I have mentioned.

My father-in-law's generation fostered the community spirit within the existing settlement. They saw everything that Wedge could be all those decades ago and they forged a way forward. They did not go to Wedge to make money in a property investment, they did not exclude anybody from also establishing a place at Wedge and they did not contravene any existing Government policy. They established a place to enjoy with their families and establish mateship's that exist to this day.

The next generation, my wife's generation were lucky enough to spend their childhood years exploring the bush and surrounds. Swimming in the pristine ocean, learning how to fish and listening to tales around a kerosene lamp or a pulsing light globe powered by an old diesel generator. To this day at forty eight years of age she still reminisces with old Wedge kids about school holiday adventures and all day treks up to Wedge in the old Holden. They recall how they learnt to drive, start a kerosene fridge, navigate to where their Dad's secret Skippy hole was and how they met their first love.

My children's generation, I believe has gained the most. They have been lucky enough to enjoy the comforts of city life whilst also experiencing the benefits of being nurtured in a small community and without the trappings of city life such as TV and Play Stations. My children understand the concept of sustainability, they understand that self sufficiency does not come in mains water, underground power and deep sewerage. They have not only learnt how to start a kerosene fridge, find their Poppy's secret Skippy hole and how to drive, my babies have been a part of the Wedge community from their day's in nappies. The only thing I am not sure of is if they fully grasp that their childhood has been blessed by being able to go to Wedge and develop within a close community. Unfortunately not all kid's will have that life experience. I am fighting to see that my Grandchildren are afforded that privilege.

I think today that people have lost sight of what a close knit community can provide in the way of modelling social values. Having grown up in Kalgoorlie I have been appreciative that my city raised children have had a taste of smaller community dynamics and understand the importance of being an active community member.

The original pioneers of Wedge and the generations that have followed are not about property investment or exclusivity. We love Wedge and we love to have people visit and stay at Wedge and share our beautiful part of the world. We believe that we have a heritage and a community worthy of retention that can co-exist within a future development.

We do not wish to put our head in the sand and hope that everybody leaves us alone, we accept that we have a responsibility to upgrade our shacks to required standards, we accept that affordable accommodation should be provided and available for the general public. We hold true to the point that the Wedge environment should be protected and nurtured.

However we also believe that we have a well established social heritage with a strong community and sense of place and it can be retained and co-exist within a future development.

I owe it to my family, the next generations of my family and the families of our community to fight for retention and seek co-existence within any future development.

I respectfully request to make a personal representation to the Standing Committee and seek the same for the Executive Committee of the Wedge Island Protection Association (WIPA).