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WLS SUB 1



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Economics and industry Standing Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
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As a grower of produce on swamp bed in the Albany groundwater area I still struggle to see the need to have a licence and cannot find any valid justification for us having to pay an administration or any other fee.

We do not use any more water than the original vegetation and much of that which we do use is used by not irrigating. We do have irrigation in place that is used on only some short term crops in summer which do not develop deeper rootsystems due to their short period of growth till harvest. Other short term crops such as melons and pumpkin do not require irrigation due to their ability to meet their requirements through their deeper rooting nature. In fact we have found that irrigation can cause such crops to die. Our fruit trees do not need irrigation but they like other non irrigated crops certainly do use water to stay alive. I would argue that our water use is not consumptive in nature. i.e. It is not greater than the background level of use of the original vegetation

The main impact on the watershed is from the Water Corporations consumptive extraction and pumping through a pipe to other watersheds. This impacts on the watertable and the flow. It has also impacted on ourselves in recent times. eg. In the summer of 2006 the watertable on our home block was at sea level which caused pasture and marron to die. This land adjoins Princess Royal Harbour. We have had issues of salt incursion associated with high tides due to the insufficient watertable to maintain flow to the shoreline interface. This has caused shoreline vegetation to be killed on several occasions.

A complaint lodged with the Department of Water in the spring of last year about the watertable being too low for that time of year to maintain flow to the saltwater interface during the summer led to a denial of evidence of adverse impact of Water Corporation extraction from the aquifer. Subsequent investigation discovered that the Water Corporation had exceeded its licenced allocation for two years in a row in the adjacent borefield and that the monitoring well the nearest to the creek forming part of our land was at approximately 2.5 metres below sea level during that summer. There had been no administration or management to reduce urban consumption of water extracted by the Water Corporation during the two years of the exceeding of the allocation.

I understand that the Water corporation has had reduced water availability from Angove Creek in the Two People Bay watershed in recent years. There is possibly a linkage with this and the advent of bluegum plantations in that watershed. These trees use far more water than the original vegetation and perhaps this needs administration and licencing to alleviate the pressure that has put on our watershed through the Water Corporation trying to meet its commitments not being met from that watershed.

I do not believe we have had any valid services provided by the Department of Water and I have refused to pay the administration fee because my experience has

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been what I believe to be maladministration other than on my dealings with one Brendon Huntley who actually did do something useful which did enable me to confirm that my observations had been correct. I have experienced on several occasions what I consider to be complete incompetence and/or lack of understanding of basic natural processes and consider that much of what is done is wasteful and/or non productive job protectionism.

My wife and I have worked so hard for so long for so little financial recompense in relation to capital, time, effort and knowledge producing the necessities of life to the benefit of others that I am unable to support this department to the detriment of my family's welfare and future.

Our land in Scrub Bird road was purchased in 1991 after seeking the advice of the Water Authority of W.A. in relation to the water use intended on that land. This was an existing market garden and is still used for the same use. There was no requirement to have a licence despite the land being within the proclaimed groundwater area. There was no advice as to any requirement to pay any administration or any other fees or charges in relation to the water use I was seeking advice about. The value of the water use was paid as part of the purchase price of the land based upon that advice.

I was asked to sign a form in 1992 by a Mr. Robert Hammond. Subsequently I was sent a licence with an allocation not reflective of actual use. I have calculated that that allocation was only sufficient to grow a single crop of potatoes per year which at that time it was not legal for me to do.

I have since then obtained an allocation reflective of use. This allocation reflects land use not irrigation or pump use.

As I understand things there is a requirement under the national water initiative for management plans to take account of interaction between ground and surface water which has not occurred possibly due to legislative constraints. My most recent communication with the Albany Department of Water office discovered that a management plan for the Albany groundwater area is still only about half written. There may be a connection between these issues and penalties or costs that might be applied to Western Australia by the Commonwealth. There may also be linkages between incomplete groundwater plans, lack of interactive management and the desire of certain parties to take water for further subdivision of otherwise dry land or other purposes in other watersheds than the one where our properties are located.

We did not buy dry land. I am fully aware of what we have paid for because we sought the advice of the authorised authority at that time prior to purchase of that land.

There is also the issue of gross inequity of being expected to pay an unnecessary administration fee while others we are expected to compete with do not. This is a complete lack of procedural fairness. Not that that is anything new in my experience.

As our water use is non consumptive I cannot perceive of the need for there to be any costs required to be incurred in administration of our use. As previously outlined the costs of administration are the cause of Water Corporation activity and lack of proper administration of that and other activity has caused us material loss costs and damage. To be quite honest we do not need the services of the Water Corporation let alone the Department of Water. What we do need is a recognition of our right to make a living from our land not subject to fees and charges for doing so.

Yours sincerely,

Graeme Waugh.