

PUBLIC

Shirley Watson

12 November 2009

Cassandra Stephenson
Committee Clerk
Standing Committee on Public Administration
Legislative Council
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Ms Stephenson

Bush walking in public drinking water catchments

I make the following submissions in support of allowing bush walking in public drinking water catchment areas:

- The Government should be encouraging bush walking activities, not discouraging them;
- Bush walking is an environmentally safe activity, particularly when done as part of a bush walking club;
- Bush walking is perfectly compatible with drinking water catchments, with no reported cases of bush walking being the cause of water quality problems. This is indicated by bush walkers conducting activities in catchments for many decades without any adverse effects;
- Elsewhere in Australia there is no restriction on bush walking activities in water catchments, since there has been shown that these activities have no effect on water quality;
- Bush walkers are likely to actually prevent or discourage other people who may adversely use drinking water catchment areas, such as trail bike riders. This supports the preventative role of Water Department Rangers, who are unlikely to cover as extensive an area as bush walkers;
- Bush walkers, and bush walking club members in particular, are generally highly sensitive to the environment. Bush walking clubs promote minimal impact bush walking techniques that leave no trace. For example, a strong emphasis is placed on burying human excrement well away from water bodies and streams to eliminate any potential impact on water catchments; and
- Bush walkers recognise that there may be areas that are prohibited, such as environmentally or culturally sensitive areas. Bush walkers are more likely to recognise and respect these areas than other users.

I am happy to discuss the above points further if required and can be contacted on 0415 720 196.

I hope that the Standing Committee on Public Administration takes a practical view when assessing the restrictions to be placed on activities within public drinking water catchment areas.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shirley Watson".

Shirley Watson