

5
PUBLIC

Mrs D. Hunt



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

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs in response to the petition on Shack Site Communities tabled on 4 March 2010 in the Legislative Council by Hon Alyssa Hayden.

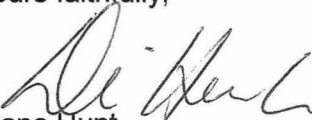
The reason for generating the current Shack Site Communities Petition is to convince the Government to undertake a policy review and to highlight the increasing public support to protect sites capable of providing affordable coastal family holiday destinations.

Shack communities are an untapped resource which can generate great investment in tourism assets and provide a far wider range of recreational and tourist facilities and experiences. These resources can also facilitate an increase in the access to and use of these sites rather than the narrow view expressed in the 'exclusivity' claims made at the time the Squatter Removal Policy was promulgated.

The recent report released by the Economic and Industry Standing Committee (E&ISC) of its review of the Caravan Park and Camping Ground industry, highlighted the need to protect "a central part of the WA way of life" and of the need to collect data to better plan for and manage suitable sites.

I believe the formation of a new Special Purpose Committee to investigate and recommend a framework under which shack communities could transit into evolving local management plans would ensure the needs now being met and benefits produced could be maintained.

Yours faithfully,


Diane Hunt

9th April 2010

Submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Petition No 50 – Shack Site Communities

Promoter – Mrs Diane Hunt,

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

The petition was raised to show awareness and to initiate action on behalf of Shack Communities because of the lack of progress by the current State Government to activate a review.

Previously the Liberal Party made a pre-election statement that an incoming Barnett Liberal government would re-activate the Wedge and Grey Taskforce, which was convened in July 2008, to investigate and evaluate how the Wedge and Grey Settlements could be integrated into a future management plan.

Recently the Minister for the Environment, Hon Donna Faragher, reiterated her position that the Taskforce would not be re-convened as she did not believe it could reach a unified position. However, no alternative mechanism was identified.

To convince the Government to undertake this review it was decided to generate the current Shack Site Communities Petition and to also highlight the increasing public support to protect and keep sites capable of providing affordable family coastal holidays.

Over 13,500 signatures have been collected for a similar petition directed at the Lower House. We are now focusing our direction to the Upper House and 6500 signatures have been collected.

Apart from the Wedge and Grey community sites there are a number of other coastal locations in the south and the northwest of Western Australia that this issue affects. This subject impacts on the whole of government especially, Environment, Lands, Planning, Tourism, Heritage, Local Government and Indigenous Affairs.

The Taskforce was established to review how other States have managed the retention of conforming shack sites and communities into long term site management plans to enable coastal family holidays to coexist with future tourism and public access requirements.

The format taken in NSW, SA and Tasmania has been successful especially taking into account the cultural heritage values that should be retained. Also the approach taken at these sites relating to building standards, environmental sustainable services and the general public access have been satisfactorily implemented.

My family purchased a shack at Wedge in 1991 which enabled us to have inexpensive holidays for ourselves and many of our friends. These holidays enabled our children to experience a way of life that is rapidly disappearing. It concerns us that many coastal communities are being redeveloped by consortiums to cater for overseas & interstate visitors as well as the local 'well-heeled' public who can afford to frequent these resorts, such as Bunkers Bay. These resorts price out the average family in affording holidays on our coast and many of the coastal caravan parks and camping sites have been closed. This means that these families can only afford to holiday at places like Wedge and Grey and if these sites are closed most families will have no alternative but to stay home. This will mean children will lose the opportunity to experience the coastal outdoor life and will resort to sitting inside watching TV or playing on the computer.

appears to me that the government is more focused on the top end tourism market and interested in attracting developers. Sites like Wedge and Grey would seem a prime target for Tourism WA but unfortunately when sites like these are developed the "community feel" that is currently felt at these sites are lost forever and families are excluded by virtue of cost and availability.

The cultural heritage and the underdeveloped community feel of Wedge and Grey has resulted in the National Trust registering these two sites. Also the tourism opportunity, from the retention of these types of communities, has been recognized by John Selwood PhD.

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 but which still adheres to the community feel that is currently in place. A site specific plan cannot exist in isolation and needs to fit within an overall policy framework. The Squatter Removal Policy framework that is currently in place was developed in the late 1980s when the focus was to halt the uncontrolled expansion of unauthorized structures being erected on Crown land. That policy has served its purpose. Since the Squatter Removal Policy was introduced values has changed dramatically and if the best interests of the State are to be protected and a balance between economic, social and environmental needs incorporated then the Policy must be revised.

The Taskforce was intended to be the means for the process of revision to be implemented. If, as Donna Faragher has stated, the Taskforce is not to be re-instated then another system needs to be activated.

If a new system is implemented, such as a Special Purpose Committee for example, it should have representatives from each of the key portfolios mentioned earlier. It should also include experts and shack community representatives. This new 'Committee' should investigate and recommend a framework that conform to specific shack community requirements and implement local management plans to ensure the needs are being met and maintained.

The recent report released by the Economic & Industry Standing Committee of its review of the Caravan Park & Camping Ground industry highlighted the need to 'protect a central part of the WA way of life' and of the need to collect data to better plan for and manage suitable sites. This is reflected in the demand for access by the general public to shack community sites. This demand and the capacity of the current sites to respond to the demands are not recognized or acknowledged.

These shack communities are an untapped resource that can generate investment in tourism and provide recreational and tourist facilities and experiences. An increase in the access to and the use of these sites would be expected and the narrow view expressed in the 'exclusivity' statement made when the Squatter Removal Policy was declared would be dispelled.

The Wedge community, my family and friends, as well as 20,000 public voters do not want to see the end of such communities and especially the end of a "traditional WA way of life".