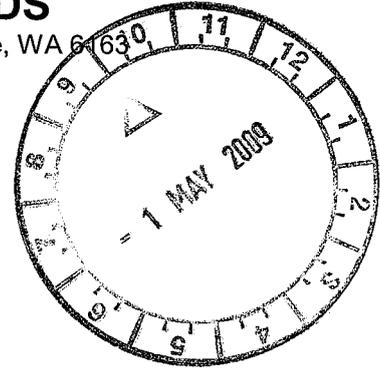


SAVE BEELIAR WETLANDS

c/- Dr Felicity McGeorge, 8 Annois Rd., Bibra Lake, WA 6130

20 April 2009

Hon Sheila Mills MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council of Western Australia
Parliament House,
Perth, WA 6000.



Dear Ms Mills,

Petition No. 21 - Regarding Roe Highway, Stage 8

Thank you for your letter of 26 March 2009 in regard to our petition calling for an inquiry into the cost-effectiveness and environmental, social and cultural sustainability of the proposed stage 8 of the Roe Highway.

We would like to point out that the Roe Freeway (now called the Roe Highway) was planned over 50 years ago as an outer ring road for Perth. This planning occurred at a time when very little was known about the environmental, cultural and social values of the Beelihar Wetlands. This proposal was not subjected to environmental impact assessment at that time, because the EPA was not established until 1972. Since then the EPA has carried out three assessments of Roe 8 (1978, 1983, 2004) and on each occasion it has concluded that Roe Highway Stage 8 should be deleted or realigned. Despite this advice no action has been taken by successive Governments and it still remains in the Metropolitan Region Scheme, although Roe Highway Stage 9, was deleted some years ago.

Previous Governments have always assured us that Roe 8 was not required and that it would be deleted from the MRS in due course. However, recently the Barnett Government has announced that it is planning to build Roe 8 from the Kwinana Freeway in Bibra Lake, to Stock Road in Hamilton Hill. On 6 March 2009 the Minister for Transport announced that he had allocated \$20 million to preliminary planning and siteworks for Roe 8.

We believe that this decision is a waste of taxpayers' money as Roe 8 does not serve any useful purpose and it cannot be made environmentally, socially or culturally sustainable. The Environmental Protection Authority clearly articulated this view in its strategic advice to the Minister in EPA Bulletin 1088 (2004).

The MRS alignment for Roe 8 runs directly between North and Bibra Lakes and involves a 100 metre wide corridor through virgin banksia woodland and the pristine Roe Swamp, which is a refuge for rare and timid wildlife. The area affected by Roe 8 has so many important environmental, social and cultural values that it would be impossible to construct a major six lane freeway without permanently destroying many of them. Any attempt to preserve these values would involve an enormous expense. Some engineers have suggested a tunnel under the lakes, others a bridge over the lakes or a causeway between the lakes, but all of these would produce unacceptable environmental, social and cultural impacts.

We can provide full evidence of these values to support our claim that Roe 8 is unsustainable. In this brief submission, I will only be able to highlight some of the outstanding values of this area, which lies in the path of Roe 8.

Social Values

1. Bibra Lake is the social centre of the Beeliar Regional Park.
2. Bibra and North Lakes are the most popular picnic destinations in the Cockburn area.
3. The Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre caters to the educational needs of thousands of local school children each year and it is very close to the proposed path of Roe 8.

Cultural Values

1. The Roe 8 route passes through the centre of the most important Aboriginal spiritual site in the southern metropolitan area.
2. The North Lake/ Bibra Lake wetlands are widely used by the Noongar people and local residents and school children for environmental and heritage activities.
3. The Bibra Lake area has a rich European cultural history and a documented heritage site exists next to Adventureworld.

Environmental Values

1. Bibra and North Lakes are used extensively by rare, endangered and internationally protected migratory birds.
2. The North Lake woodlands contain a rich, diverse flora and fauna, including several endangered species.
3. Roe Swamp, which lies directly in the path of Roe 8, is a pristine wetland of a type which is now rare on the Swan Coastal Plain. It contains a very diverse flora and fauna, including several species of timid and uncommon waterbirds.
4. Wildlife, particularly migratory birds and small mammals, will not use this area if it is degraded by noise, vibration, pollution and light spill from heavy vehicles using Roe 8.
5. These lakes are known to contain acid sulphate soils which may oxidise and acidify the groundwater if they are exposed during roadworks.

When you consider these priceless social, cultural and environmental values that are so widely appreciated by the community, it does not make sense to destroy them for a road that leads to nowhere. As the southern suburbs continue to develop we will need to retain more of these precious recreational and cultural areas to provide for the physical and mental wellbeing of our community.

We assert that building Roe 8 is unnecessary and unsustainable. When the new port is established in Cockburn Sound there will be no need for Roe 8, as access will be provided by the Kwinana Freeway and Anketell Road. In the meantime, there are better alternatives for addressing the traffic congestion on Leach Highway and South Street. These include:

- (a) development of a light rail system
- (b) provision of a heavy rail linkage between Fremantle and Cockburn Central
- (c) greater use of rail transport to the port of Fremantle
- (d) development of a new harbour in Cockburn Sound.

All of these alternatives and more were developed by the Freight Congress in 2002 and they provide for relief from traffic congestion at a much lower cost and without the undesirable consequences of building Roe 8 through the Beeliar Wetlands. We believe that this is the essence of sustainability - finding solutions that are cost effective and socially and environmentally beneficial.

We believe that Roe 8 was a major planning error that was made in ignorance fifty four years ago and that it should have been corrected decades ago, when the EPA first drew attention to it in 1978. It is clearly unsustainable and socially unacceptable at this point in time.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet the members of the Standing Committee and discuss these matters in more detail with them.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F.McGeorge', written in a cursive style.

Felicity McGeorge
Convenor
Save Beelias Wetlands