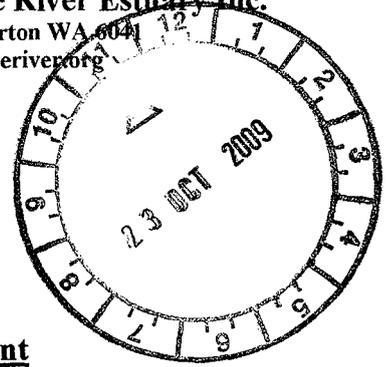


OUR RIVER NEEDS
MOORE FRIENDS

Friends of the Moore River Estuary Inc.

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Hon. Brian Ellis, MLC, Chairman,
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs,
Parliament House, Perth, 6000.

Dear Mr. Ellis,

Re: Petition #49 – Moore River Development

People in the community of Guilderton, and well beyond it, are most concerned that on June 9th, 2009, Planning Minister John Day, MLA announced that the controversial development proposed by the Moore River Company on the south bank of the Moore River, right near its mouth and fragile estuary, was back on the agenda. Most disturbing was the tone of the Minister's statement of that date in which he stated that "the issue of whether the land should be developed or not is no longer open to debate."

According to the Minister, the proposed development would be scaled back from Mr. Marcus Plunkett's original plan to house 13,000 people in 5,000 dwellings, to 6,000 people in 2,000 dwellings. A new Outline Development Plan would have to be put to the Shire of Gingin and assessed by the Western Australian Planning commission. This flies in the face of concerted public pressure over fifteen years to leave the south bank of the Moore River, at its mouth, in what Professor George Seddon (UWA: "A Sense of Place, 1972) has called "pre-settlement condition" – a rare treasure so near to Perth – and he continued "this makes the south bank immensely valuable for the future in its near natural state."

Friends of Moore River Estuary heartily endorse his remarks, and value enormously unique aesthetic and environmental features which this area contributes towards the natural capital of our state.

Specifically and briefly, our concerns are these:

1. **Urban sprawl:** the northward spread of Perth now extends to Two Rocks. It should stop there. The current bushland buffer zone protects Guilderton from merging with Perth. Left intact, this area would link with the proposed Wilbinga Reserve to provide a substantial coastal corridor to enhance the ability of local flora and fauna to survive as representative of a unique coastal heathland.
2. **Planning Policy:** Current state Planning policy stresses the importance of "facilitating the efficient use of existing urban infrastructure and human services, and preventing development in areas which are not well serviced." A development on this site would virtually be a new town – currently no services whatsoever are available near the site. Who would pay for the road, water, sewerage and power connections for the development? We believe it would not be economically feasible for the State government, nor for the Gingin Shire, to get involved with major infrastructure costs. Taxpayers would be heavily subsidizing the Moore River Company's money-making scheme.

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3. **Non-existent employment:** There is no planned economic hinterland to support a township of 6,000 residents, which makes the proposal artificial, with the possibility of needing costly supporting social services, as experienced in establishing other isolated townships.
4. **Eco-Tourism destination:** The Moore River Estuary is a unique and attractive eco-tourism destination. Its appeal for leisure, retirement and education would be severely compromised by a development proposal five times the current size of the small town of Guilderton on the north bank. A possible connecting bridge to link the two communities would substantially interfere with prospects for any eco-tourism opportunities.
5. **Gingin Coast Structure Plan:** This plan was adopted by the West Australian Planning Commission after exhaustive community consultation in 2006. It designated the land in question as a “recreation and tourist not investigation area,” and required the land to be re-zoned back to RURAL. Minister Day’s June 9th announcement reverses the WAPC’s recommendations without any public consultation whatsoever.
6. **Guilderton’s amenities:** Guilderton has about 400 residential lots with a permanent population of about 100, which swells to several thousand in peak holiday times. The creation of another township south of the river would dilute the local authority’s resources, potentially devaluing the existing amenities and ambience of this much-loved quiet holiday/retirement town.

Furthermore, we completely disagree with most of the Minister’s claims about the possible benefits of this development. To focus on just two of his claims (Ministerial Press release, 9/6/09):

- a) “Scaling back the size of the development will address environmental concerns...” - not so. This is a fragile coastal eco-system, the integrity of which would be severely undermined by any housing development close to the river. Once an area is damaged, the loss is permanent. And we certainly do not want to see Moore River become a second Mandurah.
- b) “(This is) treating the landowners fairly, because their land has been zoned for urban development since 1995” – however, the urban re-zoning was made against overwhelming opposition from the Guilderton community and wider public. The government of today should recognize the history of the confrontation and have the courage to overturn the zoning decision (as the WAPC recommended). Planning laws exist because no landowner anywhere has the unfettered right to do what s/he wishes to the detriment of the whole community.

FOMRE would greatly appreciate your committee taking the time to explore this issue further. We believe it deserves the widest possible scrutiny, in the interests of preserving an iconic aspect of our environment for future generations to enjoy.

Yours sincerely,



John Prince,
Convenor

22 October, 2009

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