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PUBLIC

Hon Brian Ellis MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Chairman

Petition No 73 - Rezoning of underground Water Pollution Control Area in Pinjar South

I refer to your correspondence dated 27 May 2010 regarding the above petition, and am pleased to provide a submission in support of the petition.

My submission on these important issues is as follows.

I have received a number of complaints regarding the Government's proposal to rezone the underground Water Pollution Control Area in the Pinjar South site from a Priority One (P1) Water Source to Priority Two (P2). The following facts and issues in this submission were raised by my constituents and, in my opinion, necessitate an inquiry into the situation.

In 2001, the State Government delivered a report into the land use and water management strategy for the Gnangara Mound. This report highlighted the importance of the Gnangara Water Mound. My constituents have pointed out that the State Government felt it was so significant that they resumed rural land falling within the priority one area (P1).

P1 status is declared to ensure that there is no degradation of the water source. As a consequence, a strategy of risk aversion is taken where development is generally not permitted. Any development of the South Pinjar site apparently requires a process of de-watering. I have been informed by a constituent that this process is known to create an acid plume in the ground water as a consequence of the acid sulphate soils.

My constituents are concerned that general industries requiring a buffer of up to 1km will be permitted to operate on the site. A number of industries which produce toxic substances, such as pesticides manufacturing, require less than a 1km buffer.

It is evident that a consideration of the precedent created by this proposal is necessary. Changing the zoning requirements to allow development may open the floodgates for analogous development plans across the region.

Under the Gngangara Sustainability Strategy (GSS) risk of groundwater pollution and detrimental effects to the water table will be permitted provided that the risk is not deemed significant. However, given the potentially devastating impact of contaminating the Gngangara Mound, my constituents are questioning whether any level of risk is acceptable.

I am informed that rural land in the area was resumed in 2001 to ensure that there was no risk whatsoever to the water table and the purity of the water source. Many environmental calamities have resulted from a risk which was not considered significant.

From my own experiences in the Northern Suburbs, any proposed changes to water pollution control areas should be carefully examined and reviewed. The implementation of a policy by the Planning Control Authority across parts of the Gngangara Mound in the mid 1990s resulted in the State Government purchasing land under an injurious affection provision. This act was extremely controversial, causing the Government to be accused of land banking by concerned parties. It would be useful to examine the common threads between the two policies.

Another concern of my constituents is that the Gngangara Sustainability Strategy Indigenous Consultation Project in December 2008 delivered a fairly unanimous response that any new land use should retain or put back as much of the natural environment as possible.


I believe that these issues must be investigated and further addressed before a final decision is made on the planning outcomes for the region.

501 signatures were collected from residents concerned about the potential impacts of the proposed changes. They should be given the opportunity to present their views to the Committee and the Government on decisions that will impact their quality of life in the future.

On behalf of my constituents and residents of the area, I encourage the Committee to further investigate this important issue.

Please don't hesitate to contact my office if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ken Travers', written in a cursive style.

KEN TRAVERS MLC
MEMBER FOR NORTH METROPOLITAN

11 August 2010

CC: Glynis Monks, principal petitioner