



Hon. Diane Evers MLC
Member for the South West Region

Hon. Matthew Swinburne MLC
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Committee Members,

PETITION NUMBER 131 – WATER SKIING IN THE MULLOCULLOP NATURE RESERVE

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs regarding Petition No. 131 – Water Skiing in the Mullocullop Nature Reserve. I confirm that I wish the Government/Committee to inquire into the matters raised in the petition. To the best of my knowledge, the issues described in this petition have not been taken to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman).

The petitioners are opposed to the recent gazettal of Lake Mullocullop in the Mullocullop Nature Reserve for the purpose of water skiing by the Department of Transport (DOT). Mirrambeen, as traditional owners know it, is a registered site under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. The Lake is one of the few remaining freshwater lakes in the area, and has a very fragile ecological system which needs to be better understood. An environmental survey to assess its environmental values and flora or fauna is needed. Comparable stream and lake systems further west, such as the Goodga River and Lake Angove, contain populations of the western trout minnow – a fish species that is listed at both state and federal level as “critically endangered”. This precious place should be valued and respected by all members of the community, not desecrated. As explained in the petition, it is a place of cultural significance and reverence for the Minang and Wilomin Noongar people as a meeting place and food gathering area. Above all, the traditional owners are concerned about the past and future environmental impacts of water skiing - traditional owners cannot practice culture unless the environment is preserved and intact. There are totems in the area, as well as bush foods and medicine. It is a story telling place that is connected to a story line, and is a place of gathering for Noongar Families. Such intangible cultural heritage is described by the United Nations ‘as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development’¹. Although an independent consultant engaged with representatives of the Local Noongar community with regard to recreational use of Lake Mullocullop, his report was only ‘noted’ and appears to have gained very little traction.

Traditional owners have made it clear that water skiing on the lake is the main problem – swimming, windsurfing, canoeing, paddling, picnicking, walking, photography and so on are welcomed, and in fact are likely to be negatively impacted by water skiing. The traditional owners are happy to share knowledge about the lake and surrounds, and teach those who are interested, including school children. This approach would benefit the community, and build social capital that we know can support people who are suffering from stress and are seeking ways to cope, as I know many farmers are. I understand that a relatively small number of people have been water skiing on the lake without permission intermittently for around 35 years with associated environmental impacts including noise and waste pollution, however gazettal of the lake for this purpose may escalate the issue. Water skiing may have occurred in the past without full understanding of the wishes of traditional owners, however it is time that we move on. This is a chance to strengthen the ties between community members through better understanding. Gazettal for water skiing is a missed opportunity for the community.

¹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>



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A majority of the local Noongar people surveyed are against water skiing in particular, because of the likelihood that it will cause further environmental damage. Research shows that speed boats negatively impact water quality in shallow lakes. For instance, speed boats can disturb the bottom sediment and cause the release of excess nutrients, such as stored phosphorous into the overlying water². The wash can disturb the shoreline at the water's edge. Boats cause noise pollution to the detriment of nearby landowners and traditional owners, and fauna. There are many migratory or nesting birds at the lake, as well as many species of frogs which are known barometers of our environment. There are animals such as Quokkas, fish, and land and marine flora species. The speed boats leave residues of petrol and oil, and contaminants can be carried in on the boats and their trailers. The gazettal has been permitted on the basis that water skiing or recreation is an activity that is ancillary to the purpose of the Reserve. However, the purpose of the Mullocullop Nature Reserve is "Water (for stock), Camping (for stockmen) and the Conservation of Flora and Fauna". Being a Nature Reserve, I assume the main purpose would be Conservation. If "ancillary" means "Providing necessary support to the primary activity" or "Something which functions in a supporting role" it is difficult to understand how water skiing could be regarded as supporting the main purpose of the Reserve.

To date, we have seen no plans from either the Department of Transport or the City of Albany to show how they will manage the increased traffic on access roads and what actions will be taken to mitigate the impact on the local environment of power boating activities and increased numbers of visitors accessing the reserve. We know tourism and recreation can cause negative environmental impacts if poorly managed. For instance, non-native species can be spread, and effective biosecurity interventions are needed to prevent this³. Locals have already noticed increased waste and noise in the area associated with speed boats. While other activities that are supported by traditional owners and local people may bring more visitors, the impacts of this can be managed far more easily than that of speed boats and water skiing. There are other places to water ski. Furthermore, the use of the Lake for the recreational activity of water skiing may be in contravention of the Lands Administration Act 1997 and the Management Order relating to the purpose and use of the Mullocullop Nature Reserve. No plans have been presented by the DOT or the COA as to how they will monitor and enforce safety rules and rights of way on such a small and isolated lake.

The petitioners request that the DOT's Director of Waterways Safety Management rescind the gazettal of Lake Mullocullop for the purpose of water skiing and reinstate a ban on water skiing activities in the Lake. The existing gazettal of Water, Camping and Conservation of Flora and Fauna should be honoured.

Yours sincerely,



Hon. Diane Evers MLC

² David N. Nedohin & P. Elefsiniotis (1997) The effects of motor boats on water quality in shallow lakes, *Toxicological & Environmental Chemistry*, 61:1-4, 127-133, DOI: 10.1080/02772249709358479

³ Anderson LG, Rocliffe S, Haddaway NR, Dunn AM (2015) The Role of Tourism and Recreation in the Spread of Non-Native Species: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *PLoS ONE* 10(10): e0140833. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0140833