

PUBLIC



To whom it may concern,

I am a keen fisher, although I don't get the chance to do it all that often.

However, with a young family now showing some interest in wetting a line, I hope to get more chances to fish in the future.

With that in mind, I have chosen to make a submission to the parliamentary review committee.

Again, with having a young family, I can see great benefits to our lifestyle, and those of all West Australians, in increased access to water supply dams for a range of recreational uses, including fishing.

I applaud Minister Graham Jacobs for having the foresight to put the issue of recreational use of water supply dams back on the table.

For too long, those that control water supply in this state have operated with an exclusion mentality and treated water supply dams as something like their personal kingdoms, with almost ludicrous restrictions on access for all but a fortunate few.

Strangely, it seems most people outside those in charge at Water Corp can see the benefits of dual-use of water supply dams in WA.

No one questions the importance of clean drinking water, but let's not forget the water is treated to remove pathogens before entering the piping system.

It seems the concept of maximising the public value of these resources (of which recreational fishing is just one part) hasn't entered the equation – which staggers me in this enlightened age.

Meanwhile, elsewhere around the world the dual-use of water supply dams continues unabated, and without the devastating impacts on world health some in WA would have us facing.

Last year I travelled to New Zealand and fished in several water supply dams, and you only need to use Google to discover how many water supply dams on the east coast can be used for recreational purposes, including fishing.

In fact, Recfishwest's submission on the proposed Logue Brook Dam closure, identified over 119,000 hectares of water which was available (or had been until recently) for domestic water supply that was also allowed to be fished in NSW and Queensland alone.

In many cases on the east coast, free permits are issued to anglers, or even angling clubs, by local authorities to allow them access and limitations include bans on boating, wading and fishing from structures.

And this dual-use scenario is repeated all around the world without major incident.

Earlier this year, a Curtin University study commissioned by the Department of Conservation strongly recommended that controlled recreational use of water supply be considered in WA.

It said: "A blanket ban of all recreation does not recognise the potential for low risk activity and runs counter to international good practice and an integrated approach to total catchment management."

Pretty straightforward, I would have thought.

I believe the economic and social value of recreational fishing has been grossly understated in WA for far too long.

Just last weekend, four of us spent more than \$1500 on a weekend in Pemberton, and for our money kept just three redfin perch.

None of that money was spent on fishing gear, rather it went over the counter at the service station, pub, accommodation, bakery and local cafe, but we wouldn't have been there were it not for the fishing.

A sustainable tourism resource where the economic return per unit extracted is so high must be a massive boon to local economies if managed effectively.

Yet we have gone the other way in WA, preferring to slowly strangle freshwater fishing opportunities.

Some of our water supply dams have boasted good stocks of trout many years and would offer first-class angling opportunities, but we've always come up against an exclusion mentality access, apparently because of the dire danger to water quality of angler access, despite the other activities that already go on in water catchments.

In closing, I think this a great opportunity to show some foresight and make a change from "risk avoidance" to "risk management" that will have wonderful long-term benefits for everyone in WA, including recreational anglers.

It is to be hoped we can finally get past the current bizarre "one size fits all" approach when it comes to water supply management in this state.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this review.

Regards,

Cameron Finnie