



Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Administration

Enquiry into Recreation Activities within Drinking Water Source Areas

Canoeing Western Australian Inc. is the state body responsible for the management, co-ordination, development and promotion of paddle sports in Western Australia. It represents the nine incorporated Canoeing Clubs in Western Australia and their 1389 affiliated members. Canoeing WA also has an event member database of over 2000 members. Canoeing Western Australian is also a member association of Australian Canoeing Inc. representing all of Australia's canoeing members. Canoeing WA conducts a wide range of competition and recreational events in all forms of canoeing and paddle sports throughout Western Australia.

Canoeing in Western Australia is a rapidly expanding sport with an estimated one in four people owning a kayak. Water catchments have historically comprised an important part of the recreation experience in WA. As population increases in WA recreational paddlers will need more access to recreational waterways. Management of recreation is required to be able to protect the water quality and environments surrounding water catchment areas.

Recreational paddling is thoroughly enjoyed by many Western Australians and provides a low impact environmentally friendly physical activity that all age groups can enjoy. With the importance placed on the role of physical activity and recreation in contributing to physical and mental health it is vital the West Australians are provided with outdoor recreation locations. The Blackwood River as an example has a long history of recreational canoeing with its unique aesthetics, cultural heritage and tradition it provides many social benefits of improved health, quality of life and a stronger community.

Canoeing WA recommends that the management and planning of recreation in public water catchment areas also recognises that recreation provides extensive physical and social benefits.

Throughout Western Australia inland water catchments, reservoirs, and streams in the South West provide major resources for recreational canoeing. However current water governance throughout WA is not accommodating to recreation activities in water catchment areas with many areas existing as Priority 1 Zones limiting all recreation in a two kilometre buffer zone.

Recreational Canoeing has a long history in WA using sites such as the Mundaring Weir, Serpentine Dam, Victoria Dam, Bickley Reservoir. Since 1903 seven of the ten significant rivers in the upper southwest have been lost to recreation through dam construction, including Helena, Canning, Wungong, Serpentine, South and North Dandalup, Harvey and Collie Rivers (Thorpe, 2007).



The Department of Water's Policy 13 (WRC, 2003) has had a significant detrimental impact on recreation and tourism in many areas of WA. Direct exclusion of recreation from water reservoirs and catchments including the Stirling Dam, have also had an indirect detriment on the communities which partially depend on the economic contribution of recreation and tourism. Towns most likely to be adversely affected by restrictions on recreational access to catchments include Dwellingup, Collie, Harvey, Waroona, Walpole, Denmark, Pemberton and Margaret River.

'State of play: a review of recreation in drinking water catchments in South-western Australia' states that 'recreation posed a very minor risk' relative to other activities which cause threats to public drinking water source areas. It also suggests that 'water quality can be managed without reverting to exclusion.'

Canoeing as a recreational activity poses zero risks to the surrounding environment. Canoeing WA and its members recognise the importance to preserve and protect the environment and maintain an aesthetically pleasing environment.

Canoeing WA would recommend that recreation activities such as Canoeing with its minimal environmental impact be permitted access to water catchment areas.

The loss of the Harvey International Slalom course has had a severe detrimental impact not only to Harvey but to the Olympic sport of Slalom and Whitewater Down River Racing in WA. Many competitors including Olympic Bronze Medallist and World Champion Robin Bell, have had to relocate away from WA to train and compete.

The loss of the internationally recognised Harvey down river course has meant that many international and national events cannot be held in WA at this point.

Currently there are a number of key areas of legislation and policies which are relevant to the management of recreation in water catchment areas. The management of these policies is spread throughout conflicting agencies which creates confusing and resentment within the community.

Canoeing WA would recommend that the approval process for activities and events to take place in water catchment areas be reviewed and made more simple and transparent for all members of the community.

Canoeing WA also recommends that planning policies should be revised to allow for greater flexibility for recreation in water catchment areas.

The continuing growth of the Perth metropolitan area will put an increasing demand on recreational canoeing areas. Policy amendments need to be made so that recreational paddlers are not restricted. This will mean that the future of recreational paddling in WA will require careful consideration and planning of water catchment areas to enable a balance between recreation, tourism, and water quality and quantity.

Summary

- Recreational paddling is widely enjoyed throughout WA providing a low impact environmentally friendly physical activity.
- Recommendation that the management and planning of recreation in water catchment areas recognises the social benefits of recreation.
- There are large numbers of historical recreation sites in WA that the public no longer has access to.
- Water Policy 13 has had a significant detriment to recreation in WA.
- Most recreation poses a very minor risk to water source areas.
- Recommendation that recreation activities are assessed for their impact on water catchment areas.
- The loss of The Harvey International Slalom course has had a severe effect on Slalom and Whitewater racing in WA.
- Recommendation that the approval process of recreation in water catchment areas is made more transparent.
- Recommendation that the planning policies for water catchment areas be revised to allow more flexibility for recreation.
- Other Australian states allow recreational activities within water catchment areas and on water reservoirs with no detrimental health effects to the community.
- Canoeing WA is working towards the establishment of access to long term sustainable white water offering an increased range of tourism and

recreational opportunities and this can only be achieved through water storage facilities.

- Canoeing Western Australia requests to be a key part of the drinking water access consultation as primary recreational users of water catchment areas

Canoeing Western Australia would like to thank you for taking the time to read our submissions and we look forward to hearing positive outcomes for all users.

On behalf of Canoeing Western Australia please accept our submission.



Ash Nesbit
Executive Officer
Canoeing Western Australia
ash.nesbit@canoe.org.au
0413 177 927