



**PUBLIC**

Committee Clerk  
Standing Committee on Public Administration  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Madam

The WA Fish Foundation is a not for profit body that was established in 2006 and is recognised by the Commonwealth Department of Environment & Heritage as a conservation organisation.

The Foundation was created to provide co-ordinated scientifically sound fish stocking solutions throughout Western Australia. Our Board comprises scientists, researchers from Murdoch University Centre for Fish and Fisheries Research and the Aquaculture Development Unit at Challenger TAFE in Fremantle. The Board also includes members from the Department of Fisheries and Recfishwest.

West Australian freshwater impoundments and river systems are a valuable State resource that is currently grossly underutilised because of the erroneous belief that recreational fishing poses a threat to water quality, and the inflexible and narrowly focused water source protection policies of the Department of Water.

These policies ignore the wide ranging community and economic benefits that are associated with properly managed use of water bodies for recreational fishing in particular, and over emphasise some highly theoretical, and largely undemonstrated risks associated with human activity in catchments.

Freshwater recreational fisheries across Australia and the world provide significant economic and social benefits to the communities that are associated with them, including multi-million dollar impoundment fisheries and fishing tourism experiences that greatly add to the community value of these resources.

Studies of recreational freshwater fishing in the USA and elsewhere have indicated that a vibrant freshwater fishery may generate many millions of dollars a year in economic activity. These include not only direct expenditure on holiday accommodation, travel, fishing equipment, tour guides and the like, but also indirect benefits on real estate prices, the attractiveness of freshwater areas as holiday destinations, jobs, wages and taxes.

In Australia for example, a Queensland cost benefit analysis of barramundi stocking in Lake Tinaroo concluded that each dollar spent on fish stocking returned \$31 of economic benefit to the Qld economy (Rutledge et.al. 1990).

Freshwater bodies in Western Australia need to be viewed not simply as sources of drinking and irrigation water, but as critical elements in a series of complex ecosystems, which support not only native plant and animal communities, but also a wide range of highly valued human activities.

8 Fairlight Rise, Kallaroo, WA 6025 Phone: 0403 256 008 Email: [stagles@westnet.com.au](mailto:stagles@westnet.com.au)  
Board Members: Ian Stagles (Chair), Greg Jenkins, Dr Alex Hesp, Dr Steeg Hoeksma, Dr Jennie Chaplin,  
Andrew Cribb BA, Scott Sawyer CA, Chris Hallett, Kane Moyle, Robert Michael

The Department of Water appears to support the view that it is "world's best practise" to keep all potable water impoundments closed to public access. Whereas this could have been correct 100 years ago it is clearly no longer the case as the Queensland examples listed below show.

It is strongly suspected amongst some parts of the community that the Department of Water hang on to this outdated view because water drawn from their dams is not being processed to the highest standards., Rather the Government continues to rely on good luck and providence to avoid contamination – hence wishing to keep the public away from its dams. It is time to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the multi-use management of these water bodies.

However, mining companies and bush walkers can access the catchments of most dams thus ensuring that human activities already exists in these areas. Double standards perhaps – you bet.

In a recent study by *Rolfe and Pravaga*<sup>2</sup>, from Queensland University, some very significant benefits were identified for three Queensland dams. Their study showed that the total Consumer Surplus annually for Bjelke-Petersen Dam was \$1,067,428, Boondooma Dam \$3,189,777 and Fairbairn Dam \$4,538,273 – not insignificant regional benefits. These dams are now major economic contributors for the regional communities where they are situated. And no evidence of widespread disease resulting for human access has occurred to-date.

The Foundation is continuing the very successful Blackwood River black bream restocking and monitoring project, which has won National and International recognition for both the effectiveness of the restocking and the subsequent scientific monitoring work. We believe that the Foundation is well equipped to provide a sound source of fish and any ongoing monitoring work required.

Given that recreational fishing has come under increasing restrictions in recent years it would seem logical to suggest that we should develop a network of suitable stocked and managed impoundments to meet the current and future recreational fishing needs of the community.

The recreational fishing community has contributed significantly to the responsible management of fish and fisheries over the last 25 years and we are confident that the quality of water in State water supply dams can be responsibly managed by the sector into the future. It is long overdue that Western Australia should move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the multi-use management of these water bodies.

Internationally renowned biologist and conservationist Professor David Bellamy summed up how recreational fishers care for the waters in which they fish when he said:-

***"Good anglers are the eyes and ears of waterside wildlife. Without their lobby our rivers would still be used as sewers."***

We would very much appreciate the opportunity of meeting with your Committee to provide further information in support of our submission, which we have tried to keep as brief as possible.

Ian Stagles  
Chair

October 2009

8 Fairlight Rise, Kallaroo, WA 6025 Phone: 0403 256 008 Email: stagles@westnet.com.au  
Board Members: Ian Stagles (Chair), Greg Jenkins, Dr Alex Hesp, Dr Steeg Hoeksma, Dr Jennie Chaplin,  
Andrew Cribb BA, Scott Sawyer CA, Chris Hallett, Kane Moyle, Robert Michael



In Queensland fishing permitted in the following dams –

Bjelke Petersen, Boondooma, Borumba, Burdekin, Callide, Cania, Connolly, Cooby, Coolmunda, Cressbrook, Eungella, Fairbairn Dam, Fred Haigh, Glenlyon, Gordonbrook, Kinchant, Lake Clarendon, Lake Dyer, Lake Gregory, Lake MacDonald, Lake Samsonvale, Lenthalls, Leslie, Maroon, Moogerah, North Pine Dam, Peter Faust, Somerset, Storm King, Teemburra, Theresa Creek, Tinaroo, Wivenhoe, Wuruma

**Bibliography:-**

**Cost benefit of hatchery-reared barramundi, *Lates calcarifer* (Bloch), in Queensland. *Aquaculture and Fisheries Management* 21, 443-448.**

**Rutledge W, Rimmer M, Russell DJ, Garrett R, Barlow C (1990)**

**Estimating Values for Recreational Fishing at Freshwater Dams in Queensland**

**John Rolfe & Prabha Prayaga of Central Queensland University.**

**[www.aares.info/files/2006\\_rolfeprayaga.pdf](http://www.aares.info/files/2006_rolfeprayaga.pdf)**

**Restocking the Blackwood River Estuary with the black bream *Acanthopagrus butcheri*.**

**Jenkins G.I, French D.J.W, Potter I.C, de Lestang S, Hall N.G, Partridge G.J, Hesp S.A, and Sarre G.A.**