The Committee Clerk,
Legislative Council Public Administration Standing Committee,
Parliament House,
Perth, WA 6000.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission Re Greater Access to Water Catchments

As the holder of a Freshwater Trout and Marron licence for over forty years, I wish to respond to the Media Statement of 16th September regarding “Greater Access to Water Catchments to be Explored”.

Over a number of years, several waters which I have fished for trout and/or marron or have visited to explore the fishing potential, have been closed to fishing, and also parts of their catchment areas have been closed to public access, including Samson Brook Dam, Stirling and the Serpentine Pipehead Dams, and the Harvey River above Stirling Dam. Recently, stretches of Lefroy Brook above the Town Dam have also been closed to fishing. So also was Logue Brook Dam for a short period. This has significantly restricted my fishing and marroning activities as well as those of all other holders of Recreational Southwest Freshwater Fishing and Marron licences.

I request that the above waters be reopened to fishing, along with others mentioned below, as well being opened to other low-impact, non-polluting activities.

very environmentally conscious (we share the bushwalkers’ ethic of leaving nothing but footprints) and support the concept of allowing environmentally low-impact activities within water supply catchment areas which are consistent with the aim of preserving water quality. With this concept in mind, I suggest that certain activities should be allowed, both on the water and within the catchment areas.

I suggest that such allowable activities should include

- Fishing – using artificial lures only (both off-the-bank fishing and boat fishing, including use of kayaks, float tubes, rowing boats
- Marroning – using snares only
- Kayaking, rowing, sailing
- Bushwalking
- Birdwatching
- Cycling/Mountain bike riding
- Walk-in overnight camping (eg by bush-walkers)

Trout and marron fishing would be subject to the relevant rules (including seasonal restrictions) of the WA Department of Fisheries.
I suggest that any potentially polluting activities should be excluded, for example

* Fishing using non-artificial baits
* Power boat use should be banned, because of the potential for pollution from fuel (petrol and diesel), and possible lead contamination from electric motors.
* Motor bikes/trail-bikes – because of possible fuel pollution and particularly because of noise pollution, and the potential for accidents involving the trail bike riders themselves and also other users
* Use of motor vehicles on the banks of the dams and within the general catchment area – other than at approved access points/parking areas close to the dams.

Access should be restricted to licensed individuals only (eg there should be a low-cost annual permit available - a Permit to Enter a Restricted Access Area – or some such designation- similar to that for entry to National Parks and there should be some form of access control – eg sign-in and/or regular permit checks by Rangers. An annual access fee of say $50 would not be regarded as unreasonable, and would defray the costs of managing access.

There should also be significant penalties for entry without a permit, and for breaches of such regulations as are imposed (eg regulations which ban the leaving of rubbish or the use of power boats, or which restrict fishing to artificial lures only)

Vehicle access (eg at individual dam sites) should be restricted to a few specific access points with parking, toilets, rubbish bins, boat access tracks - non-power boats only therefore concrete ramps not necessary).

I believe that such low-impact activities would be a valuable step in allowing recreational access to several selected areas without compromising water quality. I drink the water too!

Dams which should be considered for access for fishing and other restricted activities could include:

Churchmans Brook Reservoir  
Serpentine Pipehead Dam  
South Dandalup Dam  

Without doubt, the Lefroy Brook above the Town Dam should be reopened. Logically this should be reopened without any requirement for a permit – since it can be accessed by tourists, bushwalkers, etc at present, without any restrictions. However, use of non-artificial bait for fishing and marroning could be banned there in order to preserve water quality.

In other parts of the world – in particular I am familiar with the fishing scene in UK, where nearly all of the water supply dams are dual-use dams, ie they are managed trout fisheries. On a recent (2008) visit to Scotland I fished one of these – see the attachment “I fished a Water Supply Dam” (Attachment 1)
While the activities recommended above are basically non-polluting, to be ultra-safe, **Watercorp should immediately commence to upgrade its treatment methods** to include filtration as well as chlorination. Better treatment would preclude the need to close off ever increasing areas to all forms of public access.

A recent article (attached) in the West Australian (Attachment 2) illustrates the **absurdity of the present exclusion policy**. In this case the proposal includes purchase of private land to return the area to forest in order to improve water quality, without the need for additional treatment. Not only are public funds required for the purchase of the land, but in addition, the economic benefit to the individuals in particular and the state as a whole are lost for good under such a policy. One wonders how much additional land Watercorp intends to purchase and/or exclude the public from.

A proposal released, I think in late 2007 (see Attachment 3), regarding “Public Drinking Water Source Protection Areas in the SW of WA”, envisaged that vast areas of the southwest of WA would be protected by excluding public access in the name of additional water supply potential. To be effective, this protection would inevitably mean further extensive private land purchases. This is clearly unacceptable both from public access grounds as well as on economic grounds.

Policies need to change.

I look forward to action on these proposals.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr David Gellatly
About 100 properties near the Denmark River, some of which have been in the same families for three generations, may be compulsorily acquired by the Water Corporation under a new strategy.

The government utility is considering a plan to reforest the area to improve the river quality, which was still too saline to be potable, that had prompted the Water Corporation to list it as a potential new source in its Water Forever Great Southern strategy.

Local resident Murray Brooker said no amount of money could compensate for the loss of lifestyle and livelihoods, which included organic, hobby and cattle farming, herb gardening and an art gallery.

"Every Australian can understand the sentiment that their home is their castle," Mr Brooker said. "A home is more than an economic statement.

"It's about the life and love that goes into it, and that can't be replaced with money."

Mr Brooker said the "greenie" residents had spent thousands to fence the river and plant trees in a bid to reduce salinity.

He claimed it was their success in improving water quality, which was still too saline to be potable, that had prompted the Water Corporation to list it as a potential new source in its Water Forever Great Southern strategy.

He feared a dam could destroy the fragile Wilson Inlet, undermining the town's main tourism drawcard.

Pasqualina Bocuzzi, 83, said she could not bear to leave the property she had farmed for 45 years, which she and her late husband started with 12 cows and some chickens.

She retired from free-range eggs last year, but her sons have continued the cattle farm, which supplies veal to Woolworths.

"When we found this land I was so happy I cried," said Mrs Bocuzzi, who raised five children on the property.

"I am 83 years old and I have been collecting eggs for 43 years, 40 eggs a day. All my work is on this farm. All my life is this farm."

Her son Marino said: "It was the water that bought us to Denmark, and now it's the water that could ruin us."

He said it would take years to get another farm in order and he feared it was too late to start again.

Neighbour Jean Wrightson said her cattle farm was bought by her husband's grandfather in 1908 and she was saddened that her sons might not be able to continue the family legacy.

Conservation Council director Piers Verstegen said dams should not be considered because they had a negative environmental impact.

A Water Corporation spokesman confirmed the move was one of five preferred options among 30 suggestions. Social and environmental effects would be considered before a final decision, he said.
Watercorp has now declared its hand, by issuing a list (and accompanying map—see p11) showing the “Status of Water Source Protection Planning in the South West Region” There are 34 public water source areas, 13 of them already “protected”, and the remainder are due to be protected by 2015 or sooner. The map shows that Watercorp wants to “protect” more than 80% of the total length of the Darling Scarp and the southern forest areas through to near Albany by 2015(see map) All shaded areas are either protected now (dark grey) or proposed(pale grey). That means that as far as possible (private land is presumably excluded), all sport and recreational activity will be banned from this massive area (includes almost all of the Warren catchment!) all so that Watercorp can continue to get away with minimal water treatment. When one considers that enhanced treatment of the drinking water proposed to be taken from Logue Brook Dam would cost only $250,000 per annum[ Ed: I have seen this figure quoted, but it needs to be verified], this wide scale closure is totally unacceptable.

David G