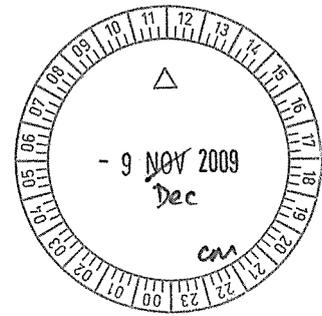


PUBLIC

Sub. 193



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

Dear Ms Stephenson

**RE: Inquiry into Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas**

Over the last three years I have walked nearly every Sunday through Autumn, Winter and Spring on the Western Walking Club's day walks as well as doing a number of overnight walks (one to five nights) on the Bibbulman Track. I have also assisted in Bibbulman Track maintenance on several days, and carried out the occasional self-organised walks.

**Rules that don't make sense**

Many normally law-abiding people are tempted to ignore rules which are seen as unnecessarily restrictive or plainly ridiculous. The Water Corporation's decision to exclude bushwalkers from RPZs comes into this category. One wonders how many experienced bushwalkers were involved in making such rules – especially when we know that their own study (in 1995) found that up till that time bushwalking activities had a very low impact on water catchments or water quality.

**Litter**

One of the things that has impressed me is how little litter is found on the Bibbulman Track, or indeed on other designated walking tracks. Litter that we do find in the bush is invariably the kind that has been dumped there by people who do not wish to pay for dumping at designated rubbish dumps and left in roadside carparks by casual users. I can only speak as an ordinary member of our club but we are regularly reminded of basic safety and environmental rules.

**Human waste.**

I believe that the majority of walkers in the Hills area are day walkers. I also believe that most people defecate prior to leaving home (since most people are reasonably regular in their habits). Those who need to 'go' whilst out walking are relatively rare and those who belong to clubs would mostly abide by club rules in relation to burying their waste and distance from any water. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that this is unlikely to be a serious cause of pollution of our waterways. Those who overnight backpack are generally on the Bibbulman Track and the campsites have toilets and the same applies.

**Disturbance of soil and/or destruction of plant life.**

It would not be possible to claim absolutely no disturbance of soil or destruction of plant life from cross-country, or off-track bushwalking. However, I believe that it is possible to claim very minimal damage of this kind. I can only speak as a member of the Western Walking Club but I am aware that our Sunday groups number from three or four to perhaps twenty-five. Further, the walks are generally repeated only every second year or so, and even then the route may well be modified by the leaders (who are required to carry out a prior survey). The walks are specific to our club and any particular route is seldom repeated exactly so that new paths are not established. We see very few other walkers on our cross-country walks (which of course is one of the things that appeals so much).

**Cultural value**

As a 67-year old single female I can attest to the values that bushwalking with the Western Walking Club have brought into my life. These include:

- The joy of discovering the great variety of forest and plant life in the Darling Ranges plus many previously unknown (to me) land forms and places of great beauty;
- The joy of making new friendships based on a shared love of bushwalking;
- The joy of seeing the Darling Ranges throughout the different seasons;
- The joy of getting to places of great beauty through considerable physical effort and challenging terrain;
- The sense of challenges overcome in the surveying and leading of a walk – especially an off-track walk where one is reliant on compass and map-reading.
- Increased self-confidence at a time when many around me appear to be suffering from decreasing self-confidence.
- The spiritual value of discovering running streams in this arid land during the winter and spring months.

### **Water Quality Monitoring**

I understand that the Water Corporation does not release the results of its water quality monitoring programme in spite of requests to do so from various stakeholders amongst recreational users. I urge the Inquiry to look into this and to ensure that these results are published on the Water Corporation's website. As a comparison I point to the Rottneest Island Authority (RIA) who are responsible for the water quality in the marine reserve around Rottneest Island. The RIA must manage a large population of visiting boats in popular swimming bays. At various times they have undertaken regular sampling at specific points around the Island and then published the results on their website. This helped to resolve some differences of opinion between the Authority and boaters. On nearly every occasion where there was a problem with the water quality (and there weren't many) it turned out to be at a time when boaters could not have been the cause (there weren't any) but when, for example, there had been heavy rainfall and run-off.

### **Conclusion**

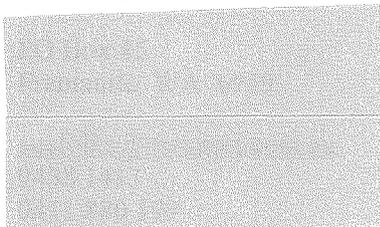
Some of the most scenic and physically challenging parts of the Darling Ranges for bushwalkers are close to creeks and reservoirs. There is much evidence from other jurisdictions overseas to demonstrate that various degrees of recreation, including fishing and some kinds of boating, are not only perfectly acceptable around and on public drinking water reservoirs – but seen to be the responsibility of water managers to embrace and encourage!. It behoves the Water Corporation to rethink their approach to this matter and to properly justify their policy decisions – and not just to rely on waving the 'water quality' and 'public safety' flags (important though they are).

I respectfully ask that this submission be considered by the Standing Committee.

Yours faithfully



Sue Folks



4 December 2009