

Federation of Western Australian Bushwalkers Inc.

(The following is a post of ca. early 2013 archived from the previous website.)

Bushwalking Access in Drinking Water Catchments

- The water catchments of the Darling Range cover a large area where bushwalkers have traditionally been allowed access.
- In July 2003 the WA Government's Department of Water introduced regulations (Statewide Policy 13 – Policy and Guidelines for Recreation in Public Drinking Water source areas on Crown Land) that severely restricted bushwalkers and others from accessing the catchments. Every effort made by bushwalkers to soften the impact of these policies as they lead in to various management plans for specific catchments areas led to them being made more draconian.
- The resultant public outcry culminated in the issue being examined in some detail and many bushwalkers and others made submissions. A Curtin University of Technology Sustainable Tourism Study 'State of Play Review' published in July 2008 found that the various acts which protected the catchments gave responsibility for the management of catchments to a number of Government Departments - for example, Health, Environment and Conservation, Sport and Recreation, as well as the Department of Water.
- Following a meeting between the then Minister for Water John Kobelke, the Water Corporation, and Federation (now BWA) representatives in April 2008, the Federation received written confirmation from the Director of Water Resources Management Department, John Ruprecht, that bushwalking could continue in catchments in the area outside the reservoir and two kilometres upstream from the high water level into the catchments (the Reservoir Protection Zone). Camping however was restricted to designated camping areas only, and groups of more than 25 people were required to apply in the usual manner to the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Water Corporation.
- An ad-hoc alliance of all the groups which had traditionally recreated in Drinking Water Catchments – and those who saw their currently enjoyed rights being curtailed by the new regulations – grew up around the WA Sports Federation and its members. Named the Western Australian Recreation, Sport and Tourism Alliance (WARSTA), it aimed to get the regulations softened by lobbying Ministers, parliamentarians and public servants.
- In 2009 the Government arranged for the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Public Administration to examine the issue of Recreation Activities in Public Drinking Water Source Areas and report to Parliament by 2010. Submissions had to be to the Standing Committee by 5 November 2009. The Federation (now BWA), many bushwalking clubs and many individual bushwalkers, as well as recreational fishers, hunters, canoers, concerned members of the public, and concerned organisations made submissions to this enquiry. Federation representatives appeared before the Standing Committee to put the bushwalker's case for continued access.
- The Standing Committee recommended that that a cross government subcommittee would jointly devise a new Policy 13. This committee was to comprise members from the Department of Water, Water Corporation, Department of Sport and Recreation (now Dept. of LGSCI-Sport and Recreation) and Department of Environment and Conservation (now Dept of BCA - Parks and Wildlife Service)

- The new Statewide Policy 13 Policy and Guidelines for Recreation in Public Drinking Water source areas on Crown Land, published in late 2012 allows for there to be no bushwalking activity inside the reservoir protection zone (the area outside the reservoir and two kilometres up steam from the high water level into the catchments) unless on a designated trail - or walkway, but for bushwalking to continue at historic levels outside RPZs. Parties of more than 25 people who wish to camp overnight in catchments must apply through the DBCA - Parks and Wildlife Service.

Figure: **Bushwalking Areas near Perth Relative to Drinking Water Catchments**

