

**Submission by the NSW Council of Freshwater Anglers
Enquiry into Recreation Activities within Public Drinking Water Source Areas**

9 November 2009

Public Administration Committee
Legislative Council
Parliament of Western Australia
Parliament House
Harvest Terrace
Perth WA 6000

Dear Committee Members

This response to your inquiry is made on behalf of the New South Wales Council of Freshwater Anglers (NSWCFA). The NSWCFA is the senior representative body for freshwater anglers in NSW. We are partners with the NSW Fisheries Department on all aspects of freshwater recreational fishing in NSW. We are also actively involved in many conservation issues across the State and regularly partner NSW Government Agencies on environmental issues.

The NSWCFA is pleased to see that Western Australia is leading the way in developing the discussion on extending the use of drinking waterways. We would like to offer these observations to the Committee from our experiences in NSW.

In NSW the use of such waterways is managed in an ad hoc fashion. To a degree this is understandable considering the history of the development of drinking water technology and the subsequent traditions that surround access to such places.

When water storages were first created for large cities it was considered a logical step to limit human and animal access as contamination of water was a consequence that technology could not solve, so through the 1800 and 1900's it was common place for such storages to be placed off-limits to human access. However; many country located water storages did not adhere to the same rule. In country areas access for people and stock was not only tolerated it was actively encouraged. As examples, Warragamba Dam supplies most of Sydney's water and access to it is denied, however the feeder rivers run through farm land and water entering the system passes through rural developed sites. In comparison the NSW town of Jindabyne NSW draws its water directly from Lake Jindabyne (a part of the snowy hydro scheme). Lake Jindabyne is a premier tourist facility with fishing, swimming and boating all encouraged. On the surface it would seem that the health of people in Sydney is more important than those in Jindabyne, but the reality is that the waterways are managed by different entities with different views. In both cases the water is treated between extraction from the dam and delivery to the piping system and technology is such that any pathogens are easily removed.

Of course we should not lose sight of the fact that in NSW and all other States "river" towns draw water directly from rivers. These rivers have high human and stock activity as well as sewerage input, yet technology keeps down-stream town drinking water safe. Many people we speak to in the bush comment that city folk are a bit precious when it comes to access to water.

In NSW it has become a tradition that "State Water" limits access to its storages, largely because of a desire not to have to "manage" the waterway beyond mere supply, after all this is how it has been done for over a hundred years! In NSW we are currently trying to get the senior bureaucrats to see water from a different perspective, but this is difficult as they do not want to move from their long held traditional position.

So, in NSW we have some storages that are accessible and some that are not. Our contention is that with modern technology all storages should be opened if the water is treated before entering the piping system.

There is little doubt that opening such storages will increase the social aspects for those who live in close proximity to the waterway. In NSW we have the strange position where people often travel long distances to fish a dam or have a picnic by the water, when they live closer to a better dam they cannot use because it is closed. In this age of concern over green house gasses the fishing fraternity is pushing for a philosophy of fish locally, support local economies and reduce your emissions. However in reality this is only achievable if local water storages are accessible.

To illustrate this we cite the example of Googong Reservoir, which supplies Canberra's water.

In the 1970's the Australian Capital Territory Government led the way in access to major city water storages when it allowed access to Googong Dam. This dam is a direct feed into the water supply of Canberra and Queanbeyan. Access to the dam is still ongoing and in over 30 years of operation there has not been a single human caused water quality issue at Googong.

Activities allowed are fishing, boating (sail, paddle or electric powered craft only) day visiting. Swimming is not allowed and dogs are not permitted (this is because of the high wildlife value of the area and is not related to water quality). Interestingly, the local community is actively engaged in the welfare of this dam. Instead of it being a locked away secret place, it is a significant recreational facility that is very popular with anglers and day visitors. This high profile has ensured that Googong is effectively managed and has become a haven for rare and endangered species of plants and animals.

To give you an idea of the esteem of Googong, the decision was made when it was opened that no rubbish bins would be provided – instead visitors were asked to take their rubbish home. At the time, not providing rubbish bins was contrary to customary practice and the nay-sayers predicted that Googong would become a rubbish tip. Needless to say this was not the case and it has been a great success with litter is a very rare event on Googong,

The cost in maintaining this access to Googong appears to be negligible. Access is not allowed overnight, but the on-site rangers open the gate at early mornings and close the gate of an evening. Access times vary with the time of year and day-light savings, but the system works well and is respected by all.

The NSWCFCA is of the opinion that all water storages should be managed to provide maximum value to the community. It is our opinion that technology has delivered to us the means where more people could enjoy outdoor pursuits closer to home if water storages were opened. We do not advocate a cart-blanche system, that would be as silly as the current situation. Rather, our preferred option would be for water authorities to sit down with local communities in good faith and develop a plan for the management of the waterway.

In 2009 it is disheartening to see that bureaucracy still tries to manage large water facilities as a one size fits all concept. In some instances there may be real reasons why a facility remains closed, but we make the distinction here between a real reason and an excuse.

The NSWCFCA thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide input into this most valuable inquiry.

Steve Samuels
President
New South Wales Council of Freshwater Anglers
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