

Destroying a unique part of our Fishing and Shack Heritage at Wedge and Grey

The shack associations of Wedge and Grey and the local Yued Traditional Owners represented by the Shaw family custodians (whose ancestors since the early 1800's used traditional cultural ways producing significant coastal heritage sites), wish to respond to Recommendation 6 of the Report (removal of shacks at Wedge and Grey) tabled in Parliament on Thursday 14th April by the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs.

This was the only recommendation of eight which proposes the removal of shacks at any site in WA. All other shack communities are endorsed for retention by the Committee. There is no equity in these contradictory findings and recommendations.

This is inconsistent with the process followed in other regulated sites in WA, considering:

- If equity and matters of access are not issues at these other sites, then why are the same principles not applied at Wedge & Grey?
- Similarly, shacks at others sites have been given the option to upgrade to appropriate building code standards, yet shack owners at Wedge and Grey are denied this opportunity
- It appears the Committee has discounted the opinions of experts in reaching Recommendation 6. The degree of emphasis placed on the opinions presented by the Shire of Dandaragan and their attitude towards Shack removal, is unbalanced.

Wedge Island Protection Association Inc (WIPA) and Grey Conservation and Community Association Inc (GCCA) have for the last 10 years proposed formal arrangements for both Wedge and Grey to enable:

- The right of all members of the public to experience the recreational shack lifestyle
- Controlled access to low impact camping and caravanning facilities
- Continued open access for day visitors
- Protection for environmental and social heritage values.

WIPA and GCCA wish to inform the public of the following facts:

- Shack lease-holders have been levied \$5.7M in lease fees by the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), formerly CALM, over the last 16 years
- None of those funds have been used to provide any public facilities at either site
- Heritage professionals and academics have documented the significant cultural heritage values of Wedge and Grey as acknowledged by the Heritage Council of WA

- Wedge and Grey are the largest remaining shack sites in Australia, enabling tens of thousands of people to enjoy affordable coastal family recreation. The accommodation capacity of these sites exceeds that of Rottnest, access to alternatives do not exist on the scale provided by these sites.

The opposition to enabling these shack communities to co-exist with other visitor facilities basically comes down to the dilemma faced by the Shire of Dandaragan, in its obligation to operate in accordance with policy, and Tourism interests which promote conventional developments for domestic and international visitors.

We give credit to the Minister for the Environment the Hon Bill Marmion MLA, and his predecessor Hon Donna Faragher MLC, for creating the opportunity for WIPA and GCCA to discuss the development of a co-existence model with DEC as the management authority for these sites. We expect these discussions will be ongoing to fully validate claims that such a model can work and will deliver the best outcomes for all Western Australians.

Our plan is to:

- Retain the feel of the place, which makes Wedge and Grey unique destinations along the mid west coast and creates distinct tourism assets
- Retain the affordability of access to shacks for all members of the public by including lease conditions which impose some market control over shack availability and prices
- Use the critical mass of the shack community resources to generate viable additional tourist accommodation and public facilities; removal of the shack communities would make a formal commercial replacement unsustainable
- Upgrade shacks to comply with health and safety standards
- Integrate low impact camping and caravanning facilities.

We also understand that DEC in collaboration with the Shire of Dandaragan intends to conduct a blitz on campers over the Easter/Anzac long weekend. We respect their right to exercise some management control over irresponsible campers; however this will result in members of the public being denied the traditional practice of beach camping between Wedge and Grey when no alternatives are available to large numbers of family groups.

We invite the people of Western Australia to make their views known to their local MP and visit www.wedgewa.com for further information on the background to these matters.

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