



Save the Nature of the Kimberley

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**KIMBERLEY**  
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12<sup>th</sup> March 2009

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| <b>Sue Murphy</b><br>Chief Executive Officer<br>Water Corporation<br>PO Box 100<br>Leederville WA 6902 | <b>Carol Howe</b><br>President<br>Broome Golf Club<br>PO Box 143<br>Broome, WA, 6725 | <b>Ken Donohoe</b><br>Chief Executive Officer<br>Shire of Broome<br>PO Box 44<br>Broome, WA, 6725 |
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CC: **Bruce Zencich**, Operations Manager, Water Corporation, North West Region, Broome.  
[bruce.zencich@watercorporation.com.au](mailto:bruce.zencich@watercorporation.com.au)

Dear Ms Murphy, Ms Howe and Mr Donohoe,

**Re: Cannoning of recycled water on native bush remnants at the Broome Golf Club**

We wish to highlight community concern regarding the practice of spraying recycled water on bushland remnants at the Broome Golf Club. There have been a number of informal meetings with Water Corporation and the Golf Club in the past and there is a community call for a more formalised approach to resolving the issue.

A meeting was called by community members in November 2008 to discuss the issue with Bruce Zencich, Operations Manger for Water Corporation. At least 13 people attended this informal meeting, with an additional two asking to be informed about any further proceedings.

Community members were able to outline their concerns to Mr Zencich and the affected sites were visited with the Golf Clubs gardener.

Mr Zencich offered a commitment to minimising the use of the water canons at the Golf Course and retaining these canons as their last option for disposal of surplus effluent. Heavy seasonal rainfall, however, was cited as a potential problem that would require these cannons to be reused.

The issues relating to the use of the water cannons on native vegetation are explained below. At present these issues, including the lack of options for the disposal of surplus effluent, remain unresolved.

**Issues to be resolved**

***Nutrition and degradation of native vegetation***

Recycled water cannons are being used in four patches of remnant bushland on the golf course. These patches are in excess of 1 ha in size and the impact zone extends beyond the reach of the cannon. It is estimated that 6-8 hectares are currently affected. The excessive nutrients and water have led to significant degradation of the native vegetation, as high nutrient levels become toxic to native plants. Native plants can also respond negatively to too much water. The excessive nutrients encourage the growth of weeds, and the majority of the understorey and middle storey has been replaced with weeds. Much of the overstorey, particularly the remnant bloodwood trees, are beginning die out. Everyone agreed that the practice of water cannoning is killing native bush.

***Nutrition and adjacent marine algal blooms***

There is also some concern that the continued flooding of this area is directly related to the wet season and pre-wet season algal blooms (*Lyngbia*) in Roebuck Bay. The area has particularly shallow aquifers that feed into the

bay. There is some debate as to whether the nutrients are leaching into the aquifers or there is significant runoff following a rainfall event.

### ***Spreading of weed seeds***

There is concern that weed seeds are being spread into cannoning areas, including areas outside the golf course, due to unmanaged weeds surrounding the ponds where the water is sourced.

### ***Degradation of vegetation through hot, late dry season fires.***

There is additional concern for other patches of remnant bush that had been burnt in what appeared to be very hot, late dry season fires. Such fires, reduce the opportunity for a strong recovery from native plant remnants and contribute to the decline of larger old trees and fire-sensitive plant species. Cooler burns conducted in April/May would be much more appropriate and maintain the health of the vegetation.

### ***Introduction of non-indigenous plants***

People were also concerned that the trees being planted at the golf course are not local natives and are therefore detracting from the health and quality of the remnant vegetation. The trees being planted are Darwin Lillipillies. In order to maintain the site and surrounding remnant vegetation, it would be preferable to plant native plants from locally sourced seed.

### ***Background – History prior to the November 2008 Meeting***

*A meeting was originally held in 2005 at the Golf Club, where the Water Corporation manager at the time, Paul Templeman, reportedly agreed to the cessation of water cannoning on native vegetation. At this time, approximately 1ha of bushland had been severely degraded.*

*It was noted at the time that rampant growth of the weed Balsam Pear, Momordica charantia, was being encouraged by the high nutrient levels.*

*Further on-ground discussions with Mr Templeman led to Water Corporation agreeing to pay for herbicide, weed spraying and rehabilitation of native plants within the disturbed areas. Water Corporation was, at the time, preparing to send excess water to the BRACS oval, which was done later.*

*The November 2008 meeting was called by community members due to renewed concern that the practice of water cannoning on the golf course vegetation had resumed. Where the use of the water cannons had persisted, the remnant bushland patches had become significantly degraded in comparison with their condition in 2005.*

### **A Pathway Forward.**

Community members are aware that the opening of Broome North Plant in 2010 will alleviate some pressure on the overloaded waste water disposal system. However:

- 1) There needs to be a formal commitment to ceasing the practice of water cannoning on bushland remnants in the long term.
- 2) There needs to be a formal commitment to minimising the practice in the interim. This may include the confinement of the water cannoning footprint to one or two sites and initiating a restoration program in remaining sites.
- 3) A concerted effort needs to be made to identify alternative methods of waste water disposal
- 4) There needs to be a formal commitment to remedying the existing damage and restoring degraded sites.

Suggestions made by the group for alternative waste water disposal points were

- Sump on Woods Drive or Vacation Village
- Build a series of wetlands serviced by native aquatic vegetation as in Derby and other sewage treatment plants in South and Eastern Australia.
- Utilise the old “Woollies” wetlands for this purpose.
- Use in road construction
- Use at Turf Club
- St Mary’s Oval may be able to take additional water?

However, it is the responsibility of Water Corporation to investigate and provide a feasible interim solution.

One of the most important aspects to identifying an alternative site is:

**It is important that the new site for the water does not simply transpose the problem of vegetation death – or leach into aquifers to another area.**

### **Recommendations**

Stakeholders (Broome Shire, Broome Golf Course and Water Corporation) work with community members to:

- 1) Develop an **interim management plan** for
  - a) Removal of the cannoning practice on the Golf Course
  - b) Transposition to an alternative site
  - c) Restoration of degraded areas no longer being affected by water cannoning

It is also essential that the parties responsible for the destruction of the vegetation through the use of water cannoning:

- 2) **Commit to developing and implementing a restoration plan** for all bushland remnants at the site.

Engagement of an environmental consultant and/or facilitator who works with the concerned community members and identifies a solution to the current problem should be the responsibility of the Water Corporation. It is also important that DEC be asked to assist with matters to do with waste water and have an advisory role in the development of management plans.

We wish to work cooperatively with the stakeholders on this matter and look forward to your collective response.

Regards

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Phillip Docherty

Chairperson  
Environs Kimberley