



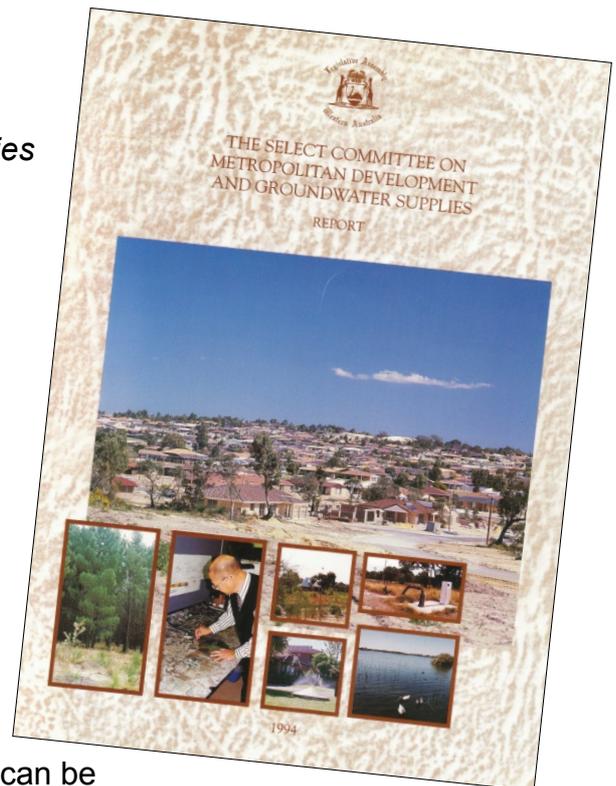
## Water quality information sheet 7 January 2016

### **Select Committee report on metropolitan development and groundwater supplies, 1994 - summary**

In 1994, the *Select Committee on metropolitan development and groundwater supplies* was formed due to increasing conflict between land use and groundwater protection. It reported to the Parliament of WA with recommendations on how to manage development and still protect groundwater resources. Whilst the focus of the committee's report

***"Sometime after year 2021 when the population [reaches] two million, sources of water will become more expensive, remote and difficult to develop. It is in this context, when Perth's existing sources of water will become even more valuable especially to our children and grandchildren, that the Select Committee has examined the issues relating to development over catchment areas."***

1994



is on groundwater, many of the recommendations can be applied to managing drinking water sources in general. This information sheet summarises the main findings of the report.

***"Experts around the world have expressed their envy of our relatively pristine water supply and have advised us to protect [it] at all costs."***

#### ***International examples***

The committee met with experts from around the world and took an international tour to the UK and the USA. They saw examples of developments made in an ad hoc manner resulting in difficult decisions about development and the protection of water resources.

Those cities spent billions of dollars trying to repair the damage to their drinking water sources. The report states that with foresight, WA has the opportunity to avoid the same costly mistakes made by others.

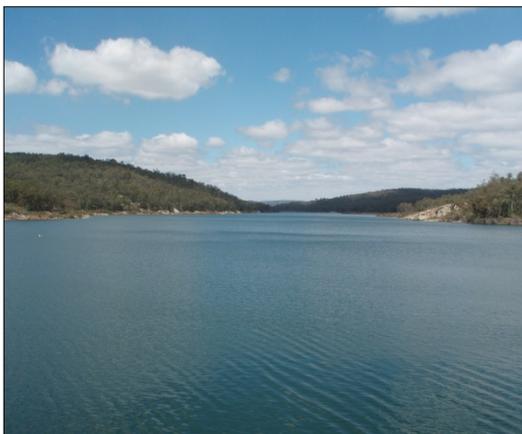
#### ***Protection vs. treatment***

The committee found that cleaning up a drinking water source costs many times more than establishing a protection program. They stated that the old saying "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" was very true when it comes to drinking water sources. The report says that government must meet the community's expectation of a high standard of water but also gauge what cost they are willing to pay for its protection and supply. Also, costly treatment required for serious contaminants increases the consequences of failure and can create toxic or unpalatable by-products.

***"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."***

**Extract of recommendations from the select committee report:**

- 1 “... Government move, without delay, to strengthen the legislative mechanisms which control the protection of groundwater resources.”
- 2 “...prior to any major development, re-zoning, amendments to the MRS or Local Authority Town Planning Schemes in public water supply groundwater areas, the EPA carry out an environmental assessment and consult with the Water Authority on the potential impacts on the groundwater resources.”
- 3.2 “All government agencies should agree, when considering developments in Priority 1 areas, that protection of the groundwater resource will be given primacy over all other issues.”
- 8.2 “... to give the highest priority to the protection of water supplies for present and future generations on a sustainable basis when considering development on public water supply[ies]. The Committee should adopt the precautionary principle, when considering proposals for developments ...”
- 14 “... [ensure] the protection of groundwater supplies is not compromised by incremental decision making.” For example, a decision to allow one small development in a drinking water catchment might pave the way for other similar approvals and before long the catchment becomes polluted and unusable.
- 16 “... give urgent consideration to providing additional resources to the general education of the community in regard to groundwater and the protection of groundwater...”
- 18 “... that the Water Authority, with support from other agencies, continue to maintain a high class water supply to the people of Perth and the option of reducing water quality standards should not be contemplated under any circumstances.”
- 27 “... Government should take into account the full cost of development over groundwater catchments, including the benefits of development, the availability of land, the treatment costs of water, the possible loss of consumer confidence in the water quality, the possible loss of aquifers as a water supply and the economic, social and environmental problems associated with transportation of water from remote areas.”



***“Water is indeed our most precious resource. The availability of fresh water is essential to Perth’s future and our generation must protect our water resources for future generations.”***



Citation: Board, M (MLA Member for Jandakot and Chairman of the Select Committee) 1994, *The Select Committee on Metropolitan Development and Groundwater Supplies – Report*, Legislative Assembly, Perth, Western Australia. You can obtain a copy of the select committee report from the State Law Publisher phone (08) 9426 0000 or visit [www.slp.wa.gov.au](http://www.slp.wa.gov.au).