



# Mundaring & Hills Historical Society Inc.

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Referral Business Entry Point, EIA Policy Section (EPBC Act)  
Approvals and Wildlife Division  
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts  
GPO Box 787  
Canberra ACT 2601

25 November 2009

Ref: 2009/5193

Dear Sir/Madam

## **The Water Corporation/Water management and use/Mundaring/WA/Mundaring Water Treatment Plant and Mundaring C Pump Station Project**

Mundaring and Hills Historical Society is a community organisation active in retaining the history of the Shire of Mundaring and relating that history to the public at large. We consider that the construction of a Water Treatment Plant on the "DEC site" will destroy an historic site significant to the history of the shire and the state.

We consider that the referral to DEWHA by the Water Corporation has omitted several key pieces of information listed in point form below and addressed more fully further in this submission:


1. The DEC site (also known as Portagabra and the former Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement), has been Classified by the National Trust of Australia (WA);
2. The DEC site has been re-instated in the Heritage Council of Western Australia's assessment program following the receipt of new information pertaining to the historical significance of the site;
3. The Water Corporation has failed to recognise and assess the site as a cultural landscape, it has considered it only under the terms of a natural bush environment;
4. The DEC site forms an important entry statement to the Perth Hills National Parks Visitor Centre and the internationally recognised Mundaring Weir. The Water Corporation has not discussed in its referral what the loss of the aesthetic values will be to this entry statement; and,
5. The Water Corporation has not mentioned that additional land will be required for the construction of an electricity sub-station, an essential component for the upgrade.

1. The National Trust of Australia (WA) placed the former Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement on their list of Classified places in March 2009. One of the key elements that came out of the classification was that the place was established to maintain the water quality in the catchment system that fed Mundaring Weir and that part of this process was the planting of exotic trees (mostly, but not only, species of pines). Therefore, the place is significant as the only Forestry Settlement in the state established to maintain water quality in a catchment system through forestry management and that the place retained a number of mature trees that provided a backdrop to the buildings located within the former settlement.
2. In 2003 the Heritage Council of Western Australia assessed the former Mundaring Weir Forestry Settlement and determined that it fell below threshold levels. Following the new information provided by the National Trust's assessment documentation this body decided to re-investigate the heritage significance of this place and placed it in its assessment program in July 2009.
3. The referral indicates that the Water Treatment Plant site boundary will be located on land that is considerably disturbed. It also notes there are minimal native flora species, the site being dominated by introduced, vegetation species. What these two different statements fail to address is that the disturbed site is occupied by a former Forestry Settlement (established in 1923) and that the introduced vegetation represents an historic pattern of scientific development, viz the efforts of forestry workers to determine which tree species would be best to plant in the catchment area to reduce salinity levels in the Weir while at the same time providing a monetary return. Thus the exotic species are part of a cultural landscape that tell a story about early conservation and forestry practices; a story which is strongly related to the development of Mundaring Weir.
4. The construction of the Water Treatment Plant will have a considerable impact on the aesthetic qualities of the local environment that leads down to Mundaring Weir Village and Mundaring Weir. This local landmark attracts visitors from interstate, intrastate and overseas. Mundaring Weir is the central component of the internationally recognised Goldfields Water Supply, recently designated an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Civil Engineers. The drive from Mundaring leads through a rural and bush environment before terminating at the Weir, which is set in landscaped grounds. The proposed Water Treatment Plant will be located at the intersection that directly leads to this important landmark, and also to the Perth Hills National Parks Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre aims at teaching schoolchildren, and other visitors to the Hills, the importance of the bush environment. Due to the gradient of the land in this locality the proposed Water Treatment Plant will have a strong visual presence in this treed environment, which will negatively impact on the current aesthetic qualities of this area.
5. A new substation will be required to operate the Treatment Plant. This information has only just been conveyed to the community representatives previously involved in the consultation process. The new substation will require a large piece of land, a fact of which the representatives were unaware when they debated on the site for the Water Treatment Plant. Omitting the substation as part of the Water Treatment Plant makes this referral incomplete.

In conclusion we consider the construction of the Water Treatment Plant will lead to the loss of an important historic site and that it will also have a huge impact on the local environment. The location of an industrial development on the edge of a National Park will have a significant effect on visitor appreciation and numbers to the area that will then lead to a diminution of environmental awareness in the wider community.

We strongly urge that consideration be given to alternative sites that were identified during the consultation process such as the O'Connor site, which was not properly considered during the consultation process. The choice of this site would lead to the retention of an historic place and have significantly less impact on the natural environment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Bush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fiona Bush (Mrs)  
President  
Mundaring & Hills Historical Society