A SURVEY OF ABORIGINAL SOCIAL WATER REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SOUTHERN BLACKWOOD PLATEAU AND THE SCOTT COASTAL PLAIN SOUTHWEST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A report prepared for the Department of Environment:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Environment (DoE, previously the Water and Rivers Commission) is undertaking groundwater allocation planning work in the South West (Bunbury-Augusta) region. As a part of this allocation planning process the social/cultural and ecological values of the region must be identified and the Environmental Water Provisions (EWPs) set.

Social Water Requirements are defined as elements of the water regime that are identified to meet social values (Water and Rivers Commission, 2000). Aboriginal cultural values are one component of these social values. These studies will endeavour to build upon previous work which identified these values and attempt to express these values in a way that the DoE can define Social Water Requirements (SWRs) and integrate them into Environmental Water Provisions (EWPs) and Allocation Planning.

The objectives of this study are to define the social water requirements for the traditional owners of water bodies located within the study area, including the identification of and the significance for specific wetland and riverine resources, customary use and seasonality of customary use of these places and resources within the study area. Also required is to identify if alterations to the water levels, flows and water quality will affect Aboriginal values pertaining to the maintenance of their cultural values to the above identified places and resources. Lastly it needs to identify the limits of acceptable change to water levels, quality and flows to water bodies identified within the study area. The study area includes the Blackwood River and its tributaries between St John Brook and Hut Pool, the Southern Blackwood Plateau and south to Lake Jasper across the Scott Coastal Plain to Milyeannup.

A search of the DIA Sites Register was conducted on the 15th November 2005 in order to provide a summary of registered Aboriginal Heritage Sites that are located within the study area. A total of 21 registered Aboriginal Heritage Sites have been noted to be located within the study area. These sites are predominately archaeological sites that are stone artefact scatters that represent prehistoric camp sites that are located on the periphery on the regions water resources. A number of sites of mythological significance identify the importance of water bodies to traditional and contemporary Aboriginal people of the area. A summary of these sites is provided in order that an understanding of the nature and extent of the regions Aboriginal heritage can be understood in terms of its protection and relevance under the West Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972) (See Archival).

The overall result and underlying themes from the outcomes of this survey is that Nyungar people believe that the water sources within the study area, particularly ground water, is at the centre of both their belief system and its association with the health of the environment. In a sense, water is essential to the life of the landscape, the health of the forest and all the animals and birds and other forms of life that rely upon it. The Aboriginal people consulted in this survey have demonstrated this belief in both a spiritual and domestic mundane sense by describing both their traditional and contemporary use and association with places of importance identified within the region, i.e. Blackwood River Summer Pools, Milyeannup Brook, Barrabup Pool, Lake Jasper, Gingilup Swamps and Scott Coastal Plain where the Scott River runs through to Augusta.

It is the opinion of the Aboriginal people consulted that since colonisation the cultural practises and values of the European invaders have modified the ecology of the landscape and the hydrology of the waterways to a point that is now almost beyond redemption. The Aboriginal people consulted in this survey believe that due to the actions of agriculture, land clearing, construction of dams, the effect of tree plantations and the abstraction of ground water for domestic and agricultural use the health of the environment has suffered to be now almost to the point of no return. The Aboriginal people believe that this has had a profound effect upon their culture in that the diminished integrity of the environment and the resources
that it provides has led to Aboriginal people having difficulty in maintaining their cultural practices and associations with country. In a sense the loss of the environment, has caused a disconnection with this country and the notion of country and has caused a crisis of identity for the regions Aborigines. Aboriginal people have a strong spiritual belief in connection with the environment and believe that they are tasked with its maintenance and protection. In a sense this is a symbiotic, cultural and ecological relationship. The two are interdependent of each other. The loss of the environment makes it difficult for Aboriginal people to pass on their culture to their children and in a sense their church or place of worship is being destroyed or diminished. It is now seen as a priority by the Aboriginal people consulted in this survey to be able to express their values in a way that they can be absorbed by the mainstream community as a priority in being able to protect what is left. So in a sense, Aboriginal people wish to see that the environment is exploited less from a western scientific economic need and that the ethic of only taking what you need rather than too much is absorbed within current environmental thinking.

In this current survey, the focus for the scientists has been to assess in quantifiable terms the point at which abstraction of ground water from the Yarragadee Aquifer creates environmental, social and cultural problems and ask the Aboriginal community at what point does this happen.

Various sites such as Poison Gully, Milyeannup Brook, Barrabup Pool and Hut Pool crossing on the Blackwood River were visited where these questions were proposed and these issues were debated. The Aboriginal community were informed of some of the Ecological Water Requirements (EWR) that had been proposed for groundwater and surface-water dependent ecosystems in the study area.

EWRs for groundwater dependent ecosystems were explained as being the minimum summer groundwater depth required to maintain key ecological values. Knowing this enabled the scientists to approximate the amount of drawdown in the current water table level that could occur before the vegetation was placed at risk.

EWRs for surface-water dependent ecosystems were explained as being the volume or level of flow in rivers and streams required to maintain key ecological values, such as habitats for fish and macroinvertebrates.

Aboriginal people were asked if they agreed with this science and if they supported the drawdown of water bodies in the region to these levels. It was clear from the responses that Aboriginal people believe that already too much had been taken and that any further abstraction of water and diminishment of flow in terms of quality and quantity would have adverse effects upon the ecology, which would in turn cause great pain in terms of people’s sense of identity and diminish the places available for Aboriginal people to maintain and transmit their cultural practises and beliefs to future generations.

As a result of the above survey, the following recommendations are made:

It is **recommended** that the Department of Environment give due consideration to the cultural belief of the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim group with regards to the significance of the identified water resources within the region. It has been identified that Aboriginal people believe that the issue of further licenses for the abstraction of ground water from the Yarragadee Aquifer will cause undue pressure to the survival of the ecology within the study area and that because this ecology is of fundamental importance to the nature and continuance of Aboriginal culture that further abstraction of ground water should be avoided, particularly for uses external to the region.
It is accepted by the Aboriginal community that some current use of water resources from the underground Aquifer can be sustainable if the use is tied to the values of local needs only for agriculture and local domestic consumption within the south west. It is therefore recommended that no more ground water licenses other than those that already exist be issued for the harvesting of water from the Yarragadee Aquifer.

It is further recommended that the Department of Environment continue to monitor water resources in the region in order to maintain adequate supplies so that the necessary environmental flow is maintained to protect the integrity of places identified within this survey as places of high significance to the Aboriginal community. Places such as the Blackwood River Summer Pools, tributaries of the Blackwood River such as the Milyeannup Brook, the St John Brook, the Rosa Brook and in particular Poison Gully, Lake Jasper and other wetlands of the Scott Coastal Plain are places that are highly necessary for Nyungar people’s sense of identity and continuance and maintenance of their culture.

It is finally recommended that positions be made available within the Department of Environment for Nyungar people so that a diffusion of Nyungar values with regards to water resource management can be absorbed within mainstream management practices. A further benefit of this recommendation would be that Nyungar people would have more exposure to scientific assessment and management practices which would ultimately engender more trust and faith with environmental management procedures.
A SURVEY OF ABORIGINAL SOCIAL WATER REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SOUTHERN BLACKWOOD PLATEAU AND SCOTT COASTAL PLAIN, SOUTHWEST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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REPORT

A Survey of Aboriginal Social Water Requirements for the Southern Blackwood Plateau and Scott Coastal Plain, Southwest, Western Australia.

ISSUE

The Department of Environment (DoE, previously the Water and Rivers Commission) is undertaking groundwater allocation planning work in the South West (Bunbury-Augusta) region. As a part of this allocation planning process the social/cultural and ecological values and water requirements of the region must be identified, which leads to the setting of Environmental Water Provisions (EWPs).

EWPs are the water regimes that are provided as a result of the water allocation decision making process taking into account ecological, social (including Aboriginal) and economic impacts. They may meet in part or in full the Ecological Water Requirements (EWRs), which are water regimes needed to maintain ecological values of water dependent ecosystems at a low level of risk.

Previous Aboriginal Heritage and Cultural values studies have been carried out for the Blackwood Ground Water and the South West Yarragadee areas by Goode (2003a, 2003b & 2003c) and Parker (2003). Further to this work the current study proposal is seeking to determine Social Water Requirements (SWRs) to maintain the Aboriginal cultural values of the prominent water bodies in the defined study area.

Social Water Requirements are defined as elements of the water regime that are identified to meet social values (Water and Rivers Commission, 2000). Aboriginal cultural values are one component of these social values. These studies will endeavour to build upon previous work which identified these values and attempt to express these values in a way that the DoE can integrate them into the Environmental Water Provisions (EWPs) and allocation plans.

REPORT OBJECTIVE

To define the social water requirements for the traditional owners of water bodies located within the study area, including the identification of and the significance for specific wetland and riverine resources, customary use and seasonality of customary use of these places and resources within the study area.

To identify if alteration to the water levels, flows and water quality will affect Aboriginal values pertaining to the maintenance of their cultural values to the above identified places and resources

To identify the limits of acceptable change to water levels, quality and flows to water bodies identified within the study area.
BACKGROUND

In February 2003 in response to the Water Corporation’s wish to harvest 45 gigalitres of water from the Southwest Yarragadee Aquifer, Guttridge, Haskins and Davey commissioned a desktop Aboriginal Heritage Survey of the lower Blackwood Ground Water Area in order to advise the Water Corporation of any likely heritage or cultural constraints with the proposal. The survey by Goode 2003a identified 85 registered Aboriginal heritage sites within the study area. The survey also informed the Water Corporation of the Aboriginal significance of all the rivers, wetlands and creeks that were located within the region. The study discussed the notion of the ‘generalized religious significance’ of these water bodies in terms of Waugal beliefs and argued the relevance of these beliefs under the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972). The study also discussed the possible implications of the identification of these water sources in terms of the processes that would need to be met under the above heritage legislation. The survey also informed the Water Corporation that the water in underground aquifers may also have the same significance to the Aboriginal community and that this would need to be addressed through extensive consultation with the Aboriginal community should the proposal proceed.

In May 2003 Parker conducted a survey upon behalf of the Water Corporation with regards to the location of bores that would be used by the Water Corporation to determine the effect of possible draw down from the pumping of the Yarragadee. In this survey the Aboriginal group consulted voiced their concerns with regard to the proposal saying that these bores would have a detrimental effect upon the St John Brook, the Warren and Blackwood rivers and all their tributaries, which were considered important mythological sites.

In response to the above proposal in August 2003 the Water and Rivers Commission, now part of the Department of Environment, who are tasked with the issue of licenses for allocation of ground water resources, commissioned Brad Goode and Associates to conduct an Aboriginal cultural values study of the Southern Blackwood Plateau and the Scott Coastal Plain to determine the significance of environmental water to the Aboriginal community.

Although discussing the area’s Aboriginal heritage under the relevant legislation the study also endeavoured to identify the underlying Aboriginal social and cultural values of the region’s water sources in Toto and there significance to the maintenance of Aboriginal culture and life styles. As a result of this study the Blackwood River, its tributaries and its connection to the Yarragadee Aquifer were identified to be a system of primary importance to the region’s ecology and therefore maintenance of Aboriginal culture. In this study the Aboriginal people consulted also suggested that all the region’s water sources that are hydrologically connected are of the same spiritual essence and as such should be considered as one large site (in heritage terms), it is the belief that they make up one whole system that is of significance to the region’s Aborigines.

In this report this significance was discussed in both a sacred (Waugal beliefs) and mundane sense (resources use). It was concluded by the Aboriginal informants that negative actions from human activities that interfered with the flow of water in the environment through the region’s rivers, creeks and wetlands, and their association with underground aquifers could have grave spiritual consequences for the Aboriginal community who believe that they are culturally tasked with the protection of these area’s natural environs. It was felt that science did not know enough about the interaction of the region’s ecology with the underground aquifers to be able to determine that large amounts of water could be extracted from the Yarragadee without having a detrimental effect on the region’s ecological resources, which are of fundamental importance to the region’s Aborigines. As a result of this study the Aboriginal community did not support the notion of drawing unsustainably from the Yarragadee Aquifer,
especially if that water was to be used outside of the region, and that more study was needed
over a much longer time before they could be confident that the proposal would not have a
negative effect on the environment of the region.

Also resulting from the 2003 study, the Blackwood River and the Yarragadee system was
registered as a site under the terms of the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972).
At present due to mapping problems the DIA are yet to add the Yarragadee Aquifer to the
public data base, however when the data becomes available it is their intent.

While these previous studies were specifically in response to the Water Corporation’s proposal
to harvest water from the Yarragadee for domestic use in Perth the Department of
Environment have now recognized a much broader and more long term need to conduct
ground water allocation planning and develop a strategy for the future management of ground
water resources within the Southwest region.

As a result of this need and as part of this allocation planning process the social/cultural and
ecological values of the region must be identified and the Environmental Water Provisions
(EWPs) set. In response to this requirement the Department of Environment have
commissioned Brad Goode and Associates (consulting Anthropologists) to conduct further
research into the Aboriginal social and cultural values associated with water bodies within the
region. In the brief the consultants were asked through further consultation to identify the
social water requirements for the region, if alteration to the water levels, flows and water
quality of the Region’s rivers, creeks and wetlands from ground water harvesting will affect
the maintenance of Aboriginal cultural values with regards to the places and resources
identified in the previous work. The consultants were also asked to identify the limits of
acceptable change to water levels, quality and flows to water bodies identified within the study
area, in a sense the planners were asking for a line in the sand to be established by the
Indigenous Community. It was however recognised that such an outcome may be difficult to
achieve and that more qualitative data may be the result.

Despite the difficulty in what is required with this new approach it is now the intent of modern
water resource planners to endeavour to consider these qualitative social and environmental
values when determining water allocation plans. Little work of this nature has been conducted
previously in the South West of Western Australia. Similar studies in the Northern Territory
(Jackson 2004) have also identified that ‘it is difficult to take subjective, intangible values that
underpin Aboriginal people’s relationship to land and translate them into Western
environmental management frameworks, which have a utilitarian focus and are highly reliant
upon objectification and quantification’. Despite this difficulty with cross cultural approaches
to environmental management it is now recognized and broadly accepted that indigenous
values and paradigms are likely to add greatly to an informed and holistic debate upon such an
important and contentious issue as the management of water in a dry continent such as
Australia. With this in mind the following study will attempt to feed these perspectives into the
decision making process that is now taking place and will affect water resource management
in the South West over the coming decades.
LOCATION

Figure 1. Map by Strategen, (2004), Showing the Location of the Study Area.
ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

TRADITIONAL NYUNGAR CULTURE

The south-west of Western Australia is considered to form a distinct cultural bloc defined by the distribution of the Nyungar language. Before Nyungar was used as a group or linguistic name the south-west people recognised themselves, their language and culture, as ‘Bibbulmun’ (Bates, 1985). Daisy Bates writes that the Bibbulmun people were the largest homogenous group in Australia. Their land took in everything to the west of a line drawn from Jurien Bay on the west coast to Esperance on the south coast (Bates, 1966). Bates also mentions that over seventy groups that shared a common language and some local variations occupied the Bibbulmun area. Bates (1985) recorded that the name of the dialect between Augusta and Vasse was Burrong wongi. Further, she explains:

“All coastal Bibbulmun were Waddarn-di – sea people, and called them and were called by their inland neighbours, Waddarn-di Bibbulmun. The inland tribes were distinguished by the character of the country they occupied. They were either Bilgur (river people, heel or bil-river), Darbalung (estuary people), or Buyun-gur (hill people – buya-rock, stone, hill), but all were Bibbulmun [Nyungar]” (1985:47).

Tindale (1974) identified thirteen ‘tribal groups’ in the south-west based on socio-linguistic boundaries and minor dialect differences. He describes the Wardandi Bibbulmun territory as encompassing the coast from Koombanup (Bunbury) to Talanup (Augusta) following the Blackwood River inland to Nannup. The Nyungar people of the Capes region used the name Wardandi to describe themselves. They maintained a number of paths between the Vasse/Wonnerup area in the north and Augusta to the south, and as far as Nannup to the east that followed the coast and the Blackwood River. The coastal path passed directly through the Hamelin Bay - Margaret River - Kilcarnup area and many of the Nyungar names for camping places are still in common use. Close to Kilcarnup are Wainielup, Gnarabup, Daleep and Gnoocardup, which are all traditional camping places of the Wardandi Nyungars (Collard, 1994). The territory or range of the Pibblemen included the lower Blackwood River, the Scott River Basin and from Bridgetown, Manjimup, the Gairdner River and Broke Inlet (Tindale 1974).

The Nyungar or Bibbulmun people of the south-west were a distinct group in that their initiation practices varied markedly from their desert and semi-desert dwelling neighbours. Unlike the desert people the Nyungars did not practice circumcision or sub-incision, but rather practiced a ritual of nasal septum piercing and ciatricision of the upper body (Bates, 1985). The people who followed these socio-religious practices have been described by Berndt and Berndt (1980), as being of the ‘Old Australian Tradition’.

Within the Bibbulmun, two primary moiety divisions existed, the Manichmat or ‘fair people of the white cockatoo’ and Wordungmat or ‘dark people of the crow’, which were the basis of marriage between a further four class subdivisions: Tondarrup, Didarruk and Ballaruk, Nagarnook (Bates, 1985). Bates describes the only lawful marriage between the groups to be “the cross-cousin marriage of paternal aunts’ children to the maternal uncles’ children”, and states that the four clan groups and relationships, under different names, are “identical in every tribe in Western Australia, east, north, south and southwest…” (1966:24-25).

Each socio-linguistic group, sometimes referred to as the ‘tribe’, consisted of a number of smaller groups. Each of these smaller groups was made up of around 12 to 30 persons, related men, their wives and children and, at times, visiting relatives from other groups. These subgroups could be described as a family, a band or a horde. For every subgroup there was a tract of land with which they most closely identified themselves with, an individual or a
group’s land was called their *Kalla* or fireplace (Moore, 1884). This referred to an area of land which was used by the group and over which the members of the group exercised the greatest rights to its resources. It was also the area for which the group would act as custodians of. Other groups would also have some rights of access and use gained through marriage.

“Ownership rights to land were held by groups of people linked through common descent; there was definite ownership of land in both social and personal ways. As well as belonging to a local descent group by birth, each individual simultaneously belonged to an economic or food gathering group” (Le Souef, 1993).

There are two forms of socially organised relationships to the land, a spiritual association and an economic one. Stanner (1965) uses the terms ‘estate’ and ‘range’ to distinguish these two different associations, he writes that the ‘range’ was that land in which the group ‘ordinarily hunted and foraged to maintain life’. The ‘estate’ refers to the spiritual country and which may be ‘owned’ by either an individual, by the group or by part of the group. The relationship to ‘estate’ is mostly religious; however there is also an economic benefit. The estate can be considered the country or home of a group. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘Dreaming place’ and as such includes all religious sites, myths and rituals that occur on or about that land. In this way ‘estate’ forms part of the Aboriginal ties to Dreaming and place (Stanner, 1965).

“There is a clear relationship between the individual and the land, which is expressed in a number of ways. There is a direct link between the mythic heroes and spirits of the dreaming and the land. Relationships with these beings, which are transmitted through birth, descent and marriage (to a lesser extent), are a reciprocal arrangement of rights and obligations and they are vital for claiming rights to the land” (Silberbauer, 1994:124).

The link between the individual and the land comes from the conception site, where the animating spirit enters the mother and thus there is a direct connection between the land, spirit and the identity of the individual (Machin, 1996). The spiritual ties with the land strengthened economic rights and land usage involved both ritual and social connections (McDonald *et al.*, 1994).

Land use or ownership in traditional Aboriginal Australia is based on a religious view of the world and the position of people in it. This religious view is most often referred to as the Dreaming; the Dreaming is an ideological and philosophical basis for a close emotional connection between Aborigines and their land (Machin, 1996). The Dreaming refers to a distant past when the world had yet to be fully created. Dreamtime stories refer to mythic beings that roamed the Earth creating plant and animal species. During the struggles of these mythic beings many landforms such as hills and rivers were created. The landscape bears testimony to the struggles of creation and is studded with sacred sites recalling the Dreamtime.

“All permanent native waters have legends attached to them, legends of the “dream” time, which go back to the days when birds and animals possessed human attributes, or were human beings, or were groups of which the bird or animal was representative, or were magic animals and birds possessing the power of human speech. The natives cannot say that the “founders” of the various permanent waters were altogether human, although birds or beasts, or half bird half human, but the bird or animal name only is always given in the legend never a human name.” (Bates D. 1966)

These sites are owned by or belong to either one or more groups, and so such sites have a shared significance amongst the local population. The shared spiritual significance of these sites had a function of bringing together different groups. Another function of these shared sites is that knowledge of the local myths created rights of use to the land.
“Rights are recognised through active social relations, a process symbolized through the possession of knowledge. That is, knowledge is only gained through participation in social relations and rights to the land are reliant on the possession of relevant religious knowledge” (Machin, 1996:11).

Dortch 2002 puts forward an archaeological model of traditional hunter-gatherer socio-economic and territorial organisation in the southwest. He states that; ‘rivers, wetlands and lakes, dune fields, escarpments and other topographical features that certainly would have influenced the positioning of estate boundaries and band foraging ranges…’ The Blackwood River is referred to as the acknowledged boundary between the Pibblemen and Wardandi. Lakes, rivers, wetlands and estuaries are all acknowledged as being places of importance in the social organisation of the traditional Aboriginal society, they are also considered ‘assets’ of particular groups. (Dortch: 2002)

Estimates of traditional Aboriginal population density in the region, point to a population density of between 20 and 50 people per hundred square miles for the southern end of the Swan Coastal Plain (Hallam S 1977). In the Jarrah and Karri forests the population was less dense, except along the larger rivers such as the Blackwood River (Hallam 1977). The swamps and alluvial valleys of the southwest were places that provided abundant plant foods, sedges, fresh water and frogs and long necked tortoises. Fish traps located in tidal estuaries and weir or slot type traps in the rivers and creeks were the focus of large gatherings of people (Meagher and Ride 1979). The weir or slot type fish trap that was widely recorded by early settlers and explorers were made of wood and as such have a low archaeological survival potential or chance of being rediscovered (Dix and Meagher 1976). However several wooden type fish trap have been rediscovered, one was located on Blackadder Creek near Northcliffe (Dortch and Gardner 1976). Traditionally, the Bibbulmun Nyungar people recognised six different seasons in the year. Each of these seasons coincided with a particular seasonal abundance of a wide variety of food resources. Fish traps were used to catch large migrations of estuarine and river fish. These fish traps were so efficient at providing food that they formed the basis of regular meetings between neighbouring groups and were a focus of cultural activities (Contos et al 1998, Bates 1985).

“Mammals, birds and eggs, many reptiles and frogs, fish (especially marine species from the lower reaches of rivers, and from estuaries and inlets), and some invertebrates (especially the larvae of some beetles and moths) were eaten. So was a wide range of roots, seeds and fruits”. (Meagher and Ride, 1979: 71).

Both Bates (1985) and Meagher (1974) have described the traditional foods of the Nyungar people, and also their methods of procurement. Meagher (1974) lists the kangaroo, wallaby, possum, bandicoot, quenda, Tasmanian devil, and the native rat and mouse as the most commonly hunted mammals. Kangaroos were generally obtained by either driving the animals into swampy areas where they were more easily speared, by digging pits for entrapment, or by stalking and running down (Bates, 1985). Reptiles were tracked to their holes and grabbed by the tails, whilst birds were captured by spearing the nest from underneath, causing the birds to fly out of the nest to then be subsequently clubbed by the hunter (Bates, 1985). Fish were commonly caught by spearing using the gidgi, or by the use of fish traps, constructed weir-type structures into which large schools of fish are driven often for the purpose of feeding large ceremonial gatherings (Tilbrook, 1983).

“Not all members of a ‘tribe’ or a larger constellation hunted or collected food together … Normally they spread over the country in small groups, varying in size according to season and according to circumstance” (Berndt, 1979:138)
According to Meagher (1974), roots, bulbs and tubers figure prominently in historical sources and seem to have been important food items throughout the year. Bird and Beeck (1988) have compiled a list of the plant foods that were known to have been used by the Nyungar people (see Table 1). They categorised the types of bush foods as underground storage organs (roots and tubers etc.), fruits, or other foods such as seeds, gum, flowers and leaves. Bird and Beeck suggested that bulbs, roots and tubers were the most important staples eaten by the Nyungar people, with fruits and other plant foods supplementing them as well as providing tasty treats.

<table>
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<th>COMMENTS</th>
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<td>Chocolate lily</td>
<td>Root tuber</td>
<td>Eaten raw</td>
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<td>Yug</td>
<td>Root tuber</td>
<td>Eaten raw or roasted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Various</td>
<td>Root and stem tubers</td>
<td>Should not be eaten when flowering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liperanthus nigricans</td>
<td>Djubag</td>
<td>Root tuber</td>
<td>Eaten raw or roasted</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Djiyag</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casuarina species</td>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>Seed</td>
<td>Sucked to relieve thirst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xanthorrhoea preisseii</td>
<td>Balag</td>
<td>Leaf base</td>
<td>Also used for hut and fire making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Plant Foods that are Utilised by Nyungar People in the Southwest.

Source: Bird and Beeck (1988)

Other plants were exploited for their various qualities rather than for food. The resin or gum of the blackboy *Xanthorrhoea* sp., known as *tudibi*, was used as a resin or glue to fix spear heads and to make the *kadjo*, which is a hammer or adze that is blunt on one end and sharp at the other (Berndt, 1979). The oil of sandalwood *Santalum spicatum* was used to polish spears (Meagher, 1974).

Plant foods were also traded to districts where they were unavailable. The highly prized seeds of the zamia palm *Macrozamia riedlei* are one such food (Bird and Beeck, 1988). The Nyungar also traded for ochre *wilgi* and various goods such as ground axes and pearl shell that came from as far a field as the northern Australian coastline (O’Connor et al., 1995).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant Species</th>
<th>Aboriginal Name (Daw, 1997)</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Sites Where Species Were Identified Within the Study Area (Mattiske, 2005)</th>
<th>Estimated Depth To Groundwater Where Identified In The Study Area (Mattiske, 2005)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Thysanotus patersonii</em></td>
<td>Tjunguri</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>PG, RE, ML, LY</td>
<td>1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Burchardia umbellata</em></td>
<td>Kara</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>PG, ML, LY</td>
<td>1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lepidosperma gladiatum</em></td>
<td>Kerbein</td>
<td>Rope, String, Food Spears</td>
<td>ML, RB, LY, BR</td>
<td>&lt; 1m, 1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kunzea ericifolia</em></td>
<td>Spear Wood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pteridium esculentum</em></td>
<td>Bracken Fern</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>SCP, RE, ML, RB, BR</td>
<td>&lt; 1m, 1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Leucopogon verticillatus</em></td>
<td>Tassel Bush</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>SCP, ML, RB, LY, BR</td>
<td>&lt; 1m, 1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Styphelia tenuiflora</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Haemodorum sp.</em></td>
<td>Born, Blood roots, mardja, bohn</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>PG, RE, ML, RB, LY, BR</td>
<td>&lt; 1m, 1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cassytha sp.</em></td>
<td>Love vine, bush dodder</td>
<td>Medicinal, Food</td>
<td>PG, LY, RB</td>
<td>&gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Nuytsia floribunda</em></td>
<td>Mooja, Christmas tree Bluebell</td>
<td>Food, Ceremonial</td>
<td>PG, SCP</td>
<td>1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sollya heterophylla</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Podocarpus drouynianus</em></td>
<td>Koolah, emu berry</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>PG, SCP, ML, RB, LY</td>
<td>&lt; 1m, 1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Banksia grandis</em></td>
<td>Poolgarla,magnete, beera, boilgalla, boorabup</td>
<td>Food, Cultural</td>
<td>PG, SCP, ML, RB, LY, RE</td>
<td>1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Dryandra sessilis</em></td>
<td>Pudjak</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>No listings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Burnettia nigricans</em></td>
<td>Djubuk</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>No listings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Persoonia saccata</em></td>
<td>Cadgeegurrup, snottygobble Taaruuk</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>LY, PG</td>
<td>1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Clematis microphylla</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>No listings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Trymalium floribundum</em></td>
<td>soapbush</td>
<td>Soap, Fishing</td>
<td>ML, RB</td>
<td>&lt; 1m, 1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Exocarpus sparteus</em></td>
<td>Djuk, Sandalwood</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>No listings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Santalum acuminatum</em></td>
<td>Quondong, dumbari, jawirli</td>
<td>Food, medicine</td>
<td>No listings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Typha sp.</em></td>
<td>Yangeti</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>No listings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Xanthorrhoea gracilis</em></td>
<td>Mimidi</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>PG, ML, RB, LY, PS</td>
<td>1-3m, &gt; 3m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A SURVEY OF ABORIGINAL SOCIAL WATER REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SOUTHERN BLACKWOOD PLATEAU AND SCOTT COASTAL PLAIN, SOUTHWEST, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Xanthorrhoea preissii  
Balga, balka  
Food  
PG, SCP, RE, ML, RB, LY, RE, PS, BR  
< 1m, 1-3m, > 3m  

Macrozamia riedlei  
Jeeriji  
Food, Fire  
PG, SCP, RE, ML, RB, LY, RE, PS, BR  
1-3m, > 3m  

Comesperma virgatum  
Medicinal  
PG, SCP, RE, LY, RE  
< 1m, 1-3m, > 3m  

Persoonia elliptica  
Boomerang  
PG, ML, BR  
> 3m  

Table 2: Bush Tucker Species Identified in the Study Area.

PG - Poison Gully, SCP - Scott Coastal Plain, RE - Reedia Swamps; ML - Milyeannup Brook, RB - Rosa Brook, LY - Layman Brook, BR - Blackwood River, PS - Pig Swamp.

The Nyungar people of the south-west had to cover themselves against the cold winters and for this they wore a cloak buka constructed of three or more female kangaroo skins sewn together with sinew or rush and worn with the fur side innermost (Berndt, 1979). String headbands made from spun possum fur were worn by the men and decorated with emu or cockatoo feathers (Tilbrook, 1983). Two types of kangaroo skin bags were used by the women, the goto was for general purposes, and another, the gundir, was used for carrying babies. The men often carried a type of hammer or axe called a kadjo which consisted of a stone head blunt on one end and sharpened at the other fixed to a short stout stick (Berndt, 1974) The kadjo was carried in a belt of spun possum fur (Tilbrook, 1983). The digging stick used by the women in this area was called a wonna, from which Wonnerup takes its name. The wonna was made from the peppermint tree Agonis flexuosa, a coastal native that is found only in the southwest, and was a common trade item of the Nyungar people (Tilbrook, 1983). The men carried two types of spear and a throwing board (Tilbrook, 1983). The gidji-garbel was a light spear made from the swamp wattle mungurn with a point made by scraping and then firing to create a hard tip. The gidji–garbel was commonly used for spearing fish (Grey, 1840, cited in Berndt, 1979). The gidji-borryl was also made of swamp wattle mungurn but was much larger, being up to ten foot long and one inch in diameter. It was originally set with quartz in the tip and which shortly after settlement was often tipped with glass (Bates, 1985).

The Nyungar people also constructed huts made of various plant materials, these included bark, rushes, and leaves, particularly the fronds of the blackboy Xanthorrhoea preissi. A typical construction consisted of a series of poles placed in a semi circle with a further frame of light branches woven or criss-crossed to form a base upon which a variety of materials could be added to form the roof and walls (Tilbrook, 1983).

There are few archaeological records of Nyungar material culture, with the exception of bone and stone artefacts, as the Nyungar relied largely on implements that were derived from non-durable natural materials such as bark, wood and skins (O’Connor, et al., 1995).

WATER AND ABORIGINAL SIGNIFICANCE

There is no doubt that water, especially fresh water was of vital importance to traditional Aboriginal people right across Australia, the rivers, pools and wetlands were a source of food, linked campsites along walk tracks and in the case of the Blackwood River defined the territories or estates of the Pibblemen and Wardandi people (Hallam 1979). As the Blackwood River, particularly in the lower reaches created an impassable barrier to people without boats the places where the river could be crossed (Hut Pool and the mouth near Augusta) created an intersection of tracks and as such became focal points of traditional camps where ritual activity often took place. At Hut pool Mrs Vilma Webb (per com 2005) said that this ford was a place where the trading of women from the Pibblemen to Wardandi would take place for betrothals. Gibbs (1989) drawing upon the writings of Bates states that a number of theses paths were
maintained as initiate’s tracks, with one of the longest following the Blackwood River south from Augusta through Nannup, Demark, Albany and eventually to Ongerup. Other paths from the Vasse Estuary followed the St John Brook to Barrabup Pool and then south along the Milyeannup Brook to Lake Jasper. (Collard 1994, Kelly per com 2004) Camps along these water courses were often places that had Nyungar names and were noted by the first Europeans’ early maps.

“It should also be recognised that a large number of Aboriginal names have been perpetuated in modern maps, although their original contexts and meanings are unknown. An examination of older maps, such as the 40 chain series held in the Battye Library, do not reveal much more detail, although a limited number of specific features, especially springs and watercourses, do have Aboriginal names indicated….Kwaggamai’erup [ spring near Nannup], Dallatgurup [ part of the Blackwood River, Kweelyjup [ lower Blackwood], Eedagulup [River bar Blackwood] (Gibbs. M. 1995)

The Regions Rivers were also important sources of food. Marron and other fresh water Cray fish species were an important food source that was caught in the pools along rivers and creeks throughout the region. Fish traps were also constructed on creeks, in rivers and in the tidal zones of estuaries. As these were efficient and abundant, harvests could be made. These places also created focal points for traditional ceremonial activity where large gatherings of Nyungar could be maintained. (Gibbs 1995).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fish</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Waterways Found in April 2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Galaxias occidentalis</td>
<td>Western minnow</td>
<td>BW, PG, MB, LB, RB, AB, RG, MC, SJ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galaxiella munda</td>
<td>Western mud minnow</td>
<td>PG, MB, LB, RB, RG, MC, SJ, SC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bostockia porosa</td>
<td>Night fish</td>
<td>BW, PG, MB, LB, RB, AB, RG, MC, SJ, SC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edelia vittata</td>
<td>Western pygmy perch</td>
<td>BW, PG, MB, RB, RG, MC, SJ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nannatherina balstoni</td>
<td>Balston’s pygmy perch</td>
<td>BW, MB, RG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tandanus bostocki</td>
<td>Freshwater cobbler</td>
<td>BW, RB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afurcagobius suppositus</td>
<td>Big-headed goby</td>
<td>BW, RB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudogobius olorum</td>
<td>Blue spot goby</td>
<td>BW, RB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geotria australis</td>
<td>Pouched lamprey</td>
<td>MB*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* S. Beatty per com 2005

**Table 3:** Native Fish and Crayfish Identified for Food Within the project areas.

Archaeological research in the South West has also confirmed that all water sources were important to prehistoric traditional Aboriginal people for campsites and food procurement activities. Archaeologists have recognised there is a higher likelihood of finding artefacts from prehistoric campsites around freshwater sources, such as rivers, creeks, lakes and estuaries. Lake Jasper for example has a rich archaeological record with 10 such sites found upon the lake bed and margins showing such camps prior to the formation of the lake some 4,000 years ago. Charles Dortch from the W.A. Museum said that these sites were extremely significant sites to the understanding of the region’s pre-historic Aboriginal settlement patterns. They represent camps that have been in use upon the wooded margins of a stream prior to the area becoming inundated by the formation of the lake some 4,000 years ago when sand dunes moved into the area and blocked the stream, flooding the area.

“The submerged stone artefact scatters at Lake Jasper, at least those at depths sufficiently great that one can be reasonably satisfied that they have remained permanently underwater, differ from those in terrestrial open-air sites in that they have been ‘sealed’ by their submergence, with definite cut-off dates corresponding to the time when the surrounding trees or other plants were flooded and died. This, of course, provides a minimum age for the artefacts, and thus the temporal control necessary for determining their actual radiocarbon age, by means of excavation, using delicate suction techniques capable of removing sandy sediments in 1 or 2cm levels. Radiocarbon dating of charcoal or other datable material in situ in the upper parts of such lake floor excavations can show whether the artefacts exposed on the lake floor are contemporaneous with the dated stumps in situ in it. Once this was established, it would be possible, in a programme of species identification of plotted trees and other plants, to reconstruct the plant associations or habitats surrounding the archaeological sites, creating an unquestionably valuable record of uncontaminated late Middle Holocene or older campsites in their formerly terrestrial settings, and having the potential for the preservation underwater of wooden implements and other organic remains associated with human activities.”(Dortch1990:7)

The records of registered archaeological sites upon the DIA sites register also confirms that within the study area most artefact sites are located upon or in the vicinity of the areas water ways (see archival section).

From the archaeological and ethno-historic records from the region Dortch (2002) has also developed a prehistoric model of hunter-gatherer socio-economic and territorial organization in the southwest coastal regions. In this model Dortch concludes that the distribution of topographical features such as estuaries, rivers and wetlands would have had a strong bearing on the population distribution; “rivers, wetlands and lakes, dune fields, escarpments and other topographical features that certainly would have influenced the positioning of estate boundaries and band foraging ranges were seen as focal points for activity with major topographical features such as the Blackwood river as being important cultural boundaries between Aboriginal groups” (Dortch 2002). In regards to this last point O’Connor writes;

“Archaeologists and Anthropologists generally agree that prehistoric land use patterns were based on the seasonal migrations between the coastal plain and its hinterland to exploit the various food and water resources. There is a tendency, in all parts of the project area, for sites to be located near the various water sources, such as rivers, creeks, lakes, swamps and estuaries. Based on the existing information, the most important river systems in the project area are the Busselton Drainage Basins, Margaret River and the lower Blackwood River.” (O’Connor et al 1995)
Comparative studies with regards to the significance of water that have been conducted in the Northern Territory where it has been found that water bodies also served the above cultural functions as focal points for resource activity and ritual aggregations. In these studies water bodies also almost always had mythic dimensions. Studies by Barber and Rumley 2003, Langton 2002, Toussaint et al 2001 and Yu 2000, state that Aboriginal people as with the land conceptualize that water sources such as rivers, lakes and wetlands have derived from the Dreaming, a time when the world attained its present shape. These studies emphasise the importance of stories about the actions of mythic beings in the origin and maintenance of such water sources. In these stories cultural affiliations to water are expressed in many ways, through social etiquette, narratives about places, rituals and practices of such rituals. Water is described as the living element that both creates and defines the shape and character of the country and gives it sacredness and identity (Jackson 2004).

In the south west of Western Australia several early writers recorded parts of the Aboriginal mythology about water, however clearly a lot of knowledge and stories have been lost in the years since settlement and no complete record of traditional mythology was ever made. Many of the European observers did note the importance of water to the traditional people and that water also occupied a place in the traditional mythology. The small parts of mythology recorded and references to the Waugal or a snake like spirit of water are widespread both throughout the south west of Western Australia and other parts of Australia. Bates (1966) recorded that in the southwest: “Their only deity was a Waugal or serpent-god that dominated the earth, the sky, the sea, and punished evil doers.” (ibid 1996)

“All permanent native waters have legends attached to them, legends of the “dream” time, which go back to the days when birds and animals possessed human attributes, or were human beings, or were groups of which the bird or animal was representative, or were magic animals and birds possessing the power of human speech. The natives cannot say that the “founders” of the various permanent waters were altogether human, although birds or beasts, or half bird half human, but the bird or animal name only is always given in the legend never a human name.” (Bates D. 1966 p. 157)

Another reference to the Waugal or snake like spirit of water was recorded by Salvardo (1850) and indicates the fear or reverence with which Aboriginal people regard the spirit of water and also the harmful powers of the ‘serpent’.

“If the natives are afraid to walk about at night time, for fear of Cienga, they dread even more going near large pools of water, in which they believe there lurks a great serpent called ‘Uocol’ [Waugal], who kills them if they dare to drink there or draw water during the night. A large number of natives came to me one evening asking for water. The first ones took all I had and drank it, and the others, about fifteen of them, asked me to go to the pool nearby to get some for them. I showed them the bucket and told them to go themselves. They all fell silent, and no one dared take the bucket, or tell me what they were afraid of, until, about an hour later, one of them said respectfully: ‘N-alla cape uoto, chetchet cuaragn: nunda uoto quaragn iuad’ (If we go and take water, very soon we will be killed, but if you go, you will be alright). I saw quickly that they had some superstition on the subject, and said that I would go with them, with the idea of banishing their false fears. As we went to the pool or stream, they made me go ahead, and the others, about fifteen of them, asked me to go to the pool nearby to get some for them. I showed them the bucket and told them to go themselves. They all fell silent, and no one dared take the bucket, or tell me what they were afraid of, until, about an hour later, one of them said respectfully: ‘N-alla cape uoto, chetchet cuaragn: nunda uoto quaragn iuad’ (If we go and take water, very soon we will be killed, but if you go, you will be alright). I saw quickly that they had some superstition on the subject, and said that I would go with them, with the idea of banishing their false fears. As we went to the pool or stream, they made me go ahead, and all followed me in single file, in deep silence. While they were quenching their thirst, I started to move away, but immediately they shouted, ‘Nanap, nanap’ (‘Stop, stop’), fearing that I was going to leave them on their own. As we began to go back to the hut, they ran ahead and preceded me, again in single file, so that I came last. When I reproached them for their superstitious ideas, they replied condescendingly: ‘Nunda tonga but’ (‘You don’t know anything about it’). However much the natives of both sexes like to swim ‘dog-paddle’ style
in summer, they will never go into water that is dark and deep, because they say that the serpent *Uocol* is there, and they are afraid of him even during the daytime.” (Salvardo 1850)

Salvardo (1850) recorded that the Aborigines ‘hide carefully from strangers their customs and, in particular, their beliefs’. Moore (1842) described the *Waugal* as a ‘huge winged serpent’ that lived in dark waters and was feared as a harmful force. A woman who fell ill or miscarried during a pregnancy was called *Waugalan*. The *Waugal* is of particular danger to pregnant women and so associated with fertility if in a harmful rather than replenishing manner.

Not all of the stories regarding the creation of water sources or rivers in the southwest and wider Nyungar territory involve the *Waugal* or snake like spirit of water. In a story regarding the creation of the Margaret River a magic stick is the means of transformation or creation of the Margaret River.

“The native name of the Margaret River was *Wooditchup*, named after *Wooditch*, who made the River with his magic wand. Nearby is Milyanup, the place of *Milyan*, the wife of *Wooditch*, and daughter of *Ngungaroot*. *Milyan*, who was a very fine looking young woman, fell in love with the *Wooditch*. *Wooditch* was a medicine man who was known as the ‘*Mulgar Kattuck*’ which means ‘medicine power possessor’. He could transform one thing into another and do almost anything he chose by a mere touch of his magic wand. *Wooditch* became violently in love with *Milyan* the moment he saw her. He forthwith made know his desires to *Ngungaroot* her father. The old man became very wrath and said that his daughter was already promised to *Wooditch*’s eldest brother, *Ngorable*, and that as soon as *Ngorable* came down from *Dudinalup* she would be handed over to him for his lawful wife. *Wooditch* was not deterred by this reply, as he was quite confident that *Milyan* loved him better than any man she had ever seen. He decided to employ his wonderful magic to get her for his wife. For some considerable time he very cautiously watched the movements of *Ngungaroot* and his daughter. One night, before the moon rose, the old man *Ngungaroot* got up, gathered all his equipment, his pear, axe, boomerang, hunting knife and digging stick, awakened *Milyan*, and bade her to take her skin bag and follow him. By midday, they reached the *Kalkardup* country. There the old man mysteriously fell asleep. While he slumbered, *Wooditch*, who, by his magic power, had sent the old man to sleep, made his appearance to *Milyan*, and beckoned her to follow him quickly. After a few minutes, *Ngungaroot* awoke, sprang to his feet, and finding *Milyan* gone, set off in search of her. He picked up her tracks and would soon have overhauled the runaways but *Wooditch*, seeing him coming with his beard in his mouth, muttering curses and preparing his weapons to strike, again exercised the power of his magic wand. He placed the wand upon the ground and commanded a big river to run between them. The old man was dumbfounded. Being a man of great strength, he pulled up large trees by the roots and threw them across the river, but the current was so strong that it washed them down the stream. When the afternoon was half gone, the two enemies, walking on opposite banks of the stream, reached the ocean, where *Wooditch* gave river a lead into the sea. The water was running so swiftly that *Ngungaroot* was still unable to cross and remained on the other side of the river, yelling his curses to the runaways on the opposite bank. *Wooditch* and *Milyan* were now very hungry, and decided to go out on to the reefs at the mouth of the river, to spear groper, which were very plentiful there. They set off, leaving *Ngungaroot* still raging at the other side of the river. After a while, the rushing waters subsided and *Ngungaroot* managed to get over to where the young people were. He was on the point of seizing his daughter, when *Wooditch* struck him with the magic wand and turned him into a groper, which disappeared into a deep hole in the reef. As the couple returned to the wide beach in order to make a fire to
roast their fish, Wooditch spear a big groper which was swimming close to the shore. He left it with his wand leaning against it while he helped Milyan to roast the other fish. While they were eating their fish, Wooditch began to feel very sorry he turned the old man into a groper, for Milyan kept bursting into tears over the loss of her father. He told her that if the big fish beside him should happen to the groper which had been her father, he wished it would turn into the old man again. Immediately, the transformation took place, and Ngungarooow router Ngungarooow restored to them. He was now resigned to the union of Milyan and the powerful Wooditch. They left the neighbourhood and lived happily for many years at a place which has ever since been known as Milyanup. When Ngungarooow got very old they went back to Wooditchup and lived by the river that Wooditch had made. After they had been there a little while, one day Ngungarooow went into a cave and died. The cave is on the eastern end of the cliff at Walcliffe on the Margaret River. This place is ‘Wainilyinup’ or ‘the place where the old man died’”. (Buller-Murphy, D. 1959)

Another story that is believed to have been recorded in the Kojonup district tells of a crow and a hawk creating a fresh water soak.

“…Dinah, the mother of the late, distinctive Ted Smith, told (him) this legend of the Kojonup district. The country was gripped in drought and the only known water was salty. The health of the parched Aborigines, birds and animals deteriorated. An eagle-hawk, soaring about the sky and swooping to earth, observed that a fat and shiny crow had a wet beak, wet with fresh water. The eagle-hawk, seething with unparalleled fury, attacked the cunning crow. In so doing his claws split the rocks and the blood of the attacked crow was splattered over the surrounding rocks and earth. So, a fresh water soak is to be found in the Wakhinup area, hidden amid rocks and surrounded by rich, red loam.” (Bignell M. 1971).

Another story that was related to the current researcher, by Doc Reynolds an Esperance traditional owner was about the creation of the Young River near Esperance. This story also involves the action of an eagle and a crow. Reynolds states:

“The Noongar people camped along the banks of the Young River, because the Eagle chased them all away from the fresh water. He wanted to keep it all for himself and not share with anyone. One day all the fresh water dried up. The eye of the crows which were the people had all turned white because they were forced to drink salty water. The Crow and Eagle then had a big fight and the Crow speared the Eagle and killed him. The Eagles wife, the Mallee Hen dragged his body way down to the estuary of the river and buried his body on the east side. Because of the Mallee Hens scratching up of all the sand to bury her husband, her foot markings can still be seen today. The hill on the east side looks like a Mallee Hens nest, were the ‘walitj’ is buried.” (Doc Reynolds, per com: 2005)

Despite these and no doubt other such tales about the moral aspects of water the predominant theme with regards to water is the Serpent mythology. Radcliffe-Brown (1926) wrote about ‘the Rainbow Serpent Myth of Australia’. He wrote that throughout Australia there is a belief in ‘a huge serpent, which lives in certain pools or water holes’. He wrote that the serpent was sometimes associated with the rainbow and it could also occur or be seen as “a wavy dark shadow” in the Milky Way. Certain commonalities exist in the myth of a serpent type creature that has creative and punitive powers and that lives in dark or deep pools of water. Radcliffe-Brown points out the similarities of this widespread myth, although throughout his article he refers to different names and different attributes of the ‘Rainbow serpent’ in different regions.
“I have been able to trace the belief in the rainbow-serpent, living in deep, permanent water holes, through all the tribes from the extreme southwest at least as far north as the Ninety Mile Beach and eastward into the desert. In the tribes around Perth it is called wogal, and certain water holes are pointed out as being each the abode of a wogal. It is regarded as dangerous for anyone except a medicine man to approach such a water hole, as the serpent is likely to attack those who venture near its haunts. “It generally attacks females, and the person whom it selects for its victim pines away and dies almost imperceptibly. To this creatures influence the aborigine’s attribute all sore and wounds for which they cannot otherwise account.” (Radcliff-Brown ; 1926).

The notion of a serpent type deity associated with water also occurs throughout the northern and eastern parts of Australia, at the Daly River in the Northern Territory a serpent like deity is held responsible for the creation of rain and ceremonies are performed to this dreaming character to bring the rain. In this area the deity is the spirit of water, rain and flood that is depicted in the rock art of the Wardaman people who have many sites where hundreds of cuts are incised into the rocks for rain making and to control the cycles of nature governing the monsoonal floods. In the north east goldfields of Western Australia the serpent is called the Tjilia or the two carpet snakes. This dreaming track is associated with the creation of the vital waters thought out the Western Desert, and there are numerous highly secret, scarred sites located upon this track which are important ceremonial centres. Lake Miranda is an important site where this serpent deity resides as is Logan spring in the Bar Smith ranges near Wiluna (Liberman 1976) The Rainbow serpent as a spirit creature is believed to have excavated the beds of the rivers during its travels throughout Aboriginal Australia. It is often the belief that it had ‘reached down from the sky to the waterholes and pools, bringing water to the earth’. (Jackson 2004) Throughout Arnhem Land and the Kimberley’s the Rainbow Serpent is associated with other myths regarding fertility and is sometimes regarded as male and at others as female (A.W. Reed 2001). Other similarities with the Waugal or Marchant include the Rainbow Serpent having powers to harm, particularly those who offended against it.

“In the beliefs of many Aboriginal tribes, the rains would dry up, the earth would become parched, and life would cease to exist if it were not for the Rainbow Serpent.” (Reed, A.W.:2001).

In the Esperance region the Mythical serpent that created the water ways was the ‘norrun’ (tiger snake). Doc Reynolds who related the story, states that:

“Long ago the Norrun (tiger snake) awoke from its sleep up north and began his journey towards the coast. The land was bare and desolate. As it moved along, its body pushed up the hills/dunes and went under the ground and back up again all the way along the coast. When the rains came is started to fill up the gullies and the flat areas that then became our creeks/ rivers and lakes/swamp areas that today make up “kepwari”. (Doc Reynolds, per com:2005)

Mudrooroo, an Aboriginal writer who has lectured at several Australian Universities offers a contemporary story about the Waugal placed in a modern context. The story deals with current social and environmental issues for Nyungar people and the wider community.

“…this is a story about a big snake. European people do not like snakes. They think that they are bad and good for nothing, but to the Nyoongar people, the ancestor of all the snakes, the Waugal, was not only good, but long ago made all the rivers and hills and valleys in South Western Australia. The rivers are the tracks he made as he twisted his way along. One of his tracks is the Swan River where this story happened. But before I begin our story, first of all I would like to say that after
Waugyal had made everything, he went to sleep in a deep part of the river. And he is still there today. Perhaps I should say he tries to sleep, for these days there is too much noise and when he is disturbed, he becomes angry and restless and causes trouble. Sometimes he makes all the fish go away and other times he causes boats to capsize. He does not do these things because he is bad, but because people are bad. I’ll tell you one thing about the Waugyal. Wadjelas have studied us and have found that Aborigines all over Australia respect snakes, and they have joined up all these stories about snakes and made something called a rainbow serpent. They say and even tell us that the Waugyal is a rainbow serpent, whatever that is. But he isn’t. He is a big hairy snake that made the rivers and hills and valleys and then, after he had done this, went to sleep in the deep part of the river. If he is any colour he is black, but when we tell them this, they say he is a Rainbow Serpent and refuse to listen.” (Mudrooroo A Snake Story of the Nyoongar People – a Childrens Tale, in Giblett & Webb 1996)

Ethnographers and anthropologists continue to debate the importance of the Waugal or water spirit snake to Nyungar people. Some observers believe that so much of the knowledge about the Waugal mythology has been lost, and that what is currently retained by the Nyungar community is severely fragmented. Few stories about the Waugal or water spirit/snake are associated with particular places or features. Most places Aboriginal people identify with the Waugal do not have a story or explanation to accompany them.

While Bates (1985:221) reports that the ‘woggal’ [Waugal] “made all the big rivers of the Southwest” and “wherever it travelled it made a river” she does not indicate that historically all of the watercourses were of the same mythological significance. Rather, Bates (1985:221) notes that around the turn of the last century: “the places where it camped (stayed, entered the land) in these travels were always sacred”. That is these earlier reports referred to specific or “certain” places (Bates 1985, Radcliffe-Brown 1926). In contemporary reports, the Waugal now does not generally seem to have the same evil or avoidance/sacred (winnaitch) qualities as found in earlier reports. In contemporary reports most Nyungar reporting the presence of the Waugal are unable to provide any localised or contested mythological/ritual/ceremonial information with regard to the majority of reported Waugal sites. The Waugal is now essentially only the benign bringer of water. (McDonald 2000).

The Aboriginal Communities views with regards to Waugal beliefs have changed over time. Historically the Waugal was both a creative and punitive spiritual force and sacred Waugal sites were places where the Waugal inhabited deep pools and created other features of the landscape such as hills, where it had travelled. McDonald (2000) views this as a modern phenomena and interpretation as being tied to the re-invention of tradition, as those traditional stories have been lost due to western acculturation. In a report by Goode (2003) this modern view of Waugal beliefs was referred to as “generalized significance”, significance based upon religious beliefs as opposed to contextualized mythology. In both the Perth metropolitan area and the south west most contemporary Waugal reports are of a generalized nature, yet in the minds of the Aboriginal informants relating the story the significance of the place or water source has not diminished.

Macintyre et al (2003) states that the continuous chain of lakes from Moore River to Mandurah was believed to have been created by the Waugal, the Waugal was believed to have created all the rivers, lakes and wetlands in the Perth region. Dobson (2003) goes on to say that;

“The Waugal was not only a creative totemic being but it was also a protector of the environment. According to Nyungar law, springs and gnamma holes could not be drained as it was believed that this would kill the guardian Waugal spirit and cause the water source to dry up permanently. The Waugal was said to be responsible for
attracting the rain and keeping water holes and springs replenished. It was seen to be both a destructive and creative force in that it could cause sickness as well as cure illness….At a deeper level Waugal mythology was a metaphor that emphasised the pre-scientific mysteries of the rivers, water sources and the landscape. It also explained how water moved throughout the Swan Coastal Plain as a system of underground streams interlinking wetlands to the rivers and ocean.” (Dobson 2003:13)

In contemporary times the Waugal has become or is seen to be present in all water bodies – it is the benign ‘bringer’ of water. This change of view is largely based upon Aboriginal people now not knowing the traditional mythical stories about specific places but attributing significance by reading the country and assigning general significance. (Goode, 2003a, Villers, 2002). McDonald has described the Waugal as having changed or been lessened in meaning, from an entity that made all of the rivers in the past to now ‘a benign bringer of water’. Although Bates recorded that the Waugal made all of the rivers and watercourses in the southwest it was formally the places where it had camped or where it lived in the land which were the sacred or were winnaitch areas. McDonald would seem to be suggesting that formally these places were of greater mythological significance than the other parts of the watercourses. This point of view explains the Waugal as being seen in a different way than that recorded by early European observers – Bates and Radcliffe-Brown can be contrasted with another view that sees the Waugal as a force in the present tense that is multi dimensional and more based upon religious philosophy than traditional mythology, contemporary observers such as O’Connor et al. 1989 and Goode 2003a, 2003b have recorded the Waugal as a more complex entity and associated with a wider belief system, O’Connor sums it up with this statement;

“The Waugal is not just a mythic serpent, an Australian version of the Loch Ness Monster. The Waugal is not just a totemic ancestor. The Waugal is not just a spiritual being, a semi deity. The Waugal is indeed all of these but is, more fundamentally, a personification, or perhaps more correctly animalization, of the vital force of running water….As such also, the question does this permanent river (or creek, or spring or other water source) have (or belong to, or be associated with) a Waugal (or the Waugal) becomes, from an Aboriginal viewpoint, meaningless and condescending. The presents of living water bespeaks Waugal immanence.” (O’Connor et al. 1989)

Milyeannup is another very important site that is located upon the Scott Coastal plain within our current study area. Although not a site that is specific to the nature of water it is an important Dreaming site within the area that is connected to Lake Jasper, Lake Bolghinup and the Scott River by a traditional story line that follows the travels of these mythic figures along the coastal path to the Margaret River. The Milyeannup site is significant as it was the camp site of Milyan and Wooditch two mythical figures that created the Margaret River, and according to Vilma Webb was a place where these figures and other Bibbulmun came together to conduct ceremonies. Mr Wayne Webb said that Milyeannup had been made by the people when the earth was still soft and the limestone had been easy to carve or engrave. According to Mr Webb this site’s ritual importance is shown by the animal motifs left in lime stone slabs in a paddock currently owned by the Dunnett’s. (Wayne & Vilma Webb per com. 2005)

The Milyeannup site is one of the few traditional rock art sites within the South West. The site was first identified to the public by a newspaper article in 1962, where it was stated that the engravings were believed to be fossilized foot prints. In 1983 Alex Baines and John Clark from the WA Museum investigated the site and concluded that the markings, of which they recorded over 100 in number, were carved to represent the images of animals’ footprints. The engravings have been carved in sheets of limestone that are made from limestone carbonate which was believed to have formed in the bed of a shallow lake. The rock formations which
make up the engraving site are spread over a large area mostly located within a paddock on Dunnett’s farm, with some within the National Park to the north and west. The site is located near a swamp to the southwest and a small tributary of the Scott River to the west. The site is of high significance to both the Aboriginal and scientific communities and as such has been registered and protected under the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972).

IDENTIFICATION OF SPOKESPEOPLE

THE RIGHT TO SPEAK ON HERITAGE ISSUES

Various authors have discussed the contemporary problem of who in the Aboriginal Community has the authority to speak on heritage issues within an area. O’Connor et al. (1989:51) suggest that when this question is posed to people in Aboriginal Australia, answers are usually framed by such terms as ‘the traditional owners’, i.e., those people who are defined by place of birth i.e. descent. Meyers presents a broader and more contemporary view of ‘ownership’ based upon descent and association:

“An estate, commonly a sacred site, has a number of individuals who may identify with it and control it. They constitute a group solely in relationship to this estate. Identification refers to a whole set of relationships a person can claim or assert between himself or herself and a place. Because of this multiplicity of claims, land holding groups take essentially the form of bilateral, descending kindred. Membership as a recognized owner is widely extended” (cited in Machin, 1993:22).

Meyers then goes on to further clarify the current perception of ‘ownership’ when he states:

“....such rights exist only when they are accepted by others. The movement of the political process follows a graduated series of links or claims of increasing substantiality, from mere identification and residual interest in a place to actual control of its sacred association. The possession of such rights as recognized by others, called ‘holding’ (kanyininpa) a country, is the product of negotiation” (Ibid.).

While the notion of descent is clearly an important criterion within Meyers analysis, it must be seen in terms of the contemporary Nyungar situation. Nyungar tradition in the south west has been seriously eroded since colonization, lines of descent have been broken and previously forbidden and mixed marriages have interconnected many Nyungar groups who would not have traditionally had a close association (Ibid.). Consequently, in contemporary times the criteria of historical ‘association’ seem to be important in regards to the ‘right to speak’ on heritage issues within an area:

“Traditional subsistence no longer sufficed to support Aboriginals so they combined this with menial work on farms and over time new relationships to land developed. As a consequence, the more recent history associated with their involvement with European agriculture and labour patterns is often more relevant than the pre-contact mode of attachment to an old way of life and the roots of the identity as original owners of the land. Biographical associations are often tied to post-settlement labour patterns and identification. These can predominate. This is part of a dynamic process of ethnicity, identity and tradition” (Machin, 1995:11).

O’Connor, et al. (1989) identified several criteria for determining contemporary community spokes people. A spokesperson must have a long-term association with an area, usually as a young person, and had extensive contact with a member or members of the ‘pivotal generation of the culture transmitters’; those people whom, as children themselves, had contact with people who could pass on their traditional knowledge. A spokesperson must also demonstrate
knowledge of the region’s natural resources, its hunting, fishing and camping grounds, its local water sources, and the flora. This is important because a person without this knowledge is unlikely to be seen by their fellow Nyungars as truly being from that country, despite having been born or lived in that area. In some cases, people from outside a specific region have established themselves by political activism. They are accepted by their fellow Nyungar because they may have participated in mainstream white pursuits, such as advanced education, or legal and political careers, that have empowered them within the broader community. As such, these people are a valuable resource to the local Aboriginal Community. The people consulted in this survey fulfil at least one of these criteria.

NATIVE TITLE CLAIMS OVER THE SURVEY AREA

Currently, there is one registered Native Title application that overlays the project area, lodged with the Register of Native Title Claims and the Schedule of Applications held by the Commonwealth Native Title Tribunal. The Schedule of Applications includes registered applications, unregistered applications, and applications still undergoing the registration test.

- South West Boojarah WC 98/63

  Applicants:
  Mr. Benjamin Nannup, Mr. Donald Corbett, Mr. Frank Nannup, Mr. Franklyn Nannup, Mr. Glen Colbung, Mr. Glenn Councillor, Mr. Ivan Corbett, Mr. Jack Hill, Mr. Ken Colbung, Mr. Kevin Miller, Mr. Phillip Prosser, Mr. Sam Miller, Ms. Barbara Stammner-Corbett, Ms. Donna Hill, Ms. Teresa Miller, Ms. Wendy Williams.

SELECTION OF SPOKESPEOPLE FOR THIS SURVEY

The selection of spokespeople for the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim area was based on the consultant’s long association and experience in working within this Aboriginal community. People were selected based up on their knowledge of the area’s environment with regards to water resources and mythology and their political and cultural affiliation with the area. The following Aboriginal people participated in this survey:

Mrs Vilma Webb is an applicant of the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim and is involved in its working party. Mrs Webb is also a member of the Bibbulmun Mia Aboriginal Corporation of Busselton and sits on the South West Commission of Elders. Mrs. Webb is also involved in teaching Nyungar language, history and culture to primary and high school students and at TAFE colleges. Mrs Webb and her family run the Wardan Aboriginal Cultural Centre at Wyadup and are involved in Eco-tourism ventures in the area. Mrs. Webb is able to trace her lineage through her great, great grandparents to traditional people from the area. Mrs. Webb has lived in the area most of her life and has a wide knowledge of both traditional and more recent historical usage of the region.

Mr Ken Colbung is a well-known Nyungar Elder in the south west and is an applicant of the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim. Mr Colbung is a former member of the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee. Mr Colbung has hereditary ties to the Margaret River area and is knowledgeable about both traditional and contemporary Nyungar culture.

Mr Phillip Prosser is an applicant to the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim and president of the Aboriginal Veterans Affairs Association. Mr Prosser was born in Busselton and grew up at Ryan’s Mill in Cowaramup with his parents, Arthur and Gladys Prosser. Mr Prosser’s parents are descendents of the Sambos. His grandmother Eva Frances Wattling (who died at 82 years of age) was said to be the last of the traditional people in the area and had initiation scars on her shoulders and chest. Mr Prosser was taken from his parents by police officers in 1944 and was schooled at Roelands Mission. Currently Mr Prosser maintains regular association with the Busselton area through his political efforts to secure Native Title.
Mr Jack Hill is an applicant to the Southwest Boojarah Native Title Claim. Mr Hill was born in Busselton; he is the son of Les and Gloria Hill and the grandson of Edward and Mary Hill (nee Isaacs) who were born in Karridale and Busselton. Mr Hill is a member of the Gnruren Aboriginal Corporation of Busselton, the Lake Jasper Juvenile Justice Project and also sits on the executive committee of the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Mr Hill has held a number of government positions throughout his life in the Ministry of Justice, Family and Children’s Services, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and is currently employed by Aims Security in Perth. Mr Hill was formerly the chairperson of the Nyungar Employment Development Aboriginal Corporation (NEDAC).

Miss Ellen Hill is a descendant of the traditional Bibbulmun Wardandi people. She is a member of the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim and an executive member of the Gnruren Aboriginal Corporation of Busselton. She also assists with the Nyungar Education Committee which helps Nyungar children at school. The country she feels she has rights to speak for includes the Busselton, Margaret River, Karridale area through to Manjimup and north towards Bridgetown.

Mr Wayne Webb is a member of the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim group and lives in Walpole. Mr Webb has been involved in Aboriginal heritage surveys as an archaeological assistant for nearly 20 years and is widely respected as a competent and knowledgeable field archaeologist. Mr Webb is actively involved in the preservation and teaching of his culture to young Nyungar people through out the region and also sits on a number of advisory committees for government departments in the region.

Mrs Barbara Corbett-Councillor Stamner is an applicant to the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim. She is the daughter of Frank Corbett and the niece of Dan Corbett who were schooled at the Bussell family’s Ellensbrook Mission. After leaving the mission they took work as farm labourers in the Busselton and Margaret River area. The Corbett family has since had a long term historical association with the Busselton and Margaret River area and claim traditional blood ties through matrilineal descent.

Mrs Sue Kelly is a member South West Boojarah Native Title Claim group and sits upon the working party at the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council. Mrs Kelly lives in Manjimup and is a member of the Manjimup Aboriginal Corporation. Mrs Kelly has traditional ties to the region through her father’s parents who were Hill’s and Froome’s, who were both born in Pemberton. Mrs Kelly is actively involved in the preservation of Aboriginal heritage of the region and is the co-author of a book with Mr Angus Wallam of traditional mythological stories about the region.
COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

AIMS

- To define the social water requirements for the traditional owners of water bodies located within the study area, including the identification of and the significance for specific wetland and riverine resources, customary use and seasonality of customary use of these places and resources within the study area.

- To identify if alteration to the water levels, flows and water quality will affect Aboriginal values pertaining to the maintenance of their cultural values to the above identified places and resources.

- To identify the limits of acceptable change to water levels, quality and flows to water bodies identified within the study area.

METHOD

The informants to conduct this survey were contacted by telephone and briefed as to the requirements of the consultation and were sent briefing notes where possible. Countless discussions on the telephone with regards to the objectives with regards to seeking Aboriginal cultural values with water requirements and water flows within the project area were discussed. Following these consultations field survey meetings were held between the 26th and 29th of October 2005. During these onsite consultations Mr Adrian Goodreid and other members of the Department of Environment were present to explain the requirement of the study and to show people areas of ecological interest where particular vegetation zones were present. During these onsite visits the Aboriginal community were asked to identify areas of significance with regards to water and heritage which were visited during the consultation period. Following each day’s events, discussion sessions were held in order to refine people’s responses with regards to the brief and to identify future areas of investigation.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

On Wednesday the 26th of October Mr Jack Hill, Mrs Barbara Corbett, Mrs Ellen Hill, Mr Ken Colbung and Mr Philip Prosser met with Mr Adrian Goodreid – Department of Environment (DOE), Mr Brad Goode – Anthropologist and his assistant Mr Floyd Irvine. The group met at the Nannup Park where they were briefed on the nature of the survey before proceeding to Barrabup Pool and then Poison Gully before returning to Nannup for lunch and ended the day at Sue’s Bridge on the Blackwood River. On the following day Mrs Vilma Webb, Mr Wayne Webb and Mrs Sue Kelly met with the consultants, Mr Adrian Goodreid and Mr Mike Brainbridge (DOE Environmental Officers), and also with the group were Mrs Toni Webb (wife of Mr Wayne Webb), Mr Allen Kelly (husband of Mrs Sue Kelly) and Mr Bill Bennel (South West Catchment Council – Natural Resource Management Coordinator). The group met at the Nannup Park and proceeded to Poison Gully, the Milyeannup Brook, Milyeannup (Stone engravings) and ended the survey at Hut Pool on the Blackwood River.

Throughout the survey the Aboriginal informants were asked to comment on the significance of water and the effect that depletion of water (through drawdown, pollution and/or alteration of natural hydrology and flow) as a cultural resource would have on the Aboriginal community and culture.

The Project area for this study comprised of the Blackwood River, its tributaries and wetlands downstream of Nannup, the Scott Coastal Plain including Lake Jasper and other dependent ecosystems of the Yarragadee Aquifer; that is, the known recharge and discharge zones of the Yarragadee aquifer.
Figure 2. Group 1 at Poison Gully.

Figure 3. Group 2 at Poison Gully
During the meeting in the Nannup park several members of the first group expressed serious reservations about the science behind the proposal to extract groundwater from the Yarragadee Aquifer. Mr Philip Prosser was emphatic in his belief that if water was taken from the Yarragadee Aquifer it would cause the water in the Leederville Aquifer to drain into the space created below. Another member of the group felt compelled to tell the others in the group and the consultants that she doubted the government would listen to what Nyungar people had to say about the bush and the importance of water to Aboriginal culture. One informant said that she was concerned that while Nyungar people might tell the Wadjelas – white people - about Nyungar culture but would the Wadjelas accept what they were being told, would they believe the Nyungar people? While at the park the group talked about what is important to the Aboriginal people regarding the bush. The group saw the right of access and enjoyment of the environment as an inheritance they wanted to pass on to their grandchildren and future generations of Nyungar and Aboriginal people. The group talked about the way in which Aboriginal culture has changed over the last 100 years as has the Aboriginal lifestyle, in a modern and practical sense the Aboriginals are concerned about protecting what is left.

**Blackwood River**

- The Aboriginal informants were asked to consider if the area of discharge of the Yarragadee Aquifer into the Blackwood River was of a higher significance than other parts of the river.

The Aboriginal informants stated they believed that areas of fresh water discharge were of a greater significance than other parts of the river. The fresh water discharge supports more animals and it improves the habitat of the fish and marron. The animals and the trees need the water to survive.

- They were asked if they were aware of and if they practice propitiatory rituals such as throwing sand and talking or singing to the river or sea.

They all knew of such rituals and knew of other Nyungars who practiced propitiatory rituals. The Waugal was said to be able to make the water dry up. The feelings about water are very strong, nothing survives without water, and water is the ‘life blood’.

Some of the informants talked about *Mummeries*, small spirit people who were able to cause trouble and were often mischievous. If people do bad things the *Mummeries* would cause trouble for the custodians of the country, these spirits are all across the country and they are letting Nyungar people know that they are not doing their job of looking after the country. The custodians of the country had to try and put something back into the country, it was their duty to protect and preserve good areas of ‘bush tucker’.

- The Aboriginal informants were asked about the water requirements in the larger rivers during the summer months, would a depth of water comparable to the Poison Gully stream be a sufficient amount of water in the shallowest zones of the Blackwood River. (At Poison Gully the Aboriginal people were asked to estimate the depth of water in the stream [@ 5cm] and to visualise the shallowest points of the Blackwood River during the summer flow. The Blackwood River downstream of Nannup was described as essentially consisting of one hundred or so pools separated by shallow bars – ripples – around 5-10 meters wide during the summer flow. The Aboriginal informants were asked if a 5cm depth of water flowing over these shallow ripples during the summer flow was enough water to maintain the integrity/ cultural values/ life of the river).
The group did not think that 5 cm of flow over riffles would be enough to maintain the Blackwood River. The water quality, oxygenation and temperature of the pools would be affected. The flow of water into and through the pools on the rivers needed to be enough to maintain the fish and marron comfortably in the deeper pools. The group also said that area of habitat around the water would decrease if the water levels dropped and that reducing the amount of habitat that exists around the rivers would not be acceptable, there is little enough left already. The Snowy River was referred to as a river that had been altered in a way that was totally unacceptable to Aboriginal people. The main concerns of the group in reducing the amount of summer flow was its effect on the animals and said that any changes to the water in the landscape would affect the behaviour of the animals in response to the amount of water available to them and in the quality of the bush habitat. The group did not think that there was any capacity to reduce the summer flow in the Blackwood River. Any change to the water levels and quality in the Blackwood River would result in increased pressure on the remaining areas of good habitat and water in areas such as the Poison Gully and Milyeannup tributaries as the fish and marron moved into and overcrowded the refuge areas. Mr Webb said he had seen the river reduced to almost no flow in summer and that he had removed debris at the head of a pool to let water flow before. He had done this to free up the water flow to allow enough water to oxygenate and cool the waters of the pool for the fish and marron. They believed that it would be a huge problem if the water level in the Blackwood River was allowed to fall to as little as 5cm of water over the shallowest points; that a 5cm deep flow of water was hardly enough for a river like the Blackwood.

• The group were asked to comment on their trust in science of the assessment process for water management.

The Aboriginal informants all responded by saying their trust in science was very low, scientists always say that they know best. What happens naturally is sustainable, any change will affect what lives in the water and everything around the river suffers if the water is affected. Mr Prosser commented on the Collie River saying that the river used to be full of Marron and Gilgie and Cobbler but that there is nothing since they built the dam.

Mr Jack Hill and Mrs Ellen Hill said that the Ancestors would never have taken anything from the rivers or the sea that would affect the environment. If an animal or food resource was scarce they would leave those fish or eggs or plants alone until they were more abundant. When fishing the Nyungar people would only take what they needed, Geographe Bay now has no fish left because people took more than they needed for a feed. Mr Prosser commented on the lack of prawns in the Swan River as an example of a river that has lost a resource because of water quality. He said that extracting a further 45 gigalitres a year from the Yarragadee, the whole south west forest area would be killed in 10 to 15 years. These comments reflect a belief that a traditional Aboriginal and common sense approach was tried and true.

• The Aboriginal informants asked to visit the Hut Pool area in particular the crossing of Great North Road. The Aboriginal people wanted to show the DOE Officers an ochre site at the crossing but the site was inaccessible due to the height of water in the river.

At Hut Pool on the Great North Road the group explained that the Blackwood River formed a tribal boundary, the Bibbulmun to the south and the Wardandi to the north. The ford at the crossing of Great North Road was a place where the two tribal groups met to trade. Ceremonies and corroborees were held at this spot, there is an ochre site nearby and the group found numerous artefacts in an area near the car park. It was also the place where wives were exchanged between the two groups. A rite of passage was endured during the exchange when the man would stand in front of the woman while spears were thrown at them, if the woman did not move in the same direction as the man she was likely to get speared. The Bibbulmun people did not carry shields because they believed in their own ability to dodge the spears. The consultants were shown a plant called Djubuk – an edible plant, the root is eaten – possibly Orchidae.
Mythological/Spiritual and Sacred Associations
The Blackwood River and its tributaries were created by the Waugal, the Waugal lives in many places along the river, Nyungar people often talk about not swimming in deep dark pools because they believe the Waugal lives in these places. Propitiatory rituals such as throwing sand into the water and singing or talking to rivers and the sea to let the Waugal be aware of your presence and intentions. This is to ward off bad luck or sickness.

Blackwood River Tributaries
Aboriginal cultural requirements for groundwater levels and stream flow in the Poison Gully and Milyeannup Brook.

- The group were told that the Poison Gully stream was believed to act as a refuge for aquatic fauna during the summer months. Poison Gully was chosen as a site to visit by the DOE as it is an area containing a permanent stream and a varied vegetation community fed directly by the Yarragadee Aquifer. Mr Adrian Goodreid – DOE explained to the group that scientific surveys had indicated that the plant most susceptible to a reduced water level growing in the area could tolerate a 0.5 of a metre drop in the ground water level at the Poison Gully site.

The group recognised that certain areas did act as refuges for animals during the summer months they said that if the water was diminished there would be more pressure on these areas and that the balance of animals and plants in the bush would be disturbed. If the balance of the bush was disturbed it is bad for all of the animals as they crowd into smaller and smaller places. The animals would move in accordance with where the food and water was.

The group said that the burrowing fauna such as frogs and gilgies that depend on the damp zones around the rivers and wetlands would be the first to feel the effects of any reduction in ground water levels. The gilgies and frogs were a food resource for Aboriginal people and both groups said that the frogs they heard at Poison Gully were ‘telling them that this is good country’.

At Poison Gully the group talked about several different types of bush foods available in that area and other parts of the forest. Using frogs to obtain water in areas of salty or dirty water was also mentioned. Mrs Corbett stated that this area was a very important place as a resource and a teaching place. She emphasised that if areas such as this are lost there will be no places to take the young people to teach them about the bush; the bush is the Nyungar people’s blackboard and classroom.

Mr Webb said that Nyungar people used to dig holes into the beds of rivers and in soaks to find water not only for themselves but also to make the water available to the animals. This is a practical measure of the depth of ground water required to maintain cultural practices – the depth to which one can reasonably dig with an implement such as a stick. If the ground water was drawn down at all the amount of habitat available to these animals (frogs and gilgies) would shrink dramatically.

- The Aboriginal informants were asked what they would lose if the water was taken away or stopped flowing.

The Aboriginal informants said that the life source would be gone and that all of the animals which are the Nyungar people totems would suffer, this would be like losing one of your family. If the plants die off, it will be impossible to take the young people out into the forest to teach them about bush tucker. It wouldn’t be the same taking the kids to a museum. Mrs Kelly said that when people’s houses burn often the thing people feel they have lost most from is when they lose their photographs. When people lose their photographs how can they show their children and grandchildren what they were doing 40 years ago? Losing the bush for
Nyungar people is like losing all of your precious photographs, how can the younger people be taught if there is no bush to show them? The Nyungar people have strong feelings about the bush - it is in the blood of Nyungar people. Nyungar people will go into the bush to search for what they are missing; the bush is a place to re-charge them - to feel the connection to their country. Many older people who were raised in the missions are still looking to find their own country, a place where they know they belong. If the Nyungar people in the group lost their own country, if the plants and animals weren’t there, they couldn’t take their children to another group’s country to teach them about the bush. The other Nyungars in different places have different words for plants and animals and it would be highly disrespectful to take your children there and then use words and names from your country in theirs. The bush was described as a church and a classroom. The bush was described as being a part of a Nyungar person’s identity - a small piece of you dies each time the bush dies. Mr Prosser stated that Poison Gully was a very significant place to him and that if the water dried up it would result in the death of his totem, the Tiger Snake.

The group expressed reservations about the science used to say there would be no effect taking water from the Yarragadee Aquifer. They were sceptical about science, saying they trusted their own intuitions more. The whole south west would be affected if water was taken from the Yarragadee, the land will die off and farming will be affected along with the forests and rivers. The Aboriginal informants also expressed the view that they believed that if people are allowed to take a certain amount of water from the Yarragadee Aquifer now the amount of water they will take in the future will increase. One group of informants recalled they had visited the Poison Gully site during a previous consultation regarding the placement of test bores for the Yarragadee Aquifer, it was commented that the Aboriginal custodians had requested the bores not be placed at that site, they were disappointed to find when they revisited the site that bores were present and this no doubt reinforced the notion that ‘the government’ doesn’t listen to them. One informant said it was ‘guaranteed’ that as the demand for water increases the amount taken from the Yarragadee will also increase with time. The Aboriginal informants said they were alarmed about the size of the proposed Yarragadee Aquifer pumping project because they believed that it could affect the whole of the south west region. They also pointed out that if the proposal today was to take 45 gigalitres of water from the Yarragadee Aquifer what would happen when Perth and Mandurah doubled in size? Climate change was mentioned, Nyungar people were aware that the south west was becoming drier. As the climate changes more from global warming the demand on the water will increase and this water will become more important. If water was taken from the Yarragadee Aquifer, then the amount taken should be very conservative.

The group talked about the water being a part of their country, in the past there was always an exchange if something was taken from one place to another, the group didn’t see that there would be anything given in exchange for the water that would be sent to Perth. It was also mentioned that if the water from the Yarragadee was used in the south west for agricultural purposes the water that did not get used by the plants could recharge the aquifer, if the water was taken to Perth there would be no possible recharge. The group thought that water should be used locally to grow food, that this would be a tolerable and sensible use of the water. Using the water to grow gardens in Perth was seen as being a folly. People in Perth should be encouraged to use water more sensibly; there should be incentives and requirements to reuse grey water for example. It was suggested that a minimal amount could be taken from the aquifer to meet the water needs of towns in the south west but that it would not be acceptable to take the water to be used in Perth. Mr Webb said that the country was suitable for a nomadic life and not for the lifestyle that had developed in Perth.

Mr Webb said that it would be OK to take or draw down the ground water by 10cm but only provided the water was used locally. He used the comparison of ten centre metres against 50cm which he said was an unacceptable amount of draw down in ground water levels. The
Aboriginal informants were aware that water was being taken from the Yarragadee Aquifer by farmers on the Scott Coastal Plain. They were also aware that licences to extract water by the farmers were not as yet being used to their capacity. Most of the informants accepted there was a need to use some water for agriculture but that there was also a point at which no more water can be taken. Mrs Sue Kelly said that people should be aware of where the food comes from, the agricultural areas in the south west and that we need to be able to produce food more than people in Perth need to water their lawns. The Aboriginal informants were also aware of the need for water in the south west; they knew that there have been water shortages in Bridgetown and Manjimup in recent years. Some of the informants were able to reluctantly accept that some water could be taken from the Yarragadee Aquifer but felt strongly that the water should be used locally rather than in Perth. If the water was used locally it was staying in the same locality and some of the water could recharge the aquifer below.

The management of the landscape was also discussed, the group pointed out that in the past the Aboriginal people used fire to create areas of good habitat, to hunt and to clear paths. They said that the amount of run off from the forest would be less now than it used to be because of the altered pattern of burning. If traditional burning practices were used again they believed there would be more run off into the rivers and more recharge into the ground water.

- The Aboriginal informants were asked to make comments on the significance of the fresh water inflow.

The significance of fresh water inflow is that it is sacred in that it preserves the vegetation which is the condiments or resources that the Nyungar people used to survive. The maintenance of water in the landscape was of critical importance, any reduction or redirection of the flow of water would diminish and damage the value of the environment. The Aboriginal informants were highly concerned that any draw down in the water table would have an adverse effect on plants and the animal communities that relied on the water and vegetation. Any damage or diminishment of the environment has a corresponding effect on Nyungar culture because the Nyungar people use the land to teach respect for the land and that there has to be something there – in the bush, the forest, streams and pools - to teach people about for the culture to survive.

- The Aboriginal informants were asked how they would know if the environment was affected, what would be the signs that the environment was suffering.

Mr Prosser pointed to pigface in a book the Mr Adrian Goodreid had. He said that there used to be heaps of that growing along the sand dunes but that now it was far less common having been displaced by marram grass after sand dunes had been disturbed by development, he used this as an example of a ‘ripple effect’ where if water was taken from this area it would start a ‘chain reaction’ or series of events that would damage the local environment. The informants said that the effects of reducing water levels would begin before it became visible. The rivers used to be different before the white people arrived and they have changed a lot since then, why rush the process along? Several of the informants made references to the ground water extraction from the Gnangara Mound, comments were made to the effect that taking water from the Yarragadee would result in the same problems as are being experienced in the area of the Gnangara Mound.
St John Brook – Barrabup and Workman’s Pools

- At Barrabup Pool the group were asked to consider what a change in the water level of the pool and similar pools would mean to Aboriginal people and to indicate what level of change would be acceptable to Aboriginal people.

Several of the Aboriginal informants recalled that there used to be more water in the south west than there is now, that the tributaries of the main rivers had more water at this time of year than they do now and that there used to be more places that had water in summer. People were ‘absolutely’ sure that there was less water in the streams now than there used to be. Mrs Vilma Webb recalled that around Busselton there used to be springs which bubbled up out of the ground pushing the water about half a meter above the ground; such was the force of the spring. She remembers two springs in the Busselton area that flowed like this but that they had stopped flowing in recent years. The reasons for the reduced amount of water were given as, decreased rainfall, agriculture, clearing land, dams, tree plantations and water extraction from both streams and ground water. Mr Colbung said that quantity and quality were affected, the run off into the rivers is dirty and carries a lot of salt and the rivers are filling up with silt. Because the upper catchment is salty and polluted now the pressure on the remaining downstream environment has increased and is increasing. These are the effects of farming in the catchment and an example of how something happening over ‘there’ affects what is happening ‘here’. Mr Prosser added that you couldn’t do more damage to the environment than taking the water and that the greatest threat to the environment is from the people who want to take the water.

Several of the informants said the Waugal had created the environment, the rivers and the valleys, the hills and that to Nyungar people the bush was a place to worship and heal. The bush is the Nyungar place to come, not to the church, when the sorrow of life affects you. Mr Colbung said that the spiritual side to water was the rainbow serpent, the rain comes and makes the river, there – pointing to the water– and now, the Waugal is present in the water. We can’t survive without water and we need to protect the water, the water is sacred to us, the Waugal is in a water hole, the river and lives in the forest, it is present in all that because it wouldn’t survive without all that. If the water is drawn down in this pool the effects will be felt by the forest, the trees that surround the river and the trees at the top of the slope, the whole forest around the pools will change if the water level drops. The water doesn’t just support the people, it supports all the animals and the trees, it is the lifeblood. Mr Colbung said that people who grew up in a place had a responsibility to look after that place, in this case to prevent the water becoming muddy or letting the water dry up. The people lose the privilege they have of using the water. The use of water in other place is already taking water away from the forest, the blue-gum and pine tree plantations are taking the water from the rivers and the trees. The jarrah and karri trees are here because they know how much water to take, they can survive here and they have survived here. The water is the spiritual medium that guarantees the trees can grow, as a birthright you have a responsibility to protect that essence, to tell people who come into your country how to protect it. Mr Prosser said that Nyungar people liked to walk in the bush and communicate with nature, to look at the birds and wonder, to look at the trees and listen to the trickle of water in the creek. The trees are sustaining the river, if you take away the forest the river suffers, look at the wheat belt he said. Once you start pumping water from the Yarragadee the ground water will be affected, water finds its own level and the environment responds to what people do to it. Water is life.

- The Aboriginal informants were asked “What is the first sign of loss of water?”

Mr Prosser said the Old Coast Road and the Ludlow Tuart Forest were examples, the effects of clearing and in the Tuart Forest the mine would cause the water to drop and the trees will suffer and that in turn affects the kangaroos, the birds and the possums that live in the trees. The effect on Nyungar culture would be that they would not be able to take their grandchildren
into the bush to be taught about their culture. “If you remove access you diminish the resource, the values and the ability to teach those values, the bush is the resource that sustains the culture”. Mr Colbung said that it was important to introduce people to the bush and that a place like Barrabup Pools had an effect on the forest, there are tables and paving and toilets designed to not pollute, and these facilities are of a scale and such construction to blend in with the bush. Aboriginal people and other people use these places and these places are a change to the environment but they are acceptable to Aboriginal people. Because the environment changes the Aboriginal people change with their environment. “Once this country was all snow country and the Aboriginal people survived in that environment as well. The desert people have their ways to save water when they cook their meat and this is in response to their environment, they don’t skin their Kangaroos so the meat doesn’t lose its water – the Bibbulmun people skinned their Kangaroos for coats because they had to respond to their environment. When the Aboriginal people worked on farms and were paid in tucker they were responding to their changed environment, Aboriginal people have been able to adapt and the new culture is to protect these places.

Mythological/Spiritual Associations
The bush is a part of the Nyungar person’s identity, if the bush suffers or dies it was referred to ‘as if a part of you dies’. The bush is a spiritual place where Nyungar people can recharge and ‘find’ themselves. It is the place of worship. Totem animals of individual people would die off if the environment is destroyed. Aboriginal custodians have a responsibility to look after their totems. The culture of Nyungar people has changed with the altered environment and the current culture is to protect the places that are left, looking after your country is important.

Scott Coastal Plain, including Gingilup Swamps and Milyeannup
Damp swampy country such as the Scott coastal plain, the Gingilup swamps, Lake Jasper and Milyeannup were very important food gathering areas for Aboriginal people, foods such as frogs, gilgies, birds, and eggs were abundant at certain times of the year. Other resources such as spear wood were also available in these areas.

The Aboriginal people were already concerned about the existing Acid Sulphate problems on the Scott Coastal Plain and believed it was not a good idea to do anything that could make the existing problems worse.

The second group visited the site of the Milyeannup rock engravings. Milyeannup was also known to the group as the dreamtime camping place of Milyan. Wooditch was a strong law man and this is where Wooditch and Milyan came after the creation of the Margaret River when they had run from Milyan’s father. Milyan, who was the daughter of Ngungaroot, married Wooditch who created the Margaret River. Milyan had been promised to another and Ngungaroot did not want Milyan to marry Wooditch, the two eloped together and after creating the Margaret River and dealing with Ngungaroot (who they turned into a groper) they went to Milyeannup where they lived, Buller-Murphy, D (1959). Mrs Webb said the women who married the Wardandi men came from the Lake Jasper and Milyeannup area and that the women were exchanged at the crossing at Hut Pool on the Blackwood River. The informants said the area was an important place for spear wood, gathering food and hunting. They believed that in the past there would have been more water in the area, that there would have been swamps in the places that are now pasture. The Aboriginal informants felt very strongly that the Milyeannup Rock Engravings are highly significant and sacred to them. They want the area of land that the engravings occupy preserved, they want the land bought off of the farmer. They said that the area of the engravings is more important to the people of Western Australia than they are to just one farmer.
The group told several stories they knew about the Milyeannup area and the rock carvings. The *Kybra* made the tracks in the limestone. This was the great white bird for which the Bibbulmun people mistook the white sails of the first ships they saw. The people thought the sails were the *Kybra* coming back from across the sea. People used to dance with the big bird the *Kybra* at Milyeannup, the place is of ritual and sacred significance.

The consultants were shown a ‘water tree’ by the members of the Webb family; this is a large old Jarrah tree that is forked into two main trunks around two meters above the ground. A hollow has formed in the fork of the tree, whether by natural means or as a result of deliberate burning is unclear. The hollow is deeper than one’s arm and a stick had to be used to reach the bottom. There was in fact no water in the tree which surprised the informants, Mrs Webb said that she had drunk from the tree with her late husband by lowering a cup into the hollow. She had drunk from the tree last about 5 or 6 years ago. She had been told about the tree a long time ago but could not recall who had told her about it. Mrs Webb said that this tree was the last place that Milyan and Wooditch drank water before they reached the camping ground at Milyeannup. Wooditch gave the Milyeannup Brook the name of his wife.

![Figure 4. Rock engravings at Milyeannup.](image)

**Mythological/Sacred Associations**

Milyeannup and the rock engravings are an important part of a dreamtime story that links the area with the Margaret River and the Wardandi and Bibbulmun people. The story has associations with locations through the region, the Milyeannup water tree, the Milyeannup Brook and the Milyeannup and Lake Jasper area.

The rock engravings at Milyeannup are of emu or bird footprints, kangaroo and dog tracks. Ritual dances with the *Kybra*, a mythical bird took place at the location of the engravings according to several of the informants.
Lake Jasper

The Aboriginal group were asked to comment upon the effects that draw down would have on Lake Jasper, Mrs Vilma Webb stated;

“Our culture and dreaming are centred on this land and Lake, these are our hunting and gathering areas, we have stories which go all through this area, and this proposal would break the line.” No diminishment of the water level in Lake Jasper would be tolerable. The group knew that there were archaeological sites under the water of the lake and they believed the water was protecting the sites, they also said that a small drop in the water level of the lake would expose many more sites around the lake and that people would be likely to remove the artefacts if this happened. The Webb family stated that Lake Jasper is the most significant place to their family because traditionally it is where their wives came from, for the Wardandi People. The ecology of the lake and the land around it is the life of the lake, the group said that if the draw down of the water produced acid sulphate that got into the lake it would affect the surrounding vegetation and the Donnelly River if there is an underground connection between the two- some people believe that the lake drains into the lower Donnelly River.

Mr Goodreid asked the group if they believed that the water level in Lake Jasper would be affected if water was taken from the Yarragadee Aquifer.

The group replied that they believed there was a deep sump in the middle of Lake Jasper and that the lake was recharged from groundwater input. The group were interested to know if any water sampling had been done at Lake Jasper to determine if the lake was recharged from the Yarragadee Aquifer. Some of the informants believed that the lake and the Yarragadee Aquifer could be linked or related.

The group knew Lake Jasper had been a camping area for Nyungar people before it filled with water and that there had been a strong spring there which bubbled up out of the ground before the lake filled. Mr Webb outlined to the DOE officers and the consultants part of a traditional story concerning the lake. “During the great shaking that occurred across the south west a long time ago all of the ground shook. This caused gases and fumes to come up out of the ground and these gasses caused the people to fall asleep. When the people woke from their sleep the whole of the landscape had been changed, there were mountains and hills that had been formed and the sand dunes had moved to form a barrier between the spring and the ocean causing Lake Jasper to fill with water”. Mr Webb said that the carvings at Milyeannup had been made by the people when the earth was still soft and the limestone had been easy to carve or engrave.

OUTCOMES OF THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The results of the community consultation have been summarized to highlight the key issues raised by the Nyungar people and to derive the Aboriginal Social Water Requirements for the Southern Blackwood Plateau and the Scott Coastal Plain.

Nyungar Community Views on Water Abstraction from the Southwest Yarragadee Aquifer

- All water sources were important to prehistoric traditional Aboriginal people for campsites and food procurement activities, maintaining this association and the ability to teach future generations of Nyungars from their own home land is at the heart of the community’s desire to maintain the ecological integrity of areas that may be affected by groundwater abstraction from all aquifers in the study area.
- The Nyungar informants were aware of groundwater being abstracted for farming and mining on the Scott Coastal Plain and for many purposes in the Busselton, Capel and
Bunbury areas. They thought this abstraction and land use change was already having a detrimental effect on the environment.

- The informants were also concerned about climate change and the ability of the environment to withstand lower rainfall and large amounts of groundwater abstraction.
- The water of the Southwest Yarragadee Aquifer belongs in the region and where it discharges and supports the environment is critical to maintaining the cultural values of the Nyungar people.
- Any abstraction of water from the aquifer should be sustainable. However, the informants were sceptical of the science that defined sustainability.
- More involvement with the scientists that define sustainable use, which the informants understood to be associated with the setting of Ecological Water Requirements (EWRs) would greatly improve their ability to determine whether these EWRs were adequate for protecting their cultural beliefs.
- Based on some general descriptions of some of the EWRs developed for the study area the Nyungar informants believed that a small change in water tables might be acceptable, but only if this was sustainable and if the water was to be used in the Southwest region. At least in this instance some of the water might be recharged back to Southwest aquifers.
- Culturally significant sites in the study area are offered some protection from their location in National Parks and other CALM managed areas, this limited protection from most land use change, except mining, should not be further threatened by taking from beneath. That is from taking away the water that supports the environment.
- Whilst the field based consultation only visited a small number of key sites the sentiments expressed in this study at these sites in relation to the importance of water and its place at the core of Aboriginal beliefs extends over all Nyungar lands and needs to be recognized and integrated into western water management practices.

**Aboriginal Social Water Requirements: Blackwood River & tributaries –St John Brook to Hut Pool**

- The Blackwood River and its tributaries is a very significant cultural site, which is supported by its listing by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs as a Registered Aboriginal Heritage Site.
- Maintaining the current health and composition of wetland and riverine vegetation communities associated with the Blackwood River and tributaries is of prime importance to the Nyungar people.
- Maintain summer flows in the Blackwood River, especially to maintain pool water quality. The Nyungar informants were sceptical of the ability of the EWR for macroinvertebrates, which was explained to be a 5 cm depth of flow over riffles, as being adequate to mix, oxygenate and maintain water quality of the summer pools in the Blackwood River. Although they were unable to state quantifiably what level of flow would be sufficient to achieve this they believed it to be much greater than 5 cm.
- St John Brook and pools are significant sites that the Nyungar community wants to be protected from groundwater pumping. Zero to minimal decline in pool levels and the flow in the brook would be acceptable. Equally important was maintaining the health of the riverine vegetation.
- At Poison Gully and Milyeannup Brook the Nyungar informants will accept between zero and a minimal draw down of the water table (in the order of 10 cm) for regional water use.
- The maintenance of the summer aquatic habitat, including damp substrate for burrowing animals like frogs and crayfish, in the perennial streams of Poison Gully and Milyeannup Brook was considered to be critically important. The informants would not accept any loss of aquatic stream habitat in these streams.
Aboriginal Social Water Requirements: Scott Coastal Plain – Lake Jasper and Gingilup Swamps

- The Scott Coastal Plain contains very significant Aboriginal sites, especially Lake Jasper and the Milyeannup stone engravings. Mythological connection with these lands is very strong.
- The swampy country of Lake Jasper and the Gingilup Swamps were very important food gathering areas for Aboriginal people, foods such as frogs, gilgies, birds, and eggs were abundant at certain times of the year. Other resources such as spear wood were also available in these areas. It is therefore important to the community that these areas are preserved and the environment is protected. These areas should not be put at risk by drawing down the water table any further than what is currently occurring due to farming and mining on the Scott Coastal Plain.
- The Aboriginal people were concerned about Acid Sulphate problems on the Scott Coastal Plain and were concerned that further activities such as mining and groundwater abstraction would severely degrade the area. Consequently the community does not agree with any further draw downs in the water table or activities that disturb the soil profile that may cause acidification of the soil and waterways.
- Lake Jasper is a very significant Aboriginal site, as evident by the large number of submerged archaeological sites contained within the lake. Maintaining water levels to maintain the ecological integrity of the lake and to keep significant sites submerged, to protect them from disturbance is critically important to the Nyungar people.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall result and underlying themes from the outcomes of this survey is that Nyungar people believe that the water sources within the project area, particularly ground water, is at the centre of both their belief system and its association with the health of the environment. In a sense, water is essential to the life of the landscape, the health of the forest and all the animals and birds and other forms of life that rely upon it. The Aboriginal people consulted in this survey have demonstrated this belief in both a spiritual and domestic mundane sense by describing both their traditional and contemporary use and association with places of importance identified within the region, i.e. Blackwood River Summer Pools, Milyeannup Brook, Barrabup Pool, Lake Jasper, Gingilup Swamps and Scott Coastal Plain were the Scott River runs through to Augusta.

It is the opinion of the Aboriginal people consulted that since colonisation the cultural practises and values of the European invaders have modified the ecology of the landscape and the hydrology of the waterways to a point that is now almost beyond redemption. The Aboriginal people consulted in this survey believe that due to the action of agriculture, land clearing, construction of dams, the effective tree plantations and the abstraction of ground water for domestic and agricultural use has caused the health of the environment to be now almost to the point of no return. The Aboriginal people believe that this has had a profound effect upon their culture in that the diminished integrity of the environment and the resources that it provides has led to Aboriginal people having difficulty in maintaining their cultural practises and associations with country. In a sense the loss of the environment, has caused a disconnection with this country and the notion of country and has caused a crisis for identity of the region’s Aborigines. Aboriginal people have a strong spiritual belief in connection with the environment and believe that they are tasked with its maintenance and protection. In a sense this is a symbiotic, cultural and ecological relationship. The two are interdependent of each other. The loss of the environment makes it difficult for Aboriginal people to pass on their culture to their children and in a sense their church or place of worship is being destroyed or diminished. It is now seen as a priority by the Aboriginal people consulted in this survey to be
able to express their values in a way that they can be absorbed by the mainstream community as a priority in being able to protect what is left. So in a sense, Aboriginal people wish to see that the environment is exploited less from a western scientific economic need and that the ethic of only taking what you need rather than too much is absorbed within current environmental thinking.

In this current survey, the focus for the scientists has been to assess in quantifiable terms the point in which abstraction of ground water from the Yarragadee Aquifer creates both environment, social and cultural problems and ask the Aboriginal community at what point does this happen. Various sites such as Poison Gully, Milyeannup Brook, Barrabup Pool and Hut Pool crossing on the Blackwood River were visited where these questions were proposed and these issues were debated. The consulted groups were informed of a number of environmental water requirement criteria that had been established for various sites in the study area. The informants were asked if they agreed with this science and if they supported the drawdown of water bodies in the region to these levels. It was clear from the responses that Aboriginal people believe that already too much had been taken and that any further abstraction of water and diminishment of flow in terms on quality and quantity would have adverse effects upon the ecology, which would in turn cause great pain in terms of people sense of identity and diminish the places available for Aboriginal people to maintain and transmit their cultural practises and beliefs to future generations.

As a result of the above survey, the following recommendations are made:

It is **recommended** that the Department of Environment give due consideration to the cultural belief of the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim group with regards to the significance of the identified water resources within the region. It has been identified that Aboriginal people believe that the issue of further licenses for the extraction of ground water from the Yarragadee Aquifer will cause undue pressure to the survival of the ecology within the study area and that because this ecology is of fundamental importance to the nature and continuance of Aboriginal culture that further abstraction of ground water should be avoided, particularly for uses external to the region.

It is accepted by the Aboriginal community that some limited use of water resources from the underground Aquifer can be sustainable if the use is tied to the values of local needs such as agriculture and local domestic consumption within the south west. It is therefore **recommended** that ground water abstraction licenses only be issued for the harvesting of water from the Yarragadee Aquifer for local sustainable use.

It is **further recommended** that the Department of Environment continue to monitor water resources in the region in order to maintain adequate supplies so that the necessary environmental flow is maintained to protect the integrity of places identified within this survey as places of high significance to the Aboriginal community. Places such as the Blackwood River Summer Pools, tributaries of the Blackwood River such as the Milyeannup Brook, the St John Brook, the Rosa Brook and in particular Poison Gully, Lake Jasper and other wetlands of the Scott Coastal Plain are places that are highly necessary for Nyungar peoples sense of identity and continuance and maintenance of their culture.

It is **finally recommended** that positions be made available within the Department of Environment for Nyungar people so that a diffusion of Nyungar values with regards to water resource management can be absorbed within mainstream management practices. A further benefit of this recommendation would be that Nyungar people would have more exposure to scientific assessment and management practice which would ultimately engender more trust and faith with environmental management procedures.
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APPENDIX 1: ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

SITES REGISTER SEARCH

A search of the DIA Sites Register was conducted on the 15th November 2005 in order to provide a summary of registered Aboriginal Heritage Sites that are located within the study area. A summary of these sites are provide in Table 4. For original documentation, which includes an outline of the areas searched, see Appendix 2.

Table 4: Summary of Registered Aboriginal Sites Located Within the Study Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site No.</th>
<th>SITE Id No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>LOCATION (MGA Zone 50)*</th>
<th>SITE TYPE</th>
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<td>NORTING</td>
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<td>6217597mN</td>
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<tr>
<td>S02714</td>
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<td>378639mE</td>
<td>6190647mN</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4516</td>
<td>Lake Jasper 04</td>
<td>379639mE</td>
<td>6191647mN</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4517</td>
<td>Lake Jasper 07</td>
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<td>6191647mN</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>S02595</td>
<td>4534</td>
<td>Lake Jasper 05</td>
<td>378639mE</td>
<td>6190647mN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S02596</td>
<td>4535</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4649</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6203147mN</td>
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<td>6228292mN</td>
</tr>
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</table>

* Please note: Coordinates are indicative locations that represent the centre of sites as shown on maps produced by the DIA – they may not necessarily represent the true centre of all sites, particularly if access to specific site information is tagged as ‘closed’ or ‘vulnerable’.

REVIEW OF RELEVANT SITE FILES

Site ID 483 - Stewart Road This site was recorded by Quartermaine in 1995. The AMG Zone 50 coordinates are 367339mE 6217597mN. The site is a quartz artefact scatter located in grey and yellow sand on the west side of a small gully with a pool, immediately south (six meters) of Stewart Road at a point 700 meters east of Milyeannup Road and 1.5 km east of Kookaburra road. The extent of the site is five by two meters.
Site ID 4482 (S2714) Lake Jasper 06 This site was recorded by Charles Dortch West Australian Museum (WAM) on the 26.02.1991. This site is a micro lithic chipping floor at a depth of 4.8m 148m north/north west of the southern most shore of the lake. The co-ordinates are given in metric at 1:250 scale on map sheet S150-10 as 378 190 and at 1:100 000 scale as 786 903. The site’s extent measures 1m x 2m and contains approximately 50 quartz flakes, backed blades and microliths. Tree stumps near the site have been dated at 3800bp. The results of this site’s investigation have been published in Australian Archaeology. The site is of high archaeological significance.

Site ID 4516 (S2658) Lake Jasper 04 This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) on the 02.05.1990. The site is a submerged sparse gravel bed factory. The site is located approximately 30m from the eastern shore of the lake and is northwest of Site Two. The co-ordinates are recorded in longitude/latitude and were given as 34° 24’S and 115° 41’E. The site has an extent of 50m x 100m. The site is given low archaeological significance.

Site ID 4517 (S2659) Lake Jasper 07 This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) on the 09.05.1988. The site is a possible shoreline camp site where artefacts have been deposited. The site is located on the northwest corner of the lake and extends into the water. Artefacts have been collected to a depth of 1m. The site is estimated to be 3800bp. The co-ordinates for the site are recorded in longitude/latitude at 34° 24’00”S and 115° 39”E. The sites extent is estimated to be 50m x 50m. The site is considered to be representative of other shoreline sites and is not considered of high significance.

Site ID 4518 (S2660) Lake Jasper 10 This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) in May 1990. Site 10 is located on the lakes western shore line. No other information is recorded for this site. Imperial grid reference is 36 74. The site’s verification project has assessed the site and has deemed there is insufficient information to accurately locate this site. It is recommended that the file be placed in stored data.

Site ID 4534 (S2595) Lake Jasper 05 This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) on the 11.02.1990. The site is described as an extensive artefact scatter that was formerly an open air campsite that was laid down prior to the formation of the lake 5000 years ago. The artefacts are scattered over a deep sandy shoal in amongst tree and black boy stumps that are at a depth of 1.8m. The site is in the centre of the lake. The co-ordinates are recorded in longitude/latitude as 34° 24’ 50’S and 115° 40”45’E. The site’s extent is estimated to be an area of 50m x 80m. The site’s artefacts have been collected and are housed at the WA Museum. The site’s significance is not discussed.

Site ID 4535 (S2596) Lake Jasper 08 This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) in February 1990. The site is described as an artefact scatter that was a likely open air camp site prior to Lake Jasper’s formation. This site is located approximately 100m to the southeast of site eight. The extent of the site occupies an area of 10m x 10m. Microliths have also been found at this site at a depth of 7-8m. It is estimated that this is 5000 years old. This site is of high significance.
Site ID 4562 - Barlee Brook  
This site is a surface artefact scatter situated on the west side of a small gully within a pool immediately south of Stewart Road and 700m east of Milyeannup Road. There is insufficient information within the site file to accurately define the nature and extent of this site and it is likely that the site is the same site as Site ID 483.

Site ID 4598 (S2449) Lake Jasper 02  
This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) on the 04.05.1988. This site is an extensive gravel bed quarry factory that was a major source of quartz and quartzite for pre-historic stone tool nappers. The site is located approximately 150m west of Site One in the water from the eastern shore. The site can be exposed with low water levels in the lake. The co-ordinates given are in longitude/latitude and are 34° 25’S and 115° 41’E. The site’s extent is an area of 50m x 50m. The site is dated to 3400bp and of moderate archaeological significance.

Site ID4599 (S2450) Lake Jasper 03  
This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) on the 04.05.1988. The site is a partly submerged artefact deposit on the south western shoreline of the lake. A tree and a black boy stump are a part of the site which has been dated to be 3700-4000bp. The co-ordinates for the site are recorded in longitude/latitude at 34° 25’ S and 115° 41’E. The sites extent is an area of 25m x 25m. Test excavations have been carried out to a depth of 1.8m on the exposed portion of the site. The site is described as a rich example of tool types representative of Mid Holocene traditions and is of high archaeological significance.

Site ID 4649 (S02448) Lake Jasper 01  
This site was recorded by Charles Dortch (WAM) on the 07.05.1988. This is an extensive artefact deposit that is located in a formation of hard pan soil on the eastern shoreline of Lake Jasper. Co-ordinates given in longitude/latitude are 134 25 and 115 41E. The extent of the site on the shoreline is an area of 25m x 25m. The site extends from the shoreline into the lake for an unknown distance. A tree stump in this site was dated at 3800bp. Artefacts that are embedded in this soil pre-date the formation of the lake and are the oldest recorded at the Lake Jasper site complex and is of high archaeological significance.

Site ID 4882 - Dunnett’s Farm  
This site was recorded by Clarke in 1983. The AMG 50 coordinates are 754000mE 6203000mN. It is described as a ‘series of flat limestone outcrops, some of which are engraved, scattered over an extent of 200mx50m of low lying and swampy land. The site is located in the northwest corner of a paddock (location 680) of the Dunnett’s farm, directly to the east of Roberts Road. This site is of considerable significance to both the Aboriginal and scientific community as it is one of the few examples of south west rock art that has ever been recorded. During field work for the current survey the site was also recorded to be the mythical camp site of Wooditch and Milyan, two dream time figures, who after creating the Margaret River ran away and spent the rest of their days at this location. Mrs Vilma Webb, a cultural custodian in the area, described this traditional story to the consultants and believes that there also may have been a massacre of the traditional people that lived in the area, shortly after settlement.

Site ID 16878 - Lake Jasper  
This site was recorded to be a site of mythological significance on the 15th July 1995 by various un-named informants from the Southern Aboriginal Corporation. The site was recorded on map sheet S150-10 (zone 50) to be centred at 378 500E and 6191 500N. A straight line of extent was captured to be 2.5km (25 000m). The entire lake inclusive of its embankments was reported as the site. It was stated in O’Connor (1995) that the land and social justice spokesperson for the Manjimup Aboriginal Corporation, who is also the secretary for the Southwest Coalition of Aboriginal Organizations, stated that the traditional owners of Lake Jasper had been traced and that the lake was a site on a dreaming track and that the dream time story pertaining to the lake had been recorded. This story was not contained in the site file or in O’Connor’s (1995) report. This informants name was also not
reported. O’Connor (1995) added that Lake Jasper had been recently the subject of bitter
dispute between a mining company and rival Aboriginal organizations and that any
ethnographic information in regards to the known significance of Lake Jasper must be
analysed with this in mind.

Charles Dortch, the (WAM) Archaeologist who recorded the pre-historic artefact sites on the
bed of lake stated that he was not aware of any ethno-historic or ethnographic information
pertaining to Lake Jasper. He stated that he had made extensive enquiries and that he had
found no information (per. comm. 2003). Lake Jasper has been assessed to be a site on the
permanent register as a result of the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee (ACMC)
resolution 00/88 on the 13.06.2000.

Site ID 19802 Milyeannup Coast Road Scarred Tree This site was first recorded by Goode in
2002. An Aboriginal scarred tree was located and recorded approximately 1km east down
Milyeannup Coast Road. The tree was a large jarrah and located on the north side of the road
approximately 1m from the track. The GPS WGS84 co-ordinates are 341561mE, 6205084mN.
The scar was approximately 1m in height and 50cm wide. The scar was about 2.5m off the
ground. It was apparent from the rough grooving in the cambium layer of the tree that the
cutting had been made by a cutting edge that was uneven and blunt. All the Aboriginal
informants requested that this tree be registered as a site under the Western Australian

Site ID 20434 - Blackwood River Mrs Vilma Webb and her daughter Mrs Gwenda Chapman
contacted the consultant and requested that they wished to register the Blackwood River as an
Aboriginal Heritage Site. The request was made on the basis of ‘generalized significance’; in
that they believed that the river was created by and was home to a ‘Waugal’. It was also stated
that the Blackwood River was a ‘bidi’ (path) from inland areas around Nannup to the west
coast. The informants stated that the Blackwood River was a boundary between the Pibblemen
and Wardandi language groups and that a traditional ford extended at a point where Great
North road now crosses the Blackwood River. A large ochre deposit was also recorded eroding
out of the south western embankment. The informants also stated that the whole river should
be recorded as a place of mythological significance. Mrs Webb stated that at this position on
the River wives were exchanged between the moieties.

Site ID 20435 - Blackwood River Ochre Deposit This site is located on the south western
embankment of the Hut Pool crossing of the Blackwood River upon the Great North Road at
corordinate 342 421mE and 6226 508mN or 34° 05” 23’S and 115° 17” 31’E. The deposit
contains red, yellow and white material that has been exposed by the collapse of the south west
embankment. The extent of the deposit is 10m north/south x 25m east/west.

Site ID 21149 Barrabup Pool This site was first recorded by Parker in 2003 and later by
Goode in 2003a and 2003b. The site is described as having mythological significance in
association with Waugal belief as a component and a tributary of the Blackwood River, site ID
20434. This site is also described as a traditional camping area upon a path from the Vasse
Estuary through to walk trails on the Blackwood River. This site has contemporary
significance to the Aboriginal community as a place to recreate and as a place to bring their
children to in order to maintain the cultural identity by teaching their traditional beliefs.

Site ID 21150 Blackwood Riverbank This site was recorded by Australian Interaction
Consultants as a mythological site with the South West Boojarah Native Title Claim Group.
The site has been described as an area of bush food, medicine plants and large habitat trees.
The red tailed cockatoo’s presence in this area is mythologically significance as their calls
were seen as a sign and attempt to communicate with the aboriginal people.
Site ID 21928 Jalbarragup Road This site was recorded by Simon Choo as part of the RFA (Regional Forrest Agreement). Informants included the Blurton, Councillor, Gillespie, Harris, Krakouer and other families. This site was identified as a hunting place by the Aboriginal community.

Site ID 21929 Sue’s Bridge This site was recorded by Simon Choo as part of the RFA (Regional Forrest Agreement). The Aboriginal informants included the Blurton, Councillor, Gillespie, Harris, Krakouer and other families. This site was identified as a hunting place and also identified as a camping and meeting place for communities. This site has contemporary significance to the Aboriginal community as a place to recreate and as a place to bring their children to in order to maintain the cultural identity by teaching their traditional beliefs.

REVIEW OF RELEVENT REPORTS

Aboriginal Affairs Department. 1997. Site management Options, Milyeannup Engravings, Scott River. Aboriginal Affairs Department – Site S 01786 Dunnett’s Farm. Discussion paper commissioned by the Aboriginal Affairs Department, Southwest Regional Office, Albany.

This report outlines the physical characteristics and management history of the Milyeannup engravings site. The report then discusses more recent investigations, develops a series of issues and management strategies that have resulted from consultations with the WA Museum and local Aboriginal communities. The report finally recommends that as this is a site of outstanding significance the site should be declared a protected area under Section 19 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972) and be vested with the Crown. (Aboriginal Lands Trust, ALT).


This report documents Charles Dortch’s (WAM) first investigations of the shores of Lake Jasper in April 1988, when drought conditions had lowered the water level of the lake and had exposed sections of the lake bed. During these investigations scatters of stone artefacts and black boy stumps were found leading Dortch to postulate that the bed of Lake Jasper represented an intact prehistoric landscape and that the possibility of reconstructing an image of this landscape and its Aboriginal usage prior to the lakes formation over 4000bp was possible with further research work.

This report also summarizes the results from Dortch and teams of divers from the WA Maritime Museum who conducted a series of underwater archaeological surveys, the first in 1989, the second in 1990.

The results of these surveys revealed a number of archaeological deposits (up to 10 sites) being found and provided a comprehensive understanding of the lakes pre-history and former usage by Mid Holocene hunter gatherer groups being formulated.


This report assesses the possible adverse effects on submerged and shoreline Aboriginal archaeological sites, arising from developments carried out by CALM at Lake Jasper, to provide facilities for recreational use.
This development included the construction of a camp area, a toilet facility and a boat ramp in the south east corner of the lake. The report concluded that the construction actually did not affect any Aboriginal archaeological material or sites. The report however did identify that continual power boat usage on the lake could have the potential to damage shore line sites due to erosion from increased wave action. The report also noted that by providing better recreational facilities increased visitation also increased the likelihood of unauthorized artefact collections being made by the public.

The report provides a comprehensive assessment of the nature and extent of all Lake Jasper sites but states only 10% of the lake bed has been assessed. The report informs CALM of Lake Jasper’s scientific and current ethnographic significance. The report finally sets out a number of recommendations to manage the heritage values of the lake.


This report, which was funded by the Heritage Council of Western Australia, is a comprehensive report on archaeological sites that occur in and around south coast lakes, rivers and inlets. Early work conducted at Lake Jasper which pioneered underwater archaeological survey techniques prompted WA Museum researchers to embark upon a regional thematic study. Aboriginal archaeological sites were discovered and investigated at Broke Inlet, Wilson Inlet, Oyster Harbour, Torradup Inlet, Oldfield Inlet, Sandy Island, Chatham Island, Lake Jasper and Black Point. Results of this work, as well as collection and synthesis of data from other researchers is presented in this report.


This report compiles ethnographic observations and considers the early European occupation of the southwest of Western Australia, with a focus on the Scott River district. The report notes that the region to the east and south of the Blackwood River, inclusive of the Scott River, is one of the ethnographically least known regions in all of the southwest of the state. A speculative reconstruction of the late prehistoric socio-economy of the district is considered in the light of ethnographic and historical recordings for adjacent areas and the rest of the southwest cultural bloc.


This report is a comprehensive desktop study of all known and registered Aboriginal Heritage sites within the Water Corporation’s project area. This report locates sites, reviews their significance and makes recommendations for their management in line with the legal obligations set out under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972). This study pays specific attention to the Aboriginal significance of rivers and wetlands in the region and discusses their registration under the notion of ‘generalized significance’ and its relevance under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972). This study argues that despite not having developed any specific policy upon this notion that heritage administrations and the A.C.M.C. have accepted the notion by registering many waterways from general ethnographic information. The study sets out a number of recommendations that Water Corporation will need to comply with, in order to progress to construction while meeting their obligation under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972).

This report documents all previously recorded Aboriginal heritage sites that were not captured in the Water Corporation’s report ‘A Desktop Preliminary Aboriginal Heritage Survey for Water Corporations Proposed Development of the Yarragadee Aquifer in the Lower South West Corner of Western Australia’ (Goode, 2003a). The Blackwood Groundwater study area, while overlapping the Water Corporation’s study area, extends further southwest and to the east, but does not extend as far to the north. This report reports the Blackwood River as a site of mythological significance and records an ochre site at a crossing on the Blackwood River at its intersection with the Great North Road. This report to be read in conjunction with the Water Corporation Report provides baseline Aboriginal Heritage information for planning for the Water Corporation’s Yarragadee proposal and for the Water and Rivers Commission (Department of Environment’s) groundwater allocation planning work for the Blackwood Groundwater Area.

Goode, B. 2003c. *Southwest Yarragadee Blackwood Groundwater Area Aboriginal Cultural Values Study* on behalf of the Department of Environment, Bunbury, Western Australia.

This report was commissioned by the Department of Environment to survey for Aboriginal heritage under the relevant legislation within the Blackwood groundwater study area. The report also endeavoured to identify the underlying Aboriginal social and cultural values of the region’s water sources in Toto and there significance to the maintenance of Aboriginal culture and life styles. As a result of this study the Blackwood River, its tributaries and its connection to the Yarragadee Aquifer were identified to be a system of primary importance to the region’s ecology and therefore maintenance of Aboriginal culture. In this study the Aboriginal people consulted also suggested that all the region’s water sources that are hydro-logically connected are of the same spiritual essence and as such should be considered as one large site (in heritage terms), it is the belief that they make up one whole system that is of significance to the region’s Aborigines.

In this report this significance was discussed in both a sacred (Waugal beliefs) and mundane sense (resources use). It was concluded by the Aboriginal informants that negative actions from human activities that interfered with the flow of water in the environment through the region’s rivers, creeks and wetlands, and their association with underground aquifers could have grave spiritual consequences for the Aboriginal community who believe that they are culturally tasked with the protection of these areas’ natural environs. It was felt that science did not know enough about the interaction of the region’s ecology with the underground aquifers to be able to determine that large amounts of water could be extracted from the Yarragadee without having a detrimental effect on the region’s ecological resources, which are of fundamental importance to the region’s Aborigines. As a result of this study the Aboriginal community did not support the notion of drawing unsustainably from the Yarragadee Aquifer, especially if that water was to be used outside of the region, and that more study was needed over a much longer time before they could be confident that the proposal would not have a negative effect on the environment of the region.

Also resulting from this study, the Blackwood River and the Yarragadee system was registered as a site under the terms of the Western Australian Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972). At present due to mapping problems the DIA are yet to add the Yarragadee Aquifer to the public data base, however when the data becomes available it is their intent.

This report was a large thematic Aboriginal heritage study conducted for areas covering the shires of Capel, Donnybrook, Dardanup, Balingup, Bridgetown, Manjimup, Nannup, Busselton and Augusta Margaret River. In this study which was both Archaeological and Ethnographical a number of sites reviewed in this survey were identified and discussed. Particular emphasis was placed on the rivers of the region and how their cultural significance has re-emerged by way of a process referred to as “cultural revitalization”, Nyungar people whom generally did not possess detailed mythical knowledge about the regions rivers due to western acculturation were now identifying the regions rivers with Waugal beliefs, a phenomenon not noted by researchers prior to more recent times.


This Ethnographic survey was conducted in order to identify sites of ethnographic significance that may be impacted upon by the shire at Margaret River’s proposed by-pass road east of the town. In the course of this survey two ethnographic sites were identified, Site ID 4495 Margaret River and site ID 4494 Rosa Brook Road. In regards to this report for Water Corporation information not previously recorded about the mythological significance of the Margaret River was recorded. Aboriginal consultants mentioned that the Margaret River was created by Wooditch a local dreamtime creative spirit. Other Aboriginal consultants also associated the Margaret River with Waugal significance. However the Aboriginal consultants advised that they thought the Margaret River no longer had a Waugal.


In November 2001 McDonald, Hales & Associates conducted an archaeological and ethnographic survey of Cable Sands Gwindinup mineral sands mining project south of Boyanup. This report also discussed at length the history of the Waugal myth as recorded by various authors over the last 100 years. The report noted that the Aboriginal Communities views had changed over time. Historically the Waugal was both a creative and punitive spiritual force that inhabited deep pools and created other features of the landscape such as hills where it travelled. In contemporary times the Waugal has become or is seen to be present in all water bodies – it is the benign bringer of water (ibid: 30). The report explains that this change of view is largely based upon Aboriginal people now not knowing traditional mythical stories but attributing significance by reading the country.


The report provides a comparative theoretical explanation of what O’Connor terms to be “The ubiquitous Waugal myth.” The Waugal, O’Connor (1989) et al, states is seen as “a water creative spiritual force with a serpentine physical manifestation”, that is said to have created many of the south west rivers and whose essence remains in these rivers today. According to O’Connor this religious view of the significance of water is not restricted to the south west but has been recorded by Maddock (1982) and Kingsford (1982) for similar systems in Arnhem Land and the Murchison – Gascoyne district. He adds that the imputation of religious significance to water sources is at least as old as recorded human history and that it is not surprising that in an arid country such as Australia that it occurs in many totemic forms.

This report is a comprehensive archaeological, ethno-historic and ethnographic study of the significance of water bodies in the area from Busselton out to Wagin and down to Walpole. Here the authors provide ethno-historical data which records important water bodies to the region’s Aborigines as recorded by the region’s early explorers. This project records and locates archaeological sites that are in association with the region’s rivers, lakes and springs. The ethnographic section of the report records and locates significant water bodies as known by contemporary Aborigines. This section of the report also discusses this significance in light of the politics of heritage administration and the struggle between environmental movements versus developers. The report finds that the region’s waterways were the main focus of Aboriginal traditional life, for provision of resources, camp sites and access highways from inland areas to the coast.


In May 2003 Parker conducted a survey upon behalf of the Water Corporation with regards to the location of bores that would be used by the Water Corporation to determine the effect of possible draw down from the pumping of the Yarragadee. In this survey the Aboriginal group consulted voiced their concerns with regards to the proposal saying that these bores would have a detrimental effect upon the St Johns Brook, the Warren and Blackwood rivers and all their tributaries, which were considered important mythological sites. During this survey Barrabup Pool, St John Brook and Blackwood River were identified as sites of mythological significance and it was requested that they be registered as such under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972).


This report collates and summarizes from past survey reports, site files and ACMC decision documents information that relates to Aboriginal heritage issues raised pertaining to rivers in the Perth metropolitan area and the south west. This report endeavours to provide the ACMC with clear policy guidelines with regards to the Aboriginal sentiments attached to the significance of these rivers and how this significance has been administered under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (1972). This document makes recommendations that past heritage management practices with regard to these rivers are not consistent with Aboriginal community sentiments and sets out base guidelines that should be adopted in order to address this problem. This report also sets out to raise questions about “generalized significance” and its relevance under the Act. The report states this debate that could be answered by further research and that this research is needed to address past problems with heritage administration and Aboriginal community sentiments regarding metropolitan rivers.
APPENDIX 2: SITES REGISTER SEARCH
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<td>O</td>
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<td>STEWART ROAD</td>
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APPENDIX 3: MAP OF STUDY AREA IN RELATION TO REGISTERED ABORIGINAL SITES AND IDENTIFIED WALK TRAILS BETWEEN WATER SOURCES OF SIGNIFICANCE
APPENDIX 4: SITE REPORT FOR THE WATER TREE
PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

Site is a big jarrah located approximately 2 metres to the west of the Milyeannup Coast Road, approximately 3 kilometres from the intersection of Stewart Road. The jarrah tree splits into 2 forks, 2 metres from the ground and between the splits the tree has a large reservoir that has been hollowed out. Its depth is approximately 1.2 metres. The tree at present has a white surveyors tape attached to it. The trees diameter is 1.5 metres in girth. See attached photo.

ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

The consultants were shown a ‘water tree’ by the Webb family; this is a large old Jarrah tree that is forked into two main trunks around two meters above the ground. A hollow has formed in the fork of the tree, whether by natural means or as a result of deliberate burning is unclear. The hollow is deeper than ones arm and a stick had to be used to reach the bottom. There was in fact no water in the tree which surprised the informants Mrs Webb said that she had drunk from the tree with her late husband by lowering a cup into the hollow. She had drunk from the tree last about 5 or 6 years ago. She had been told about the tree a long time ago but could not recall who had told her about it. Mrs Webb said that this tree was the last place that Milyan and Wooditch drank water before they reached the camping ground at Milyeannup. Wooditch gave the Milyeannup Brook the name of his wife.

STORY OF MILYAN AND WOODITCH
(MYTHOLOGICAL CHARACTERS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WATER TREE)

The native name of the Margaret River was Wooditchup, named after Wooditch, who made the River with his magic wand. Nearby is Milyanup, the place of Milyan, the wife of Wooditch, and daughter of Ngungaroot.

Milyan, who was a very fine looking young woman, fell in love with the Wooditch. Wooditch was a medicine man who was known as the ‘Mulgar Kattuck’ which means ‘medicine power possessor’. He could transform one thing into another and do almost anything he chose by a mere touch of his magic wand.

Wooditch became violently in love with Milyan the moment he saw her. He forthwith made know his desires to Ngungaroot her father. The old man became very wrath and said that his daughter was already promised to Wooditch’s eldest brother, Ngorable, and that as soon as Ngorable came down from Dudinalup she would be handed over to him for his lawful wife. Wooditch was not deterred by this reply, as he was quite confident that Milyan loved him better than any man she had ever seen. He decided to employ his wonderful magic to get her for his wife.

For some considerable time he very cautiously watched the movements of Ngungaroot and his daughter. One night, before the moon rose, the old man Ngungaroot got up, gathered all his equipment, his pear, axe, boomerang, hunting knife and digging stick, awakened Milyan, and bade her to take her skin bag and follow him. By midday, they reached the Kalkardup country. There the old man mysteriously fell asleep. While he slumbered, Wooditch, who, by his magic power, had sent the old man to sleep, made his appearance to Milyan, and beckoned her to follow him quickly.

After a few minutes, Ngungaroot awoke, sprang to his feet, and finding Milyan gone, set off in search of her. He picked up her tracks and would soon have overhauled the runaways but Wooditch, seeing him coming with his beard in his mouth, muttering curses and preparing his
weapons to strike, again exercised the power of his magic wand. He placed the wand upon the ground and commanded a big river to run between them. The old man was dumbfounded. Being a man of great strength, he pulled up large trees by the roots and threw them across the river, but the current was so strong that it washed them down the stream. When the afternoon was half gone, the two enemies, walking on opposite banks of the stream, reached the ocean, where Wooditch gave river a lead into the sea. The water was running so swiftly that Ngungaroot was still unable to cross and remained on the other side of the river, yelling his curses to the runaways on the opposite bank.

Wooditch and Milyan were now very hungry, and decided to go out on to the reefs at the mouth of the river, to spear groper, which were very plentiful there. They set off, leaving Ngungaroot still raging at the other side of the river.

After a while, the rushing waters subsided and Ngungaroot managed to get over to where the young people were. He was on the point of seizing his daughter, when Wooditch struck him with the magic wand and turned him into a groper, which disappeared into a deep hole in the reef. As the couple returned to the wide beach in order to make a fire to roast their fish, Wooditch speared a big groper which was swimming close to the shore. He left it with his wand leaning against it while he helped Milyan to roast the other fish.

While they were eating their fish, Wooditch began to feel very sorry he turned the old man into a groper, for Milyan kept bursting into tears over the loss of her father. He told her that if the big fish beside him should happen to be the groper which he had been her father, he wished it would turn into the old man again. Immediately, the transformation took place, and Ngungaroot was restored to them. He was now resigned to the union of Milyan and the powerful Wooditch.

They left the neighbourhood and lived happily for many years at a place which has ever since been known as Milyanup. When Ngungaroot got very old they went back to Wooditchup and lived by the river that Wooditch had made. After they had been there a little while, one day Ngungaroot went into a cave and died. The cave is on the eastern end of the cliff at Walcliffe on the Margaret River. This place is ‘Wainilyinup’, or ‘the place where the old man died’.
Figure 1. Mr Wayne Webb at Water Tree
Figure 2. Mr Wayne Webb measuring the depth of water in Water Tree
LOCATION MAP OF WATER TREE
Aboriginal Site Recording Form

The minimum information needed for the Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee to assess a site is Questions 1 to 5, a map and detailed site description.

1. Site Recorder: Bradley Goode & Colin Irvine
   Contact Details: (08) 9755 3716
   79 Naturaliste Terrace, Dunsborough WA 6281

2. Consultation
   Have local Aboriginal people been consulted about the site? Yes ☑ No ☐ go to Q3
   a) Who was consulted? Mr Wayne Webb, Mrs Vilma Webb and Mrs Sue Kelly
   b) How do we contact them? Phone – See DI records
   c) Is there anyone else (person, family, corporation, Land council) who we can contact in the future about this site if we cannot locate the original informants? Mr Glen Kelly
   d) Did they request this information be restricted? Yes ☐ No ☑
   e) Did they advise that the site is dangerous? Yes ☐ No ☑

3. Site Name
   Water Tree

4. Location
   How was it determined? Map ☐ GPS ☑
   If GPS, what datum? AGD66 ☐ AGD84 ☐ GDA94 ☑ Other (please specify) _______

   MGA/AMG: Zone (please circle) 49 50 51 52 361880 E 6215489 N

   Latitude: _______ ° _______ ’ _______ ” Longitude: _______ ° _______ ’ _______ ”

5. Site Type
   Ceremonial ☐ Fish Trap ☐ Artefacts ☐
   Mythological ☑ Modified tree ☑ Midden ☐
   Repository/cache ☐ Painting ☐ Historical ☐
   Skeletal material/Burial ☐ Engraving ☐ Grinding patches/grooves ☐
   Man-Made Structure ☑ Quarry ☐

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6. Additional Information

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Other (describe) ___Water source_____________________________ BP (dating)  

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**Instructions on use**

The ACMC has determined that the minimum information it requires to assess a site is Questions 1 through 5, a map or site plan of the site extent, and a site description.

**Maps/Site Plans:**
Please attach a map showing the site extent and other features. If the location has been determined by use of a GPS, please clearly mark on the map the location where the reading was taken. Include a scale with the map and clearly indicate North.

**Site Description:**
Please attach a description of the site, including ethnographic and archaeological comments, site significance, management etc. Copies of relevant pages from a site report are sufficient. Please also include a detailed description of how to find the site. Wherever possible, identify the traditional owners of the site.

**Site Names:**
The Aboriginal Cultural Material Committee and the Department of Indigenous Affairs encourage the use of local Aboriginal names for sites.

**Completed Forms**

Please forwards to:

Post: The Registrar of Aboriginal Sites  
Department of Indigenous Affairs  
PO Box 7770 Cloister's Square  
PERTH WA 6850

Fax: (08) 9235 8088  
E-mail: sites@dia.wa.gov.au  
Enquiries: (08) 9235 8000