



Whose Land is it Anyway? Contesting Urban Fringe Nature-based Tourism and Recreation in Western Australia

MICHAEL HUGHES, MARIAN TYE and ROY JONES

Abstract: Urban fringe natural areas on public land are important resources for tourism and recreation use. However these contested areas are also in demand for a range of other land uses. How the land is managed can strongly influence opportunities for nature-based tourism and recreation, and the benefits that these bring to participants and host communities. This paper examines the case of tourism and recreation access to the forested urban fringe of Perth, Western Australia (WA) using a typology of land occupancy and management priorities originally devised for private land use. A review of legislation and policy relating to tourism and recreation access to land in WA was conducted. Tourism and recreation groups and land managers associated with access to the Perth urban fringe natural areas were interviewed regarding their perceptions of land access management. Most land in the WA study area is publically owned and is therefore technically accessible to the public. In regions dominated by multiple private land owners such as Europe and the UK, varying approaches to land-use management may be classified according to a predictable land occupancy typology that tends to be consistently applied. By contrast, the single public land holder in this area of WA, the state government, lacks consistency in its approach to recreational and tourist access to land. This creates both public and governmental uncertainty and confusion regarding where and how land may be accessed on the Perth urban fringe.

Keywords: land access management; land occupancy; urban fringe; natural area; Western Australia.

Introduction

This paper examines the management of tourist and recreational access to public land in Western Australia within the broader context of land-use management regimes. In particular, this paper considers claims by WA recreation and tourism advocates that public access to the peri-urban areas of the state's capital city is being significantly reduced despite the growing demand for this type of access to public land. This reduction of access is seen by these groups to have important consequences for the future of nature-based tourism and recreational activity and opportunities in this region.

Nature-based experiences are a significant component of tourism and recreation activity globally (Hughes and Carlsen 2009; Jennings 2007). In particular, fringe areas under natural vegetation and adjacent to urban development are an important and accessible resource for nature based tourism and recreation (Mann et al. 2010; Newsome et al. 2002). However, the expansion of urban areas and the growth in urban populations are generating increased pressures for the provision of a range of resources and uses on these locations (Garrod et al. 2006; Millward 1991; Urquhart et al. 2012). According to Holmes (2006), land use patterns on the urban fringe are complex because of the range and type of occupancy modes that occur in these

MICHAEL HUGHES is Senior Lecturer at the School of Marketing, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth, WA 6845, Australia. e-mail: m.hughes@curtin.edu.au

MARIAN TYE is Director, Centre for Sport Recreation Research, Curtin University, Australia. e-mail: M.Tye@curtin.edu.au

ROY JONES is Emeritus Professor at the Faculty of Humanities, Curtin University, Australia. e-mail: R.Jones@curtin.edu.au

areas. Holmes (2006) identified key 'land occupancy modes' associated with the urban fringe in which the broad land-use categories of production, consumption and protection exist in close proximity. In this context, rapid urban expansion, combined with associated increased demand for outdoor tourism and recreation activity on the urban fringe, has exacerbated the land-use conflicts that are, in any case, characteristic of such areas (Hughes and Ingram 2009; Laing et al. 2008a).

Many Scholars (Jenkins and Prin 1998; McIntyre et al. 2001; Urquhart et al. 2012) observed that there is a considerable body of research into public access to land for various forms of recreation and tourism. Furthermore, Butler et al. (1998), Hultman et al. (2011) and Urquhart et al. (2012) consider that peri-urban and rural tourism have received greater recognition by managers and policy-makers over recent decades, in line with their growth, as a significant and valuable land-use. While there has been a shift towards such multifunctional land-use, how this is operationalized depends significantly on who manages the land and what they prioritize in terms of the three occupancy modes of production, consumption and protection (Garrod et al. 2006).

In this context, although public access to peri-urban areas for recreation and tourism is generally reported to have increased priority in developed nations, it is still often considered as an imposition by land managers and owners. A range of issues may contribute to this including landowner and manager sense of exclusive ownership, concerns about public liability and the ordering of land-use priorities that places tourism and recreation below other preferred uses (Millward 1991). For example, although government management of public land includes recognition of tourism and recreation as a legitimate use, in practice, management tends to favour productive values that include timber extraction, mining and agriculture, as well as conservation (Pigram and Jenkins 1999; Haukeland 2010). This often clashes with the Western tradition in rural areas of free access to public land for various uses including recreation (Williams 2001).

In this vein, Urquhart et al. (2012) developed a

typology of land-use functionality based on a considerable body of published research in the UK, US and Europe. This typology is based on management of woodlands as areas in significant demand for a range of uses by land managers and the public, including tourism and recreation. Table 1 summarizes the four different occupancy mode types identified and their woodland management priorities as identified by Urquhart et al. (2012).

Table 1. Typology of Woodland Occupance Modes from Urquhart et al. (2012)

Occupance Mode	Core Attributes
Multi-functional	Entrepreneurial approach that includes timber production, conservation, public access for recreation and tourism. Includes a profit motive.
Individualist	Strong emphasis on exclusive property rights. Tend to focus on extractive uses and provision of ecosystem services. Against public access.
Hobby Conservationist	Strong emphasis on protecting natural habitat. Wary of public access due to potential impacts on nature values.
The Custodian	Maintain natural resource for future generations. Includes extractive uses and conservation. Wary of public access due to risk and liability concerns.

Source: Authors

These various modes of land occupancy reflect varying levels of acceptance of access for recreation and tourism in a complex setting of land ownership and management. In Urquhart et al.'s (2012) particular case, this variation is generated by the patchwork of distinct private tenures which are owned and managed by individuals for a range of purposes. The preponderance of privately owned land in the UK and Europe dominates the debate regarding tourism and recreation access in these regions (Garrod et al. 2006). By contrast, given the relatively large proportion of publicly owned, naturally vegetated land in Western Australia, as compared with the UK, Europe and the United States, the management of access to this land is generally dominated by government (Hall 2011; Hughes and Ingram 2010). Perhaps because of this,

there is currently no specific legislation in Australia that directly defines rights of access to land for outdoor tourism and recreation, as is now the case in the UK, continental Europe and other countries (Hughes et al. 2010). This is because public land is more likely to be seen as generally accessible to the public, on whose behalf the government manages the land.

However, even with the government as the single, dominant land manager, there is still a variable and often conflicting approach to the management of public land. This is characteristically based on differences within and between government departments (Hall 2011). Furthermore, there is still a limited supply of such land while pressure from competing modes of access to it is increasing. Since government, for economic and environmental reasons respectively, tends to prioritize land uses associated with production and conservation, this can constrain levels of access for non-productivist modes of land-use, including tourism and recreation. As a result, opportunities for nature-based tourism and recreation on the urban fringe may be restricted while growing urban populations, with increased disposable time and income, are fuelling a growing demand for tourism and recreation access (Williams and Shaw 2009).

This paper examines the case of tourism and recreation access to the urban fringe of Perth, Western Australia with reference to the typologies of land occupancy described by Urquhart et al. (2012) and Holmes (2006). The metropolitan area of Perth (population 1.7 million) is growing rapidly with an associated increase in demand for nature-based tourism and recreation in the publicly owned and government managed natural areas adjacent to the city's inland eastern fringe. The majority of land in this region is managed by various arms of the Western Australian State Government for a range of purposes. Access for tourism and recreation is seen by recreation user groups to be increasingly restricted in favour of other public land occupancy modes. This paper examines the public land management context of the Perth urban fringe and its relationship with nature-based recreation and tourism access management.

Darling Range Tourism and Recreation

The Darling Range is an area of hills, woodlands, forests, rivers, farms and water bodies (mainly reservoirs and dams for stock) situated along the eastern fringe of the metropolitan area of Perth, the capital of Western Australia (WA). The range comprises about 30,000 km² of various land tenures and jurisdictions in the southwest of WA (Williamson and Mitchell 2001). About 65% of the area is public land, managed by the WA State Government for a range of land uses including nature conservation, timber production, drinking water catchment, mining and tourism and recreation (Conservation Commission 2010). Public land in the Darling Range varies in terms of type and extent of public access, depending on the applied management regime (Table 3). Private land in the region is used for various types of agriculture, semi-rural retreats urban development and some mining.

Over the past 60 years, the population of the Perth Metropolitan Area has grown considerably from approximately 310,000 in 1950 to more than 1.7 million in 2012 (Weller 2009; ABS 2012). The amount of disposable income and time available to the population has also increased over this period. Consequently, the Darling Range, as Perth's inland 'playground', has experienced an increase in demand for its resources, including access for tourism and recreation (Advisory Committee on Purity of Water 1977; Williamson and Mitchell 2001; Jennings 2007; Ingram and Hughes 2009). The metropolitan area and associated urban corridors have expanded along the coastal plain. Consequently, the adjacent areas of the Darling Range are in demand for a range of recreation and tourism activities. This has resulted in an increasingly complex land-use management environment within which competing land-uses vie for a limited area of available land. For more than five decades, intervention through a series of plans and policies has been accepted as the most appropriate means of resolving the potential conflicts by the land-use and conservation agencies in Western Australia (Moir 1995).

The Darling Range has been a focus for tourism and recreation since the early 20th century (Ingram

and Hughes 2009). A 1977 report on public access to water catchments in the Southwest of Western Australia noted that access was mainly related to 'passive pursuits' including: tourism, barbeques, picnics, photography and 'nature study' (Advisory Committee on Purity of Water 1977: 2). A later report included an expanded list of more active pursuits including many water-based activities such as canoeing, water skiing, white water racing, rowing, power boating, fishing and swimming (Martinick and Associates 1991). A 2001 report on tourism and recreation included 13 types of water-based and land-based active and passive recreational activities (Muench, 2001). Finally, a report published in 2009 detailed 20 different types of tourism and recreation activities across the Darling Range area (Hughes and Ingram 2009). The pattern shows that over time, both the types of activity and the number of people accessing the Darling Range for tourism and recreation have increased significantly. In this regard, recreation and tourism is an important occupancy mode in the Darling Range.

Method

This paper presents some of the results from two pieces of research on land management and recreation and tourism access in the Darling Range area. These were a desktop research exercise reviewing Western Australian land access legislation and policy and a series of interviews with recreation user groups (Hughes et al. 2010; Hughes and Ingram 2009). The aims of the research were: to identify the main issues regarding access to public land in the Darling Range for tourism and recreation; the perceived extent of any problems emanating from such access; and the extent to which both the access levels and any resultant problems were influenced by the policy and management environment.

Review of Legislation and Access to Land

A desktop literature review of the documented legislative and management contexts for managing access to land in Western Australia and specifically in the Darling Range was conducted in 2010. Online resources, reports, and academic publications were

used. In addition to reviewing the literature, legislation and government documentation on land-use management, 15 representatives from the various state government agencies responsible for managing land were interviewed over the course of the research. These included senior managers and middle management staff responsible for formulating policy and implementing land-use management regimes. This phase provided information on the policy and management context in terms of legislative, policy and access management responsibilities associated with the Darling Range area.

Tourism and Recreational Land Use

This component of the research gathered data about recreational and tourist use of the Darling Range. Various Perth based recreation clubs and association representatives participated in in-depth interviews regarding when, where and how they accessed and used the area. A total of 80 representatives of various recreation and tourism clubs and associations based in the Perth region were interviewed over the course of the research between 2009 and 2011. This information gathering exercise included face-to-face interviews with representatives based on a semi-structured interview format using open-ended questions to obtain opinions about recreation and tourism access (Table 2). Public land managers were also interviewed regarding their management of public access to land for tourism and recreation. E-mail conversations were used to gather supplementary information.

The following section discusses the findings from the desktop review and the interviews with land managers and recreation and tourism user groups.

Land Management and Policy Perspectives

The modern era of public land management in Western Australia arguably began in 1984 with the establishment of the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), mandated by the CALM Act (1984). The CALM Act (1984) represented a shift towards a more integrated

Table 2. Recreation and Tourism Use Interview Summary

Historic and Current Use, Future Concerns
Historical tourism and recreation access
Locations that were used but are no longer in use for the activity
The main reasons for unused or changed locations
Current tourism and recreation access
Location or areas of various types of access and activities
Times (seasons) of the year when access occurs
Frequency of access for the respective activities
Potential future tourism and recreation access issues
Issues of concern relating to access and activities management
Suggestions for future management
Positive and Negative Experiences in Relation to Land Access for Tourism and Recreation
Can you recall any positive experiences associated with gaining access to land for tourism and recreation?
Can you recall any negative experiences associated with gaining access to land for tourism and recreation?
Thinking of your history of recreation and tourism access to the Darling Range, do you think there have been changes in access to land?

Source: Authors

approach to management of public land in WA. Prior to this, responsibility for different public land-use modes was divided among various government agencies. CALM's ancestry lies in the establishment of the WA Forests Department in 1916, a body with the prime responsibility of identifying and conserving forest areas for timber production. A series of local park reserves boards were established during the early 20th century with responsibility for public recreation and tourism access and the conservation of 'natural oddities' (Rundle 1996).

A 1970 campaign by a consortium of WA conservation groups focused government attention on setting aside more land for conservation purposes. Consequently, in 1971, the WA State Government undertook a series of legislative reforms that led to the Environmental Protection Act 1973 (WA) and the establishment of a single entity for parks management in WA, the National Park Authority, in 1976 (Rundle 1996). A 1983 review of natural resource management was then undertaken by the state government with a view to making further reforms to bring about more efficient

management. As a result, CALM was formed through the amalgamation of the Forests Department, the National Park Authority and the wildlife component of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, as mandated by the Conservation and Land Management Act (1984). The CALM Act included a mandate for conservation of nature, providing public access to nature for recreation and tourism, and management of forests for timber production as a means of more integrated management.

Since 1984, the Department of CALM has been significantly restructured twice. In 2000, the forestry production element of CALM was separated out to become the Forest Products Commission. At the time it was perceived by conservation advocates that the management of the forests by a single agency for both timber production and conservation was a conflict of interest. The alternative view was that having one agency responsible for timber production and conservation enabled more effective integration of these activities as well as providing an income stream from logging that could fund conservation, recreation and tourism-related management and infrastructure (Shea personal communication 2002)

In 2006, CALM was amalgamated with the Department of Environment to become the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). The number one stated key objective of DEC is biodiversity conservation while the management and facilitation of public recreational and tourist access to parks comes fourth among eight objectives, reflecting an increased focus on conservation as the preferred land-use mode (DEC 2007). The WA government is currently in the process of developing a Biodiversity Conservation Act that appears to include a slightly greater emphasis on tourism, recreation and Indigenous cultural land-use modes, relative to conservation imperatives. These changes over time represent, in principle, a move towards more integrated management of public land through the establishment of a single agency with multiple responsibilities.

In terms of the Darling Range specifically, Table 3 outlines the main types of land-use types and management regime.

Table 3. Primary Land-use Types and Public Access in the Darling Range Study Area

Land Type	Area (ha) '000s	Tenure	Occupancy Mode	Primary Land Access Manager	Public Access Status
Timber reserve	1,300	Public, Crown Land	Mixed use	DEC	Allowed
Conservation reserve	1,100	Public, Crown Land	Recreation tourism and conservation	DEC	Allowed with some restrictions and exceptions
Private land	600	Private	Mixed use	Land owner	Not allowed without owner's permission
Active mining	10.5	Public, lease hold	Mixed use	Mine Lessee	Not allowed without Lessee's permission
Drinking water protection zone	463	Public Crown Land and Private	Water conservation, mixed use	Water Corporation	Restricted in P2 and P3 areas Not allowed in P1 areas
Declared Disease Risk Area	Approx. 1,000	Public	Mixed use	DEC	Restricted or no public access, variable depending on management

Sources: Australian Natural Resources Atlas (2009); DPI (2005), Forest Products Commission (2010) DEC (2010), Conservation Commission (2010), Dept Regional Development and Lands (nd)

Public (Crown) land in the Darling Range primarily includes areas managed for conservation, forestry reserves, water reserves and declared disease risk areas. Other areas are set aside for mining activities. Land reserved for conservation is managed by the WA Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) for the benefit of the general public, mandated by the CALM Act 1984 (WA), Environmental Protection Act 1986 (WA) and Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 (WA). DEC managed lands include areas designated as national parks, nature reserves, recreation areas, conservation parks, and environmental parks and so on. These different land-tenure types allow for a varying range of public activities.

State forests are public lands managed by DEC and the Forest Products Commission primarily under the CALM Act 1984 and Forest Products Act 2000 for the purposes of timber production. State forests are open to public access for recreational purposes except in areas where logging is active or specific management regimes or zonings are overlaid. Such overlays can include land designated as special conservation zones, water protection zones or disease risk areas.

Private land generally includes freehold urbanized land, agricultural properties, hobby

farms or privately held holiday homes. Public access to private land is at the landowner's discretion. Private landowners in WA have a tradition of control of access and a strong belief in the exclusivity of their rights to manage their property without interference. Staley (2006) argued that private landowners are feeling increasingly threatened by government imposed restrictions and controls in WA. There is also a general strong sense of exclusivity and a reticence to allow public access for recreation due to perceived risk and liability similarly observed by Jenkins and Prin (1998) and Booth (2006).

All of the land in the Darling Range falls under some form of mining exploration lease, though only a small portion of this is actively mined, mainly for bauxite at the southern end of the study area (Figure 2), and for some other metal ores including gold. The principal bauxite mining lease covers 50–60% of the Darling range study area and most of the water supply catchments. (Bari and Ruprecht 2002). However, the area of active mining involves about 550 hectares annually. Mining is restricted to state forest and is excluded from the conservation reserves. Bauxite mining is highly mobile and involves removing forest and up to 3m of soil profile in isolated pods averaging about 20 ha but up to 100 ha. The mined areas are rehabilitated but do

not return to the original ecological state with significantly altered topography, hydrology and biodiversity (Majer in press). Public access into actively mined leases is not allowed without the lessee's permission. Previously mined areas and areas under lease but yet to be mined are open to public access. The shifting character of bauxite mining and the reduce ecological quality of previously mined areas was identified by some recreation groups as reducing the quality of recreation and a disincentive to access in these areas.

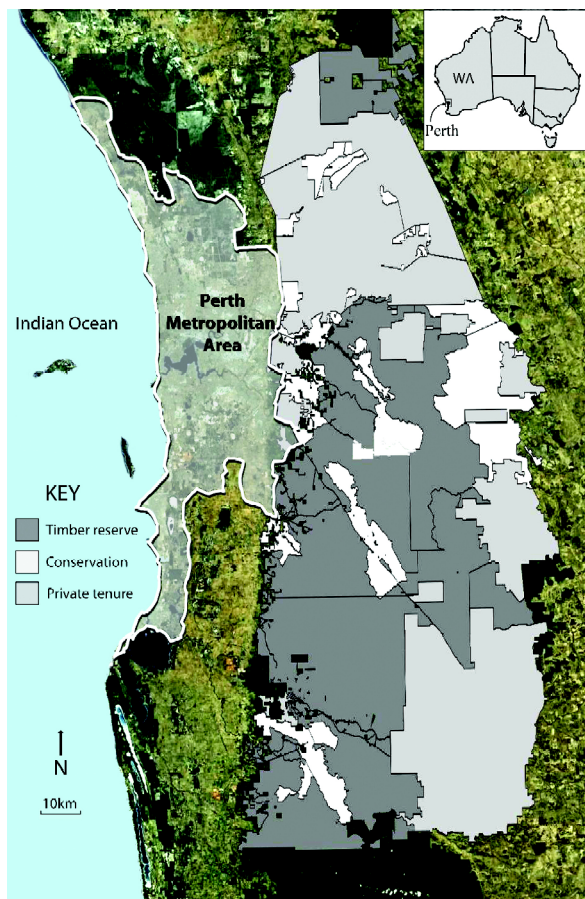


Figure 1. Map of the Darling Range Study Area Showing Private Tenure, Conservation Reserves and Timber Reserves

As part of its biodiversity conservation remit, DEC also manages land in the Darling Range for control of a soil-borne plant pathogen known as

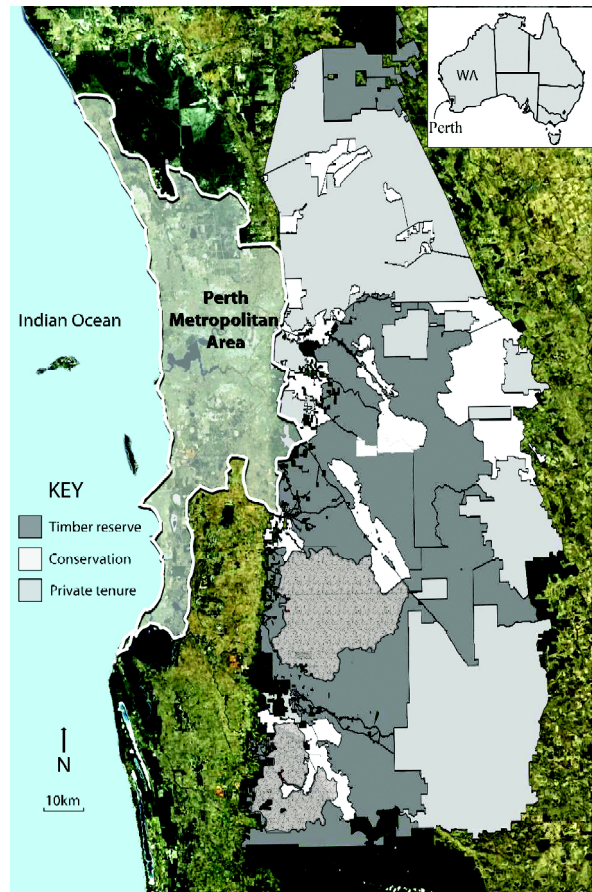


Figure 2. Darling Range Study Area with an Overlay of the Active Bauxite Mining Leases

Die Back (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) which attacks a range of plant species including the dominant Jarrah tree (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and thereby adversely effects the entire forest and woodland ecosystem. This pathogen can be spread by people or vehicles carrying infected soil from one forested area to another. To manage the spread of the pathogen, part VII of the CALM Act 1984 and the Forest Management Regulations 1993 (WA) enable DEC to establish 'Disease Risk Areas' (DRAs) that restrict public access and certain activities within these areas (Figure 3). This can include banning vehicle and machinery access or a blanket ban on all public access for periods of time. The DRA can overlay other occupancy modes on public land. The current DRA includes a significant portion of the Darling Range study area meaning that public access

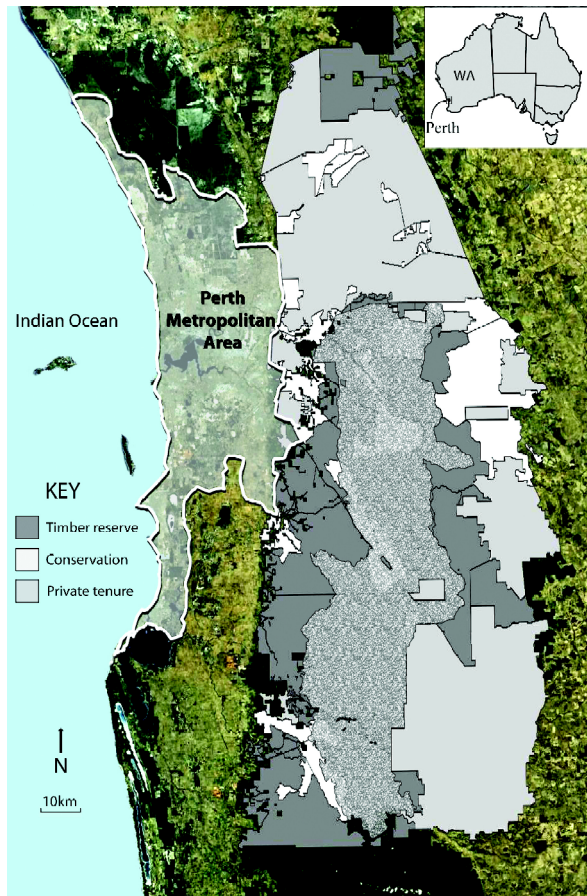


Figure 3. Darling Range Study Area with an Overlay of Disease Risk Areas as at 2010

is either restricted to certain activities or is excluded entirely. Thus DEC, as an amalgamation of various government agencies and responsibilities, is responsible for a broad and complex array of land-use management and occupancy modes.

In addition to DEC, another significant public land manager in the Darling Range region is the Department of Water which is responsible for policy regarding the management of public drinking water dams and catchments. Much of the Darling Range land is within public drinking water supply catchment areas where varying levels of public access are allowed. The Darling Range area includes ten dams that capture part of the Perth Metropolitan Area's drinking water supply. These dams are located in a north-south line along the eastern fringe

of the metropolitan area. Each catchment is currently divided into three levels of access management priority. Priority 1 zones comprise an area with a radius of 2 km upstream of the dam wall where all public access is excluded. The remaining priority 2 and 3 zones allow certain restricted forms of public access. These zones overlay state forest reserves, urban areas, agricultural areas, mining leases private land and conservation reserves. Water protection zones may be declared under the Metropolitan Water Supply Sewerage and Drainage Act 1909 and the Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947 by the WA Department of Water and are managed by the quasi-government organization, the Water Corporation. (Figure 4). Currently, state

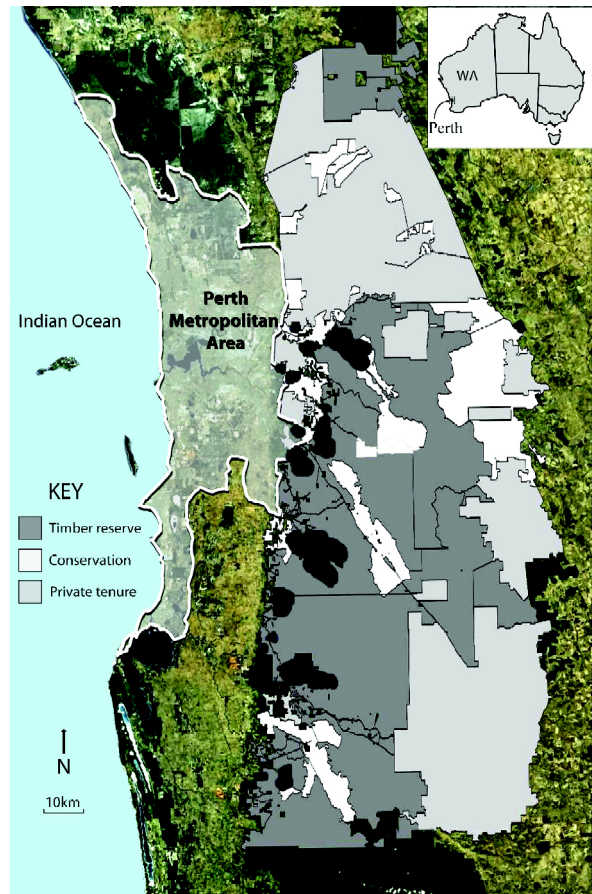


Figure 4. Darling Range Study Area with an Overlay of the Priority one Exclusion Zones for Drinking Water Supply Protection

regulations allow the re-designation of these zones under the Acts by the Department of Water, for water-related purposes, which can result in exclusion of public access for recreation and tourism from previously accessible public land while other activities such as mining and agriculture are allowed to continue in these zones.

So, while public land is plentiful in the Darling Range area, and is (in theory) managed by a single entity in the form of the state government, the government is divided within itself with regard to how the land is managed. This is despite efforts to integrate land management through amalgamation of government agencies and responsibilities. However, two key agencies with responsibility for managing the majority of public land in the Darling Range, DEC and Department of Water are mandated by different, and often conflicting, legislation. For example, it would seem that DEC, as the principal land manager is aligned more with Urquhart et al. (2012) 'Multifunctional' and 'Custodian' landowner types. These types of landowners are interested in conservation and resource extraction, but are also open to public access for recreation and tourism under certain preconditions. This is particularly so for the 'multifunctional' landowner approach, while 'custodians' are more wary about public access, based on their concerns for conserving natural habitats. The Department of Water seems more aligned with the values of the 'custodian' and 'individualist' land manager.

While these categorized landowner types occupy and control discrete pockets of private land in regions such as the UK, US and Europe, thereby creating a fixed mosaic of land-uses, the WA context is more complex. This is because the various management approaches are applied as policy jurisdictions that can overlap and change at short notice. For example, land managed for recreation and tourism by DEC can be overlaid with water catchment protection zones, DRAs and/or mining leases. Figure 5 provides a combined overlay of the various occupancy modes illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3, demonstrating the overlaps between DRAs, water protection zones, mining, conservation, timber production and the residual DEC tenure in the Darling Range study area. The combinations

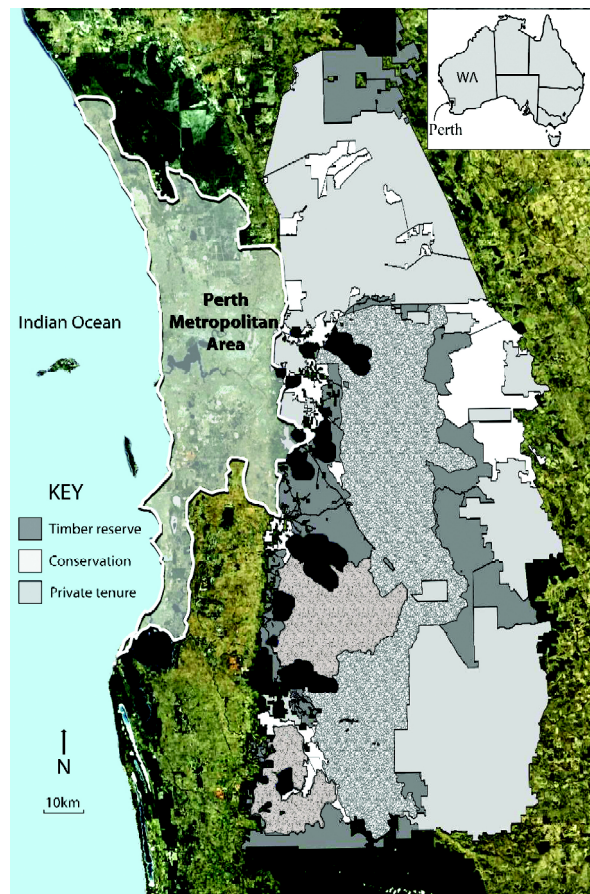


Figure 5. Darling Range Study Area with an Overlay of DRA, Mining and Water Protection Zones

and intersections of these management regimes result in a majority of the public land exhibiting either restricted public access or complete exclusion of public access for recreation and tourism.

In addition, policies and management and the land areas to which they are applied in the Darling Range can change, either gradually or rapidly (Hughes and Ingram 2010; Hughes et al. 2008). For example, an area of forest may be closed to recreation and tourism access at short notice if it is declared a DRA. Alternatively, an area of forest may have its DRA management status downgraded thereby allowing public access. As another example, a water reservoir that is solely used for irrigation supply may be used for land- and water-based tourism and

recreation activities. If that reservoir then has a portion of its water allocated to the urban drinking water supply, all tourism and recreation activities are totally excluded within 2 km upstream of the water body in order to protect water quality. This situation can occur at short notice (see for example, Hughes et al. 2008). Furthermore, while Priority One water protection zones prohibit public access for tourism and recreation, they may overlap with mining areas, agriculture and timber production areas. Mining, agriculture and timber harvesting are permitted to continue in these circumstances while, paradoxically, tourism and recreation are excluded to protect water quality. This fluid state of policy and management combined with the overlapping jurisdictions causes tensions between and within government agencies as to which land occupancy mode should take primacy and what should be allowed when and where. This also causes confusion for the public as to when and where they can access land for which forms of tourism and recreation.

Tourism and Recreation Users' Perspectives

Interviews with recreation clubs and associations (80 interviews) documented 13 general types of recreation and tourism activity which were widely distributed across the length and breadth of the Darling Range. Many of these activities included several sub-categories. For example, mountain biking included down-hill, cross-country and long-distance riding. Bushwalking included day walks, extended overnight walks and on-track and off-track hiking. Four wheel driving included day trips, extended overnight excursions, and preferences for access to a range of terrain from rough to mild. This indicates not just a diversity in terms of the range of recreation and tourism activity types, but also diversity within each type in terms of public expectations and requirements.

In terms of what types of land are accessed, the interview respondents indicated that they most commonly accessed conservation reserves (86%), state forest (timber) reserves (84%) and water protection reserves (58%). Interestingly, a significant number also indicated they regularly accessed private land (51%). Only a small fraction indicated

access to mining reserves (7%). These results show that most recreation and tourism activity undertaken in the Darling Range by Perth-based groups is primarily on public land managed for either conservation, water production or timber production. That is, these groups commonly use land set aside for production and conservation as well as recreation and tourism.

When asked to recall positive experiences associated with the process of gaining access to land for tourism and recreation, about 64% of respondents could do so, while 14% could not. When asked whether they could recall any negative experiences, about 33% could, while 42% could not. Further investigation revealed that the positive experiences tended to be associated with personal interactions with individual government agency staff (such as park rangers) as part of an informal, independent recreation and tourism experience on public land. Alternatively, positive experiences were associated with relationships built up between recreation and tourism groups and individual private land holders. Negative experiences tended to be associated with organizational and systemic issues regarding access to public land. Negative experiences were also mainly associated with obtaining permission for organized group activities and events on public land. This explains the higher proportion of people able to recall positive experiences because obtaining informal and independent access was a more common type of activity than was seeking access for organized large group events.

Commonly, there was confusion regarding which authority to approach for a permit to conduct organized group activities such as orienteering, rogaining and endurance horse riding events that tend to range across large areas of public land. These types of organized events include a combination of people involved in competitive multi-day activities and spectators who travel to the region and stay overnight. Interviews revealed that the process of gaining permission for such access generally took an extended length of time and required formal approval from several different government representatives. Some of the land manager decisions

contradicted each other in terms of allowing or forbidding certain types of access to given areas.

Interviews indicated that there was a common concern about the difficulties associated with accessing land for recreation and tourism with regard to the inconsistent and often contradictory decision-making processes that these groups and individuals encountered. Their frustrations were exacerbated when the jurisdictions of different state government agencies overlapped, such as occur between DEC and the Department of Water.

Ultimately, the publicly-owned land in the Darling Range is managed by a single land owner in the form of the state government, primarily DEC and the Department of Water. However, in practice, the government landowner encompasses the whole range of Urquhart et al.'s (2012) landowner types. Unlike private land owner types that are tied to discrete areas of land, the Darling Range has a shifting, overlapping and often contradictory maze of public land occupancy policies and management regimes. Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat ironically, from the recreation and tourism users' points of view, many opted to access private land, with permission from the land owners. This was because gaining permission to use private land for organized recreation and tourism activities was often considered to be easier than gaining access to public land for the same purpose. This ease of access was mainly associated with having to approach one landowner for private land, rather than multiple land managers to access public land.

Conclusion

Past research on access to the Darling Range has highlighted both the benefits of and the high demand for recreation and tourism access to the Darling Range area for a range of land uses (Advisory Committee on Purity of Water 1977; Hughes and Ingram 2010; Hughes et al. 2008; Martinick and Associates 1991; Muench 2001). However, it has also noted the tensions between tourism and recreation user groups and public land management agencies and the tensions within these agencies (Hall 2011; Haukeland 2010).

Despite efforts to integrate land management through amalgamation and legislative changes over several decades, the state government still lacks consistency in its approaches to recreational and tourist access to its land. This is because the primary government land manager (DEC) is responsible for a complexity of land management and use issues but appears to have a lack of corporate control. As a result, decisions made at the local level can vary from place to place. Furthermore, as land management in the Darling Range also includes different government agencies with overlapping jurisdictions and often conflicting mandates based on their governing legislation. The access regimes of areas of land that fall under the responsibility of specific agencies can change, depending on shifts in policy and legislation. This circumstance is exacerbated by a lack of clarity over which land management mandate should take precedence in any given area or situation. This leads to the somewhat ironic circumstance whereby some tourism and recreation groups wanting to organize group events approach private landholders for permission to access their land because this is easier and simpler to achieve relative to obtaining all relevant public land access permissions.

It must also be acknowledged that some land uses, including some tourism and recreation activities, that demand access to the same or adjoining spaces are, in some cases, incompatible. For example, hikers, mountain bikers, off-road motorcyclists, four-wheel drivers and endurance horse riders are just some of the groups currently vying for the same recreational spaces. Competition by various types of tourism and recreation activities as well as by a broader suite of other land users in the Darling Range has resulted, to date, in conflicting management regimes and, as a result of this, in uncertainty over access rights. This is exacerbated by the recreation and tourism user groups perceptions regarding rights of access based on a long tradition in connection to public land (Williams 2001).

Hall and Jenkins (1998), Hultman et al. (2011) and Urquhart et al. (2012) comment that peri-urban recreation and tourism has achieved greater

recognition as an important land use by managers and policy-makers over recent decades. However, this case demonstrates that while it may be recognized as significant, it is often relegated to a lower priority of importance and faces inconsistencies in management on the ground.

It seems that, in this instance, an integrated approach to multifunctional land-use is yet to be effectively achieved despite at least three decades of work towards this goal. As noted in the literature, effective management would ideally include the engagement of both the various government agencies and the community-based organizations and industries with interests in accessing natural areas for various types of activity (Mitchell and Hollick 1993; Hall 2011). To achieve this end, the sharing of resources, mutual influence, transparency, commitment, trust and respect, active participation and accountability through cross-sectorial interactions over an extended period of time is an ideal approach (Laing et al. 2008a; Laing et al. 2008b).

In the case of the public land managed by government in WA, this is undermined by a lack of consistent decision-making by DEC at the local level, a lack of effective cooperation between DEC and the

Department of Water and a lack of trust or perhaps respect between recreation users and land managers at the organizational level. This is a function of the social and political history of these agencies with land management traditions focusing variously on protection, production and consumption.

It would appear that the perception by recreation and tourism user groups that opportunities for access are being restricted on public land are true to a certain extent, but perhaps mainly owing to perceived and real power differentials (Hall 2011) and a lack of truly integrated management rather than an general drive to exclude this type of land use. This is combined with a shifting matrix of complex land management priorities and a perception by interviewed users of the right to access public land for recreation and tourism (Williams 2001). It appears that a cultural shift is required more than changes in management structure, legislation and policy. In the mean time, there is irony in WA with its wealth of public land but a tendency for tourism and recreation groups to approach individual private landholders for some types of access (usually organized events), rather than navigate the complex and shifting bureaucracy associated with accessing public land in many instances.

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