

A Case Study in Effective Public Participation in the Development of Public Sector Policy: The Quinninup Water Source Protection Plan

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Abstract

The Water and Rivers Commission, a Western Australian government agency, is responsible for the protection and management of the state's water resources, including the protection and management of public drinking water source areas (PDWSAs). This is achieved through the development of Water Source Protection Plans (WSPPs). WSPPs are non-statutory documents developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders including the community for specific drinking water sources. The Commission can regulate land uses and activities in PDWSAs. Decreasing resources have resulted in a need for efficiency through community self enforcement. One example of how this is achievable through community engagement and participation in policy development and implementation is the Quinninup WSPP.

This paper will discuss the development of the Quinninup WSPP through citizen involvement in policy development. The paper will discuss the implementation of techniques used to engage the community and encourage them to participate in the plan's development. Drawing on theoretical aspects of community engagement, the Quinninup WSPP is shown to be an excellent practical example of the successful, effective application of community engagement principles. The case study demonstrated active citizenship and engagement in the protection and management of the local drinking water supply through participatory techniques.

Success lay in engaging the community to be part of the plan's development, which increased their awareness of issues and educated the community on protection and management strategies. Community involvement resulted in ownership and active participation in the management of their drinking water. Initial results indicated a high level of ownership in the development of the plan and active participation in the management of the drinking water source. Further research should be undertaken to evaluate the long-term success of this approach, improve future community engagement in public policy development and identify elements required for ongoing community engagement.

Keywords

Public consultation, public participation, community engagement, policy development, drinking water quality

Introduction

Australian society has experienced a shift from government to governance (Keating 2000; McLaverty 2000). This shift is associated with the policies of Neoliberalism that have been adopted by the government and is reflected in the workings of the nation state (McLaverty 2000). A key change reflecting this shift is public consultation, which features strongly in government policy and is recognised as an important and necessary component in the development of these policies (Petts 2001). Another major

difference in modern governance is that many of the ideas and recommendations of decentralisation are now regarded as best practice (Diamond 2000). Despite adoption of public consultation in the development of policies, many agencies have difficulty in adopting methods to allow for more open and effective involvement in the decision-making process.

The Water and Rivers Commission is a Western Australian state government agency charged with the responsibility for the protection and management of the state's water resources. Part of this role is the protection and management of PDWSAs. The Commission achieves this through the development of WSPPs. WSPPs are non-statutory documents that are developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders and the community, for a specific drinking water source <<http://www.wrc.wa.gov.au/protect/watersupply/index.htm>>. The Commission can use legislation, planning mechanisms and bylaws as methods of regulating land uses and activities with PDWSAs. With decreasing resources at its disposal, there is a move to be more efficient with the resources at hand.

This paper will discuss the development of the Quinninup WSPP through citizen involvement in policy development paying particular attention to the implementation of techniques used to engage the community and encourage them to participate in the plan's development. The Quinninup WSPP provides an excellent case study as it reveals the practical application of theoretical aspects of community engagement. The case study demonstrated active citizenship and engagement in the protection and management of the local drinking water supply through participatory techniques.

The Quinninup Water Source Protection Plan consultation process

The Karri Lake is located on Little Quinninup Brook approximately 340 kilometres south of Perth and 35 kilometres south of the town of Manjimup. The water supply for the town of Quinninup and Karri Lake Estate is sourced from Karri Lake. Karri Lake is located on Lot 187, which is owned and managed by the Water Corporation. The catchment area is located within the Shire of Manjimup (Figure 1) (Water and Rivers Commission 2002).

The Water and Rivers Commission was required to develop a WSPP for the drinking water source of Quinninup as a priority due to the risks associated with the land use and activities that occurred in the area. This included the development of residential blocks surrounding the lake and the septic tank systems, the landfill site to the northwest corner of the catchment and various recreational activities in and around Karri Lake.

The development of WSPPs is a continually evolving process as they are tailored to reflect public consultation techniques that were successful and those that were not. The Quinninup WSPP was the most recent of plans to be developed and possibly the most successful to date. The WSPP aimed to recommend management strategies for existing land uses and activities in Quinninup, ensuring they were consistent with protecting the water quality of Karri Lake, the town's drinking water supply.

The Quinninup consultation process is used here as the case study due to the particular techniques used during the development of the plan. At the time, the WSPP was the most recent of plans to be developed and possibly the most successful to date. The plan aimed to recommend management strategies for

existing land uses and activities in Quinninup, ensuring they were consistent with protecting the water quality of Karri Lake, the town's drinking water supply. The consultation process consisted of:

1. Public Forum — An initial meeting to gauge the issues and concerns for the community to the development of a WSPP for Karri Lake. The local residents expressed a desire to retain recreational use of the lake. An outcome of this forum was the formation of the Reference Group.
2. Formation of a Reference Group — Consisted of representatives from agencies (Water and Rivers Commission, Water Corporation, Health Department of Western Australia, Department of Conservation and Land Management), stakeholders (e.g. real estate agents), local community groups (Quinninup Body Corporate North, Quinninup Community Association) and local landowners. The Commission also requested the developer be represented on the Reference Group, however this request was declined. Representatives nominated themselves for the Reference Group.
3. Reference Group meetings — Meetings were scheduled on a regular basis and at a time and date suitable for all participants. Members of the Reference Group were made aware of their responsibilities and commitment regarding the process. This included the presentation of ideas, participation in the process, link between the local community and government. The Reference Group did not possess decision-making powers; this rested with the Commission.
4. The WSPP released for wider public consultation and comment — The draft plan was released for a six-week public consultation period permitting the wider community an opportunity to comment.
5. Public Open Day — The Commission, with the QCA, organised an Open Day in Quinninup during the public consultation period. The aim of the day was to allow people the opportunity to discuss with representatives from the Reference Group the recommendations in the WSPP.
6. Release of the final WSPP — The final WSPP was released with minimal changes. Three letters were received during the public comment period. These letters only recommended the alteration of grammar and spelling.

This process was time consuming and resource intensive as it required an ongoing commitment from both the community and agencies. However, as this Quinninup case study demonstrates, if consultation is done successfully, it can increase efficiency, decrease opposition and increase support for policies. A successful consultation process can result in less intensive regulation and patrolling to ensure activities are consistent with those outlined in the WSPP. Consultation, therefore, can be considered an investment by the agency. This paper will concentrate on the Reference Group part of the consultation process as this formed a major component in the development of the WSPP and its consultation.

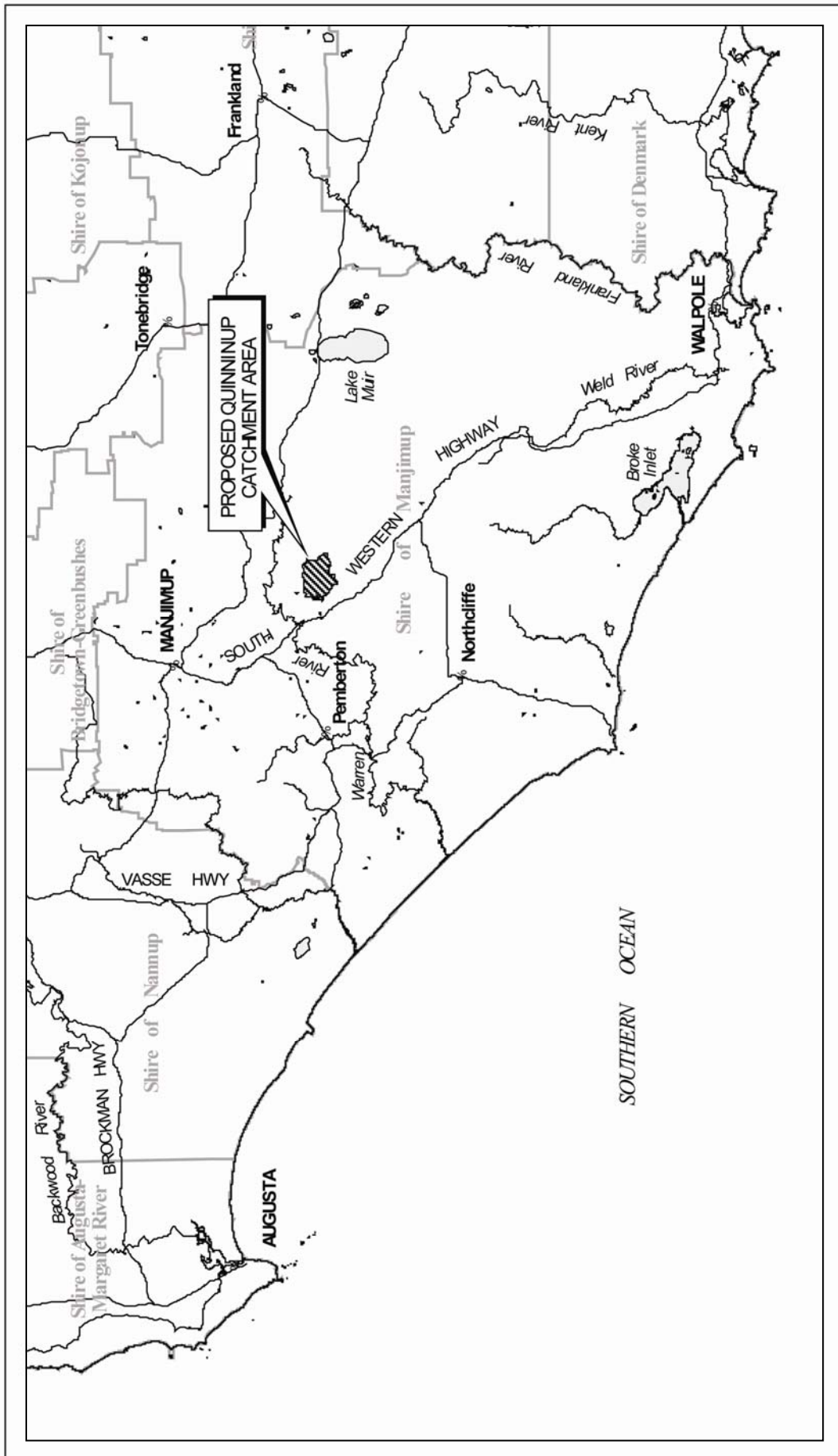


Figure 1. Proposed Quinninup catchment area (Water and Rivers Commission 2002)

In a democratic society such as ours, citizens affected by policy decisions should be part of the process defining that policy (McLavery 2000). Support for that policy is dependent on people participating in the process and their willingness to do so (Klijin and Koppenjan 2000; Kubler and Walti 2000; McLavery 2000). It was therefore imperative that the local community was engaged in the development of the WSPP to ensure support for its recommendation, particularly given that the document is non-statutory. The recommendations would also directly affect the landowners and require citizen action and participation to minimise risk to the town's drinking water source.

Landowners in the area had purchased property at Quinninup under the impression that Karri Lake was a dual-purpose lake for recreation and drinking water. The residents desired to retain both purposes and this was expressed at the public forum and Reference Group meetings. A commitment was given to the community that the agency would consider those desires and concerns in the development of the WSPP for discussion at the next meeting.

The Commission investigated the prospect of permitting various recreational activities that occurred, such as fishing, marroning (fishing for marron, a freshwater crustacean), swimming and boating, and suggested a number of management options based on risk analysis. These options included:

Option 1: Activity without controls

No controls on walking dogs on the walk trail around Karri Lake, passive boating, lure only fishing and snare only marroning. The risk to water quality would be high and, therefore, unacceptable.

Option 2: Controlling the water distribution system

This entailed taking the water distribution system offline for a period of time to allow for an 'activities period'. This 'activities period' would be dependent on the storage capacity of the storage tank, demand for water and the retention/detention time required to ensure any risk posed by the activities would be minimised. Calculations involving the size of the dam, number of houses and pump rate determined that with the current level of development, there was a three-day storage period for water. When the estate is fully developed, this would increase to one day. This option was considered not viable due to the inadequate retention/detention period to mitigate drinking water quality risk.

Option 3: Activity with management controls

This option looked at minimising the risk through management controls such as recreational facilities, restrictions (recreating at certain times of the year, lure only fishing, snare only marroning, passive boating) on a trial basis with a review after a certain period.

Under this option, risks to drinking water quality would still exist. The community would be required to consider and understand the implications of this option to their drinking water quality. These risks would need to be acceptable to both the community and the agencies. This option would require the community to indemnify the agencies against any potential legal action that may result from their activities on the lake. This included injury as well as health related issues related to recreating on their drinking water.

The agencies would require caveats or memorials on land titles allowing potential purchasers to make an informed decision on whether the risks were acceptable to them.

Option 4: Prohibition of activities

Recreational activities could pose a risk that is considered unacceptable to the Reference Group and therefore could be prohibited. This position could be reviewed when and if a new source became operational. This option would maximise the protection to the town's water supply by minimising the risk to the water source.

These options and their associated risks and benefits were presented to the Reference Group which then decided on the basis of the information presented that recreation in and around the lake should be prohibited for the duration that Karri Lake is used as the town's water supply. This decision was based on:

- the treatment process of the lake only removed solids, turbidity and colour. It did not remove pathogens
- the risks associated with recreating in the town's water supply; such as contamination from bacteria, e.g. salmonella, e-coli, parasites (e.g. cryptosporidium, giardia) and viruses
- the possibility of a future source option being established
- minimising the risk to the town's water supply
- there was no water treatment technology available for the removal of pathogens from drinking water.

As the Water Corporation owned the property the lake was developed on, there were also issues of liability in the event of injury or death as a result from recreating in and/or around the lake.

The community, via the public forum, the formation of the Reference Group and the process of consultation that followed, based its decisions on the knowledge and information that was available. It was through their understanding of the issues that the community supported prohibition of recreation in and around the lake. Having outlined the consultation process, we can now apply aspects of community engagement theory to reveal further insights into the Quinninup example.

Allowing the community to be involved in the consultation as well as the decision-making process resulted in the community taking ownership of the WSPP. This resulted in the community taking an active role in the management and protection of Karri Lake. The community employed a Lake Manager, whose role was to patrol the area and educate and inform people if they were undertaking recreational activities in and around the Lake. Many of the locals have changed their behaviour to reflect the management strategies in order to minimise risk to their drinking water quality. The consultation process therefore resulted in the successful implementation of the plan. This was due to the community being active in the decision-making process and resulted in a good outcome for both the community, who have a quality drinking water source, and the agencies, who do not have to divert resources into the active regulation and patrolling of the area. This is consistent with Perlgut's (1994) idea that support for policy is dependent on people participating in the process. This is further supported by Kubler and Wati (2000), McLaverty (2000) and Klijin and Koppenjan (2000) who all state that active participation and involving the community in

decision-making results in increased effectiveness in public policy as the community gain a sense of ownership and are amenable to implementing the policy.

The consultation process allowed for debate to occur between the agencies and the community on issues relating to the management and protection of Karri Lake. This can be confronting for both parties, as agencies attempt to defend policies and communities try to challenge them. Nevertheless, as Offe and Preuss (1991) in *Democratic Institutions and Moral Resources* argue, an important factor in strengthening policies is that people should be open to challenge. Such openness to challenge improves the quality of consultation and results in better produced policies as people question their assumptions and positions.

Despite an open consultation process, Bishop (1999), Rowe (2002) and Podger (1999) all believe that a power imbalance remains between the agencies and community. This imbalance arises in the form of knowledge and resources. Agencies have resources and knowledge as opposed to the community who are under resourced and voluntary. This was the case in the development of the Quinninup WSPP, where the agencies had an officer dedicated to the project in contrast to the community who undertook the responsibility of Reference Group membership in a volunteer capacity. The consultation process sought to overcome this by ensuring the process was open and transparent through regular meetings where agencies would present information, research and knowledge to the community for consideration. The community would participate in the deliberation process during the development of the plan alongside agency representatives. This reduced the power imbalance between the community and the agencies.

The regular scheduled Reference Group meetings, public meetings and mail outs ensured frequent contact between the agency and stakeholders, which includes the community. This regular contact prevented issues from arising as it allowed for open communication channels between agencies and the community. This is an important component of the consultation process because, as Diamond (2000) states, the probability of success is enhanced by frequent contact with those involved and an effective liaison prevents issues arising. The regular meetings also indicated that the agencies were committed to the process and were interested in the concerns of the community. These concerns were validated and investigated demonstrating the agency's serious consideration of their concerns by incorporating them in the development of the WSPP and including their issues in the final document with the agreed outcomes.

The success of the Quinninup WSPP lay in allowing the community to be part of the plan's development. The consultation process involved the community in the development of a policy that would impact on their activities. The process increased their awareness of drinking water issues and educated the community on protection and management strategies. It allowed the Reference Group to make an informed decision on which management option to adopt based on the risks their activities posed to their drinking water source and what they could do to minimise those risks.

Involving the community in decision making educated the individual members and allowed them to distinguish between their own desires than how they related to the greater good (Mills 1861, Rousseau 1994). This is exemplified in the Quinninup case study where the residents' desires to maintain recreational activities in and around Karri Lake were rethought for the greater good, that is, ensuring a quality drinking water source for the town. Many of the local residents wished to retain recreational use of

the lake. However, the Reference Group unanimously decided to prohibit recreation to minimise the risk to drinking water quality, thereby ensuring the town and its community had a quality drinking water source. This decision was based, in part, on the notions of the greater good and equity for all.

Recreational use of Karri Lake was not the only concern expressed by the local residents during the consultation process and, as the following shows, involving the community resulted in improved policies as community members ensured local information, experiences and preferences were included in the information held by the agencies (Kubler and Wati 2000; Cuthill 1995; Wood and Grieve 1995). Local residents informed the agencies that a decommissioned landfill site was located in the northwest corner of the catchment. This information had not been identified before, and had the residents not been involved in the process, may not have been identified as a potential risk to the drinking water source. The decommissioned landfill site potentially posed a risk to the drinking water source as a drainage line from the site to Karri Lake was identified on contour mapping. It was therefore necessary to quantify the risk posed to the drinking water source through investigations. These investigations would determine if a new source would need to be built for the town. This information formed an integral part of the plan and would determine if a new source is developed, therefore possibly allowing residents to resume recreating on Karri Lake. This public participation allowed for a two-way exchange of information between agencies and the community, something that McLaverty (2000) argues results in better policies. Local knowledge is essential, as agencies may not be aware of certain details. This level of community involvement in the development of public policy can result in citizens taking ownership of the plan leading to its successful implementation. It also results in increased efficiency, decreasing opposition and increased support for the policy (Klijin and Koppenjan 2000; Kubler and Wati 2000).

As previously mentioned, Australian governance reflects a neoliberal position and much emphasis is placed on decentralisation, governing from a distance, and the notion of members of the community taking responsibility for themselves. This requires individuals to act for the public good and therefore change their actions. To achieve this, people need to know and understand the reasons for changing their behaviour.

The landowners had purchased property at Quinninup under the impression that Karri Lake was a dual purpose lake for recreation and drinking water supply. The desire to retain both purposes was expressed at the public forum and the first Reference Group meeting. The Commission investigated the prospect of permitting various recreational activities that currently occurred in and around the lake using risk analysis on a number of management strategy options. These options included:

- a recreation period on the lake
- a managed recreation site at the lake
- no recreation on/around the lake
- continued unmanaged recreation on/around the lake.

The research demonstrated that:

- the storage capacity of the supply would not permit for a recreation period. This information was obtained from schematic diagrams of the source and calculations based on the number of residents and supply demand.
- there was insufficient retention time of the water for the mixing of layers for recreation to occur in/around the lake. This conclusion was derived from scheme schematics and calculations using the dam specifications. The resultant figure was not compatible against scientific research into permitted retention time and mixing rates for recreational drinking water supplies. These figures are based on scientific studies.

The agency representatives concluded that the recreational risk to the water quality at Karri Lake was unacceptable for both managed and unmanaged recreation in and around the water supply. The potential of health risk from possible contamination, e.g. giardia and cryptosporidium, was unacceptable to the Health Department and the Water Corporation. This was due to the possible litigation risk associated with public health epidemics due to unsafe drinking water when the risk was clearly identified and preventable. Possible litigation could also occur against the Water Corporation in the event of injury due to someone recreating in or around the lake due to the fact they owned in freehold the property on which the lake was developed.

The government agencies met prior to a Reference Group meeting to discuss the research and results from investigating the possibility of maintaining recreational activities in and around the lake. The agencies concluded based on the information and level of risk associated with the recreational activities, that prohibition was the preferred option. The agencies decided to present the information to the Reference Group for their consideration. This was particularly important given that the drinking water quality of the supply directly related to the actions of the individuals who lived around the lake, the community. The agencies did have direct methods of governance at their disposal, such as:

- The Water Corporation owned in freehold the property the lake had been constructed on including the surrounding 30-metre buffer. Therefore individuals could be prosecuted for trespassing.
- The Water Corporation and the original developer allegedly signed an agreement allowing the Water Corporation to restrict and prohibit recreational use in and around the lake
- The catchment area was located within the Warren River Water Reserve that was proclaimed in 1978 under the *Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947* and was therefore subject to its bylaws. This included no bathing in the dam.

Although the agencies could use direct governance to protect and manage the drinking water quality of Karri Lake, it was acknowledged that it would be more efficient and effective, and less resource intensive, to have active community members be responsible for their own drinking water quality. This responsibility took the form of self regulation, a concept associated with the belief that self interest is a more efficient mechanism of governance than government initiatives (Beeson and Firth 1998; Hindess 1996). For example, on presentation of the information, the Reference Group decided unanimously to prohibit recreational activities in and around Karri Lake. This decision was based on the knowledge that recreation could have health effects on the community members. The Reference Group decided the risk

was unacceptable. What was interesting to note was during one Reference Group meeting, a couple of community members raised the fact that there had been cases of bacterial contamination in the local community; however, the cause was unknown.

The local residents decided through the consultation process that it was in their own self-interest to protect their drinking water quality through self-regulation. This self-regulation consisted of regulating their own actions, and that of their neighbours, to ensure they posed a minimal risk to the water source. In order to achieve this, it was necessary for residents to understand what risks existed in the catchment area, the potential effect they had on drinking water quality, and how this risk could be minimised through management strategies that included actions. The Commission therefore presented to the Reference Group the various management strategies options and the risk each posed to drinking water quality for the Reference Group's consideration. The Reference Group was also presented the knowledge the agencies had gathered in investigating the desires and concerns. The Reference Group unanimously decided, despite not liking the decision, that as responsible citizens they would prohibit recreation in and around Karri Lake for the protection of their drinking water supply.

Public participation in the development of public policies educates people (Rousseau 1994; Mills 1861). The idea of democratic involvement in public policy to help educate citizens can result in a commitment to participate in a deliberative form of democracy (McLaverty 2000). The Quinninup case study supports this as initially the community desired to retain recreational use on the lake. When presented with information, knowledge and research, the community made an educated decision based on the risks associated with recreating in and around the lake. This decision was unanimous and was an outcome of a deliberative form of democracy.

Consultation in Quinninup created conversation, which elicited the views of the people to assist government and the community to make informed decisions. It also generated an opportunity for public justification of political decisions. It must be accepted during consultation that the ultimate decision lies with the representative. However, the community must be taken seriously and the government must genuinely wish to consider the community's perspective. The government must be obligated to consider all views presented by the community during the process (Bishop 1999), and communities such as Quinninup are not exception.

In order to achieve this, as Wood and Grieve (1995) state, trust must be gained between government and citizens. This results in successful outcomes, quality of policies and successful engagement with the local community. McLaverty (2000) supports this by stating that public participation can increase trust between citizens and those in government, resulting in increased efficiency and support for policies and therefore a decrease in opposition.

However, it could be argued that any trust gained may not be between the agency and the community, but between the individuals, who build a rapport and relationship. The officers, who as representatives of the department, engage with stakeholders in the consultation process, therefore building a relationship that includes trust. Trust, in any relationship, has to be earned. This begs the question, what effect would a change in project officer have on the level of trust between the agency and the community?

The issue of trust is challenging given the level of public mistrust in government. Keating (2000) postulated that increased education levels may be associated with the long-term decline in confidence in government due to the encouragement of critical thought, analysis and questioning. This level of mistrust was evident during the consultation process for Quinninup, where one community member of the Reference Group posed the following question at the first meeting. He questioned the level of commitment of the agencies to the process, and enquired whether the process was tokenism consultation whereby the agencies had already made decisions and were attempting to persuade the community to align themselves with their position. The agencies reassured the community members that the process was open and transparent and would consider any issues or concerns the Reference Group raised during the development of the WSPP.

The trust of the community was gained by the agencies through regular meetings, the documentation of everyone's concerns, issues and desires, the agencies researching and investigating each against the risk to the drinking water source and reporting and presenting this information back to the Reference Group and the wider community through the mail-outs. This process validated that the agencies were genuine about consulting the community and listening to their concerns. Trust was built by including the community in the deliberation process of the WSPP.

The consultation process used for Quinninup is supported by Young (1997) who states that the interests of all should be given equal consideration in collective decision-making. Deliberation requires acceptable reasons for decisions and requires the principle of inclusion in any decision-making process. Diamond (2000) supports this by stating the consultation process should be an opportunity for the community to voice their concerns as well as presenting technical information about the proposal. The process should not focus solely on the priorities of the agency.

Rousseau in *The Social Contract* (1994) believed that involving the community in decision-making educated the individual and allowed them to distinguish between their own desires and how it related to the greater good. Cuthill (1995) also stated that if the process were open, the community would support these decisions through an increased awareness of complex issues. Being involved in the development of the policy resulted in community ownership of those issues. The Quinninup WSPP demonstrated and supports this as through education and awareness of the risks associated with recreating on a drinking water source, the local community suppressed their desire to undertake recreational activities in and around the lake in order to maintain a quality drinking water source. The Reference Group unanimously decided to prohibit recreation to minimise the risk to drinking water quality. The decision was also based on equity for all.

The success of the Quinninup WSPP lay in allowing the community to be part of the plan's development and thereby empowering them through the process. The consultation process involved the community in the development of a policy that would impact directly on their activities. The process increased their awareness of drinking water issues and educated the community on protection and management strategies. It allowed the Reference Group to make an informed decision on the management options

presented based on the risks their activities posed to their drinking water and that could be undertaken to minimise those risks.

Allowing the community to be involved the consultation as well as the decision making process resulted in the community taking ownership of the WSPP. The community took an active role in the management and protection of Karri Lake by employing a lake manager, whose role was to patrol the area and educate and inform people on the risks of recreating in and around the lake. As a result of the consultation process, the community had decided to undertake a level of self regulation and governance in the protection and management of Karri Lake to ensure minimal risk to the drinking water quality of the town. Many of the locals have changed their behaviour to reflect the management strategies in order to minimise risk to their drinking water quality. The consultation process has therefore resulted in the successful implementation of the plan. This success was due to the community being active in the decision-making process during the development of the plan. This resulted in a good outcome for the community who have a quality drinking water source, and the agencies who do not have to divert resources into the active regulation and patrolling of the area.

Conclusion

Consultation is an essential and valuable aspect of developing policies, legislation, programs and services. It is the process through which stakeholders comment and contribute to decisions that directly affect them (Department of Family and Community Services 2000). Support for public policy is dependent on people participating in the process (Perlgut 1994).

Active participation and involving the community in decision-making results in increased effectiveness in public policy as the community gain a sense of ownership and are amenable to implementing the policy (Klijin and Koppenjan 2000; Kubler and Wati 2000; McLaverty 2000). Public participation in the development to policies also minimises resistance to that policy and results in the provision of quality information for decision making (Cuthill 1995; Klijin and Koppenjan 2000). It is also necessary to involve citizens at an early stage in the process in order to reduce hostility (Shepherd and Bowler 1994).

The consultation process used in the development of the Quinninup WSPP helped to determine a unanimous decision by the Reference Group to prohibit recreation despite the desire by the community to retain recreation on the lake. This decision was based on information presented to the Reference Group on the risks of recreating on their drinking water source. This information increased the education and awareness of the Reference Group to risks related to recreating on their drinking water source, resulting in the Reference Group making an informed decision. In being part of the decision making process, this gave the Reference Group a sense of ownership and responsibility for the protection of their drinking water. This was evident through the community employing a lake manager to implement the WSPP management recommendations.

It is unfortunate that the department does not currently evaluate the public consultation processes used for the development of their WSPPs in order to improve and further evolve the process. It would be interesting to undertake a study of Quinninup to evaluate the level of commitment to the prohibition of recreating in and around Karri Lake for the protection of the drinking water source, now that the agencies

are no longer an active participant in the community. Any further study should also include an investigation in to the level of support the community requires post-WSPP development.

During the development of any WSPP, the agency is regularly in contact with stakeholders, including the community. Post-WSPP, this level of contact is minimal. Perhaps as part of the final stage in the development of any WSPP the agency should investigate the level of support the community requires and decrease this over a period of time. This could result in the maintenance of relationships built during the consultation process and further support active, self-regulating citizens. The current method of 'going cold' on a community could lead to a compounding of community beliefs that the consultation process was tokenism.

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