

Submitted via email 22 July 1999 Hard copy following.

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**From:** The McGregors [SMTP:maybenup@bigpond.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 21, 1999 11:28 AM  
**To:** Environment.Reps@aph.gov.au  
**Subject:** Catchment Management Enquiry

W.I.S.A.L.T.S. Inc.  
Whittington Interceptor Sustainable Agriculture Land Treatment Society Inc.

21 July 1999

The Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Environment and Heritage  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT

Dear Sir,

Submission to the inquiry on Catchment Management with particular reference to the matter "best practice methods of preventing, halting and reversing environmental degradation in catchments, and achieving environmental sustainability."

WISALTS appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the Catchment Management Inquiry. The Society is a farmer organisation formed in 1978 to promote the Whittington Interceptor Bank System when that had shown its success in the Brookton area of Western Australia. In the 20 years since then, this very sustainable form of reversing land degradation has been installed in most areas of Western Australia, in NSW, Victoria and South Australia. It is fair to say that there are many look-alike Whittington Interceptor Banks, most of which do not work, and there are systems put in in the early years which have not been checked and amended which are less effective than they might be. Where the Interceptor Bank System is properly surveyed, installed and checked on a regular basis, with alterations made as required, the system is a very effective catchment management tool for controlling waterlogging, surface and subsurface waterflow, allowing the soil to heal and ensure the growth of whatever ground cover is planned (trees, crops, pasture).

We commend the Standing Committee for their commitment to Catchment Management and are pleased to see the change in boundaries of many Land Care Districts in WA to reflect the importance of tackling problems in this

way. The matters listed for the continuation of your investigation of water resource issues are all very important ones; there is a great deal of urgency in finding solutions and effective practices to ensure water supplies and food production for our increasing population in Australia.

Much time and tax payers money has been spent on inquiries and reports and discussion papers and grants to Land Care Districts over the last twenty or so years, but we as a nation seem to be no further forward in solving the problems. There are a number of successful and effective solutions developed by farmers over the years which have received little regard from 'officialdom'. WISALTS is one of them but there are others, and we would encourage the Standing Committee to at least take note of these solutions and enable them to access the same level of support as is available to semi-government supported groups.

Indeed at a Special General Meeting of the Society held on Thursday July 1st, 1999, the following motion was carried unanimously, and relevant letters have been written: "That this meeting request the State and/or Federal Governments to immediately provide interest-free loans of three to five year duration for individual primary producers to undertake conservation work of their choice on their properties. We commend this concept to the Standing Committee.

In particular reference to matter number 3 as listed above: When land clearing began, the chain reaction set in place upset the environmental balance of a catchment from the top to the valley floor. This was largely due to the change in the water/air ratio, starting a series of events leading to environmental degradation.

Nature has in place a series of barrier systems that hold the rain where it falls. The amount held depends on soil structure and condition. Also complementing the barrier systems, there are series of surface and subsurface waterways which allow excess rainfall to escape.

To reverse this environmental degradation and to counteract the effects of clearing, and still be able to use the cleared land for the purposes for which it was originally cleared, it will be essential to establish what nature had in place by using artificial means to re-create the balanced water/air ratio.

The Whittington Interceptor Bank System has a part to play in artificially re-creating the water/air balance. It is necessary to find these subsurface barriers and waterways, and to carefully plan a complete catchment or sub-catchment system from the top of the slope to the valley floor. Care must be taken to check subsurface barrier structure material for suitability to construct the artificial barrier to the top of the soil

profile. If the material is not suitable to create or construct this artificial barrier, the same result can be achieved by using a plastic sheet.

WISALTS would be very pleased to meet with the Standing Committee at any mutually agreeable time, and to also show you successful WISALTS systems in the field. I understand you have had a submission from Mr L G Adamson, suggesting a visit to the Gunning property of Mr and Mrs Ken Clancy. That property is an excellent example and has the advantage of being close to Canberra! Should the Committee be sitting in the West at any time, we can easily arrange properties to visit.

Yours faithfully

Pam McGregor

Mrs J D McGregor  
Secretary

Submitted on Email and by hard copy posted.