HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REGISTER OF HERITAGE PLACES - ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTATION

11. ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The criteria adopted by the Heritage Council in November 1996 have been used to determine the cultural heritage significance of the place.

The documentation for this place is based on the heritage assessment completed by Fiona Bush, Heritage Consultant, in October 2003, with amendments and/or additions by HCWA staff and the Register Committee.

PRINCIPAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC THEME(S)

- 3.8.6 Building and maintaining railways
- 3.11.5 Establishing water supplies
- 3.14.1 Building to suit Australia conditions
- 3.23 Catering for tourists
- 8.1.3 Developing public parks and gardens

HERITAGE COUNCIL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA THEME(S)

- 202 Rail and light rail transport
- 405 Sport, recreation and entertainment
- 409 Environmental awareness
- 507 Water, power, major transport routes

11. 1 AESTHETIC VALUE*

The Lake, which dominates the forest reserve and picnic areas, lends this recreational area high aesthetic value through the presence of the clear blue water and white beaches in association with the forest reserve. The fringing reeds, and other natural vegetation have completely naturalised this cultural feature. Views of the Lake are available from most areas in the forest reserve and considerably enhance the recreational activities to be enjoyed at the Lake. (Criterion 1.3)

- For consistency, all references to architectural style are taken from Apperly, Richard; Irving, Robert and Reynolds, Peter *A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1788 to the Present* , Angus & Robertson, North Ryde, 1989.
  For consistency, all references to garden and landscape types and styles are taken from Ramsay, J., *Parks, Gardens and Special Trees: A Classification and Assessment Method for the Register of the National Estate,* Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991, with additional reference to Richards, O., *Theoretical Framework for Designed Landscapes in WA*, unpublished report, 1997.

11. 2. HISTORIC VALUE

Lake Leschenaultia was constructed in c.1898 as an important component of the Eastern Railway line and represents part of the investment made by the Western Australian government, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, in the development of an efficient rail network. The Eastern Railway line was integral to the development of the Eastern Goldfields and to the development of Western Australia. (Criterion 2.2)

Lake Leschenaultia was one of the many reservoirs constructed by the Railways Department during the first quarter of the twentieth century, and provided water for the operation of steam trains on the Eastern Railway line from c.1898 until 1947. (Criterion 2.2)

Lake Leschenaultia has served as popular recreational area since 1949. Prior to the construction of public swimming pools in the Mundaring district in the 1960s, the place was extremely popular with local residents and children as it was one of the few swimming venues in the district. Many local children learnt to swim at the Lake. Since the 1980s, the popularity of the Lake has spread further afield attracting inter- and intra- State visitors and as well as visitors from overseas. (Criterion 2.2)

11. 3. SCIENTIFIC VALUE

The discovery of Aboriginal artifacts in the forest reserve indicates that *Lake Leschenaultia* has the potential to reveal information about the local indigenous peoples who once lived in the area. (Criterion 3.2)

11. 4. SOCIAL VALUE

Lake Leschenaultia is important to the local community as a recreational reserve and offers visitors the opportunity to experience a wide variety of recreational pursuits, with particular emphasis on aquatic activities. (Criterion 4.1)

The retention of *Lake Leschenaultia* is important to the local community as it is a reminder of the Chidlow's past, when it was part of the Eastern Railway line, and the important role that the Lake played in supplying water for this line. That role was recognised when *Lake Leschenaultia* was placed on the Municipal Inventory in 1997. (Criterion 4.2)

12. DEGREE OF SIGNIFICANCE

12. 1. RARITY

Lake Leschenaultia was the largest railway reservoir constructed on the Eastern Railway line. It survives today as the only railway reservoir in Western Australia to have been developed into an extensive recreational area, offering a range of recreational activities, which attracts visitors from inter- and intra- State and from overseas. (Criterion 5.1)

12. 2 REPRESENTATIVENESS

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12. 3 CONDITION

Many of the issues discussed by Gobby in the 1980 Management Plan for the Lake appear to have been implemented and both the Lake, buildings and forest reserve are in good condition.

12. 4 INTEGRITY

Lake Leschenaultia was originally constructed in c.1898 as a dam to provide water for the Department of Working Railways and Tramways. The Lake is no longer used for this specific purpose although it continues to act as a water reservoir. A large section of the basic infrastructure which was required to pipe water from the dam to the point where it was needed has been removed and it is unlikely to be reinstated. The current salinity of the water negates its use as a water source for machinery. While these changes mean that the Lake can no longer be used for its original purpose, enough physical evidence remains to give the place a moderate degree of integrity.

Lake Leschenaultia has functioned as a recreational area, under the control of the Shire of Mundaring since 1950. Stoker's Café represents the earliest remaining structure on the site specifically built to improve the amenities at the Lake. Stoker's Café has retained a moderate degree of integrity. The more recent structures and alterations to the infra-structure of the place have not altered the high recreational quality of *Lake Leschenaultia*.

12. 5 AUTHENTICITY

While the original pumping station, pipes and pumper's house have been removed from the dam, the dam wall remains intact without any apparent additions. The original dam has retained a high degree of authenticity.

The alterations to Stoker's Café have incorporated the restaurant and residence into one building. Few alterations have been made to the exterior fabric. Stoker's Café has a moderate degree of authenticity.

Overall, *Lake Leschenaultia* has retained a moderate degree of authenticity.

13. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The documentary and physical evidence has been compiled by Fiona Bush, Heritage Consultant.

13. 1 DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Lake Leschenaultia comprises a dam, recreational facilities, restaurant, picnic and camping areas and associated natural bushland. The dam was constructed by the Department of Working Railways and Tramways[1] in c.1898 to supply water for trains using the Eastern Railway.

In 1881, the first stage of what became known as the Eastern Railway was completed by the Western Australian government. The line ran between Fremantle and Guildford. Shortly after the opening of this section, loan funds were approved by the Legislative Assembly for the construction of Stage 2 which extended the line to Chidlow's Well. This section was completed in 1884 and was constructed by J.W. Wright and Edward Keane.[2] By 1885, the line had extended to York and, with the discovery of gold at Coolgardie, to the goldfields by 1896. The extension of the line to the goldfields was to play an important part in the development of this area and also the State. [3]

While the discovery of gold was welcomed by the government it had one serious side effect, a lack of water in the goldfields district. It soon became apparent that additional water supplies would have to be found.[4] The Public Works Department, which previously had had no need to provide water to Western Australians, suddenly found itself required to supply large quantities of water for a variety of purposes and across vast distances.[5] This led to the development of the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme by C.Y. O'Connor in 1896.[6]

The settlement known today as Chidlow was originally a stopping point for travellers on the road to Northam.[7] William Chidlow, an employee of John Morrell, an early Northam settler, discovered a watering place here in the 1830s while travelling between Guildford and Northam. Over the years the well became known as Chidlow's Well.[8] The well was not always reliable and another well was excavated during the 1880s which was also referred to as Chidlow's Well. The arrival of the Eastern Railway heralded the

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1 According to J.S.H. Le Page in *Building a State: the Story of the Public Works Department of Western Australia 1829 - 1985*, Water Authority of Western Australia, Leederville, 1986, p. 315, the Works and Railways Department underwent organisational changes in 1896 and went from being the Works and Railways Department to the Working Railways and Tramways. For the purposes of this assessment the department will be referred to as the Railways Department.

2 Le Page, *Building a State…*, p. 132; Elliot, I., *Mundaring a History of the Shire*, Shire of Mundaring, 1983, p. 42.

3 Le Page, *Building a State…*, pp. 149 & 224.

4 Le Page, *Building a State…*, p. 224.

5 LePage, p. 263.

6 LePage, pp 272 – 279.

7 The road now passes several kilometres to the south of Chidlow.

8 Elliot, *Mundaring…*, pp 54 - 55.

development of the area into a town when the land around the terminus was sub-divided into residential lots in 1882. Governor Broome chose the name Chidlow's Well for the settlement.[9]

The residents agitated for a slight alteration to the name in 1919, requesting that the word 'well', be dropped from the name, but were happy to retain the 's' with an apostrophe. However, the Undersecretary for Lands decided that it would be better to loose the 's' as well and the name was changed to Chidlow in 1920.[10]

At the end of the nineteenth century, and for the first half of the twentieth century, all train carriages in Western Australia were drawn by steam engines. These engines required large amounts of timber or coal and water. Several reservoirs were established at various points along the railway lines. In 1897, the Railways Department considered that due to increasing traffic along the Eastern Railway line, water requirements had also increased and a new reservoir would be required. Plans for a new reservoir were prepared for a dam at Chidlow. The carrying capacity was estimated to be 118,000,000 gallons and the cost approximately £14,000.[11] Plans for the proposed dam show a catchment area of approximately 3,376 acres with a proposed reservoir of 6,580 acres. The plans also stipulated that the material for the dam wall would be taken from 'within the 938.00 contour.'[12]

The records give no further details about the reservoir at Chidlow, but in the 1899 annual report to Parliament, the Railways Department lists a Reservoir at Chidlow's Well which held 117,000,000 gallons and had cost £8,803 to construct. Water from the dam was fed to the railway platform at Chidlow's Well by steam pump.[13] It was not until 1901 that Reserves 5200 and 6298 were gazetted as Reserves set aside for the purposes of a railway water supply.[14] The Annual General Reports for the Railways Department lists the reservoir at Chidlow's Well from this period onwards.[15]

The Railways Department's Annual General Report for 1901 states that additions and improvements had been made at Chidlow to the water supply for the Eastern Railway. The nature of these improvements is not known. However, as later plans show a pump house together with two pipes which carried the water from the dam to a tank at Chidlow Railway Station, it is possible that the improvements listed represent the completion of the

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9 Elliot, *Mundaring…*, p. 56.

10 Elliot, op cit. For purposes of continuity, the name 'Chidlow' will be used throughout the assessment.

11 Votes & Proceedings to Parliament during 3rd Session 1897, Vol. II, p. 52. Note that Railways Annual Reports later record the capacity as 117 million gallons.

12 W.A.G.R. Plans: Chidlow Water Supply, Cons. 1781, Item 2708, S.R.O. All of the early plans are undated. The earliest dated plans are from December 1909.

13 Votes & Proceedings to Parliament 1899, Vol. II.

14 Extracts found in Lake Leschenaultia file, Mundaring & Hills Historical Society; Reserves Index fiche Battye Library.

15 'Report on the working of the Government Railways & Tramways', year ending 30 June 1901.

reservoir and the construction of the pump house and pipes.[16] These same plans also show a jetty leading out into the lake.

At the time of the reservoir's construction, Rosedale Road passed very close to the eastern side of the dam wall. A plan of the site in April 1910 shows a pump keeper's house on the northern side of Rosedale Road.[17] Henry Stoker held the position of pumper at the Lake from 1898 until 1910 when he was replaced by John Taylor.[18]

Plans dated 1909, 1915 - 1917 also indicate that early in the life of the reservoir, rising salinity levels were starting to cause concern.[19] The area had probably been cleared of all the large trees, firstly by Edward Keane for use as railway sleepers, and then the smaller trees would have been used for fuel.[20] As early as September 1909, readings indicated rising salinity levels and plans were prepared in December 1909 showing drainage ditches that were to draw salt water seepage away from the creeks which fed the reservoir. However, the levels continued to rise as readings from 1915 through to 1917 attest. Further ditches were proposed in November 1916 but were not installed until after August 1917.[21]

The Railways Department acquired more land to increase the water catchment area and carried out an extensive planting programme. The amount of land owned by the Department at the reservoir often came under scrutiny by other government departments. At one stage the Secretary for Railways was asked by the Undersecretary for Lands if the Railways Department would object to a portion of the 'reserve' being used for a 'Government Sanatorium'.[22] The Railway Department's response was somewhat terse. A great deal of expense had gone into improving the watershed through the construction of drains and the planting of 600 pine trees. The dam had a capacity of 117,000,00 gallons and was considered to be an alternate water supply to Mundaring Weir in case of an accident. The Railways Department was not prepared to permit the construction of a sanatorium on any part of the catchment area as it thought disease might spread through this sensitive area.[23]

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16 W.A.G.R. Plans: Chidlow Water Supply, Cons. 1781, Item 2708, S.R.O. Plans showing the pump house and pipes date to August 1915. None of the earlier plans show a pump house or the pipes leading to the Railway Station.

17 W.A.G.R. Plans: Chidlow Water Supply, Cons. 1781, Item 2708, S.R.O. The plans were specifically prepared to show the extent of additional land that would be need to be acquired by the Crown for the reservoir catchment area.

18 Elliot, *Mundaring…*, p. 73.

19 W.A.G.R. Plans: Chidlow Water Supply, Cons. 1781, Item 2708, S.R.O.

20 Simpson, R., *The White's from Illawarra*, private publication, undated (c.1978). In this publication Simpson notes that Keane obtained timber concessions in the area around Mt Helena from which he cut the timber for use on the Eastern Railway.

21 W.A.G.R. Plans: Chidlow Water Supply, Cons. 1781, Item 2708, S.R.O, Plans dated 6/9/1909; July 1915, July 1916, 14/11/1916 and 1/8/1917.

22 Lake Leschenaultia file, Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, correspondence between the two departments, 26 January 1911.

23 op cit.

In March 1923, the pump keeper's house was removed from the Lake and re-erected near the Station Master's House at Chidlow.[24] No new structure replaced it. During the 1930s, the Railways Department received requests from the Forestry Department for permission to cut firewood in the reserve, and from the Undersecretary for Lands for permission to open the area to settlement. The Railways Department continued to argue that the land was still required.[25]

In April 1933, the Railways Department agreed to lease a section of the Lake to the Mundaring Roads Board for the nominal rental of £1 per annum. The Railways Department had long denied residents the right to swim in the reservoir and it is possible that this change in attitude was due to continued salinity problems.[26] However, the Department had a change of heart, for in September 1941 they terminated the lease with the Road Board. The Roads Board protested, but the Department remained firm.[27] In November 1943, a portion of the forest reserve was excised from the catchment area and released for settlement.[28]

By January 1947, the situation had changed again and the Railways Department notified the Mundaring Roads Board that salinity levels at the Lake were too high for their purposes and the Board was re-invited to lease a portion of the Lake. The Board accepted and the agreement was signed in August 1948. A portion of Reserve 5220 (approximately 31 acres) was leased by the Board for 21 years. This area was centred around the dam wall and extended to an area on the north east side of Rosedale Road. In April 1949, the Lake was officially named Lake Leschenaultia as the water was thought to resemble the blue colour of the Leschenaultia flower.[29]

As the area became popular with local residents, the Board soon saw the need to provide facilities at the Lake. However, they were unwilling to commit to this type of expense unless they had greater control of the area. After much discussion, the Railways Department vested a larger portion of Reserve 5220 with the Mundaring Roads Board. In November 1950, a new recreational reserve, number 23165, was gazetted. By-laws were gazetted in February 1952 and these included the provision for camping at *Lake Leschenaultia* set fees for the use of the recreational area.[30]

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24 W.A.G.R. Plans: Chidlow Water Supply, Cons. 1781, Item 2708, S.R.O, Plan dated 6/8/1915.

25 Lake Leschenaultia file, Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, correspondence between various government departments.

26 Lake Leschenaultia files Shire of Mundaring; Lake Leschenaultia file, Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, correspondence between various government departments.

27 Lake Leschenaultia file, Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, correspondence between various government departments.

28 Lake Leschenaultia file, Mundaring & Hills Historical Society, correspondence, 14 /10/1943 & 12/10/1943.

29 Lake Leschenaultia files, Shire of Mundaring; Lake Leschenaultia file, Mundaring & Hills Historical Society; Notes on Lake Leschenaultia , Extract from Nomination for Sir David Brand Award for Tourism, 1984, p.3.

30 op.cit.

In August 1961, the Shire of Mundaring[31] received a grant of £2,716 from the Tourist Development Authority of Western Australia. The Shire had to provide matching funds on a £2 to £1 basis. The grant was used to construct a shop and tea-rooms at the Lake, while the Shire paid for the construction of a caretaker's residence.[32] The caretaker was responsible for collecting park fees, emptying rubbish bins and cleaning the toilets. Plans for the shop and residence were prepared by Eric Moyle. The breezeway separating the shop from the residence was later enclosed in the late 1970s and the resultant space used for storage.[33]

Moyle also developed plans for an amenities block for the caravan park.[34] Camping has been permitted at *Lake Leschenaultia* since 1952. Early camping appears to have been a very informal activity with campers setting up where they wished. A caravan park was developed to the north of the tea-rooms in 1970. Amenities included a toilet block (equipped with showers) and ten powered sites. In 1973, the camping area was enlarged.[35] However, the Shire decided that the caravans were not compatible with the general recreational activities which they were trying to develop at the Lake and the caravan park was closed in 1978. Camping was permitted, particularly organised school groups and youth organisations.[36]

Lake Leschenaultia proved to be a popular venue with hills residents. The distance to the coast was a deterrent for hills' residents so the vast majority of hills' school children learnt to swim at the Lake until the Shire built swimming pools at Bilgoman Well (1968) and Mt Helena (1992).[37]

The Lake also became a popular venue for boating. Originally tourists could board a motorised boat and be driven around the Lake.[38] This was later replaced by row boats and in 1958 approval was given by the Shire for the hiring of motor boats, although this was later rescinded over concerns for swimmers' safety.[39] Canoe hire took over from the row boats and in 2005 canoes are still available for hire.

A second jetty was constructed at the Lake by the Shire in 1971 using the resources of the Regional Employment Development Scheme.[40]

The Shire sought advice from the Department of Fisheries in 1972 as to whether the Lake would be a suitable location for trout. Conditions at the

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31 Mundaring Roads Board became the Shire of Mundaring in January 1961, Elliot, *Mundaring…*, p. 289.

32 *Swan Express* 30/8/1961; *West Australian* 30/11/1961, p. 4.

33 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

34 Lake Leschenaultia files, Shire of Mundaring.

35 Extract from Nomination for Sir David Brand Award for Tourism, 1984, p.4.

36 Extract from Nomination for Sir David Brand Award for Tourism, 1984, p.3.

37 Spillman, K., *"Life was meant to be here", Community and Local Government in the Shire of Mundaring*, Shire of Mundaring, 2003, pp. 134, 258; Information about swimming lessons was obtained through talks with long time local residents Ian Elliot, Maureen Tie and Gerard van Didden.

38 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984. However, Alan did not know how the motor was driven or the exact date that this boat was in operation, 21/10/2003.

39 Extract from Nomination for Sir David Brand Award for Tourism, 1984, p 4.

40 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

Lake were found to be suitable and in September 1973 5,000 hatchlings were introduced into the Lake. Re-stocking of the Lake continued in 1978, 1983 and 1984, 1987 - 1998.[41] Re-stocking of the Lake finished in 1998 when it was decided that Trout fishing was not compatible with the recreational themes being developed at the Lake. *Lake Leschenaultia* is still listed by the Fisheries Department as a Trout fishing area.[42]

Concern over environmental issues at the Lake prompted the Shire to commission Ross Gobby and Associates to prepare a feasibility study for the management of the Lake in November 1979. The outcomes of the study indicated that many of the structures needed to be upgraded and that the bushland had become degraded due to indiscriminate vehicular access. The appointment of a full time ranger was recommended. The consultants also identified evidence of Aboriginal sites on the upstream sides of some of the creeks that drained into the Lake.[43]

In 1981, the Shire sought permission from the Lands Department to swap land near the north east area of the Lake reserve to divert Rosedale Road away from the eastern side of the dam wall. The location of the Road meant that it was difficult for the rangers to enforce the payment of fees as public traffic passed along the road to properties to the north of *Lake Leschenaultia*. Permission was granted and the line of Rosedale Road was altered to its current position.[44]

Following on from the recommendations of the Management Plan, the facilities at *Lake Leschenaultia* were upgraded during 1984 and a new ablution block was constructed for the camping ground. In May 1984, Alan Hill was appointed as the Lake's first full time ranger. The appointment of a full time ranger created better opportunities for the protection of the forest reserve which previously had been open to indiscriminate fire wood collection, the cutting of trees for various purposes and inappropriate vehicular access to the lake shore and the establishment of secondary vehicle access trails. The former care taker's residence was taken over as the Ranger's Office[45]

In 1989, a syndicate comprising Sid Shepherd, Bob Moss and Bill Angwin approached the Shire with the idea of establishing a miniature railway at *Lake Leschenaultia*. The Shire leased a section of the forest reserve to the group (in the eastern area of the forest). The group were responsible for the construction and maintenance of the railway and the Shire was to get a percentage of the ticket takings.[46]

Further additions were made to *Lake Leschenaultia* during the 1980s with the construction of a workshop, directly to the east of the tea-rooms. In the early 1990s a machinery shed was constructed on the southern side of the workshop. In 1996 the old toilet block to the north of the tea-rooms was

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41 Extract from Nomination for Sir David Brand Award for Tourism, 1984, p.5.

42 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

43 Ross Gobby & Associates, 'Management Plan for Lake Leschenaultia', unpublished report prepared for the Shire of Mundaring, May 1980.

44 Lake Leschenaultia files, Shire of Mundaring.

45 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

46 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

replaced with a new brick and iron structure. To improve the recreational enjoyment around the lake, artificial beaches were created at five different points around the western side of the Lake and at the main swimming area in front of the tea-rooms. The grey sand is replenished yearly as required.[47]

In 1997, *Lake Leschenaultia* was placed on the Shire of Mundaring's Municipal Inventory.

The Miniature Railway closed in 1999 on the death of Bill Angwin. In March 2003, all the tracks and rolling stock were purchased by the Toodyay Miniature Railway and removed from *Lake Leschenaultia*. The line of the railway track is currently being developed as a walking trail for people with disabilities.[48]

During the late 1990s the corrugated asbestos cement cladding on the tea-rooms and residence were replaced with zincalum sheeting.[49]

In 2003, the place is used for a variety of recreational activities, such as boating, walking, cycling, swimming, bird watching and wild flower sightseeing. Visitors are drawn from the local population, Perth residents, intra and inter-state visitors and overseas visitors.[50]

Three full time rangers are now employed at the Lake enabling a managed program of forest care to be implemented. Tree cutting has been eliminated and previously degraded areas (through un-supervised vehicle access), are being allowed to regenerate naturally or with assistance through tree plantings or seed distribution. A fire burning mosaic pattern has been developed to ensure that a minimum of ten years occurs between burns.

13. 2 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Lake Leschenaultia comprises a dam, recreational facilities, restaurant, picnic and camping areas and associated natural bushland. The dam was constructed by the West Australian Government Railways in c.1898 to supply water for trains using the Eastern Railway.

Lake Leschenaultia lies slightly to the north of the village of Chidlow which is approximately 50 km east of Perth. The Lake is surrounded by regenerating forest and partially cleared land. Four creeks feed into the lake with a fifth creek acting as a feeder for one of the primary creeks. The topography around the Lake itself is comparatively flat, with small valleys and ridges associated with the creek systems in the forest reserve. The main vehicular entry is situated off Rosedale Road on the northern side of the Lake. Pedestrian access is possible at various points along the eastern forest reserve.

The forest reserve around the lake is divided into three main plant communities: acacia – melaleuca near the creek valleys, the wandoo forest

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47 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

48 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

49 Information obtained from Alan Hill, Ranger at Lake Leschenaultia since 1984, 21/10/2003.

50 Visitor information obtained from Lake Leschenaultia files, Shire of Mundaring. During 1990 – 1992 visitor numbers were recorded at being slightly over 100,000.

which dominates in the heavier soil areas and also near some of the creeks and the jarrah forest which occupies the slopes and ridges. These three main communities are also home to a number of associated under-storey species. Near the shores of the Lake the vegetation is dominated by baumea – melaleuca species.[51]

The main entrance is marked by a small timber framed and clad building (with a zincalum roof), where the Lake entry fee is collected. A bitumen road, with concrete curbs, leads to either the eastern or western sides of the Lake. A gravel road encircles the entire Lake and is used only by the park ranger (gates across this road block public access). This track also serves as the pedestrian nature trail. The main picnic area is located on the eastern side of the Lake together with a camping area. A secondary picnic area is located on the western side. Five artificial beaches have been created on the foreshore of the Lake, the largest in front of the main picnic area and four smaller beaches on the western side of the Lake.

The dam wall lies directly opposite the main entrance. It rises approximately 10 metres above ground level. The northern face is a steep incline covered mostly with exotic grasses while jarrah trees have become established on the lower section of the slope. The flat area immediately to the north of the wall is a grassed and equipped with a concrete bar be que and picnic table. A poplar tree (*Populus nivra* var. *italica*) has been planted at the south eastern side of this grassed area. This was one of the only exotic tree species noted at the Lake.

The southern face of the dam is sealed with widely spaced laterite rocks over which has been laid a facing of cement render. The top of the dam wall is approximately 2.5 metres wide with a low stone wall (laid with roughly dressed laterite stones randomly laid) on the northern side. The top of dam, which is a gravel track, forms part of the nature walk. The overflow for the dam is located at the western end of the dam wall. It is spanned with a steel and timber decked bridge. A timber jetty, which is sited approximately mid-way along the wall, extends out into the lake for about 40 metres.

Just below the top of the northern face of the dam wall, is a metal pipe. Approximately 50 cm of this pipe lies above ground, while the remainder of the pipe disappears beneath the surface and appears to run down the northern face of the wall. No trace of the pipe was visible at the base of the dam wall.

The main picnic area (on the north eastern side of the lake) is a grassed area which slopes down to the main beach. The area is covered with grass and is shaded with widely spaced jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*) and marri (*Eucalyptus calophylla*) trees. Below the picnic area is a white sandy beach with mature jarrah trees (*Eucalyptus marginata*) near the lake shore. A shed, where Canadian canoes can be hired, is located at the south eastern end of this beach.

The main eastern road leads to a car park on the northern side of the restaurant (Stoker's Café). This road continues eastward past additional car parking on the southern side of Stoker's Café, past the camping ground

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51 Gobby & Associates, pp 8 – 9.

and terminates near the site of the miniature railway (near the south boundary of *Lake Leschenaultia*. The main picnic area is equipped with several concrete barbeques, as well as a large gas barbeque near a large gazebo. The gazebo is constructed of treated pine posts with a zincalum roof and concrete floor. Another large gazebo, of similar construction, is located at the rear of the main beach.

Stoker's Café lies to the north west of the main picnic area. This building is the original tea rooms and residence constructed in 1962. The residential component of the building is now used as the Ranger's Office. The building is a brick and timber framed structure with the brick sections forming feature walls. The timber framed sections, where aluminium windows are located, are clad with zincalum sheeting. The gable roof is covered with zincalum sheets. The building has been painted dark olive green. Steps on the western elevation lead up to a verandah area and the kiosk. The interior is open plan with timber floor.

Directly to the east of Stoker's Café are two large, olive coloured zincalum sheds with hipped roofs. The western shed is used as a workshop while the eastern shed is used to store machinery.

A brick toilet block (male and female) lies to the north of the café, with an additional toilet block on the south eastern side of the picnic area (this block also contains showers and is used by the campers.) The camping area lies to the north east of the Stoker's Cafe. Gravel camp sites are set out amongst the trees with concrete barbeques and picnic tables spread randomly through the area.

The site of the miniature railway is defined by the railway station and the route that the track once took. The railway station comprises a platform of hard packed earth, faced with aggregate concrete blocks. This is covered by a zincalum awning supported on iron posts. The ticket office is clad with fibrous cement sheeting. The railway route is hard packed dirt covered with a fine layer of crushed granite.

The secondary picnic area on the north western side of the lake is similar to the main area with grassed areas equipped with barbeques, picnic tables and gazebos. This is also has a small brick and iron toilet block. The secondary beach is similar to the main beach.

Away from the main beach the remaining lake shore is fringed with reeds and small patches of melaleuca thickets. Water hens and other water fowl use these areas as nesting and feeding spots, while the lake also has a variety of frog species.

Many of the issues discussed in Gobby's Management Plan for the Lake appear to have been implemented. The standard of the picnic areas has been addressed with the introduction of new gazebos. The toilets and café have all been upgraded, or in the case of the toilets completely replaced. Vehicles have now been restricted to sealed roads which only permit access to specific areas of *Lake Leschenaultia*. Evidence of gravel roads which are now regenerating can be found in several areas of the place. Camping is restricted to the north east section of the reserve. Overall, *Lake Leschenaultia* is in good condition and the place is being well maintained.

13. 3 COMPARATIVE INFORMATION

A number of reservoirs were constructed by the Railways Department in the last decade of the nineteenth century to supply water for the trains operating on the various lines. Information obtained from the Railways Department Annual Reports indicate that *Lake Leschenaultia* was the largest reservoir built on the Eastern Railway.[52]

Annual Reports of the Railways Department show that *Lake Leschenaultia* had the largest carrying capacity for any railway reservoir in Western Australia. Only Tammin (99 million gallons) and Malcolm (94 million gallons) came close to *Lake Leschenaultia*'s 117 million gallon capacity. It is not known how long these other dams were used for as railway reservoirs, as the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme replaced several dams once it came 'on line'. Kanowna is known to have been transferred to the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme, and therefore not used exclusively by the Railways Department and Niagara was also used as a town water supply at a later stage.[53]

The reservoirs became surplus to the needs of the Department once steam engines ceased to be used. Many of the reservoirs were abandoned and left to decay, such as the catchment dam at Cunderdin and the Karalee Catchment dam near Yilgarn.[54] Other reservoirs have been dismantled such as one near Grass Valley which was partially dismantled during the 1980s to permit the stream that fed the dam to flow again.[55]

As these catchment dams were located in areas where water was in short supply, they often came to be used by the local population as recreational sites, particularly for swimming. Generally no facilities were available at these sites, although Karalee Dam became associated with a hotel that was established due to the presence of the dam and the railway station. Karalee Dam became a favourite place for picnics and swimming by local residents and for travellers on the road.[56] While these dams continue to attract small numbers of visitors, none of them has developed the type of tourist facilities that can be found at *Lake Leschenaultia*.

Lake Leschenaultia was the largest railway reservoir to be built on the Eastern Railway Line. Amongst those catchment dams that have survived today, *Lake Leschenaultia* is unique in that it has developed into a popular tourist destination which attracts large numbers of visitors and has amenities which cater for these visitors.

13. 4 KEY REFERENCES

Ross Gobby & Associates, 'Management Plan for Lake Leschenaultia', unpublished report prepared for the Shire of Mundaring, May 1980.

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52 Information obtained from Votes & Proceedings to Parliament 1897 – 1899; Annual Reports on the working of the Government Railways & Tramways', 1901 - 1906.

53 See table of railway reservoir capacities, on HCWA file P08568, compiled from Railways Department Annual Reports by Fiona Bush, October 2003.

54 Site visit to Cunderdin, National Trust Assessment of Karalee Catchment and Reservoir.

55 Information obtained from Don Newman 6/10/03.

56 National Trust Assessment of Karalee Rock Catchment and Reservoir.

13. 5 FURTHER RESEARCH

A search was made through the Government Gazette for tender notices for the construction of the reservoir at Chidlow and also for the construction of the original buildings at the site. However, the indexes did not list this information and in the time available it was not possible to look through all the Gazettes from 1897 - 1902. All written documentation from this period appears to be missing, although the State Records Office does have information about the Lake from the 1920s onwards. A search through the Government Gazette for the years 1897 – 1902 may yield information about the exact construction date of the dam and the contractors responsible for the work.

The presence of Aboriginal artefacts at the site indicated a previous occupation of the area by local tribes. Research into who these tribes were, their land use patterns and the history of their occupancy was not investigated. The Aboriginal history of the site should be investigated at a later stage.

Construction dates have not been identified for the shed housing canoes, workshop and main entrance.