

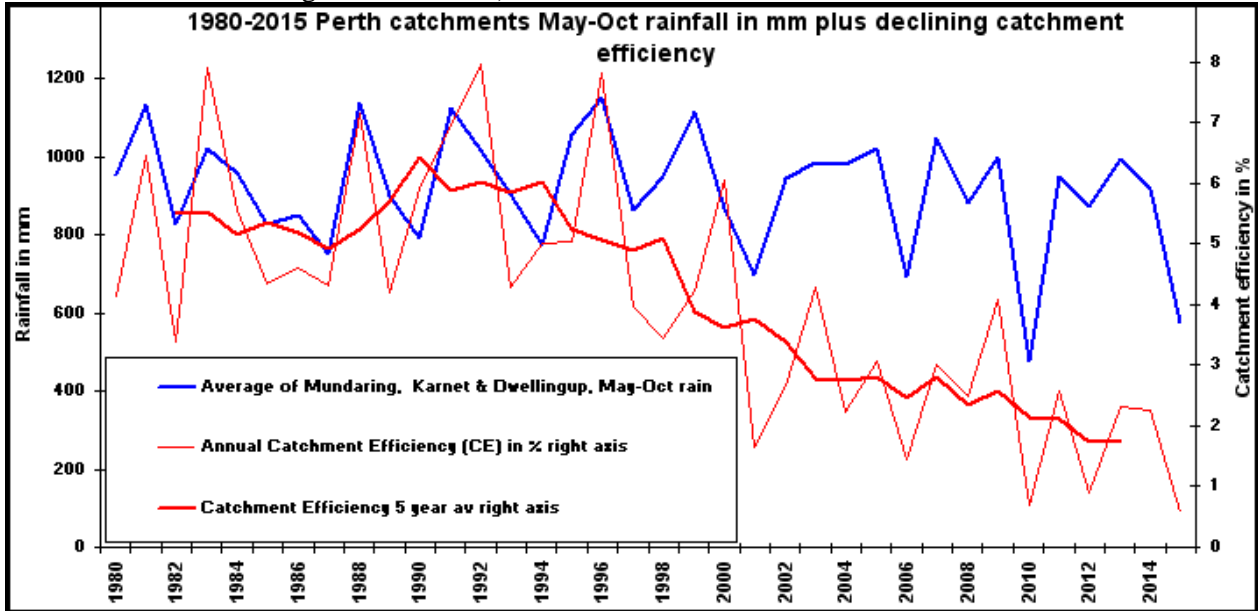
Perth water supply dam catchments are being decommissioned.

To whom it may concern, March 2016

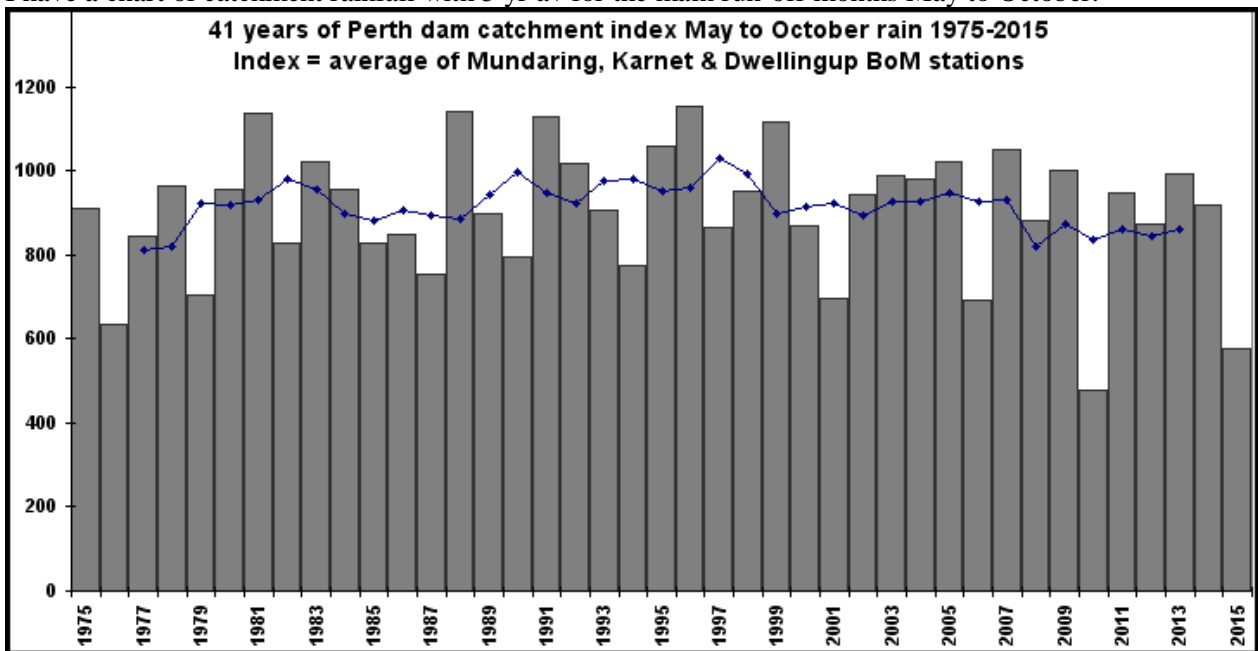
Perth dam catchments bush is not being managed so as to reasonably optimise flows into dams.

Obviously this should be done in such a way as to not cause undue environmental damage – yet take account of the fact that the dams were built to provide water for Perth.

I have constructed the following chart showing the steady decline in catchment efficiency since 1995. (CE is inflows/total rain falling into catchment)



I have a chart of catchment rainfall with 5 yr av for the main run-off months May to October.



IMHO both main political parties have been spooked by the likelihood of Green opposition to any thinning of catchment bush. Obviously Labor has their preference deal with the Greens which they view as sacrosanct. The Liberals are terrified of stirring up the “Doctors Wives” type of Green opposition which has cost them seats at times. At this point we need a little history from 2002 – a very rare media item commenting on the issue of managing catchments.

Water bosses

'snubbed' plan

Corporation
sat on scheme
to help ease
dam crisis

■ By Steve Pennells

WATER authorities have failed to act on key proposals that would have helped ease WA's water crisis.

For seven years, the Water Corporation has sat on a government recommendation that it clear vegetation around water catchment areas, effectively halving the amount of water that has flowed into some of Perth's dams.

The initiative was part of a major strategy for Perth's water future, drawn up by the former Court government in 1995.

The Water Corporation is only now looking at the proposal, at the urging of the Department of Conservation and Land Management.

The West Australian understands that the corporation's lack of action is part of a scathing internal report which criticises the long-term management of WA's water supply.

Water Corporation planning and development general manager Garry Meinck conceded yesterday that the plan would have doubled the runoff in high rainfall areas.

This would have added up to 10 gegalitres of water to Perth's water supply for every 10,000ha of catchment vegetation that was thinned. He said it had not been carried out

because it came with "a whole series of social and environmental constraints".

"Nothing has been done in relation to it," he said.

"It was just not pursued because of the difficulty of getting the community and environmentalists onside."

Former environment minister Peter Foss, who was responsible for the 1995 water strategy, said no one would have accepted it.

"Just imagine if people went up on their drive to Mundaring Weir and were standing in the middle of a desert with all the trees gone," he said.

Run-off into Perth's dams dropped dramatically about 25 years ago, when burnoffs and thinning of vegetation was cut back after complaints about smog over Perth.

The drop had been blamed on rainfall, but Bureau of Meteorology figures show the drop in rain-

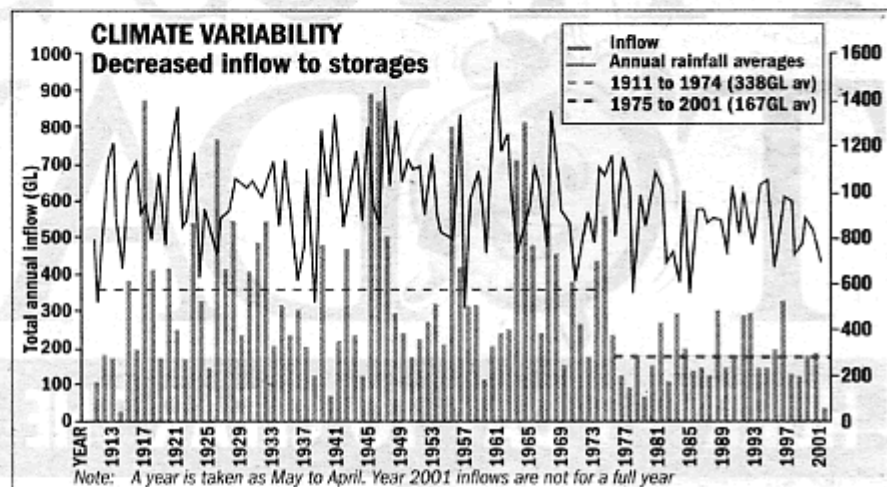
fall was nowhere near the dramatic reduction of inflow into dams.

Renewed clearing as a means of easing Perth's water shortage was discussed again in the 1980s and enforced in the Court government's strategy, which also outlined plans for water prices to reflect the true cost of supply and make water-efficient showerheads compulsory in new homes.

Many of the proposals were not acted upon and some have resurfaced in the Gallop Government's draft water strategy.

CALM regional services director Alan Walker said burning combined with thinning of vegetation had been shown to produce significant extra runoff into dams.

He said the department had suggested that the Water Corporation apply to make it official policy in CALM's imminent draft forest management plan.



Clearly the financial benefits would be enormous if bush experts were tasked to manage catchment bush to improve CE back to 5 or 6% in such a way aiming to have negligible adverse impacts. I find the Peter Foss statement about a "desert" amazingly ignorant for a cabinet level politician. The Institute of Foresters has been in favour of managing Perth catchments bush for over a decade now. In Dec 2013 Foresters sent a letter to the WA Treasurer on the issue.

From page 28 of “Wungong Catchment Environment and Water Management Project” published by the Water Corporation March 2005.

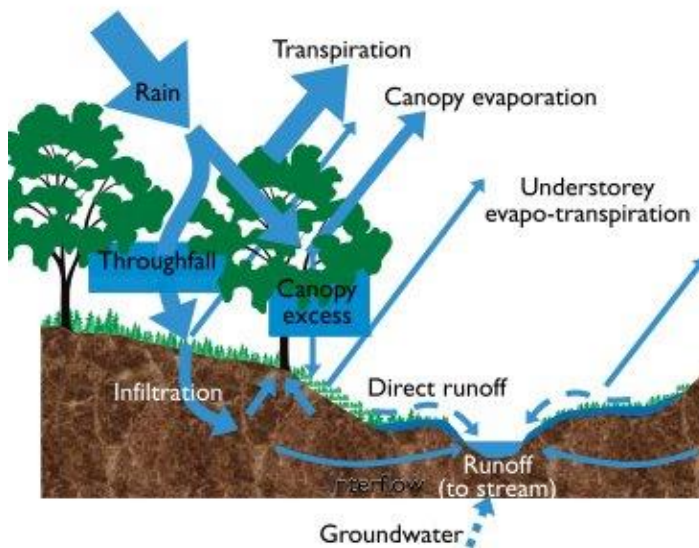


Figure 12 (above) Run-off in a forested catchment

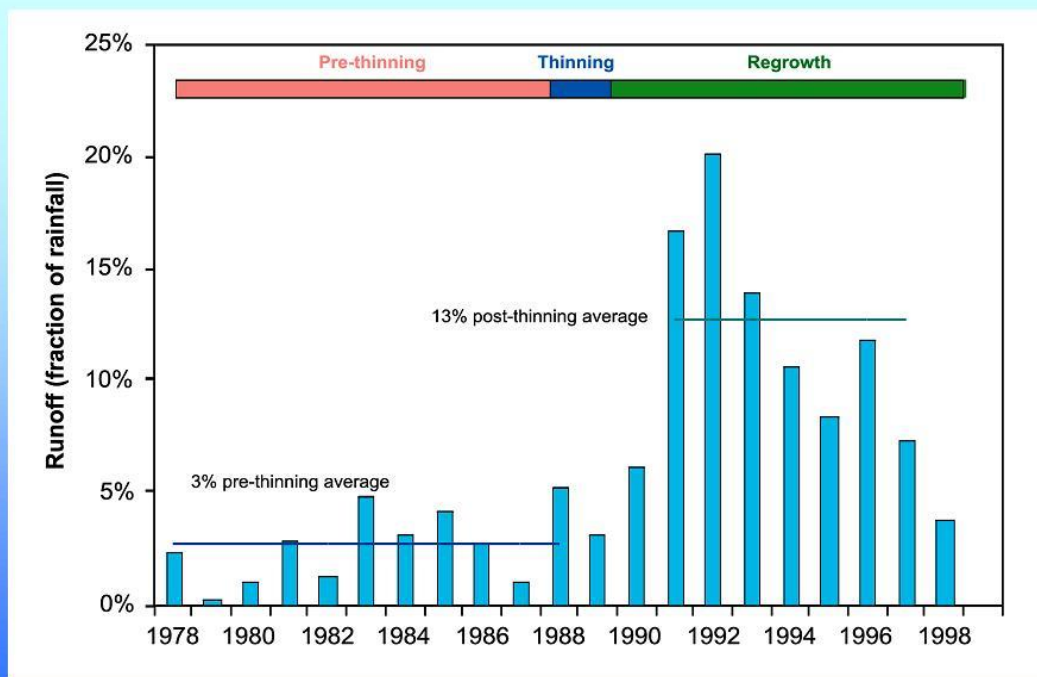


Figure 13 Increase in water yield by thinning from 37 to 15 m²/ha (Higgins Catchment north of Dwellingup with 1190 mm average rainfall during study)

Past research with catchment thinning to a similar basal area as that being proposed for the Wungong Catchment is shown in Figure 13 (although this was a once off thinning without the follow-up management planned in the Wungong Catchment Management Project) and therefore shows a decay in water yield after about five years – returning to pre-thinning flows by 12 years (Bari and Ruprecht, 2003). *This text above is from the Mar 2005 report named at top of page – and shows clearly that experts know what to do to recover catchment inflows.* I have recently learnt that the Wungong Catchment Management Project seems to have been abandoned.