

Mooring owners arc up

WAMA members voice concern their views are not being heard

■ Barry Wiseman

Critics of proposed changes to State Government mooring regulations have claimed the current public consultation process being carried out is a farce and should be scrapped.

According to the West Australian Mooring Association, which represents more than 100 licensed mooring owners, if the proposals go ahead they will remove the rights of use and ownership of recreational moorings around the State.

The Department of Transport is reviewing current regulations and stakeholders have until Friday to make submissions during what is the second round of the consultation process.

The department said it received more than 500 responses during the initial review, with the majority supporting a short-term casual-use system which the department said would provide a fair and easier access system to moorings in the agency's controlled areas in the Swan and Canning rivers, Mangles Bay, Rockingham, Peel and regional ports.

However, the WA Mooring Association said many owners were angry the concerns they expressed in the first consultation round had not been taken into consideration.

A second round of public information sessions was held at Point Walter and Rockingham this month with several transport department officers meeting owners on an

individual basis rather than an open general meeting, as was the case in the first round. Some mooring owners came away convinced their concerns fell on deaf ears and proposals would be pushed through State Parliament regardless.

"It's apparent DoT has not changed its position since day one before the first round of public consultations," one mooring owner said.

Department of Transport waterways safety management director Chris Mather said the views submitted at the information sessions and in the website survey would be taken

into account and any changes would have to be agreed to by the Transport Minister, a process which could take 18 months.

WAMA claims existing legislation already has provision for most of the department's proposals and the questions in the first-round survey were framed so as to guarantee a majority positive feedback from boat owners, such as support for one set of mooring regulations and improved administration.

Moorings in different areas of the State come under the control of different regulations. WAMA says while no one objects to one set of rules, its members have serious concerns about other proposals, including the casual use of a person's mooring apparatus and the elimination of the right to transfer their

mooring licence to another person of their choice.

Owners would also lose the right to sell their apparatus-and-boat package, which WAMA says may result in unwanted and unused boats clogging up moorings for years because of most prospective boat buyers wanting a mooring included with their purchase.

WAMA says under the review proposals the department would be able to nominate a person with whom an owner should negotiate the sale of his or her mooring apparatus. If that negotiation failed, WAMA said owners would have to

Stakeholders have until Friday ...

relinquish their licence or have it cancelled.

The proposals also include charging boat owners a fee for short-term casual use of moorings when the licensee has temporarily vacated their site. Owners say this will lead to arguments when casual users are asked to move, plus the risk of damage to their apparatus. Mooring owners pay thousands of dollars to have the apparatus installed and up to \$2000 a year in registration fees and mandatory maintenance inspections.

The mooring association has urged its members and all licensed mooring owners to respond to the second-stage review survey at the transport department website, as well as viewing its concerns by visiting wamooringassociation.org. Many members say they favour a negative survey response.