

Multi-million dollar marina in Dampier

By Ben Cranston

WITHNELL Bay could be home to a multi-million dollar marina for boat owners forced to queue up at Dampier's public boat ramp every weekend, according to Member for North West Coastal Fred Riebeling.

He said with the highest number of boats per capita anywhere in Australia owners of bigger vessels had been crying out for the marina.

"My view is that the best location would be Withnell Bay," Mr Riebeling said.

"It's a natural harbour sheltered from 95 per cent of the prevailing winds."

Another option would have been behind Tide Pole Island but Mr Riebeling said the cost was likely to be higher.

"You would have to put in a break water to add to what

Mother Nature had provided," he said.

"The report will tell us which is the best option but there are plenty of big boats around and we need something like this.

"We have the highest boat ownership rates in Australia."

Boats in the five to seven metre bracket were on the increase in the Pilbara.

He added that the number of people looking to operate charter operations with vessels from 12 to 14metre was likely to increase.

"You could expect the odd 100ft pleasure craft to drive by," he said.

"The one drawback with Withnell Bay would be access by road."

But with a planned interpretive centre at the northern end of the Burrup Peninsula a road

would eventually run right past the bay.

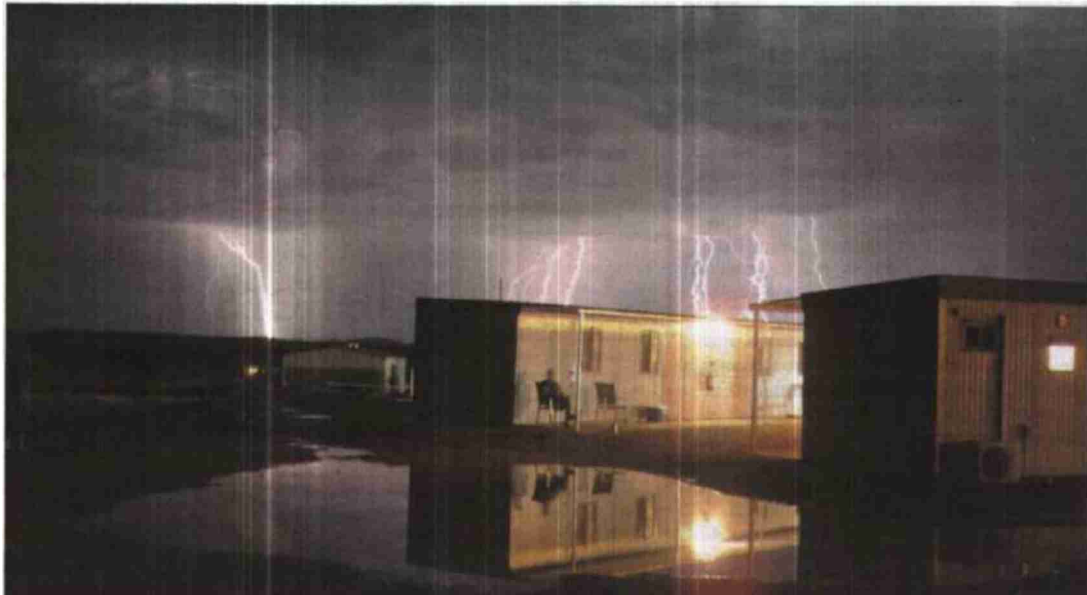
Overall the site would be cheaper to develop and be away from Dampier harbour where dust from Pilbara Iron was a problem for boat owners.

Mr Riebeling expected a consultant's report would be finished and a decision reached by next June.

"We're not going to reinvent the wheel," Mr Riebeling said.

Dampier Marina Taskforce chair Lex McCulloch said a consultant would come up with a definitive list of possible locations.

Mr McCulloch said the idea had been on the agenda for more than 10 years and everyone was aware of how many boats there were in the area but finding the right location was paramount.



Mother Nature treated inland Pilbara residents to a spectacular sky show last week, complete with medium-sized hail stones. A long-time Tom Price resident said the summer lightning storms were the most ferocious she'd seen in years. Emergency crews have blamed lightning strikes for massive bush fires burning in Karlijini National Park.