



IN THE PIPELINE: An artist's impression of the Armadale whitewater park.

Paddlers up the creek

By BRADEN QUARTERMAINE

WA paddlers have been left high and dry because the Water Corporation has been pinching their water, canoeists say.

The lack of recreational water bodies is forcing elite athletes to move east to train and depriving ordinary West Australians of the chance to use our natural assets.

Canoeing WA director Colin Thorpe said the group was concerned at the loss of whitewater rivers resulting from the Water Corporation's dam-building program.

He said the Harvey International Slalom Course was the latest in a run of rivers lost over the past 100 years.

"Perth has a wonderful climate for outdoor sport and recreation, 15 per cent of our population paddle in canoes or kayaks, and almost everyone would love to go rafting in white water," Mr Thorpe said. "However, the opportunities to use what was once a plentiful white-water resource in our South-West has steadily been taken away from us."

Planning and Infrastructure Minister Alannah MacTiernan said the government was very keen to see the development of a whitewater park and it would require some government assistance.

"But that's unlikely to include cash payments," she said. "We'll look at putting out a package involving land incentives."

WA Olympic kayaker Robin Bell is one of many West Australians at the elite level moving to Sydney to train.

"I just can't stay (in WA) and compete internationally at the top level," he said.

Bell said he would return to Perth if the whitewater park was built.

City of Armadale chief executive Ray Tame said people in the area were deprived of water activities.

"The idea of enjoying water sports is the one thing that we feel our population really misses out on," he said.

Water Corporation spokesman Phil Kneebone said it had no choice but to build a series of small dams to provide water for Perth.