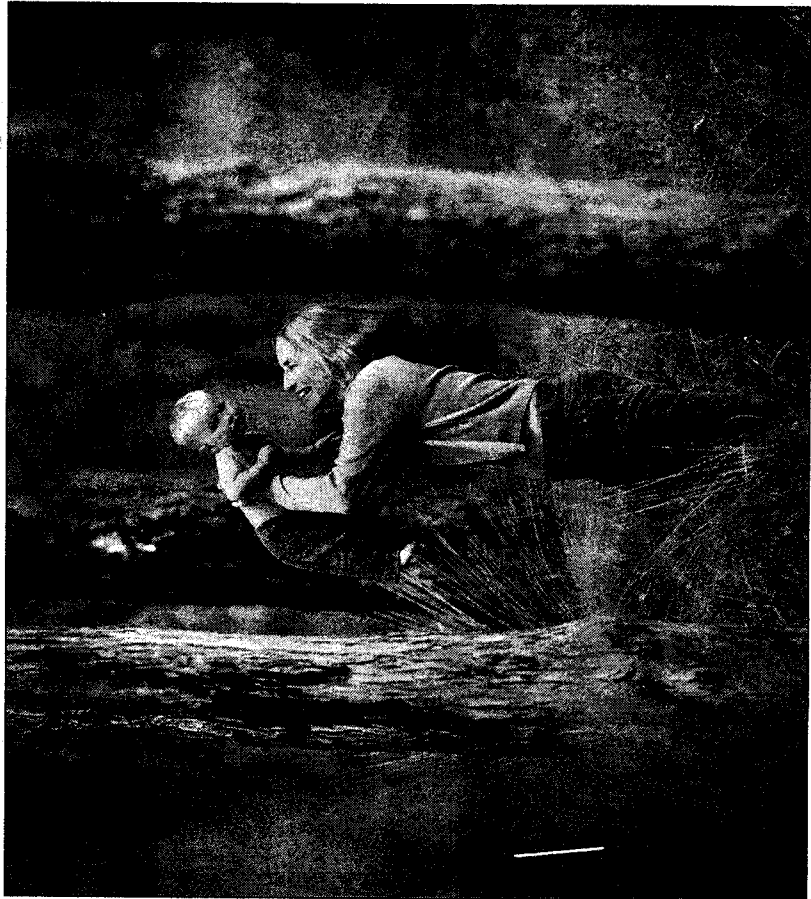


Protest over bush plans



Bush battle: Reserves Protection Group activist Sharon Davies with her one-year-old grand-daughter Simran in bush at Sawyers Valley. PICTURE: JOHN MOKRZYCKI

Water Corporation defends land clearance

■ By Peter Trott

ENVIRONMENTALISTS are up in arms over a Water Corporation plan to bulldoze 20ha of jarrah forest at Mundaring.

The land, next to the Mundaring industrial area, contains habitat trees for threatened species of black cockatoos.

The corporation wants to use the land to build a new water treatment plant for the Goldfields and Hills supply and storage tanks at Sawyers Valley.

The Environmental Protection Authority has approved the project subject to conditions, which include revegetating 80ha of farm land in the catchment as an offset for salinity problems, a construction environmental plan and establishing a biodiversity trust.

Authority chairman Bernard Bowen said it could be managed in an environmentally acceptable way if commitments by the developer were binding legally.

But local environmentalists want to block the plan because of the loss of habitat and the potential hazard of chemicals, including chlorine next to

Mundaring. "I don't know what's happened to this Government's sustainability policy," Reserves Protection Group activist Sharon Davies said.

"To me 'sustainable development' is an oxymoron, it's just the greening of development."

Ms Davies lives at nearby Mt Helena in a group land scheme where five families banded together to buy 30ha of forest which was zoned for suburban subdivision.

Her group has withdrawn from a corporation-sponsored program of providing nesting boxes for the cockatoos because she said the boxes were found to be unsuccessful.

"What good is a cockatoo program if they don't have enough to eat?" Ms Davies said.

Corporation environment manager Bob Humphries said the \$35 million project was needed to improve the quality of water delivered to the Goldfields scheme and Hills consumers.

The existing treatment plant at Mundaring Weir was being removed for redevelopment of a heritage precinct.

Three giant storage tanks were being built at Sawyers Valley because it was the highest point on the Goldfields pipeline and would achieve significant energy savings.