Central West Investigation
First consultation period
Fact sheet July-August 2017

Are you interested in public land in and around these areas?
- Wellsford forest
- Wombat-Macedon Ranges, Hepburn area and Cobaw forest
- Mount Cole and the Pyrenees Range

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) is reviewing public land in these areas and would like to hear from you. Submissions are due by 21 August 2017.

Invitation to meet with VEAC and make a submission

VEAC needs to hear what is important to you. What do you value about the public land in the investigation area and what do you think the major issues are? Do you have information about the environmental, cultural, social or economic values of these areas that you want to share with VEAC?

The best way to contribute to the investigation is to make a written submission. You are invited to find out about the investigation, get assistance to make a submission and talk with VEAC at community drop-in sessions being held in regional locations during the submission periods. Meetings will be advertised locally and on VEAC’s website.

All public input will be compiled and analysed for Council consideration during the preparation of its Draft Proposals Paper, due for release in mid-2018. This paper will provide draft recommendations for the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance natural and cultural values within the investigation area. There will then be a second submission period to inform the Final Report, due in March 2019.

VEAC encourages Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people to provide input on cultural values, uses and approaches to caring for Country, and will offer a range of engagement opportunities throughout the investigation.

How do I make a submission?

You may make an online submission via VEAC’s website or send your written submission by post or email. Only submissions sent directly to VEAC will be treated as submissions.

There is no required format for submissions, except that you must provide your name and your contact details.

All written submissions will be acknowledged by email or mail. If you do not receive an acknowledgement within two weeks please contact VEAC to ensure that your submission has been received.

Submissions are due by 21 August 2017.

How can I keep up to date?

We will email or post out bulletins during the investigation to inform you of progress and next steps, including further engagement opportunities.

Register for updates by filling in the form on the VEAC website, sending an email or phoning VEAC. And you can find us on Facebook.

Contact details
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
PO Box 500, East Melbourne VIC 3002
Phone (03) 9637 9902 or 1800 134 803 (toll-free)
Email veac@delwp.vic.gov.au
www.veac.vic.gov.au

What is VEAC?

VEAC provides the State government with independent and strategic advice on protection and management of the environment and natural resources of public land. It was established under the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001. VEAC carries out its investigations at the request of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Together the Act and terms of reference set by the Minister describe how an investigation must be conducted, including the number of reports to be prepared, matters to be taken into account, timeframes and public consultation.

Why have an investigation?

In March 2017 the government responded to calls from the community to review public land use in central west Victoria by asking VEAC to carry out an investigation under the following terms of reference. Most of the public land areas to be reviewed have not been assessed since the 1980s.

Terms of reference

Pursuant to section 15 of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to carry out an investigation into public land in the Wombat, Wellsford, Mount Cole and Pyrenees Range Forests within the area shown on the accompanying map.

The purpose of the Central West Investigation is to:
(a) identify and evaluate the condition, natural and biodiversity values and cultural, social and economic values and the current uses of public land in the specified area; and
(b) make recommendations for the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural values.

In addition to the considerations in section 18 of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001, the Council must take into account the following matters:

i. relevant State Government policies and strategies, Ministerial statements and reports by the Victorian Auditor-General; and
ii. relevant regional programs, strategies and plans.

The Council must also consult with the relevant Traditional Owner Group Entities and any other relevant Traditional Owner groups in the specified area, particularly where the area is subject to an agreement under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010. This includes the area covered by the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

A draft proposals paper and a final report are to be prepared, allowing for two public submission periods during the investigation. The Council must report on the completed investigation within two years from the commencement date.
Which types of public land are included in the investigation?

Broadly, public land means Crown land and land owned by Victorian government agencies. It does not include land owned by local councils.

All types of public land will be reviewed, including:
- parks and reserves
- state forests
- stream frontages
- unused roads
- water production areas
- uncategorised public land.

VEAC only makes recommendations for public land although, where appropriate, it takes a whole of landscape approach to the discussion of land and natural resources management issues within an investigation area.

What does VEAC do with submissions?

Submissions will be treated as public documents and will be published on VEAC’s website. The name of each submitter will be identified as part of each published submission, but personal contact details will be removed before publishing.

Confidential submissions are discouraged. If there are exceptional circumstances that require confidentiality, please contact VEAC before making your submission. Submissions may also be stored and used by VEAC or the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning for purposes relating to the Central West Investigation and subsequent government consideration of matters related to the investigation.

Aboriginal cultural values and uses – Caring for Country

The Central West Investigation area includes the Country of several Traditional Owner groups.

VEAC recognises that the land is of spiritual, cultural and economic importance to Aboriginal people.

Caring for Country is a fundamental expression of Aboriginal culture as a consciousness that defines a clan’s wellbeing.


Part of VEAC’s task is to identify cultural values and make recommendations for the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance cultural as well as natural values.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation has a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (2013) covering a significant proportion of the investigation area, and Aboriginal Title for Hepburn Regional Park and Mt Franklin Reserve.

Recognition and Settlement Agreements facilitate the formal involvement of Traditional Owners in land management, planning access and use of natural resources.

VEAC will work in partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung and other Traditional Owners, and will encourage Aboriginal people with interests in the area to be involved in the investigation.
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