



VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT
17/18

Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Parliament House
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14(1) of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is pleased to submit to you its seventeenth Annual Report, covering our activities for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.



Janine Haddow
Chairperson
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
30 June 2018

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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am very pleased to provide this annual report for the year ended 30 June 2018 to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, in accordance with the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. I was appointed as Chairperson of the Council in September 2017 following the completion of the Hon Phil Honeywood's distinguished five years as Chairperson. All five Council members were subsequently reappointed for a three-year term from July 2018.

The role of the Council is to provide independent advice to the Victorian government on the environment and natural resources of public land. Public land is a great asset and very important to Victorians. As Victoria's population grows and the pressures on natural environments from climate change increase, community views on the balance between protection and use of public land are changing. Some uses, especially those that extract natural resources, are not compatible on some categories of public land, but can be accommodated in other areas. In carrying out VEAC's role across all public land, our aim is to ensure protection of the environment while maintaining access for a range of uses.

The year began with the first public consultation period for the Central West Investigation. Five regional drop-in information sessions were held, and more than 640 submissions were received by the closing date in August 2017. Council conducted several field trips including site visits with land managers and meetings with community stakeholders to understand the investigation area and issues. The first stage of engagement with Traditional Owners was completed in partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

During the year the Draft Proposals Paper for the investigation was prepared with the release date for public comment scheduled for August 2018. The Council appreciates all the contributions so far from Traditional Owners, land managers and the community. The final report for the investigation is due to be submitted to the Minister in March 2019.

Two assessments were requested during the year. The Assessment of the Values of Victoria's Marine Environment began in March 2018 and is due for completion in March 2019. An Assessment of Victoria's Coastal Reserves was requested in June 2018 and is to be completed by December 2019.

The government response to VEAC's Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report was tabled in Parliament in December 2017. All 30 recommendations were accepted in principle, in full or in part. The government supported VEAC's call for a rewrite of Victoria's public land legislation as long overdue.

This year marked the seventh year of the Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships. In 2018, five recipients were excited to receive scholarships from a competitive field. More than 35 scholarships have now been awarded since they were established in 2011 to assist Honours, Masters and Ph.D students with some of the costs of research on public land.

I would like to acknowledge the support the council receives from its community reference groups, and from state government departments and agencies, local government, community organisations and members of the public. Thanks also to the Executive Officer Joan Phillips and her capable and highly skilled staff, and to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning who provide the administrative services and support for the council to carry out its work.



Janine Haddow
Chairperson

VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL

OUR PURPOSE

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council was established under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* (the VEAC Act) to provide independent and strategic advice to the Victorian Government on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of Victoria's public land (refer to Sections 4 and 5 of the VEAC Act).

OUR VALUES

Our organisational values reflect our attitude to the public land estate, the community and the environment. The Council:

- seeks to understand and meet community needs from public land
- is committed to excellence and continuous improvement
- values ethical, accountable, transparent and responsible behaviour
- encourages public consultation and input into VEAC's processes.

OUR FUNCTIONS

The Council:

- carries out investigations and assessments and provides advice as requested by the Minister on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land
- carries out any other functions that are conferred on the Council by the VEAC Act or any other Act (refer to Section 6 of the VEAC Act).

In carrying out investigations and making recommendations the Council is required to have regard to:

- the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- the need to conserve and protect biological diversity
- the need to conserve and protect any areas which have ecological, natural, landscape or cultural interest or significance, recreational value or geological or geomorphological significance
- the need to provide for the creation and preservation of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of parks and reserves within the State of Victoria
- the existence of any international treaty ratified by the Commonwealth of Australia which is relevant to the investigation
- any agreement at a national, inter-state or local government level into which the Government of Victoria has entered, or under which the Government of Victoria has undertaken any obligation in conjunction with the Commonwealth, a state, territory or municipal council, which relates to the subject matter of the investigation
- the potential environmental, social and economic consequences of implementing the proposed recommendations
- any existing or proposed use of the environment or natural resources.

Powers held by the Council include the ability to appoint committees and, with the consent of the relevant Minister, make use of the services of any person employed in the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (refer to Section 7 of the VEAC Act).

A website containing general information about the Council's role, operation and current and past investigations is available at www.veac.vic.gov.au. The site also contains links to past investigations, assessments and studies conducted by the Environment Conservation Council (ECC) and the Land Conservation Council (LCC).

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP



(L-R) Ms Janine Haddow, Ms Joanne Duncan, Ms Anna Kilborn, Dr Charles Meredith, Dr Geoffrey Wescott.

Members of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council are appointed under the provisions of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. Members for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 were Hon. Phil Honeywood (Chairperson) – 1-6 July 2017, Ms Janine Haddow (Chairperson) – 12 September 2017-30 June 2018, Ms Joanne Duncan, Ms Anna Kilborn, Dr Charles Meredith and Dr Geoffrey Wescott. Ms Haddow was appointed until 6 July 2018 commencing 12 September 2017.

MS JANINE HADDOW (CHAIRPERSON)

Janine Haddow is a strategic planning and stakeholder engagement consultant, she has extensive policy, planning and operational experience in the environment and natural resource management sectors including public land and park management, catchment and coastal management, forestry and biodiversity conservation.

Currently a director of the inaugural Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners Land Management Board Janine is also a past director of the Mt Buller Alpine Resort Board, North Central Catchment Management Authority and the Victorian Catchment Management Council.

Janine has qualifications in political science, education, landscape architecture and environmental planning and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Williamson Community Leadership Program and the Australian New Zealand School of Government Senior Executive Program.

MS JOANNE DUNCAN

Joanne Duncan was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of Gisborne in 1999 (later transferring to Macedon in 2002) which she represented until her retirement from politics in 2014.

During her time in Parliament, Joanne was a member of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee (1999 to November 2010 and May 2011 to November 2014).

Joanne Duncan also chaired the stakeholder reference group for the review of the native vegetation permitted clearing regulations.

MS ANNA KILBORN

Anna Kilborn is an environmental and strategic planner, with over 25 years' experience across Australia in natural resource management, regional infrastructure projects, strategy and policy development. She has previously served on the Regional Development Australia's Gippsland Committee and Planning Panels Victoria, and is currently a non-executive director and deputy chair on the board of South Gippsland Water Corporation.

Anna lives in regional Victoria and is committed to integrated planning and community involvement in planning and decision-making.

DR CHARLES MEREDITH

Charles Meredith is an ecologist and consultant with extensive experience in natural systems and conservation planning. After an early career in wildlife research, Dr Meredith founded the ecological and heritage consulting firm Biosis Research P/L and was CEO there from 1984 until he retired in 2011. During that time, he worked on environmental impact assessments of many major projects, prepared a broad range of natural area management plans, and provided strategic and policy advice on environmental matters to a diverse array of organisations, both public and private.

Dr Meredith has regularly served on committees and advisory boards for NGOs, professional bodies and government and is currently a Trustee of the Trust for Nature. He is an Inaugural Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia.

DR GEOFFREY WESCOTT

Geoff Wescott has recently retired as Associate Professor at Deakin University where his main teaching and research interests were around the relationship between science and policy, nature and conservation – particularly the role of large scale conservation networks and marine and coastal policy.

Geoff is immediate past President of the Australian Coastal Society and a Director of Zoos Victoria. He has previously been a Deputy Chair of Parks Victoria, a member of the National Oceans Advisory Council and a member of the Victorian Coastal Council. He is a current member of the Advisory Council of the International Land Conservation Network and the IUCN Commission on Parks and Protected Areas – was Chair of Victoria's National Parks Advisory Council for a decade.

He has published over 170 books, chapters, technical reports and popular articles. Geoff was also Chair of the Government's Expert Panel making recommendations on a new Marine and Coastal Act for Victoria. He is now an Honorary Principal Fellow at the University of Melbourne.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change was the responsible Minister for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The Council met formally 10 times during the 2017-2018 financial year.

Council members also attended community forums, Community Reference Group meetings, consultation sessions, field inspections and briefings in relation to the Central West Investigation.

Council members' attendance at council meetings from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018

NAME	ATTENDANCE (number of meetings)
Janine Haddow	8 of 8
Joanne Duncan	10 of 10
Anna Kilborn	10 of 10
Charles Meredith	10 of 10
Geoffrey Wescott	9 of 10

ADMINISTRATION

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council office is located on level 39, 2 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, 3000.

Telephone	(03) 9637 9902
Toll Free Number	1800 134 803 (from landlines)
Email	veac@delwp.vic.gov.au
Website	www.veac.vic.gov.au
Executive Officer	Ms Joan Phillips

The Executive Officer is responsible for managing the office and staff.

INVESTIGATIONS

CENTRAL WEST INVESTIGATION

On 20 March 2017, VEAC was requested by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to conduct a Central West Investigation. The investigation covers public land in the vicinity of the Wombat, Wellsford, Mount Cole and Pyrenees Range forests. The request to VEAC followed advertisement by the Minister of the proposed terms of reference in November 2016.

The purpose of the investigation is to:

- 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
- make recommendations for the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural values.

A draft proposals paper and a final report are to be prepared, with the final report due by March 2019. The draft proposals paper is due to be released at the end of August 2018 for public comment.

VEAC members and staff conducted three field inspections to the investigation area: in November 2017, December 2017 and January 2018.

In 2017-2018 the Council engaged with the relevant Traditional Owner entities and other relevant Traditional Owner groups in partnership with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

Submissions in response to the Notice of Investigation closed on 21 August 2017 with 644 submissions received in total. Five community drop-in sessions were held in July and August 2017 at Avoca, Beaufort, Bendigo, Daylesford and Woodend to hear community views and provide information on the investigation.

Work has continued on the preparation of a draft proposals paper to be released for public comment in early 2018-2019.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation met twice during 2017-2018. The membership of the Community Reference Group can be found on page 16.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Central West Investigation for the 2017-18 financial year was \$902,505.

The terms of reference for the Central West Investigation are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Central West Investigation

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 vicinity of 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.

ASSESSMENTS

ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUES OF VICTORIA'S MARINE ENVIRONMENT

On 4 March 2018, VEAC was requested by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, to carry out an Assessment of the Values of Victoria's Marine Environment.

The Assessment of the Values of Victoria's Marine Environment is the third assessment requested pursuant to the new section 26B of the Act.

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- (a) identify current environmental, economic, social and cultural values of Victoria's marine environment, including their spatial distribution where relevant
- (b) identify current and likely future threats to these values
- (c) provide independent advice on future patterns, trends and direction related to existing and emerging uses
- (d) determine a process to systematically classify data and an approach to describe social and economic values and uses of Victoria's marine waters
- (e) provide an inventory of available knowledge and data on existing values, uses and threats and advise on any significant gaps.

The Council is required to provide a report on the completed assessment by 29 March 2019.

The work program for the assessment in 2017-18 included establishment of a project team and scoping and initiation of projects and collaborations with agencies and stakeholders.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Assessment of the Values of Victoria's Marine Environment for the 2017-18 financial year was \$105,882.

The terms of reference for the Assessment of the Values of Victoria's Marine Environment are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Assessment of the Values of Victoria's Marine Environment

Pursuant to section 26B of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to carry out an assessment of the values of Victoria's marine environment¹.

The assessment will inform the development of a state-wide marine and coastal strategy and support the development of the proposed Marine Spatial Planning Framework.

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- a) identify current environmental, economic, social and cultural values of Victoria's marine environment, including their spatial distribution where relevant
- b) identify current and likely future threats to these values
- c) provide independent advice on future patterns, trends and direction related to existing and emerging uses
- d) determine a process to systematically classify data and an approach to describe social and economic values and uses of Victoria's marine waters
- e) provide an inventory of available knowledge and data on existing values, uses and threats and advise on any significant gaps.

The assessment will encompass all State coastal waters, bays and estuaries (including the Gippsland Lakes), and must have due regard to the interaction of processes and values of the coastal zone.

The Council must take into account the following matters:

- a) relevant agreements under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010
- b) relevant Victorian government policies, strategies and reports
- c) relevant national and international agreements, policies and strategies.

VEAC is required to consult with technical and sector experts to gather and confirm source data, and to document any relevant caveats to these data. In addition, as specified in section 26D of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must confer with any Department or public authority which may be affected by the provision of the assessment including the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning; the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; and the Victorian Fisheries Authority.

The Council must report on the completed assessment by 29 March 2019.

¹ For the purposes of this assessment, Victoria's marine environment means the following between the outer limit of Victorian coastal waters and the high-water mark of the sea –

- a) the land (whether or not covered by water) to a depth of 200 metres below the surface of that land;
- b) any water covering the land referred to in paragraph (a) from time to time;
- c) the biodiversity associated with the land and water referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b).

ASSESSMENT OF VICTORIA'S COASTAL RESERVES

On 3 June 2018, VEAC was requested by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP to carry out an Assessment of Victoria's Coastal Reserves.

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- a) review the number and types (reservation status) of coastal reserves in Victoria;
- b) identify reserves with high environmental, cultural heritage, social and economic values and identify values at risk from the impacts of climate change;
- c) identify current and emerging uses of the coastal reserves; and
- d) compile an inventory, including spatial distribution, of values and uses of the coastal reserves.

As a first step, the Council is required to publish a definition of coastal reserves to be used in the assessment, including a diagrammatic representation and map of Victoria's coastal reserves. As part of its assessment, VEAC will produce a draft report and seek public comment on it.

The Council must report on the completed assessment by 6 December 2019.

There was no expenditure in the 2017-18 financial year for the Assessment of Victoria's Coastal Reserves. Initial work on the assessment was absorbed in VEAC's work program.

The terms of reference for the Assessment of Victoria's Coastal Reserves are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Assessment of Victoria's Coastal Reserves

Pursuant to section 26B of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (the Council) to carry out an assessment of Victoria's coastal reserves¹.

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- a) review the number and types (reservation status) of coastal reserves in Victoria;
- b) identify reserves with high environmental, cultural heritage, social and economic values and identify values at risk from the impacts of climate change;
- c) identify current and emerging uses of the coastal reserves; and
- d) compile an inventory, including spatial distribution, of values and uses of the coastal reserves.

As a first step, the Council is required to publish a definition of coastal reserves to be used in the assessment, including a diagrammatic representation and map of Victoria's coastal reserves.

The assessment and associated inventory will assist the Victorian Government's future planning and decision-making for Victoria's coasts.

The Council must take into account relevant agreements under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

As part of the assessment, the Council must produce a draft report and seek public comment on it.

The Council must report on the completed assessment by 6 December 2019.

¹ For the purposes of this assessment, Victoria's coastal reserves include any Crown land along Victoria's coast (including the coast of any bay, inlet and estuary and the Gippsland Lakes) that is:

- a) reserved under section 4(1)(ze) of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 for the protection of the coastline or is otherwise reserved under that Act and is landward of low water mark; or
- b) unreserved Crown land under the Land Act 1958 that is landward of low water mark.

For clarity, Victoria's coastal reserves do not include any Crown land described as a park or marine sanctuary in Schedule 2, 2B, 3, 4, 7 or 8 to the *National Parks Act 1975* or any unreserved Crown land from low water mark to the outer limit of Victoria's coastal waters (mostly 3 nautical miles).

BILL BORTHWICK STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS 2018

The Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships assist with some of the costs of research for students undertaking Honours, Masters or PhD research projects relating to public land in Victoria in the fields of natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, economics or politics. The scholarships were established in March 2011 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the first meeting of the Land Conservation Council (LCC) and to honour the vision of the Hon Bill Borthwick, a central figure in establishing the LCC to advise government on the use of Victoria's public land.

The 2018 scholarships were presented to the recipients by VEAC Chairperson, Ms Janine Haddow and Mrs Muffie Borthwick, wife of the late Bill Borthwick, at a function at the Royal Society of Victoria on 13 April 2018. Scholarships totalling \$8,690 were awarded to five recipients.



L-R Ruthur Lee, Ana Bermudez-Contreras, Charles Meredith, Muffie Borthwick, Emma Bennett, James O'Dwyer, Janine Haddow and Geoff Wescott.

The recipients for the 2018 scholarships are:

Ms Ana Bermudez Contreras, University of Melbourne

'Can mycorrhiza explain the differential success between revegetation practices?'

Ana's research for her Master of Environment degree seeks to explore a critical knowledge gap in the field of ecological restoration relating to the role that soil biota play in determining the outcomes of different revegetation techniques. She will describe and compare the mycorrhizal fungal communities of transplanted, direct seeded and naturally occurring established plants to answer this question.

The study may also highlight the importance of soil biota in vegetation conservation practices in riparian forest systems and forest systems elsewhere in the landscape.

Miss Emma Bennett, Monash University

'Optimisation of conservation detection dogs'

Emma's PhD research will develop a framework for reporting and evaluating the performance and cost of conservation detection dogs and provide a decision tree to support managers when considering engaging a dog for their research questions or conservation objectives.

The research will investigate the financial cost of dogs and how land managers can optimise the allocation of resources between various detection methods to make cost effective decisions.

Mr James O'Dwyer, La Trobe University

'Does environmental watering enhance population connectivity for Murray cod?'

The aim of James's PhD research is to use genomic tools to investigate whether environmental watering enhances population connectivity for Murray cod.

Potential outcomes for this project include producing a case study demonstrating the impact of environmental watering on dispersal of native fish species; and recommendations for environmental water management strategies that promote dispersal and survival of a culturally and ecologically significant native fish species.

Mr Matthew Rees, University of Melbourne

'Do foxes alter their diet in response to suppression in a mesic forest?'

As part of Matthew's broader PhD project and research being conducted by external partners, the density of foxes, feral cats and native prey species is being monitored in response to fox control through a series of before-after, control-impact experiments in the Western Otways.

Matthew's PhD research aims to determine the level of fox predation pressure experienced by different prey species, through the dietary analysis of fox scats.

Mr Ruthur Lee, University of Melbourne

'The influence of anthropogenic noise on bird singing activity within a protected landscape'

Ruthur's research for his Master of Science aims to determine the impacts of noise pollution, specifically associated with motorised recreation, on bird singing activity within a protected space encompassing a range of road and track uses (Bunyip State Park).

Field work will involve testing how the presence of different categories of road access, ranging from sealed roads to seasonal 4WD tracks, affect the presence, distribution and daily and seasonal singing patterns of birds. The work will also test the geographic extent of these impacts by mapping noise across the landscape in increasing distance from various road types.

The soundscape recordings and associated data from the study will be deposited in the online acoustic wildlife library at Museums Victoria for use in research, education and outreach.

COMMITTEES

VEAC is required to establish a Community Reference Group to provide advice on each investigation. Community Reference Groups are not required for assessments or advice unless directed by the Minister or specified in the terms of reference. The Council may also appoint any committees that it considers necessary to assist with conduct of investigations.

CENTRAL WEST INVESTIGATION COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

The Central West Investigation Community Reference Group met twice in 2017-2018.

NAME *	ORGANISATION
Ian Harris	Chairperson
John Petheram	Bushwalking Victoria (Ballarat Walking Club)
Ann McGregor	Central Victorian Biolinks Alliance Inc.
Wayne Hevey	Four Wheel Drive Victoria
Michelle Wyatt	Macedon Ranges Shire Council
Olly Oleszek	Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria
Terry McAliece	Pyrenees Shire Council
Ken Gell	Central Victorian Apiarists Association
Tim Morrissey	Victorian Association of Forest Industries
John Edmonds	Victorian Farmers Federation
Matt Ruchel	Victorian National Parks Association
Wendy Radford	Wellsford Forest Conservation Alliance
Murray Ralph	Wombat ForestCare

*Membership at 30 June 2018

CONSULTANCIES

A consultant is a particular type of contractor that is engaged primarily to perform a discrete task for an entity that facilitates decision making through:

- provision of expert analysis and advice; and/or
- development of a written report or other intellectual output.

In 2017-2018, there were three consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultant were \$10,000 or greater. The total expenditure incurred during 2017-2018 in relation to these consultancies was \$38,868 (excl. GST).

Details of individual consultancies (valued at \$10,000 or greater)

CONSULTANT	PURPOSE OF CONSULTANCY	TOTAL APPROVED PROJECT FEE (EXCL. GST)	EXPENDITURE 2017-18 (EXCL. GST)	FUTURE EXPENDITURE (EXCL. GST)
Wakelin Associates Pty Ltd	Survey of geological and geomorphological sites of significance in the Central West Investigation area	\$10,868	\$10,868	Nil
Gillespie Economics	Socioeconomic profile	\$14,000	\$14,000	Nil
Midas Consulting	Assessment of current economic contribution of timber harvesting to local and regional economies	\$40,000	\$14,000	\$26,000

In 2017-2018, there were no consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000.

DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

The Chairperson and all members completed Declarations of Private Interests.

Executive Officer, Ms Joan Phillips and Project Manager Mr Paul Peake have also completed declarations.

All declarations or responses are confidential.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Council's operating funds were provided as part of recurrent funds appropriated to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The financial operations of the Council have not been separately audited. Audited statements are incorporated into the overall Financial Statements of DELWP's Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2018. The table below shows expenditure incurred.

There were no significant changes in financial position during the reporting period.

EXPENSES	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Salaries and oncosts	1,123,174	1,129,791	1,049,113	744,707	794,435
Operating	431,045	505,048	272,314	302,852	444,465
Total	1,554,219	1,634,839	1,321,427	1,047,559	1,238,900

WORKFORCE DATA

EMPLOYMENT	2017 (A)			2016 (B)		
	Male	Female	Total staff	Male	Female	Total staff
Total	4	7	11 (FTE 10.4)	2	8	10 (FTE 8.8)

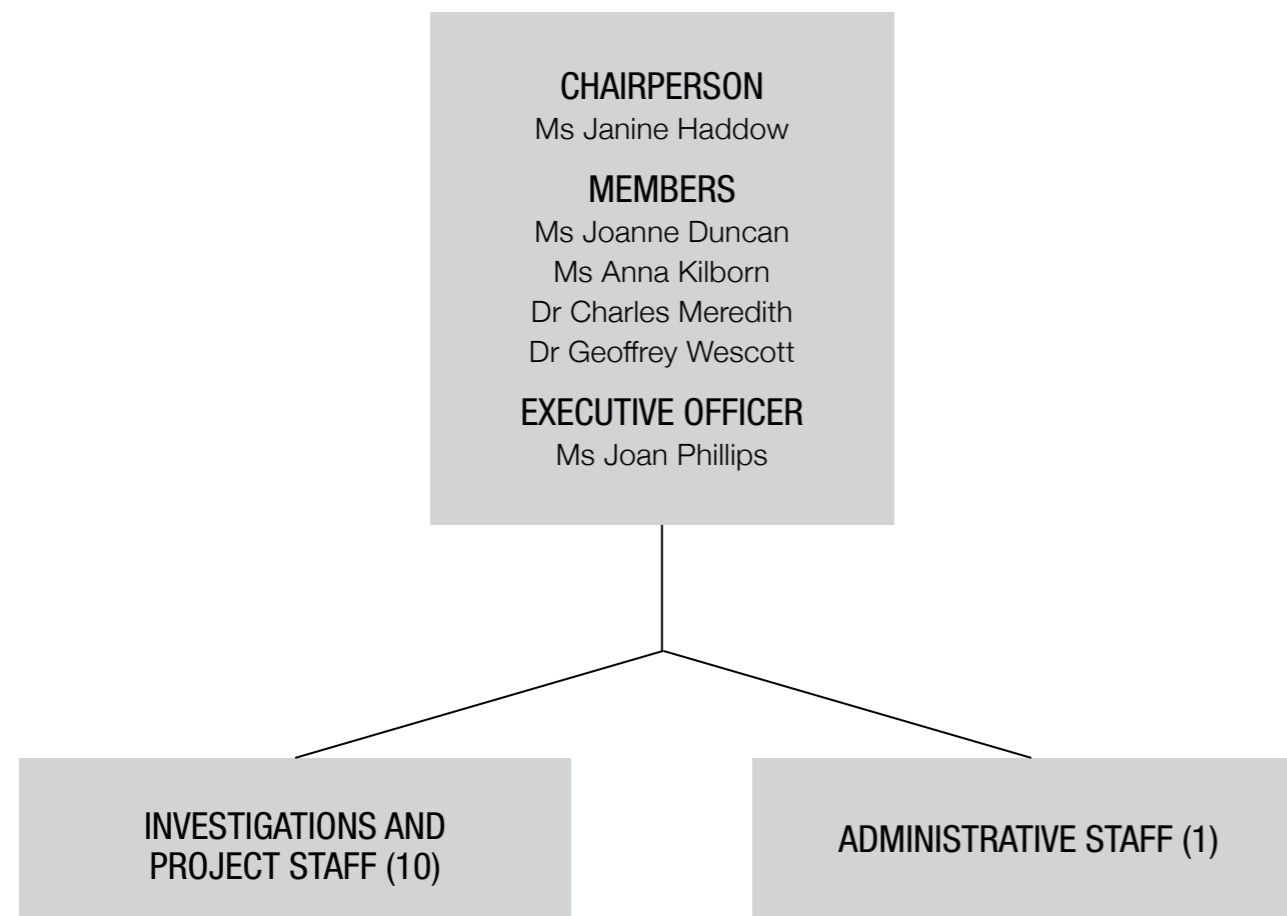
Notes:

(A) relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2018

(B) relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2017

Note: VEAC staff are also included in employment statistics for DELWP for 2017-2018.

ORGANISATION CHART



Council members as at 30 June 2018

MERIT AND EQUITY

Victorian Public Service merit and equity principles are applied in the appointment and management of staff. VEAC follows the merit and equity principles used by DELWP, in accordance with Government directives and the Public Administration Act 2004.

Three primary goals have been assumed by VEAC with regard to people management practices:

- develop and sustain organisational culture in which policies, practices and services are adapted to the needs of the community
- ensure a workplace free from policies and practices that discriminate against staff or potential staff
- ensure that staff have access to a fair, efficient grievance review process to resolve perceived breaches of merit and equity.

COMPLIANCE

The Council adheres to the principles of the National Competition Policy (NCP) to ensure that any business competition with private entities takes place in an environment where the Council has no unfair competitive advantages.

During the year the Council did not enter into any contracts to which the *Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003* applied.

In accordance with the reporting directions, the annual report must include a statement about compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*. The Council makes use of buildings and facilities controlled by DELWP to perform its functions and does not own or control any buildings.

The Council utilises DELWP's Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.

There were no major changes or factors affecting performance.

The Council is committed to the requirements of the Premier's Circular 2006/1, in relation to community inclusiveness, and applies these requirements in its operations where possible.

Government policy requires disclosure of all Government Advertising Expenditure with a total media buy of \$100,000 or greater (exclusive of GST). No Government Advertising Expenditure was incurred by the Council during the reporting period.

During 2017-2018 VEAC did not enter into any contracts valued at over \$10 million.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The Government's aim of improved environmental management is supported by a requirement that Departments disclose their ongoing performance in managing and reducing the environmental impacts of their office-based activities. The Council makes use of DELWP offices and facilities to perform its functions and the reporting requirement of the office is met by DELWP. The Council secretariat participates fully in a range of environmental programs undertaken by DELWP, including:

- separation of reusable, recyclable, compostable and landfill waste;
- use of Green Power;
- use of flow restricted taps and waterless urinals;
- use of recycled paper and use of duplex printing;
- environmentally sustainable fitouts; and
- regular use by staff of public transport, cycling or walking to and from work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) EXPENDITURE

VEAC falls under the umbrella of DELWP in regards to ICT and providing business enabling ICT services. Please refer to DELWP Annual Report 2017-18.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* gives everyone the right to seek access to documents held by the Council. It is worth contacting the Council in the first instance to find out if you can access the information without making an FOI application.

FOI requests have to be made in writing and requests can be submitted to the Council by email to veac@delwp.vic.gov.au or in writing to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
GPO Box 527
Melbourne Vic 3001

The cost of an FOI application is \$28.40; however, there may be further charges depending on the time it takes to find the documents and photocopy them and the number of pages to be photocopied. Further information is available from the website FOI Online (www.foi.vic.gov.au).

OPERATIONS

For the 12 months ending 30 June 2018, there was one valid request. The request was from a community group and access was granted to the requested documents. There were no requests outstanding as at 30 June 2018.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT

The *Protected Disclosures Act 2012* (PD Act) enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. The Act aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE *PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT 2012*

The PD Act was part of a package of integrity reforms introduced by the Victorian Government, which also established the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

The PD Act enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct within the public sector without fear of reprisal. It aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

WHAT IS A 'PROTECTED DISCLOSURE'?

A protected disclosure is a complaint of corrupt or improper conduct by a public officer or a public body.

VEAC is a "public body" for the purposes of the Act.

WHAT IS 'IMPROPER OR CORRUPT CONDUCT'?

Improper or corrupt conduct involves substantial:

- mismanagement of public resources; or
- risk to public health or safety or the environment; or
- corruption.

The conduct must be criminal in nature or a matter for which an officer could be dismissed.

HOW DO I MAKE A 'PROTECTED DISCLOSURE'?

You can make a protected disclosure about VEAC or its board members, officers or employees by contacting DELWP or IBAC on the contact details provided below.

Please note that VEAC is not able to receive protected disclosures.

HOW CAN I ACCESS DELWP'S PROCEDURES FOR THE PROTECTION OF PERSONS FROM DETRIMENTAL ACTION?

DELWP has established procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action in reprisal for making a protected disclosure about VEAC or its employees. You can access DELWP's procedures on its website at: www.delwp.vic.gov.au.

CONTACTS

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

Address: PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002
Ph: 1800 903 877
Website: www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) Victoria

Address: Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Victoria 3001.
Mail: IBAC, GPO Box 24234, Melbourne Victoria 3000
Internet: www.ibac.vic.gov.au
Phone: 1300 735 135
Email: see the website above for the secure email disclosure process, which also provides for anonymous disclosures.

INFORMATION PRIVACY ACT

VEAC complies with the ten information privacy principles in place that help to form the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. This includes handling the collection of personal information in a responsible manner. The coordinator of privacy issues for DELWP is:

Manager, Privacy
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
PO Box 500, East Melbourne VIC 3002
Telephone: (03) 9637 8697

RISK MANAGEMENT

While VEAC examines the risk of delivery of its particular work functions and objectives on an ongoing basis, it relies on DELWP risk management framework and internal audit of financial and other administrative systems which are used by the VEAC's Secretariat. Please refer to the DELWP annual report for further information.

COMPLIANCE WITH DATAVIC ACCESS POLICY

Consistent with the Victorian Government's *DataVic Access Policy (2012)*, the Council intends that data tables that it may produce in the future will be available at <http://data.vic.gov.au/> in machine readable format.

DISCLOSURE INDEX

The 2017-2018 Annual Report of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation. This index has been prepared to facilitate identification of the Council's compliance with statutory disclosure requirements.

LEGISLATION	REQUIREMENT	PAGE NO
ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER'S DECLARATION		
SD 4.2(j)	Sign off requirements	2
CHARTER AND PURPOSE		
FRD 22F	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	3
FRD 22F	Manner of establishment and responsible Minister	3,6
FRD 22F	Nature and range of services provided	7-14
FINANCIAL INFORMATION		
FRD 22F	Operational and budgetary objectives	17
FRD 22F	Summary of the financial results	17
GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE		
FRD 22F & SD2.2(f)	Organisational structure	18
FRD 22F	Occupational health and safety policy	19
FRD 22F	Employment and conduct principles	18
FRD 29 & 22F	Workforce data disclosures	17
FRD 15E	Executive officer disclosures	16
OTHER INFORMATION		
FRD 10	Disclosure index	23
FRD 25	Victorian Industry Participation Policy disclosures	19
FRD 22F	Details of consultancies in excess of \$10 000	16
FRD 22F	Details of consultancies under \$10 000	16
FRD 22F	Disclosure of government advertising expenditure	19
FRD12A	Disclosure of major contracts	19
FRD 22F	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	20
FRD 22F	Compliance with <i>Building Act 1993</i>	19
FRD 22F	Statement on National Competition Policy	19
FRD 22F	Application and operation of <i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>	21
FRD 22F	Summary of environmental performance impact	19
FRD 22F	Statement of availability of other information	25
SD 4.5.5	Risk management	22
SD 4.2(g)	General information requirements	Entire document
MRO	Compliance with DataVic Access Policy	22

LEGISLATION		
<i>Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001</i>		3
<i>Building Act 1993</i>		19
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>		20
<i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>		21
<i>Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003</i>		19
PRINT AND DESIGN		
FRD 30	Standard requirements for the design and print of annual reports	Entire document

ACRONYMS

FRD – Financial Reporting Directions

SD – Standing Directions

MRO – Model Report of Operations

STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY OF OTHER INFORMATION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

In compliance with the requirements of the Standing Direction of the Minister for Finance, details in respect to the items listed below have been retained by the Council and are available on request, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

This information is available on request from:

Joan Phillips
 Executive Officer
 Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
 Phone: 9637 9902
 Email: veac@delwp.vic.gov.au

- Publications produced by the entity about itself, and how these can be obtained

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION INCLUDED IN ANNUAL REPORT

Details in respect of the following items have been included in this report:

- Major research and development activities undertaken – see Investigations and Assessments
- Major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken to develop community awareness of the Council and its services – see Investigations and Assessments
- A list of major committees sponsored by the entity, the purposes of each committee and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved – see Committees

INFORMATION THAT IS NOT APPLICABLE TO THE COUNCIL

The following information is not relevant to the Council for the reasons set out below:

- Overseas travel undertaken including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit - Nil
- Details of changes in prices, fees, charges and levies charged - Nil
- Assessments and measures undertaken to improve the Occupational Health and Safety of employees #
- A general statement on IR within the entity and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes #
- Major external reviews that were carried out on the Council - Nil

See DELWP Annual Report 2017-2018.

www.veac.vic.gov.au