

To Whom it may concern

I am writing in response to the draft Central West investigation report.

As a bush user I am distressed to see some of the recommendations put forward.

The removal of the state forest classification and the reclassification of the areas in the report are detrimental to the communities right to access in these areas.

I am a regular user of the Wombat State Forest/Lerderderg state Park and having used many other state forests in the area including Bungal and Cobaw. The Reclassifications of these areas will severely restrict my recreational activities which include walking my dogs, camping and trail bike riding as well as my yearly firewood collection in the Wombat State forest.

The Change in classification of vast tracts of Wombat SF/ Lerderderg SP to National Park are most concerning to me. This change would mean me not being able to bring my dogs along camping with me in many of my current favourite spots as well as restricting the areas I can and can't camp. I much prefer more remote campsites with no facilities. With the change to classification I will be unable to use the campsites that I have used for many years.

I also note in the draft report that these changes will have no effect on recreational trail bike riding. I strongly refute this.

On the surface, yes registered motorcycles are allowed to be used in national parks, in reality most trail bike riders do not ride in the vast majority of national parks. This is due to several reasons but mostly because in national parks (and currently state parks) there are a much higher percentage of management only tracks that are inaccessible to motorised vehicles. A case in point that relates directly to this is the variance in riding activity in the Lerderderg state park and adjoining Wombat state forest. Due to many tracks being management vehicle only or seasonally closed most trail riding occurs in the state forest with only minor numbers of riders using the seasonally closed tracks when they are open in summer.

By changing classifications there will be more management only tracks created which will lock out all motorised vehicles including trailbike and 4x4 enthusiasts. This will apply to all areas that are currently classified as state forest as the new classifications are all more restrictive than the forest classification being replaced. This will lead to tracks becoming overgrown and cause disaster when fire services find them impassable during major fire events.

The vast majority of Trail riders and 4x4 enthusiasts are passionate about the bush and environment they travel though and want to protect it for future generations as much as possible. Many groups will of their own accord hold rubbish clean up days to clean up the mess made by those who don't do the right thing and illegal dumpers.

Classification Changes will also severely restrict firewood collection which is an important part of reducing the ground level fuel load should a bushfire go through the area.

More restrictive classifications will also make it more difficult for fire services to obtain permits for fuel reduction burns.

As Stated in your own report many areas have been extensively logged throughout the history of European settlement. Due to this these areas do not in my mind meet the intended protection level that comes to mind when you think national park or state park. National parks are meant to protect areas of strong environmental, Historical or cultural significance. Areas that have been intensively

logged in documented history do not meet this criterion and as such it is overkill to heavily restrict usage.

Current management methods appear to me to be working and protecting areas that require it while allowing access for recreation and industry in areas that can support it. There are other ways of applying regulation and managing the ways forests are logged for forestry purposes without locking out everyone.

Regards

Joshua Walker