

VEAC Central West Investigation

Submission by Phil Davis

14 Sep 2018

In my view the overarching principle at play here is access to public land by Victorians, Australians and international visitors. By converting large areas of the current state forests, nature conservation reserves, regional parks and state parks (collectively, natural places) into national parks the individuals and groups that actually use those natural places will be marginalised at the will of (predominately) city dwelling do-gooders. I draw the councils attention to submission No591 by Warwick Williams (no association) whose submission is far more eloquent than mine. Warwick is correct that once declared national park it will be almost impossible for future generations to redeem this land for whatever purpose they may desire. I also draw the councils attention to Submission No610 by the Institute of Foresters Australia (no association) which directs the reader to two studies; Kareiva et al, 2012 and Pressey et al, 2014. Both studies show that "locking up" land in national parks does not lead to better environmental outcomes.

I am a prospector of more than 30 years and I, along with every other prospector I know, has a deep affinity with "the bush". As responsible and law abiding citizens we, refill any holes dug in search of "targets", remove projectiles (lead) and other detritus left by previous generations in the soil, report any major artefacts that we may find, remove modern rubbish form the areas we visit, respect cultural places of our indigenous brother and sisters and respect gold rush era sites.

I enjoy bush camping wherever I please in state forests and have passed on life skills to my children. Survival skills such as "hootchy" building, lighting camp fires from scratch, finding direction without a compass, etc etc. I now look forward to passing on these skills to my grandchildren. These are all things that cannot legally be done in reserves or national parks. We may spend up to two weeks camped in the bush and when we leave there is nothing to show that we were there save some footprints and tyre tracks in and out. Any modern rubbish I find comes home with me for disposal.

I have around \$40k invested in my prospecting tools and equipment and support equipment, most of which was purchased in central Victorian towns. I spend ~\$3.5k per year on consumables in support of my activity, all in central Victorian towns.

Before any findings the council may recommend to government are implemented, extensive engagement with the effected forest users must be actively encouraged.

In closing I would like the councils to consider;

- Make more land available to prospectors
- No restriction placed on bush camping
- No extension to existing reserves or national parks
- No declaration of new reserves or national parks

IF IT AINT BROKE, DON'T FIX IT.

Phil Davis