

I wish to present the following objections to the VEAC Central West Forest Investigations. After attending several Information sessions, my concerns have not been resolved.

- The Draft recommendations fail to meet the requirements of section 18 of the VEAC act as there is no measurement or evaluation of the potential social or economic consequences of the proposed recommendations.

- Public land is exactly what it suggests PUBLIC.

This land is for everyone to enjoy, not just a select few people. If VEAC want to prevent the general public from entering land that has always been public land, then it needs to be an inclusive ban for EVERYONE.

- The impact on tourism in small towns in and around the defined areas.

The proposed closure and redefinition of parks will greatly impact small communities. Many of these communities rely on income gained from various sources. As a prospector, I visit many small goldfields towns. When there, I purchase fuel, food, baked goods, beverages and pay campground and motel fees. Without the revenue from people like myself, these towns will struggle and will face possible declines into ghost towns.

Throughout Central Victoria, the council's have promoted the Goldfields Route. Many tourists follow this extensive road network to see where the gold rush happened and learn about Australian history. Mining is a huge part of Central Victorian history. As a prospector, I go into the bush, not just to detect gold, but to admire the wildlife, the flora, the insects, smells, Birdlife and other's company.

- Limitations of access to Park-lands.

The legislation indicates that many activities will be excluded and made illegal. These activities include but are not limited to gold prospecting, bush walking, mountain bike riding, 4x4 driving, trail bike riding, dog walking, hunting and horse riding.

Who's going to police the bush? How are you planning on denoting where boundaries lie?

As a prospector, I've paid a great deal of money for all my items associated with my detecting. I also hold a valid licence. All three areas that VEAC are proposing to redefine are currently used by myself and thousands of other bush users legally.

I claim to be cleaning Victoria one piece of metal at a time. Most days I venture into the bush, I detect mostly rubbish. Mainly lead shot and steel. Although often bottles and plastics. I take all rubbish I collect home with me and recycle what I can. These pieces of rubbish would otherwise end up in our water ways. I know I'm not alone in my habit of cleaning up these areas. The government is getting rubbish removal done for free.

-Many pensioners and locals to these areas rely solely on collection of fire wood for heating and cooking. These people help to keep the bush and undergrowth thinner, greatly reducing full force fires from burning and destroying native habitat, properties and killing wildlife. If these VEAC recommendations are passed, I can 100% guarantee that there will be many Black Saturday and Ash Wednesday repeats.

As a wildlife rescuer, I'm also concerned that if the public aren't allowed to access this land that's always been accessed, many native animals will not be found by visitors and locals. They will suffer. Many animals and birds are attacked by feral cats, dogs and foxes. By not allowing hunters into these areas, there will be many more native animals deaths. Another thing about hunters, they endure that the population of rabbits, foxes and deer in the discussed areas are constantly being shot. If you remove hunters, the erosion caused by these vermin will increase, which is going against what VEAC are wanting to occur.

Many native animals which enter cities need to be relocated to the very bush. This will be impossible for wild life rescue team as we cannot enter the bush with our four wheel drive. We have to wait with the animal as well for upto five hour. This is so ferral animals do not attack our national treasures.

One last this I must say bush users and prospectors watch out for illegal activities in the bush. Just the other day I used a stick to check there was not a body in a doona. We come across other activities , which we report to polices. People doing illegal stuff will not listen to changes VEAC make.

My cousin is a Doctorate in climate change listening to her as a former NASA expert she send if you do not reduce fire fuel with the modelling the fires will get hotter and more destructive.

In conclusion, while I appreciate what VEAC are trying to achieve, I believe that this Draft is so not acceptable. It will impact so many people in detrimental ways.

Sincerely Christopher Butters