



GEELONG GEM & MINERAL CLUB Inc.

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*Victorian Environment Assessment Council,
Level 39 2 Lonsdale St,
Melbourne, 3000
Victoria, Australia.*

Dear Committee Members,

Re Central West Investigation.

We have read the proposal by V.E.A.C. to lock up another 79,000 hectares of forest and recreational area of Victoria. We believe that while there is an argument for the preservation of a number of areas there is also a strong argument for continuing to allow public usage of the National environment.

The Wellsford Forest and other areas around Bendigo and the Pyrenees are prime areas that support the recreational activities of Gem and Mineral Clubs, Prospecting Clubs and Fossil Collectors. The proposal as it stands does nothing to support the continued existence of these clubs as a recreational activity for many people. (Voters in Victoria). The 10,000 hectares proposed to allow continued activities is nothing more than tokenism as it is 1/8th of the total area being discussed. If we add this to the other restrictions imposed by VEAC across Victoria it represents a great loss of valued access by recreational users and to Industry. While we agree that some sights of historical value and to Indigenous Heritage should be preserved. We think that this proposal will do more harm to people living in and using the area in a sustainable and protected way, particularly in the area of tourism.

Gem and Mineral clubs affiliated with the Victorian Gem & Mineral Clubs Association have a Code of Conduct with respect to fossicking which is expected to be enforced by Field Trip Officers and Clubs.

Other Associations also have codes of conduct which are designed to protect the environment. We believe that with proper regulation and location licencing similar to NSW Forestry and Parks. This area could be well protected rather than locking up yet another slice of Victoria.

Des McKiernan

President

Geelong Gem & Mineral Club Inc

Gordon Hutchinson

Secretary