



Deep Creek Landcare Group  
 (Covering the areas of Lancefield, Romsey, Monegeetta and districts)  
 P.O.Box 99  
 Romsey 3434  
 deepcreeklandcare@gmail.com

VEAC  
 GPO Box 527  
 Melbourne VIC 3001

15 September, 2018

**Re :- Submission making comment on the VEAC draft proposals paper making draft recommendations for future use of public land in the central west of Victoria.**

To the VEAC Chairman and Board;

The Deep Creek Landcare group would like to make a submission in regards to the draft recommendations for the future use of public land in the central west region of Victoria. The Deep Creek Landcare Group is one of the original Landcare groups forming over 30 years ago in the areas covering the townships of Lancefield, Romsey, Monegeetta and its surrounds. This area is within the boundaries of the Macedon Ranges Shire Council in the North West corner on the study area known as the Wombat-Macedon block. The groups extensive contact with both public and private land in this area gives the organisation and its members a good understanding of the local issues pertaining to public land and its management. This is true for our own area, while allowing for an understanding of some of the management issues effecting public land in general. It is for this reason the group feels it is well placed to make comment of the document that VEAC has produced.

Overall the Deep Creek Landcare Group is pleased to see many of the recommendations put forward in this draft document. Increasing levels of protection for public land by changing the classification from state park to conservation and national park seems to be a positive step particularly at the landscape level. It is also noted by the group that an increased consultation with local indigenous groups is a positive component of the document.

While there are positive elements, there are some issues regarding the overall document. It appears that as a general theme there is little comment regarding fire management of these areas. While the group understands that fire management issues may be considered outside of the VEAC review, it still requires consideration. The management of fire as both wildfire and fuel reduction burning is one of, if not the most important management practices on the ecology of all public land which at times has been grossly mismanaged resulting in immense loss.

Recommendations regarding appropriate fire activities need to be spelled out for all to understand. Fire management is a complex area, both politically and environmentally, but as VEAC is independent of government it should be free to make recommendation to the best scientific standards currently available. Poor fire management does and has occurred in the past and we need to undertake the best practices while protecting life and property. This includes conserving natural values and diversity.

Another overall concern is while increased levels of protection by changing the areas public land status are positive, it is unclear what funds and resources would be sourced to achieve increased management and protection. This again may be somewhat outside of the scope of VEAC, but with out some consideration of increased staff and funding for the relevant land management agencies the changes may be in name only and fail to deliver the changes in management practices to sufficiently protect these areas.

At a more local level, the group has some comments regarding the Cobaw State forest, which sites within the north west corner of the Wombat-Macedon study area. The recommendation in the draft document is for the Cobaw State park to become Conservation Park. This on the surface is a positive change. The group wishes to make submission regarding the practical implementation of this change. One of the main concerns is the type of activities that would or would not be allowed under this change in classification.

The most concerning is that trail bikes would still be allowed in the park. The sandy soils of this park are particularly vulnerable to erosion, and past abuse of the site by trail bike riders has lead to significant erosion. While they are supposed to stay on formed roads, it is obvious that they do not and are unlikely to into the future. This erosive process impacts vulnerable flora, fauna and water quality, not to mention the noise and other issues to other park users.

It would be hoped that some further exclusion of trial bikes would be recommended. It also seems at the same time that some lower impact activities would be excluded. For example camping, horse riding and dog walking. These activities do have their issues, but in comparison are much less damaging to the park than motor bikes.

The group feels that these lower impact activities keep the community involved with the park and give an overall sense of ownership and care for the area. People need to use the area to value it. It is hoped that it could be recommended to allow these activities to continue. If left up to the management agency to designate areas for these activities it is feared that they will simply never nominate areas, so they do not have to undertake the extra expense and work that this may require. Similarly, it is noted that shooting would be excluded. Again this is an activity that has possible negative impacts on the park, but there is an element of pest animal control from this activity that would be lost which is valuable. It is hoped that some specific recommendation could be made regarding other pest animal control strategies in the park, whilst protecting other users.

Our group includes our community in conducting regular flora and fauna monitoring in the Cobaw ranges such as spotlighting, Elliot trapping, motion activated night vision camera monitoring, Spring wild flower walks and many more such activities to raise awareness and educate our local community.

Another area of public land the group wishes to address in this submission is the smaller public reserves in the area. Particularity those along the Deep Creek and other tributaries of this system. This is a vitally important water way containing threatened species such as the endangered Yarra Pigmy Perch which has been greatly impacted by land clearing and current land use. Any pockets of public land along these water ways need to be protected and managed effectively. It is our hope that a recommendation specific to these sites could be drawn by VEAC. Some of these areas are current reserves, but others are managed by private land holders - some appear to be with no legal right, whilst others are lease holders. It is hoped that it could be acknowledged the importance of these sites which need to be afforded protection. As current leases come to an end they should not be renewed, but returned to public reserves allowing revegetation and rehabilitation of these sites as a priority.

Lastly we wish to discuss a specific area of public land located at the Lancefield Park in Lancefield. This site has a range of recreational facilities and activities, but is still a public land space. There is an area at the back of this park that has been identified as containing deposits of Mega Fauna bones

(fossils) as well as aboriginal artefacts. Multiple universities have conducted many paleontological digs at this site with great success which has prompted the annual Megafauna festival held in Lancefield to celebrate findings. The area is currently under threat from a range of inappropriate activities, such as drainage works, earth moving and land fill material deposited on site. This important cultural and scientific site needs to be protected in some way. Any additional protection of this site would be very worthwhile and greatly appreciated.

Consideration of this submission would be greatly appreciated by the Deep Creek Landcare Group. We would also like to acknowledge the hard work of VEAC and its members and support staff in addressing this complex issue of future public land management.

Kind regards

Deep Creek Landcare Group