



New submission for investigation "Central West Investigation"

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Submission for the investigation "Central West Investigation"Submitted on **15-10-2018**

Information provided by the author:

Title: **Mr**First Name: **Brendan**Last Name: **Murray**Organisation: **Secret Forest Walks**

Description:

Dear VEAC I support the creation of the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park. I have a long and personal association with the Wombat Forest, and also an economic association, as the owner of a Daylesford based eco-tourism business since 2010. Secret Forest Walks is centered on GPS guided bush walking experiences in the Wombat Forest. My customers select from a range of custom mapped walks and are guided by a hand held GPS unit, negating the need for a human guide. As a business idea, I believe that it is unique, and my Tripadvisor reviews attest to the success of the method and the product. I am also a Licenced Tour Operator with Parks Victoria. For tourism and particularly eco-tourism industries in the area to develop and reach their potential, a healthy and mature forest is critical. My customers in growing numbers, with a notable increase in families of late, are seeking a quiet and intimate encounter with our natural environment. But the forest must be of the highest possible quality to genuinely captivate the visitor. A great deal of the beauty of the Wombat forest has been marred by intensive timber extraction over a good deal of time, especially during the 90s, and the prospect of mining, such as in the Nolans Crossing area, has been ever present. The scope of my walks are confined to the few remaining areas of mature and unburnt forest in proximity to Daylesford. At present, there is no certainty that areas containing the walks will endure. The recent razing for timber of the eastern side of Babbingtons Hill in Bullarto, an extinct volcano, would be a salient example. The Hill was a key element for a number of walks, but is now untenable due to the choking mass of regrowth obscuring views to the magnificent Macedon Ranges and farmland to the east. My customers generate economic activity through accommodation, health and beauty, hospitality and associated expenditure in the local area. The walking has a very low environmental impact and promotes physical and emotional well-being, and strengthens relationships. Protecting the forest from resource extraction would create a multiplier effect of human, environmental and economic benefits. Appropriate thinning operations would also be of benefit. While operations such as my own are at present quite modestly sized, an expanded and maturing forest

would further encourage investment and innovation in experiential tourism. I sincerely hope that the proposal goes ahead. Please feel free to contact me for further information or to share ideas. Yours truly [Brendan Murray](#) Secret Forest Walks. Daylesford. Victoria

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