

Margaret Ramsay

To VEAC and the State Government,

- The Australian Bush is for all to enjoy, not just a minority of people who have one activity that fits at one instance in time.
- The bush walkers, campers, motor cyclist, mountain bike riders, horse riders, four wheel drivers, prospectors, botanist, geologists, tourist's and on the list goes.
- All these activities help to keep our society healthy and actively involved in life. Many people will participate often in a variety of these activities at different times in their life. Horse rider when in their youth, camper when a parent and a prospector once retired.
- We have so many problems in the cities and country with mental and physical well being very much compromised.
- The bush should be available for everyone at all times of their life without restrictions that make it difficult and unwelcoming.
- The forest is a place to unwind, let out adrenalin, reconnect with nature and others, breath some fresh healthy air and reinvigorate mind and spiritual connections whether you are religious or atheist.
- Mental health is becoming a very costly problem in our society. Without nature to help us reconnect, unwind, let out the anger, use our adrenalin, find sanctuary, remove ourselves from the noise of our everyday lives, we are impacting on this problem enormously.
- Many of us would visit and be part of the forest more often if we had more time and ability to get there. The ability to use our past experiences in the forest often sustain us in difficult times even without being there. If we know we still can go there it gives us hope. Once locked up this hope is gone. Depression, suicide and other debilitating mental issues need every possible opportunity to find hope and escape from our mental state.
- When people are excluded from an area it becomes ignored and neglected.
- The fire risk for the forest is accelerated when less and less people are involved in the area due to unable to access and use.
- When the forest is ignored and not managed, the natural cycle of cooler burns that encourage seed germination and wood ash supply of minerals to the plants decreases. Increasing the loss of species.
- The obvious risk of towns in the vicinity of the unmanaged forest increases dramatically.
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- All tracks whether government gazette tracks, logging tracks, connecting tracks, main roads, council roads, walking tracks, hiking tracks, CFA tracks and so on should all be kept open. If people are allowed to help maintain them then (which is the case in America) we can start to be even a greater contributor to the forests well being.
- There are always a few that give each group of forest participators a bad name. Unfortunately that is sometimes ignorance, youth or lack of intelligence creates. The rest of us appreciate the experience in the bush doing our chosen activity and often try to repair, maintain, remove damage done by others (rubbish) and respect the space.

THE LAST THING WE NEED NOW AND IN THE FUTURE IS TO CLOSE THIS AVENUE FROM OUR POPULATION. LEAVE THE STATE FOREST A STATE FOREST FOR ALL TO ENJOY TO HELP KEEP MORE OF US SANE AND CONNECTED WITH NATURE.

It is pretty clear this comes down to a cost problem for the government. The clear fell logging practices of the past are no longer accepted and rightly so. Selective logging seems to have been too difficult for the authorities to manage. Our forests have some of the best quality and highly sought after hardwoods in the world. Yet we can't seem to look at other parts of the world and follow suit with managed logging that is sustainable. With the mobile saw mills around these days, enthusiastic contractors willing to jump any number of hoops to get some of this beautiful timber for high end uses. Uses which are more than willing to pay what it is worth but can't buy it. A rethink could help promote our beautiful forest timbers, create a sustainable industry, make available beautiful totally unique Australian products to the world. But no, let's lock it up so it can be lost to an extremely hot killing all forest fire that nothing gains but all is lost.

In Europe the forests have been selectively logged for centuries. Such as a cooper (whisky and wine barrel craftsman) will selectively mark trees that he thinks are suitable for his craft. The forest managers then assess the trees he has selected and if it is agreeable to all then the trees are felled individually and taken out respecting the forest health. These logs are valued so that it is sustainable in the long and short term.

In America the national parks are accessed by horse riders usually with pack horses as part of a tradition that has been part of the history of the country. Many of these groups that participate also participate with their horses, including pack horses and mules, in the maintenance of the tracks. They bring in material and small equipment on the horses to fix bridges, roads, wet areas (such as creek crossings and soaks) gravel tracks, removal of hazards and general maintenance as required to prevent further damage. This is under the management of the forest authorities who are the controlling body. Working together for a common cause.

Australians have shown that are more than willing to help the environment if given a chance. Landcare groups all over Australia try to remedy river banks, subsidizing area and so on. Clean up Australia has people from all over with all ages involved. Many country road sides are being managed by locals. Historical buildings and local land marks in small communities are being kept structurally sound and interesting to tourists so that they are not forgotten. Let Australians help manage and keep the state forest open to all.

The Wombat State Forest is a uniquely beautiful environment that has allowed generations of Australians the most spectacular experience of freedom to enjoy nature in many different ways. We have no right to take that away from future generations. Horse riders, dog walkers, bush walkers and many others will, we hope, still be around on the planet once the fuel runs out. Motor bikes and four wheel drivers may not be around for too much longer but the four wheel driver could be prospecting with his or her retired other half, half a century from now. They should still have the freedom to access the bush now and in the future.

Don't change the State Forest change the way you manage it. Do like other countries do. Get the uses to help manage it. Don't take the easy way out and lock it up, causing numerous other serious problems for the forest life, adding mental and physical health problems and the communities in its vicinity of the forest.

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO AGREE WITH WHAT I AM SAYING AND I HAVE DISCUSSED IT WITH MANY OTHERS. SO THIS IS MY OPINION BUT IS ALSO MANY OTHERS WHO ARE NOT UP TO PUTTING SUBMISSIONS IN DUE TO LACK OF SKILLS WITH THE COMPUTER.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Ramsay

1<sup>st</sup> November 2018

