



31 October 2018

To: Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

Re: Submission to Central West Investigation

Dear Councillors,

We are pleased to make the following submission to VEAC's Central West Investigation.

Who we are

The Kara Kara CMN is a not-for-profit conservation organisation based at St Arnaud in north-central Victoria. Our region of interest spans about 2,000km², extending from St Arnaud in the north to Moonambel in the south, and from Morri Morri in the west to the Avoca River in the east. This region adjoins the area covered by VEAC's Central West Investigation, and as such, any changes to land use(s) in the Central West have the potential to impact on our region at a landscape scale.

Our submission

Our comments are focused on the area closest to our region of interest, namely the Mt Cole-Pyrenees Block and the draft recommendations in VEAC's Central West Investigation Report pertaining thereto.

We support the proposed Pyrenees National Park, where prior landscape-scale revegetation works undertaken by landholders located to the north have created a bio-link through to the Kara Kara National Park. This bio-link is expected to become more effective as the vegetation matures, in the process creating an environmentally-significant linkage to Kara Kara National Park - a connection that will potentially enable species to move south through the landscape as they attempt to adjust to climate change.

We also support the creation of the Pyrenees Regional Park. The current method of managing domestic firewood coupes has, we believe, the potential to increase biodiversity over the longer term. Reducing the number of eucalypt stems allows those remaining to grow larger, and a more open canopy encourages more understorey germination and growth provided that grazing pressure is appropriately managed.

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Response to general recommendations

The following comments are made in respect of the General West Investigation Report's general recommendations.

R2 (Page 58): Parks Victoria's current resourcing levels are such that they are unable to support a visible presence at significant regional parks, including the Kara Kara National Park. As such, we assert that significantly increased funding is needed before any new parks are added to Park Victoria's existing management responsibilities.

R9 (Page 59): Effective landscape connectivity will require revegetation of private land as well as appropriate management of Crown Land. In addition, Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) that cannot be adequately represented on existing Crown Land generally occur on the deeper, more fertile soils that have the greater capacity to support wildlife during drought conditions. This means that revegetation on land that will support these EVCs is more likely to impact positively on biodiversity.

While it is not part of the Terms of Reference for VEAC's investigation, we suggest that this recommendation be expanded to urge the Government to adopt policies to encourage and assist landholders to revegetate land that will support EVCs that are not adequately represented on existing Crown Land and are located in areas that will help improve landscape connectivity.

R11 (Page 61): Current domestic firewood arrangements have an unintended adverse impact on commercial hardwood plantations. For example, the first thinning of a plantation where the timber removed is too small or poorly shaped for most uses could be used for firewood if such a market existed. Any reduction in costs during the early stage of a commercial plantation has a significant impact on the long-term economics.

Additional recommendation:

We suggest that VEAC's final report include a recommendation that the Government establish a fund to enable the opportunistic purchase of privately-owned inlier blocks of land. These blocks are a potential source of weeds and other costs such as track maintenance for the land manager.

In closing, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and look forward to a positive conservation outcome for the region.

Yours faithfully



**President
Kara Kara Conservation Management Network**