

**SUBMISSION IN RESPONSE TO THE VEAC CENTRAL WEST INVESTIGATION DRAFT
PROPOSALS PAPER**

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Making a submission to a partisan body like VEAC is an obvious waste of time. I know my submission will count as much as a pro-forma submission from a sheep, but it is all a thinking person can do. By the way, submissions stating that mineral exploration does significant damage to the environment are talking demonstrable rubbish and should be binned. MINERAL EXPLORATION IS GOOD - the more an intelligent community can know about its mineral resources the better.

It is about time we stopped flogging ideologies and playing politics and got smart about conserving the environment in Victoria. The conservation movement in this state has been a disastrous failure. We have more national parks and so-called "protected areas" than ever, but the environment continues to degrade. PEOPLE, IT ISN'T WORKING!!

VEAC should be called upon to demonstrate scientifically that declaring national (and other) parks does anything positive for the environment. If VEAC cannot do this, the government has a scandal on its hands and should disband the organisation immediately. Without good scientific data to make decisions (and careful monitoring), we are possibly wasting large amounts of money and reducing the integrity of our ecosystems with no real benefit to the community.

The township of Bright (where I grew up) was lousy with bandicoots in the 1950's. The town contained plenty of cats (both domestic and feral), but the bandicoots coped okay. If a fox appeared in the valley it was turned into money and then a fur coat. Fox numbers had been controlled by shooting for about 90 years at that stage. Now we have clever people saying that you cannot control fox numbers by shooting and we have a multitude of national (and other) parks, but we have no bandicoots. Surely there is a lesson to be learned here.

I was lucky enough to see a mallee fowl a couple of months ago - most Victorians have never seen one - it wasn't in a national park, it was in an area where the farmers shoot the foxes.

There isn't enough funding to properly manage the existing parks and this situation is not going to improve as hostility towards business increases (a trend much more demonstrable than that of global warming). VEAC is clearly not concerned about the economic damage its recommendations might inflict, otherwise it would have commissioned a study into the mineral prospectivity of the Central West Region and not worried quite so much about which road cuttings are geologically important. Are

there multi-million ounce gold deposits worth billions of dollars associated with the granites of the region?

If VEAC wasn't full of dogmatists, the fact that areas that have been used economically for 150 years are still worth turning into national parks would be ringing a few bells. The draft proposals paper states on P. 120 that "Wellsford forest is one of the largest, best condition box-ironbark forests in Victoria". How can this be if it is a mere state forest? Stopping recreational hunting in such an area can only do harm.

Convince me that ECV's aren't just a land grab. How much difference is there between Grassy Dry Forest, Grassy Woodland, Valley Grassy Forest and Plains Grassy Woodland, for example. Where were ECV definitions published in reputable peer-reviewed journals? I'm not saying they weren't but VEAC doesn't tell me where.

It is time the environmental movement in Victoria (including VEAC) got serious about controlling pest plants and animals. WHERE IS THE PEST-CONTROL MASTERPLAN? It is all very well for VEAC to recommend that "government allocates adequate financial and staff resources" to look after parks but a lot more than that is required. Please explain to me how deer proliferating in parks where hunting is prohibited is good for plants.

VEAC's bias is clearly indicated by the statement that "No change is not an option for future land use in the investigation area". It should be an option if it is the course that has the best environmental outcome. It is time we worked out whether declaring national (and other) parks does more harm than good.