

Submission by the Mineralogical Society of Victoria Inc.

14 November, 2018

Societies Background:

The Mineralogical Society of Victoria was established in March 1976 with the objectives:

- a) To advance mineralogy both as a science and an art.
- b) To disseminate knowledge of minerals, their occurrence and associations.
- c) To increase knowledge of related fields of earth science (from a mineralogical – centred viewpoint).
- d) To keep members abreast of new developments in mineralogy.
- e) To encourage an appreciation of the aesthetic value of minerals.
- f) To promote the proper care and preservation of mineral specimens.
- g) To promote the conservation of the geologically unique and of the environment in general.
- h) To provide a means of contact between professionals and amateurs in the various fields of earth sciences.
- i) To foster a sense of cooperation and understanding between individuals, organisations with similar interests and professional institutions in the field of mineralogy.
- j) To provide a forum for debate and discussions on the matters relating to mineralogy.

To that end we are actively involved in the collecting and curating of minerals and in so doing preserving a major component of the mining heritage of Victoria, other Australian States and countries around the world. We have a close relationship with Museum Victoria, with the Curator Emeritus Geosciences, Dr Bill Birch being one of our patrons.

Comments towards Proposal:

We have a major concern if changes that stem from this current inquiry erode the access that we, as Victorian mineral enthusiasts currently have, to public lands in the areas covered by this inquiry.

If these proposed parks are established under current legislation they will exclude many activities, even such a low impact activity as mineral collecting.

There are already many areas of Victoria that have been put off-limits to mineral collectors with only a negligible number of areas reserved for access. We hope that the VEAC final report will represent the diversity of activity that is part of a healthy society, including the rights and aspirations of prospectors of which mineral collectors are only one group.

We would like to make the VEAC aware that the areas concerned have been prospected by generations of Victorians, and visitors from other states with minimal negative impact. With appropriate guidelines in place, the environment and cultural heritage can be protected without shutting out hobby prospecting and collecting of mineral specimens.

The areas that are under examination in this inquiry contain areas of previous known alluvial gold and other mineral deposits. Such areas are not untouched by their mining history.

While some relics remain from the gold rush era, natural recovery has obscured much evidence of former gold extraction. The goldfields have undergone great change from that era and it is inconceivable that they would ever return to anything like their original state under current Victorian prospecting laws.

Severe floods that occur from time to time also cause major change in river-beds and are a continuing variable that result in far more extensive change than that created by modern-day mineral collectors/prospectors/fossickers using their hand tools. Modern bush fires periodically similarly wreak havoc and have an enormous long lasting impact on the environment.

Mineral enthusiasts go about their collecting activity in a responsible and practical way. With the odd exception (no different to any other recreational group), mineral enthusiasts are people who care strongly about the environment and wish to preserve it for their children and grandchildren.

Mineral collecting also comes under the auspices of Victorian prospecting laws which are very prescriptive about how collecting "prospecting" can occur. The restriction to using hand tools means that holes are never very big and are easily filled in.

Mineral collectors, both men and women, come from all walks of life. Often for reasons of 'life' they tend to be older people who seek to enjoy an educational and interesting hobby that involves substantial healthy outdoor activity.

Museum Victoria, Geosciences, relies on mineral collectors to make new discoveries so that steps can be taken to preserve sample specimens by the museum as a way of recording the State's natural history. Without collectors in the past and present museums would not exist.

Summary

The Mineralogical Society of Victoria does not advocate unrestrained access to genuinely fragile ecosystems in Victoria.

We do however strongly recommend that any laws and changes strike a fair and reasonable balance between the needs of the environment, native title holders and the needs of the broader community to be able to enjoy the experience and bounty of the bush, including national parks, state forests and any other public lands.

We request that mineral collecting and prospecting continue to be allowed in the areas under consideration by this inquiry.

MinSoc Vic is opposed to the proposal to the new proposed National Park and strongly urge the VEAC committee to retain the existing area of multiple land use so that current and future generations of mineral collectors can enjoy the experience of field collecting in regional Victoria.

Yours sincerely,

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Secretary Mineralogical Society of Victoria Inc

On behalf of:



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