

20th Nov. 2018

Peninsula 4x4club
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Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

Level 39, 2 Lonsdale St

GPO Box 527 Melbourne,

Victoria, 3001

Via Email: veac@delwp.vic.gov.au

Re: VEAC proposal for the changes to areas to National Park.

This letter represents the members and families of the Peninsula 4WD Club, who at the September general meeting, voted unanimously to oppose the Central West Investigation Draft Proposals Paper as submitted for public comment.

As an active 4WD club, we regularly visit the bushland of Victoria (in all of its forms) for day trips, overnight trips, long weekends and longer trips where we explore the area, camp and take part in many other activities including bush walking, prospecting, amongst others. We strongly oppose any changes to these areas that could diminish the existing access to these areas.

We stand along side our fellow bushland users (motor bike riders, prospectors, bush walkers, campers etc..) noting that this proposal restricts access to certain user groups and we feel that this is the first step from a minority group to further restrict access to these area to the general public. In every area that has become a National Park, access to those who use it most has been slowly restricted and areas locked out with MVO areas, permanently gated areas and areas that have been deliberately closed to access by authorities with bobcats and excavators.

We strongly recommend that the State & Federal Governments increase cooperation with the bushland user groups to protect and conserve the areas in question. As an active 4WD group, we are passionate about protecting the native lands in Australia as we see these as areas that we and future generations of our families need to go into to fully appreciate the wonder of the Australian Bush. We, along with our fellow 4WDers leave areas we visit cleaner than when we found it, we already work closely with Parks Vic and DEWLP to report any areas that need attention. More and more, our members are gaining qualifications in first-aid, chainsaw management amongst other skills that we are able to put to good use when we are in the bush. Members of our club, through 4WD Victoria regularly volunteer our time, resources and expertise to assist with management tasks in the parks and forests such as track clearing, rubbish removal and area maintenance. I have seen the official figures through 4WD Victoria and note this equates to thousands of man hours per year, not to mention the costs associated with getting to the areas, food, fuel, other commodities required for a stay in the forests.

As an active 4WD club within the 4WD Victoria organisation, I can categorically state that there are thousands of us that are regular users of these areas in Victoria, not to mention those who travel from interstate to visit our forests and bushland. We financially support the local towns and businesses that surround these areas by buying supplies such as fuel, food and drinks, camping supplies as well as vehicle repairs and equipment. We don't want to see changes in the bush that

make the area more like an outdoor museum, with paved roads, designated camp areas and serious restrictions where we can go (whether that be by car, bike or on foot) We have sufficient National Parks in Victoria already without further restricting the activities of Victoria's bush users.

In visiting these areas, we are in a very good position to monitor and protect these areas without the need for wholesale changes. We strongly recommend that the State Government better interact and recruit groups like ours to assist with managing and protecting these areas. This would give you a veritable army of volunteers who take great pleasure in visiting our bush land.

Our concern includes the deliberate misinterpretation of the National Parks Act:

The objects of Victorian National Parks Act ... is for the preservation and protection of the natural environment... for the protection and preservation of indigenous flora and fauna and of features of scenic, archaeological, ecological, geological, historic or other scientific interest in those park and ... to make provision in accordance with the foregoing for the use of parks by the public for the purposes of enjoyment, recreation or education and for the encouragement and control of that use.

With particular attention paid to the words: '...and control of that use' rather than on the emphasis on the enjoyment, recreation and educational. There are those in the community who believe that the only way to protect something is to lock it away. It is interesting to note that those who purport to be acting only for conservation are often the ones who have never set foot inside a state forest or national park, their entire belief system is based on theory and rhetoric. Ours on the other hand is from first hand experience, from working with the current land managers, from consulting with the traditional owners and most importantly from a passion to continue to use these areas whilst looking after them.

We would like to draw your attention to the Stamford University Study confirming that access to forests has a very positive benefit to our mental health.

[\(https://news.stanford.edu/2015/06/30/hiking-mental-health-063015/\)](https://news.stanford.edu/2015/06/30/hiking-mental-health-063015/)

In making these changes to the status of these areas of Mount Cole – Pyrenees Block, Wellsford Block, & Wombat – Macedon Block will without doubt end in the areas being highly restricted in access to the general public for our recreational activities and will be more like a sterile museum area with strict guidelines about walking here, driving here, camping here, and destroy the areas attractiveness to the majority of the users.

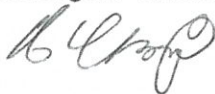
The over-arching goal here is preservation of the areas for future generations. We firmly believe that conservation and recreational use of the areas are not mutually exclusive.

We welcome further discussion about the preservation of these areas and again respectfully request that the user groups be more actively involved in the preservation activities so there can be continued access to the areas whilst protecting them for future generations.

Yours Sincerely

Peninsula 4WD Club

Aaron Langlois – President



Peter Hasell – V-President



Ali Hudson - Secretary

