

VEAC Central West Investigation submission.

veac@delwp.vic.gov.au

Anthony Cooper HGFA 226371 (paraglider)
Secretary, Dynasoarers Hang Gliding Club Inc.

On reading the terms of reference, it is interesting that the purpose of the investigation is to:

(a) identify and evaluate.....social and economic values.....

However;

(b) doesn't intend to include recommendations for "social and economic values", which I believe is what hang gliders and paragliders are very concerned with, in addition to environmental and cultural issues.

I urge VEAC to list hang gliding and paragliding as allowed activities within the proposed Ben Nevis Nature Reserve and Mount Buangor National Park, and am concerned VEAC did not mention these activities in the Draft Recommendations.

Personally, I have spent over \$10,000.00 on training and equipment to pursue the thrill and camaraderie of paragliding. Ongoing fees for the peak body Hang Gliding Federation of Australia (HGFA) and local clubs exceeds \$500.00 per year. These figures are typical of what most hang gliders and paragliders are willing to spend to support their passion.

Each of the four main Victorian clubs has responsibility for launch sites in their area, and are keen to embrace visitors.

Below is an extract from the HGFA site guide for Ben Nevis:

<https://siteguide.org.au/Sites/Ben%20Nevis.html>

"Visitors are welcome, but please contact us first. The club has annual running costs for this site's T/O & LZ and would appreciate regular visitors become a member of the club."

All clubs are highly social and encourage flying as a group activity. We don't fly in wet weather therefore only drive on dry tracks, and car pool to reduce impact. We will meet at a local bakery or café, purchase refreshments, lunch and snacks, drive to the landing zone and assess weather and flying conditions and changes to the environment. Eg; farming practices, livestock, cropping, ploughing, and other group activities as in horse riding, model aero club and others considered in the investigation.

As our sport is weather dependent, ploughed or mown paddocks with dry grass create thermals, enabling us to soar at great height and enjoy the vast natural and built environment.

We often soar with eagles that seem to see us as another like minded animal as they guide us to the thermals and join our own “gaggle” of flying wings. Later our group relive these flights and swap stories of altitude and distance, lift and sink, and are kept in touch with the retrieve crew picking up a pilot that has achieved a personal best distance.

The general public are involved in our sport, initially as spectators and often then as tandem passengers willing to pay \$300 to a commercial entity for a memorable flight. They experience what we experience: socially, interaction with their friends and family and the other hang gliders and paragliders flying at the time; environmentally, the wind, land and/or seascape, roads, buildings and people from above; and culturally, how we embrace the art and technology of flight.

In summary hang gliders and paragliders bring a wealth of social and economic benefit to whatever region we visit.

Quite often we don't fly, called “para-waiting” as the conditions are not quite right, as our saying goes “it is better to be down here wishing I was up there than up there wishing I was down here!” But we continue on being social and adding to the economy.

Regards, Anthony Cooper.

