

Submission on the draft proposals paper of VEAC concerning public land in the central west of Victoria

I am very supportive in general of the draft proposals of VEAC – in particular the recommendations for a very large National Park in the Wombat Forest.

Having lived for 40 years close to the Wombat State Forest and adjacent to the Upper Loddon State Forest I appreciate the value of these areas to the environment and to the people of Victoria. My family and I have enjoyed spending a lot of time walking and exploring the bush in the area.

We have seen the Wombat Forest being over-logged and the resulting paucity of large trees caused by a century of timber harvesting. The long overdue curtailment of logging has not yet returned the Wombat Forest to being a healthy ecosystem in most areas. There are still insufficient large old trees to provide habitat for Greater Glider possums, Powerful Owls and other creatures. The forest needs a long time to regenerate and mature. Permanent protection from logging is needed for the entire Wombat Forest.

The Wombat Forest has a very wide range of fungi and birdlife – including many species which migrate to breed in the area in spring.

There are few National Parks in this area (it is a long way to Castlemaine or the Brisbane Ranges N.P.s, and the Organ Pipes N.P. is very small). The rising population of the western suburbs of Melbourne needs some wilderness to enjoy for camping, walking, picnicking and driving. National Park status will provide more facilities and better management – including protection of endangered species and the prevention of off-track motor biking and four wheel driving, and control of illegal firewood collection. The proposed Park would be another tourist attraction for the area.

The National Park would protect the head waters of several rivers. Sedimentation and weeds are a danger to these vital catchments.

With climate change looming as a big problem we need these forests to be preserved as carbon sinks, and also as refuges for animals and plants which will be forced out of their home ranges by higher temperatures. Links such as between the Wombat Forest and the Upper Loddon State Forest (which are very close around Denver and Glenlyon), and the

Macedon Ranges and the Cobaw Range are important as wildlife corridors, especially in light of climate change.

We in Victoria (especially in western Victoria) have removed vast areas of native vegetation, and we need to preserve all we have left in the best condition possible. It is impossible, or almost so - without vast amounts of funds, labour and time, to return cleared land to its original diverse ecosystem.

Other proposals such as the Cobaw Conservation Park, the Hepburn Conservation Park, the addition of part of the Welsford forest to the Bendigo Regional Park, the Pyrenees N. P. and the Mt Buangar N.P. are most commendable.

I am disappointed that the Mt Cole area has not received the level of protection needed and will be subjected to extensive logging, especially as the Hopkins and Wimmera Rivers rise in this area.

I would like to thank VEAC for the work involved in the Central West Investigation, and in its Draft Recommendations.

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