

Dear VEAC – I live in _____, on the edge of the proposed National Park, and would like to express my excitement that the Wombat Forest will be protected by National Park status under the VEAC proposal.

I was particularly excited to find out that Powerful Owls and Greater Gliders are rearing their young in an area very close to where I live.

Conservation is dear to my heart, as I have worked on the ground in a works crew, and studied environmental science at university, and although I can see that some areas of the Wombat are degraded by past logging practices, I believe it is not too late to preserve and restore important habitat for threatened species, such as the greater glider, powerful owl, and brush-tailed phascogale, as well as rare and threatened plant species like the amazing Wombat Leafless Bossiaea, which I have had the privilege of visiting in the Wombat.

I am also a mother, and my daughter deserves to be able to enjoy a natural environment that is as good as, or better than, we are now able to.

Alison Pouliot, fungi expert, has a special relationship with the Wombat, visiting and teaching regularly, and is sure that many species are not yet documented.

The fact that Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia makes it a no brainer that we need to preserve what's left. With climate change being felt already, this protected area will be an important refuge for many species. It is also a carbon sink that we cannot afford to lose. Under climate change, the five water catchments and headwaters of six major rivers within the Wombat will need to be protected in order to maximise supply. The Wombat is also an important habitat for many migratory birds that visit in the Spring.

Sawlog harvesting in this context is not sustainable. Vic Forests' claim that 10, 600m³/yr is a sustainable yield is extremely disingenuous. I support VEAC's proposal of ecological thinning and burning where it is needed.

Recreational activities which are harmful to the environment need to be monitored and prevented where necessary. While I understand this may be inconvenient at first for some, there is a bigger picture we need to keep our eyes on, and involve the community in.

Tourism is a major industry in my local Daylesford area. I moved here because of the forest. People come from Melbourne to visit because they yearn to be restored by the natural environment that is the birthright of each one of us. Giving the Wombat National Park status can only be good for tourism in the area, and encourage the community to value what it has.

I think the VEAC proposal is a sensible compromise between environmental values and the needs of locals for firewood and recreational opportunities. I commend the work you have done, and give the proposal my whole-hearted support,

Thank you,
Teresa Castley (