

Nicholas Abicare

6th December 2018

Dear VEAC,

Re: **Central West Investigation**

The Central Western Victorian hang gliding flying sites are extremely important to me and I urge VEAC to list hang gliding and paragliding as allowed activities within the proposed Ben Nevis Nature Reserve and Mount Buangor National Park. I am very concerned that VEAC did not mention these activities in the Draft Recommendations.

This is the first time I have ever engaged with a government body. I must emphasise how important I feel it is that VEAC include hang gliding as an approved activity, hence my motivation to make a submission.

These sites are effectively my 'men's shed'. I was retrenched with the shutdown of the automotive industry, unemployed for a year, underemployed for another and suffered a relationship break up during this time. The ability to access and use this land for hang gliding has done and continues to do wonders for my mental health. Hang gliding at Ben Nevis and surrounds enables me to clear my mind and provide connections with other club pilots that I need and desire.

Having flown over seas and interstate, I consider Ben Nevis to be one of the safest and most enjoyable sites to fly. I am respectful of the original owners and country, as well as local land owners. I enjoy patronising the local business owners. I go to Avoca for fuel and pies, Beauford for pub meals and club meetings, and Elmhurst for the odd ale.

Each fortnight (weather permitting), I meet with other club members whom show me how to launch and fly safely from Ben Nevis or another suitable site in the Mt. Cole block. The senior WVHGC members are well across the HGFA rules & regulations and keep me safe and compliant with CASA regulations and orders. Our members all have a love for this area, and are extremely mindful to have minimum impact on the environment.

In milder months I take my young children camping and bushwalking in the area. Just quietly, I must admit we have a greater impact on the environment on these occasions than when I go hang gliding!

I am a member of the Western Victorian Hang Gliding Club, bushwalker and family man.

To lose access to this site would be extremely upsetting, given the naturally safe site in which to launch fly and land and lack of alternative sites.

Should VEAC not be considering including Hang Gliding as an approved activity, I would hope that it engages with our club (WVHGC), our State body (VHPA) or our National regulator – the HGFA.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Abicare -Western Victorian Hang Gliding Club -Member