

Mrs Sally Joyce

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VEAC

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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Central West Investigation Draft Proposals Paper, August 2018. I am a resident of the Macedon Ranges Shire and a general user of much of the public land described within the Wombat – Macedon area. I have a strong interest in environmental management and support the principals of the Draft Proposal Paper.

I have listed my thoughts under the headings of most of the public land use types described within the Draft Proposals Paper.

BUSHLAND RESERVES

Councils have Bushland Reserves as part of Council owned land, they are therefore not defined as public land under the VEAC Act.

Recommend, VEAC conform to the same land use prescriptions as local council policy for Bushland Reserves and Environmental Management Plans for such reserves. Bushland Reserves within the Macedon Ranges Shire for example are important for flora, fauna and at times geomorphology.

Allowing horse riding, 4 wheel driving, bicycle riding, car rally's, prospecting, trail bike riding, camping and apiculture are in conflict to Council prescriptions to Bushland Reserves.

Contrasting allowable uses between established Council Bushland Reserves' Environmental Management Plans and VEAC land use recommendations will only lead to confusion for the public and potential for conflict.

Review public land that has been labelled Bushland Reserve, determine the retention of this label and significance for landscape connectivity to retain this land use description.

NATIONAL PARKS

Wonderful and supportive of the proposed expanded or new National Park recommendations. This will support the protection of threatened species, habitats and communities.

Regulating and monitoring for new areas declared as National Park. Users of this space will have to change previous use habits. The Wombat and Lerderderg State forest are very popular with recreational motor bikes. An example would be parts of the Wombat State Forest changed to Wombat Lerderderg National Park. Undoubtedly, a need for more funding for the regulatory authority on the ground to assist with the proposed change of use.

Conflicting uses listed as allowable activities within the VEAC, Central West Investigation Draft Proposal Paper, August 2018., are horse riding, trail bike riding and bicycle riding. These activities are acceptable on established main entry and exit roads but should not be permitted elsewhere. The activities conflict with safeguarding these national parks from environmental deterioration. Examples would be in the form of introducing weed seeds in horse manure, soil pathogens such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi* introduced from vehicle tyres, compaction and erosion of soil from inappropriate use of four wheel drive vehicles, as well as the potential fire hazard from motor bike exhausts that are not fitted with spark arrestors.

No access of any domestic animals at all times. That means no dogs on leads or in cars.

The proposed National Parks should be awarded protection under the National Parks Act 1975.

REGIONAL PARKS

Regional Parks, need to have similar protection from conflicting uses as described above for National Parks. However, some uses can be seen as significantly relaxed. Trail bike riding and four wheel driving should only be allowed on established road networks appointed by the landholder. Their use where people are walking is not compatible. Dogs allowed in the regional park but must be on lead at all times. Horse riding allowed only on roads and tracks designated by the landholder.

All regional parks should have an Environmental Management Plan made and recommendations as to public use of the Park should become permissible.

Extra government funding should be allowed to help current users understand and obey any changes of use. Assist with a new culture of land use.

NATURE RESERVES

Conflicting uses of four wheel driving, trail bike riding, bike riding and horse riding, these activities should not be allowed in Nature Reserves. VEAC describes such places as 'An area of land or wetland of particular importance for its significant flora, fauna, natural habitat, geology or geomorphology' (Central West Investigation Draft Proposal Paper, VEAC, 2018, p164).

Management Plans created for these areas and the user recommendations as to public use of the Nature Reserve should become permissible.

Nature Reserves that form large wetlands or water ways should have dogs prohibited. An example of this is the Gisborne marshland.

Future Proofing

Areas of high conservation status, need to have the facility to be closed off to public access. This would be beneficial for example in times of total fire ban. Public can only exit not enter when a facility is closed.

Tourism is important to garner support, educate, enjoy and preserve areas of environmental significance. As population demands put pressure on natural areas, consideration to be made of;

- a) admission fees to assist with maintenance and/or
- b) a charge or tariff to tourist organisations to account for the negative impacts and repair of public tourist destinations.

Improve funding for the eradication and control of pest flora and fauna.

Introduction of a bounty for the eradication of listed pest animals.

In conclusion, the Draft Proposal Paper is an important beginning to safeguarding biodiversity of public land, supporting as many Environmental Vegetation Classes as possible from deterioration and creating linkages across the Victorian landscape of habitat for flora and fauna connectivity (public and private). The proposals are a significant step to establishing a buffer to retain a viable gene pool and reduce species extinction of native flora and fauna.

Kind regards,

Sally Joyce