

From research I have done and conversations regarding the proposal I would like to bring the following to the table as discussion

Firstly the bushland area known as the Pyrenees was not originally treed. Trees were planted after the war. So an argument for a National Park status to preserve old growth forest habitat is null and void. The trees that exist today were planted by hard working men and women, more than likely living in the local area; both creating a habitat for animals and a source of timber, for firewood and the construction of homes and businesses.

National Parks are created in areas of natural significance. The Pyrenees by world standards would not meet the criteria to be classified a National Park.

Claims that a National Park would attract more visitors and therefore more jobs fails to stand up to scrutiny. Studies have been done on bushland that has been turned into National parks and not one of them was successful in the creation of more jobs.

It needs to be acknowledged that there are bush walkers who travel the world to specifically visit National Parks. A Pyrenees National park I believe would not meet their standards and would be a disappointment. Not only would this mean no sudden influx of visitors from overseas, it could also lower the global opinion of Australian National Parks in general, and as such cause fewer numbers of visitors to other Australian National parks or tourist areas like the Great Ocean Road. We all know that word of mouth of a bad or negative experiences travels fast....very fast. The details tends to remain in people's minds and it requires a lot of time and money to rebuild a good reputation.

In regards to local visitors there is no evidence to support an influx of local visitors above what already attend this area, as it currently is. Those that do frequently visit this area, and a lot already do, do so to prospect, four wheel drive, ride motorbikes or collect firewood. These are the very people that would be locked out completely or massively restricted in their activities if the Pyrenees was made into a National Park.

Therefore the number of visitors would actually decrease, creating financial duress for the families of local businesses in Ararat, Avoca, Maryborough, Elmhurst and surrounding districts. This financial duress would need to be acknowledged and compensation made to those affected, resulting in an increased burden on taxpayers. As these local businesses pay taxes, and those affected would in effect be asked to fund their own financial relief package. Less business also result in less rates for the local councils.

There would be hardship placed not only on the local councils but also on local families in the form of financial duress and emotional strain in not only trying to survive on less money but also in relation to fighting for some compensation. Time and money is also required to re skill, relocate or start a new business. Studies show financial duress alone is the number one, cause of divorce. Add to this emotional stress and you have the potential for the breakdown of families and the possibility of suicides. And yes this does happen and it will go unrecognised due to the sensitive nature and difficulty in discussing this type of death.

This begs the question of what the agenda really is regarding the push to turn the Pyrenees into a National Park, where there are no logical grounds to do so. Is it part of something much bigger? An organisation, whose aim is to deliberately and purposefully keep people out of the bush and the country. Notice that country roads are not repaired and left neglected. Building permits are restricted on country blocks where there is ample room to build. Meanwhile people are crammed into cities on tiny blocks. Ridiculous laws made that require a house to be decommissioned before another one can be built on the same land and we are talking acres of land where there is ample room for multiple dwellings...And all this happens while we have people who are homeless. Extremely wasteful and illogical decision making processes in place. What is going on??

The argument that prospectors leave holes not filled in is a worthless one. The majority of prospectors fill in their holes. All prospectors are required to have a licence. As part of the licensing application they are educated on the need to refill holes. Yes some prospectors do not fill their holes, however they are more than often refilled by other prospectors who prospect in the same area. Not all road users act responsibly in the use of their motor vehicles but we do not take away everyone's right to drive a motor vehicle. Therefore the right to prospect should not be taken away from all prospectors, due to a small number that do not refill a hole. (and this can be from fatigue...have you ever been prospecting all day. It can be extremely tiring.) This line of reasoning needs to also be applied to those that four wheel drive, ride motor bikes, collect firewood and keep bees.

I have only recently gone out prospecting with a local prospector and from my experience prospectors actually do a great job of removing rubbish like lead bullets, rusty nails etc from the environment. I am yet to see any government employee in the bush removing these items.

One thing that struck me on being in the Pyrenees for the first time was a sense that we underestimate the robustness and strength of the bush (and its ability to thrive) The push by those wanting to "protect the bush" is not I believe necessary in this instance.

The Pyrenees bush constantly regenerates. The digging of small holes(and they are small) by prospectors, is quickly covered in a vast array of small plants. The removal of wood for firewood and it is a small amount of wood.(I have seen all the wood lying around on the ground there and it is everywhere. I mean everywhere.) is soon replenished by the strong winds that pass through regularly in the Pyrenees.

The rearrangement of rocks from the motorbike riders and the four wheel drivers only covers a small area in terms of the tracks where they drive compared to the rest of the area of land in the Pyrenees. This is not enough to in any way damage this environment. This bush is tough, I mean really tough, like the people who choose to live there. More damage is done on a daily basis by developers in suburbs all around the country, where the removal of all natural bush is done to make room for houses to be constructed. I would suggest the focus should be on making changes in the suburbs to retain portions of the land there as bushland.

I love being in the bush as do my family and we would like to continue to prospect in the Pyrenees. Multiple studies have proven that time spent in nature is beneficial for mental physical and spiritual reasons I would like to see the all recreational activities continue as they are for the above reasons mentioned.