

Dear VEAC,

Re: Central West Draft Proposals

Our response is to say that we do not want the Wombat State Forest to become a National or Regional Park.

Thank you for your invitation to make comments on the management plans for the Wombat Forest in our area. I would like to point out that our family arrived here in the earliest days of the gold rush and have benefited from the existence of the Wombat Forest for both commercial and recreation uses and its important cultural significance to us.

1. Many family members have spent their whole working lives in the forest. E.g. sawmilling, logging, wood contractors and etc and have had the use and benefit of locally produced timber and firewood. Up until the closure the forest was part of our very existence. These people loved and appreciated the forest for its amenity. Those who oppose the use of the forest for its continued use for commercial purposes are wasting a fine renewable resource. Everyone uses timber products in some way in their daily lives. The same as those who oppose mining but constantly use products that originate from mines. Our towns and cities are results of mining.
2. Much is made of the headwaters of the rivers. These headwaters are springs or soaks of little value that dry up in summer.
3. When the forest was managed for its resources it was a joy to see the timber produced and a healthy, clean forest growing. Today after several years of closure it is jungle-like in places and stagnating and a dreadful fire hazard with uncontrolled noxious weeds like blackberries and furze. The recent Californian fires in America as were the last disasterous fires in Victoria were partly blamed on the mismanagement or no management of the land.
4. Living surrounded by the Wombat Forest it has always been a privilege and a joy to ride horses through the bush. They do no harm but I note that the recommended action is to restrict this with no overnight stays. Why is this going to be restricted? What harm would they do?
5. During the time when the forest was carefully logged and managed native animals and birds and flora and fauna appeared to survive quite well. Since the closure we are now told that most of this is now endangered and becoming extinct. Why has this happened since the forest has been closed.

6. Being almost daily in the forest I have observed that motorbikes do little or no lasting harm. I firmly believe that in particular local children receive great and healthy enjoyment from riding in the bush and this should be encouraged, if need be by special licences. It is terrible to see them bullied by the police and forest officers who would be better employed doing other things. Their chasing of motor bike riders can lead to dangerous and often unwarranted accidents.
I see considerable damage to traditional tracks and roads being done by four-wheel drive vehicles bush bashing and making these roads unusable by normal vehicles. These roads were always trafficable to two wheel drive vehicles during the time that sawmilling was part of the normal forest activities.
7. Beekeeping should be encouraged as most people enjoy the food that they produce.
8. Historic sites should be protected. But it is ironic that these past uses are now considered terrible by some people and should never have happened.
9. All the old original tracks that were trafficable to two wheel vehicles should be graded and kept open, they are part of the forest history. I am appalled to see the department push trees across these roads and place rocks at their entrance along with other dangerous barriers. In the event of a bushfire or an emergency, locals who know these traditional tracks could get trapped by these thoughtless acts by those in authority.
10. It is claimed by some who protested about the commercial use of the forest that it was being overlogged in the past. They were entitled to their opinion but the foresters in charge who were educated experts disagreed and their opinions were overruled most likely by emotion rather than fact, and for political opportunism .
11. Hunting should be allowed, to control pest animal numbers that are causing damage to the human food supply, animals such as deer, pigs, foxes, rabbits and kangaroos should be able to be controlled in the environment in which they inhabit before encroaching on private land, then to be destroyed after wrecking fences etc.

Yours sincerely,
Graeme & Joyce Orr,