

FROM: Kyneton District Trail Riders Inc.

25/11/18

TO: VEAC, Re: Central West Investigation Draft Proposals

KDTR Inc. Is a horse trail-riding club that currently has 45 members and we are just one of many clubs that fall under the auspices of ATHRA (Australian Trail Horse Riders Association). I have been asked by the KDTR committee to write to you expressing our dislike of your proposal for the Wombat State Forest to become a National and Regional Park. Our club organised 21 official horse-rides so far in 2018 and 14 of those rides were held in the Wombat State Forest... in Glenlyon, Bullarto, Spring Hill, Trentham, Greendale, Korweingeboora and Newbury. Except for the Trentham area (which will be a regional park, we assume) our access will be denied/ limited if these proposals become law in 2019.

We believe that horse riding does not damage the forest or wild-life of the state forest. We ride on 4 wheel-drive tracks and single-file bush-tracks and do no damage to the tracks or vegetation and wild-life. Our members also frequently ride in the WSF privately or in small groups and like to be accompanied by their dogs; frequent, free access to state forests is great for mental/ physical health of both riders and animals. National Parks charge fees! If the many riders currently using the WSF (60,000 hectares) are all forced to use the proposed regional Park area (10,000 hectares) this area will become crowded, over-used and will deteriorate.

Bush-fires are a frequent occurrence in the WSF. Horse-riders help keep tracks open, making forests safer because more accessible. We have noted areas where the State Forest department have thinned spindly regrowth, allowed the

collection of fire-wood, conducted cool-burns to reduce weeds and leaf litter and improved the forest for all, including the wild-life. If tracks remain blocked, weeds and litter build up and a fire starts, the wild-life (which a NP is meant to protect) will be wiped out... as has happened in certain parts of the high country after cattle were removed and the grass grew unchecked.

In America, our members tell us, national parks are accessible to horse riders often with pack horses, thereby maintaining a traditional activity just as horse-riding and using pack-horses are in Australia. Many of these groups aid in the maintenance of tracks, especially water-crossings, fixing bridges etc. This is done with the co-operation of the NP authorities. Why can't the body who manages the WSF ask for the help and co-operation of the groups that currently use the WSF... the horse-riders, bike-riders, 4 wheel-drivers, prospectors, fishers,, shooters, firewood collectors, dog-walkers etc. Don't change the status of the WSF... recommend changes to the way it is managed! Ask the users to help manage it... don't lock us out.

Yours faithfully,

Julie Samson (Treasurer, KDTR Inc.) on behalf of the Committee.