



**RE: UPPER CAMPASPE LANDCARE NETWORK RESPONSE TO THE VEAC CENTRAL WEST
INVESTIGATION DRAFT PROPOSAL PAPER**

To Whom It May Concern,

In 2017 the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network (UCLN) made a submission to the VEAC Central West Investigation. The UCLN encompasses 17 Landcare Groups and has over 900 members. In our submission we recommended the reclassification of Wombat and Cobaw State Forests as State Parks to protect the high conservation values that lie within them.

We stated at the time that we believed that the two forests should be added to the conservation reserve system.

UCLN is extremely supportive of the VEAC Draft Proposal Papers' recommendations for a combination of National and Regional Parks for the Wombat and Cobaw Forests. These recommendations closely align with the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan (<http://www.uppercampaspelandcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/UCLN-strategic-plan3.pdf>) which states that the UCLN aims to protect and conserve

our precious environment and create biolinks and wildlife corridors to enhance connectivity throughout the region.

We believe the VEAC draft proposal is a big step forward towards protecting the very high conservation values which can be found in our forests. Our Network has recently accessed funding through the State Government to find and record some of the Endangered species which we need to protect, such as Greater Gliders, Powerful Owls and Brush Tailed Phascogales. We do not want these species to become extinct and protecting their habitat (as is recommended in the draft proposal) is an important step towards ensuring their survival.

We also have threatened flora species such as the Wombat Leafless Bossiaea, (*Bossiaea vombata*), the Basalt Peppercross (*Lepidium hyssopifolium*) and the Hairy Anchor Plant (*Discaria pubescens*). Our groups are working hard to protect these species. By reclassifying the state parks as regional and national parks, activities that can threaten their survival will be curtailed.

The large number of fungal species which are found within the Wombat will also greatly benefit from the protections the reclassification to national and regional parks would ensure.

In the Wombat Forest there are 21 threatened flora, 16 threatened fauna and 13 threatened ecological vegetation classes. By curtailing activities such as four-wheel driving, shooting and trailbike riding as recommended in the Draft Proposal, these threatened species - which we have an obligation to protect - will have a greater chance of survival.

Many scientists believe the Wombat Forest will become a “refugia” for species which may be impacted by rising temperatures due to climate change because of our higher rainfalls and cooler temperatures. The numerous migratory birds that visit the Wombat Forest in spring will have a greater chance of continued survival if their habitat is properly protected and activities such as logging are curtailed.

As we stated in our submission, we have a science-based practical and moral obligation to protect these areas by making them State Parks. By enabling these protections, with the reclassifications proposed by VEAC, we will be protecting the environment in our region that underpins our local economy based on tourism, agriculture, clean air and water.

UCLN believes the VEAC Draft Proposal recommendation to reclassify the area as regional and state park will prevent industries such as logging and mining from operating. They have a negative impact upon the high biodiversity values and are not sustainable, whereas by protecting the environment with State and Regional Park status we are encouraging industries such as tourism which has longer term economic values.

We also applaud the reclassification to State and Regional Parks because it would be an important step in protecting our high-quality riparian vegetation. Much of these riparian vegetation systems exist because the area is the headwaters for 7 major river systems. It is extremely important they are protected.

Our Government has committed to a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) National Reserve System in order to conserve biodiversity across Australia (CES 2013). The Australian Governments *Caring for Country* Program states that building a reserve system (such as that outlined in the VEAC Draft Proposal for the Wombat and Cobaw Forests) is one of six of its national priorities. The Australian Biodiversity Strategy states that this is a way of building landscape resilience in times of changing climate, thereby protecting critical habitats of threatened species.

We applaud and fully support VEAC's proposal to protect our precious biodiversity in the Wombat and Cobaw Forests by reclassifying them as State and Regional Parks.

We believe we have a responsibility to future generations to protect these areas and the values within and the reclassification as proposed by VEAC fulfils the aims of Australia's Biodiversity Strategy to protect habitats at risk.

Yours sincerely

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on behalf of the Upper Campaspe Landcare Network Inc.

