

Central West Investigation: Draft Proposals Paper

Submission by Tim Kingston

My Background

I hold a doctorate in Animal Ecology and have worked for State Governments in New South Wales and Tasmania. I conducted fauna surveys and undertook ecological research in State Forests and National Parks between 1978 and 2002.

Upon 'retirement' in 2015 I purchased and moved to a property at Musk Vale, just one kilometre from the boundary of the Wombat State Forest. Proximity to the Wombat State Forest was a major criterion for selection of our 'bush block' so that I could continue to indulge my passion for experiencing and photographing Australian native fauna and flora.

I am currently an active member of Wombat ForestCare and have been involved in operating motion-sensing cameras, the monitoring of Powerful Owls and in spotlighting nocturnally active fauna, with a special focus on Greater Gliders.

I am also a member of the CFA (Daylesford Brigade).

My Submission

I have thoroughly examined the Draft Proposals Paper and have found the document to be comprehensive, indeed impressive, and congratulate VEAC on their work.

Of the three areas considered, I am intimately acquainted with only the Wombat–Macedon segment and thus my comments are restricted to this area only.

I attended the Community Forum held in Trentham in October and so experienced firsthand the strength of feeling among some local users about what they see as "locking up" of land that they have historically used for recreational activities. I have also experienced this attitude among some of my neighbours in Musk Vale. It is clear to me that people having this mindset are concerned about their personal loss of access to a resource to which they feel entitled based on their individual and inherited 'tradition'. In my conversations with such people it has become apparent that many of the concerns expressed are based on a poor understanding of the contents of the report; a common belief being that all of the forest will be "locked up" and thus bring an end to a personally favoured activity. I have attempted to argue that legitimate (non-destructive / non-intrusive) recreational pursuits are well provided for by the provision of Regional Parks.

As a former ecologist I applaud the use of Ecological Vegetation Classes as the basis for assessing the adequacy of representation of plant communities (and as a surrogate, also for the conservation of

fauna) on a State-wide basis. The process has led to the establishment of the well-founded boundaries to the various land use categories. However, given the nature of both international and Australian agreements relating to the conservation of flora and fauna, to which the State of Victoria is a party, it is difficult to visualise how VEAC could have proceeded in any other way. While the methodology has determined the best overall result for the conservation of flora and fauna generally, it is especially pleasing to anticipate that the future survival of 'iconic' vertebrate species, notably the Powerful Owl, Greater Glider and Brush-tailed Phascogale, for which the Wombat-Macedon area is a stronghold, will be very significantly enhanced. A key component of this for all three of these species will be that over coming decades the numbers of aged trees and thus the availability of nest hollows will steadily increase. Enacting the recommendations of the report also provides the best opportunity to protect the rare and threatened plant species and the 400 recorded species of fungi of the area, to ensure the success of the many species of birds that migrate to the area to breed and to preserve water quality in the several rivers that arise there.

In conclusion I offer my whole-hearted support for the creation of the Wombat-Lerderderg National Park and of the associated Conservation and Regional Parks, as proposed. This will, I believe, ensure the protection of the biological values and attributes of the area for both the physical and spiritual wellbeing of members of the current and future generations of Victorians, while also allowing ample opportunity for non-destructive and non-invasive forest-based recreational activities.