



Our Ref: CSC-VEAC response

5/379 Collins Street
Melbourne 3000 Australia
P: 03 8631 5888
Freecall: 1800 99 99 33
(Australia only)
E: trustfornature@tfn.org.au
www.trustfornature.org.au
ABN 60 292 993 543

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Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6, 8 Nicholson St
East Melbourne 3002
Victoria Australia

Attention: Ms Joan Phillips

Dear VEAC

***Trust for Nature's submission to VEAC's Public Land Investigation: Statewide
Assessment of Public Land***

Trust for Nature welcomes the opportunity to provide a brief submission focusing upon that part of the Terms of Reference relating to options for consolidating Victoria's existing public land categories.

While Trust for Nature's core business relates to native species conservation on private land, we nevertheless recognise a mutual interest in using appropriate categories of protection to assist with management effectiveness. When deciding whether or not to enter into a conservation covenant agreement with a landowner to protect an area of private land in perpetuity, the Trust considers whether such a covenant would meet its statutory objectives and in so doing makes reference to the IUCN protected area criteria and the criteria for inclusion in Australia's National Reserve System (NRS) with its goal of systematically developing a comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) NRS. In this way, the intent of the Trust is to link meeting its statutory objectives with national and international science-based frameworks, monitoring and reporting mechanisms (now including environmental accounting). Both the IUCN and NRS also have management guidelines for each of the categories of protection that we use post establishing protection of the land.

At the same time we recognise that the Trust's statutory objectives embrace wider public purposes for protection such as places of historic significance and cultural interest.

We note that the National Reserve System's Conservation Assessment Criteria and the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) system of categorisation have been endorsed by all levels of government as effective tools for conservation under *Australia's Strategy for the National Reserve System 2009 – 2030*. The robustness of the NRS strategy and its use of IUCN criteria was analysed by the CSIRO in its investigation of *The Implications of Climate Change For Biodiversity Conservation And the National Reserve System*, September 2012. One of the key findings of this seminal and detailed research was:

"The National Reserve System is such a robust strategy [for] maintaining representativeness even in the face of climate change, but management of protected areas and landscapes will need to be adapted and revised over time."
[p 7 Final Synthesis]

Against this background Trust for Nature submits that it would be timely and appropriate for VEAC's investigation of public land categorisation and effective management, to utilise the assessment criteria and management guidelines provided by the NRS/IUCN frameworks. This system of assessment and categorisation was used by the Trust to develop its private land focused Statewide Conservation Plan (2013). Analysis work for the SCP utilised the CAR system to identify a gap of between 1.5 and 2.2 million hectares of under-represented vegetation (Taylor et al 2014; TfN 2013) and bioregional gaps in terms of comprehensiveness and representativeness (TfN 2013). While acknowledging that challenges exist to expanding the public land estate under management for conservation, we submit that nevertheless real advantages could flow from ensuring clarity about the extent to which existing protected public land meets Victoria's commitments toward meeting current and future needs for ecosystem services as well as national and international obligations. That is, use of the NRS/IUCN categories will strengthen Victorian Government capacity to coordinate protection and management efforts across both public and private land as well as guide future investment priorities, including assistance with the establishment of future Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA's).

In summary, we submit the framework for the review should be based on the IUCN protected area criteria, the Convention on Biological Diversities biodiversity goals and Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy actions.

The review could also usefully consider:

- 'soft' categories such as management zones within State Forests to assess if some of the Special Management Zones (SMZs) and Special Protection Zones (SPZs) should in fact be included into the Protected Area Network;
- new categories for instream freshwater conservation reserves to parallel what has been achieved in terms of marine protected areas.

Please don't hesitate to be in touch if follow-up discussion would be of assistance by contacting my office: Wendy Fernandes, Executive Assistant: 8631 5802

Yours sincerely



Victoria Marles

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