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Statewide assessment of public land – Discussion Paper and Draft Proposals Paper

The Minerals Council of Australia Victorian Division (MCA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Discussion Paper and Draft Proposals Paper relating to the Statewide assessment of public land (the assessment). This follows participation in the Community Reference Group (CRG) established to support the assessment process.

Discussion Paper

The discussion paper considers earth resources production in Victoria as part of its requirement to provide ‘an inventory of the types of values on public land’. To do so, it cites key minerals production from the period 2014-15 including total production, production value and derived state revenue.

Unfortunately the release of data relating to the earth resources industry in Victoria is haphazard and falls well behind practices in other states and the Northern Territory.¹ The absence of current and relevant data, including for activity that occurs on Crown Land, hinders informed discussions about the contribution and footprint of the minerals industry.

While outside of the terms of reference, the minerals industry urges VEAC to emphasise the importance of regular release of such data in its final report to the Victorian Government.

Draft Proposals Paper

Comment on recommendations relating to the minerals industry is provided below.

Recommendation	MCA comment
<p>Recommendations 1 and 2 The revised and consolidated system of primary public land use categories and overlays in table 1, which forms part of this recommendation, be adopted.</p> <p>Legislation to be amended in the short term and new legislation established within five years to reflect the recommended revised system of public land use categories, to streamline implementation of government-accepted recommendations, and to improve management effectiveness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MCA notes changes are intended to simplify categorisation rather than change land management requirements. A full review should be undertaken to prevent inadvertent changes. • The consolidated category of Resources reserve should include the current categories of earth resources and plantation only. Incorporating minerals springs may cause confusion.
<p>Recommendation 5 Standard regulations be developed for each public land category in the revised system, together with amendments to the Crown Land (Reserves) Act that provide a simplified means to revoke any existing regulations when new regulations are made.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regulation development should be undertaken in accordance with the Victorian Guide to Regulation (2014), which emphasises consultation, proportionality, efficiency and effectiveness.
<p>Recommendation 16 Crown land information systems to be consolidated, modernised and redeveloped.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-for-purpose information systems are imperative for the management and utilisation of public land. • Improvements should be prioritised to ensure efficiencies are gained in land leasing, licencing and permitting.
<p>Recommendation 19 Community-based committees of management be supported with a system of regional coordinators located in Department</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms for supporting community-based public committees should be considered in the context of proposals noted in the draft <i>Protecting Victoria’s</i>

¹ Victoria’s most recent statistical report is for the period 2013-14 – more than two years ago. The Discussions Paper is the first time 2014-15 production data has been released.

of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

Environment - Biodiversity 2036 Plan (Plan).
Duplication and misalignment is a risk without effective coordination between proposed and existing planning processes.

Priorities for further assessment and review

Subsequent to its recommendations, VEAC listed priorities for further assessment and review. The MCA urges VEAC to expand these priorities to include consideration of options to improve and contribute to public land management.

The Discussion Paper notes the continuing fragmentation and degradation of native vegetation and resourcing challenges (at local and state government levels) as challenges to effective public land management. Given these constraints, it would be prudent for the Victorian Government to consider all options to contribute to improved environmental – and social – management of public land.

These options could include the potential for native vegetation offsets on Crown Land or delivery of offsets in a way that contribute to biodiversity, cultural and community values (noted at length in the Discussion Paper). Such contributions could include funding of fencing to protect areas of high biodiversity value, support for Aboriginal Heritage initiatives or Indigenous Ranger programs or contributions to community-identified projects.

The intention is not to replace public funding for land management but to enable strategic improvements that benefit communities hosting minerals or other activities. The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 – Environmental Offsets Policy (October 2012)* is a useful starting point for consideration of these options in the Victorian context.

The MCA looks forward to continuing to contribute to the assessment process.

Kind regards

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