

# HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB



PO Box 591, Hamilton, Victoria, 3300  
hamiltonfnc@live.com.au



To:  
VEAC

6 Nov 2016

Re: **Statewide Assessment of Public Land** – a submission from HFNC in Nov. 2016

We wish to comment on several aspects of the Draft Proposals for Statewide Assessment of Public Land. We provided a submission in June 2015 and refer here again to that submission on public land use categories.

## 1. **State Parks (renamed as National Parks)**

The proposed change is supported, since it obviously reduces confusion and, as noted in our submission of 2015, provides status that areas such as Mt Napier State Park and Black Range SP deserve.

## 2. **Natural Features Reserves**

As stated in our submission of 2015, we believe this is a dreadful title and should not be used. We do not believe that a good case has been made for this terminology. We believe that the public would better understand a simple “**Nature Reserve**” title that encompasses all areas other than National Parks, Forest Parks and State Forests that have significant natural values. Clear and simple rules can then be made that covers all of those reserves (e.g. no driving off-road, camping only in designated areas, no shooting or hunting, no dogs, no dumping of rubbish, no removal of timber).

It is not clear what is proposed for the current **Flora Reserves** or **Flora & Fauna Reserves**. We believe they should be renamed as **Nature Reserves**.

**Streamside Reserves** – many of these areas are floristically very significant and they should be given a category of Nature Reserve. For example, the Fulham Streamside Reserve ought to have been given the status of Flora Reserve when the LCC first examined the area. There are some 325 native species of flora on this 860 ha reserve, including several outliers from the Mallee and it is a most significant botanical area, as outlined in our submission of 2015. Regrettably, it has not received the treatment it deserves, since the authorities appear to have regarded it as a place where people might fish or ride horses. The Wannon Four Posts Streamside Reserve is a much smaller but still significant area rich in flora.

## 3. **Community Use Reserve**

This is a strange category. It could indicate that ‘community’ is not encouraged or allowed in other categories of reserves. Why not use the term **Recreation Reserve**? ‘Recreation’ encompasses a wide range of activities.

We consider that the proposal to put all Highway Parks into this category could be most damaging. An example is the 65 ha Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve, where a small (1 ha) camping area at the old oval was officially gazetted as a Highway Reserve in about 1998. This reserve has almost 200 species of native flora, part of the Dundas Tableland land system, and the major source of native biodiversity in that area. The entire reserve should be regarded as a Nature Reserve. That would not in any way indicate that the community could not ‘use’ it.

Wetlands - there is a lack of clarity with respect to the proposed future category for swamps and lakes. There appears to be a down-grading of the ecological importance of these reserves. Why put them all in 'Community Use Reserve'? Duck hunting should NOT be permitted on many of the lakes and swamps where hunting is currently permitted. There is an overlap between the open season for ducks and the feeding season for migratory waders before they all depart – the disturbance to those species has not been considered when decisions are made to allow shooting on certain critical wetlands.

The existing categories for wetlands is rather confusing. We have Game Reserves, Wildlife Reserves, Lake Reserve and other designations. Some (e.g. Lake Linlithgow and Lake Bullrush) had Sanctuary status prior to the revision of the Fisheries & Wildlife Act in 1975, when that status was apparently inadvertently lost and has not been reinstated. That situation needs to be rectified.

All wetlands appear capable of being shot over. We would like to see no hunting on existing **Lake Reserves** – and all wetlands that are Brolga flocking sites and significant migratory bird feeding sites should be declared Nature Reserves where hunting is off-limits. There are a multitude of wetlands where hunting is permitted and there is good reason why the very few wetlands that are vitally important as sanctuaries should be protected.

#### **4. Recreation Parks**

Forest Park—we do not see the relevance of this old category, since there is very little recreation done in these parks that cannot be done in National Parks. Activities such as horse-riding and motoring is supposed to be kept to recognized tracks. We recommend transferring all of the land of the Forest Parks to adjacent National Parks (where that proximity occurs) or be named as Nature Reserves. A good example is the Forest Park adjacent to the Cobboboonee NP. That category was assigned to placate a group of horse riders and trail bike riders but there appears to be little difference in permitted activities in either park. If off-road activities are requested for recreation then that should only be permitted in some areas of State Forest, not in Forest Parks.

Regional parks – we do not see the relevance of this old category. If the vegetation or fauna is not sufficiently significant to demand the status of National Park then it should be renamed as a Nature Reserve. The Crawford River Regional Park is a good example of a bushland-river forest area that has significant floristic and faunal values. The same standards should apply to Crown lands whatever the category.

Finally, we recommend that the adequacy of existing categories of reserves be examined before any re-naming is done. Clearly, some of the current reserves should have had a more appropriate classification.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rod Bird  
Secretary HFNC