

### **Draft recommendations R I through R I0:**

Within days of assuming the presidency of Moonee Ponds Creek Co-ordination Committee, I was fortunate to be invited to join a small tour of the Galada Tamboore grasslands run by our neighbours on the Merri Creek, a tour which was also joined by a couple of botanists who added a layer of detail re the likes of micro-climate variation in species distribution around stony rises. Seven years on, I know a lot more of the reasons that colouring Victorian Volcanic Plains Grasslands a uniform yellow on maps should be a criminal offence.

So it is disappointing to see the Draft Proposals Paper dominated by a modest attempt to smudge categories even further. Yes, there is a problem, particularly in public perceptions, in understanding what detailed land use categories mean. And yes, a case can be made for the proposed changes in isolation. But should this really be the focus of the first half of the recommendations? Extending that kind of approach to my beloved east Otway coast so recently disrupted by fire and landslide where local detail is imperative seems far from a priority.



*Left: Fishermen's track at View Point after Wye River fire*

*Right: Well protected pocket of Victorian Volcanic Plains grasslands*

Short of suggesting all the work that has gone into the proposed new categories be cast aside, it should be simple enough to add a capability for adding another level below, or maybe a swathe of additional overlays, so that the level of protection given of remnant Volcanic Plains Grasslands within parks and reserves reflects their being much more precarious than similar sized fragments of forest or "desert". But even the admitted dominance of trees hides urgently needed enhanced protection of the ecological roles of large old trees forming hollows. More generally, it is time ecological values were considered to be at least on a par with amenity values.

### **Draft recommendations R I I through R I5:**

As a long time diver along the east Otway pocket of what are suddenly being recognised more widely as the riches of Australia's great temperate reef system, I also note that the marine classification is sadly underdone and recommend it be listed as an area for ongoing development and monitoring with at least as high priority as the three identified land clusters.

*Overleaf left: Life on Australia's great temperate reef, east Otway coast*

*Right: Fence between VicRoads-sponsored wallaby biolink planting & retarding basin*



There is increasing evidence that the "scientific consensus" on sea level rise has been low-balled in accordance with a politically precautionary principle rather than the physical precautionary principle that should be in play. While the timing of positive feedback fully kicking in is uncertain, assuming the currently mandated change allowance for the rest of this century is fraught. The proposed inventory of riparian land would ideally include all flood plains and must as a minimum include those estuarine flood plains which will be inundated by rising seas, with measures developed to convert all such land to public land well ahead of any question of compensation to private landholders.

A great frustration for the Moonee Ponds Creek community trying to deal with the City of Melbourne with respect to matters of detail is the highly fragmented nominal ownership of public land in the Creek corridor within City of Melbourne boundaries. Often governments demand communities speak with one voice but in this area it would not be unreasonable for the community to demand the agencies speak with one voice. A simpler example is provided by the chain wire fence separating VicRoads and Melbourne Water land at the north end of Gowanbrae above the Jacana Retarding Basin wall which precludes public movement across what could be a regionally significant open space in an oft overlooked far corner of the City of Moreland.

**Draft recommendations R16 through R18:**

There are no significant technical obstacles to making spatial information available to the interested public with at worst a registration process to obscure potential vulnerabilities of key infrastructure. Aside from layer selection interfaces which seem to have professional users in mind, much of the work is already done, although it would also be good to incentivise the integration of archival map layers as they can help guide restoration of what should be there, especially hydrological systems. Beyond that, public uptake would be facilitated by close attachment to a conversational platform within the comfort zone of Facebook users.

**Draft recommendation R19:**

There is direct conflict between the method suggested here for supporting local committees of management and the aggregation proposed by the Marine and Coastal policy process. Both correctly identify that there is a problem, but neither has a sensible solution. The core issue is that the Associations Incorporation model has always been a poor fit for such local groups. While its direct overheads have been reigned in a little, nothing has been done to redress the disproportionate demands bankers, insurers, OH&S and food safety regimes have dumped on these groups. Now with groups being created online, last century's approach needs to be superseded by a form of recognition and protection that does not treat volunteers as needing to adhere to the same level of regulatory demands placed with more justification on for profit businesses.