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17 October 2016

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6, 8 Nicholson Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission – State-wide Assessment of Public Land

Macedon Ranges Shire Council welcomes the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's state-wide assessment of public land and supports the stated focus, being to assist effective management whilst retaining the current levels of protection underpinning Victoria's public land system.

Macedon Ranges Shire has substantial areas of Crown land within its boundary, and as such we have a direct involvement and interest in the management and usage of much of that land, be it as a consequence of the vesting of reserved land to Council, or its appointment as a Committee of Management for the various Crown reserves. Our experience in this field over many years has lead us to the conclusion that, providing the recommendations are implemented they will improve the management of public land.

At the very least, Council would like to see the following outcomes:

- Simplify the classifications across the many different land categories.
- Provide guidance around effective management models for public land that enable and facilitate local destination input and determination and maximise management synergies.
- Resolve the lack of specific regulations for Crown land reserves.
- Provide clarity of roles for land managers as they relate to the Department of Environment Land, Water and Planning in its policy and strategy role and as an operational land manager.
- Identify the gaps in values on public land to ensure adequate representation across the suite of public land.

In many respects we would prefer not to have the responsibility for managing Crown land reserves under the current system, as we receive no financial benefit from them and are obliged to maintain them at a substantial cost. In many instances these costs are beyond our capacity to pay yet it is almost impossible to gain financial support from the Government to maintain the Government's asset.

As the Committee of Management Council is responsible for maintenance and public safety in the reserves but does not have the resources to carry out the necessary remediation works. Situations such as this lead us to conclude that unless realistic support from the Government for local councils and other Committees of Management is forthcoming, we will be forced to resign from our roles rather than continue to accept the responsibilities, liabilities and potential financial and legal exposure associated with these appointments.

Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact Debbie Pallot, Property Officer on 5421 1464.

Yours sincerely

Peter Johnston
Chief Executive Officer