

## **SUBMISSION**

**on**

### ***VEAC'S STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LAND USE***

#### **DRAFT PROPOSALS PAPER for PUBLIC COMMENT**

Dear VEAC Draft Proposals Team,

I commend your input and extent of detail pertaining to the past and present situation regarding the use of public land throughout Victoria in your Statewide Assessment of Public Land Draft Proposals Paper, 2016.

It is indeed timely for a revision of core issues relating to conserving environmental, social and economic values within the functions of Public Land.

I have in my personal library access to much of what has been described in the Discussion Paper, Draft Proposals Paper, including a copy of author Danielle Clode's *As if For a Thousand Years*, which details and reiterates much of the LUAC, LCC, ECC to the VEAC evolution.

My comments, therefore, to avoid repetition are brief, but I believe are urgently relevant to examining the stated issues in consideration of not only the rapidly advancing climate changes, but the singular changing social perspectives dealing with the disconnection between technology and the environment, and economic-political demands associated with increasing population pressures requiring more land, for various development purposes-

- Firstly, regarding climate change ramifications:
- 
- Even if an immediate decrease in carbon dioxide, methane and other damaging emissions could be achieved this instant, the damage already being done in a lagging period may continue for decades before a worst scenario climaxes.
- 
- In tandem with these green-house gases increasing in both the atmosphere and oceans, although extremely small, is the continued reduction in atmospheric oxygen levels recorded in the past decade by base weather stations globally. The continuing destruction and pollution of oxygen providers (e.g; forests, oceanic phytoplankton) for maintaining life and industrial processes should be of concern as it is an almost

certainty that a lag period will be involved, again, taking perhaps several decades to emerge as a serious threat. But this is not yet regarded as a concern. It should be.

- 
- Victoria – and other Australian states and territories need to have an inventory of all updated flora, fauna, soils (chemical, physical, structure) micro-organisms ecosystems and their array of habitats including wetlands and their hydrology, and geomorphological features, not only of Public Lands, but private land assessments as well.

The fragmentation of habitats and ecosystems through private land-use may now need to be taken into account. Climate change strongly signals that natural corridors habitats are a necessary measure to allow all native life-forms to evolve and adapt through moving to more secure tenures of public land reserves or parks. Private landholders may no longer enjoy the option of electing to have sections of land set aside for wildlife. Where there is remnant vegetation that has habitat status on private land, then it may have to be considered to assist landholders to engage in corridor or 'stepping stone' reserves on or through their property if there is to achieve corridors as has been envisaged in Habitat141 and the federal National Corridors Act.

The recent moves at both federal and state levels to using parcels of land for Offsets is not an answer to 'salvaging' some aspects of biodiversity, but in reality is a means to allow development projects, regardless of protective regulations or proposed use, as simply a convenient measure to subsume, yet again, the environment to economic priorities. In other words, the awareness of the ecological factors involved in 'stacking' biological entities into ever-smaller, disconnected parcels is being made without knowledge of the invariable ecological problems created, or factoring in consideration of the impact of climate changes as an added stressor, in conjunction with expanding population pressures. The corporatisation of conservation through environmental policies and legislation is also of concern

Education is the key to understanding how our ecosystems function, covering from atmospheric responses to climate changes, to oceanic changes and land function changes – and understanding the environmental and social consequences involved. Communities in particular need to have volunteer groups supported by adequate funding to increase capacity building in knowledge awareness of their regional risks to biodiversity values that may adversely impact on high quality of life expectations intra-and inter-generationally. Ecological literacy is essential.

The timely recent moves by the present Victorian government toward preparing for such changes whilst lessening adverse impacts is a good start, but it is distressing to hear some of our present federal leaders more intent on pushing profits before people or dismissing the underpinning environment, rather than grasp the enormity of the task of preparing for the impacts of climate change. Nor are some willing to acknowledge there is even a problem.

It seems to me that a new kind of ethic needs to be drafted – and tabled. The capacity of the environment, including the cultivated as well as the natural environment, must be assessed so as to drive understanding of the dynamics that support all life-support systems. Greater emphasis on promoting ESD principles, the realisation for the need to conserve biodiversity as not just a merely altruistic or virtual notion but an urgent reality, should be at the top of the VEAC agenda, loud, clear and sustained.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute my small contribution to the Drafts Proposals Paper.

Yours faithfully,

Leila Huebner OAM

1<sup>st</sup> October 2016