

## The Victorian Seekers Club Inc.

### SUBMISSION FOR VEAC CENTRAL WEST INVESTIGATION

The Victorian Seekers Club (VSC) welcomes the opportunity to present its views and comments on the above investigation.

The VSC was formed in 1980 to bring together people interested in recreation prospecting for gold with metal detectors and camping in the bush for a healthy and socially beneficial lifestyle.

We currently have about 200 members aged 40-85 yo, mostly retired, who follow our club rules on bush ethics and environmental protection. The VSC recognize the need to 'tread lightly' and avoid any damage to the natural and cultural environment, consequently our club adopted the motto: 'Seek, But Don't Destroy'. We live by this principle, obeying all camping and fire regulations and taking home our rubbish. We also dispose of our toilet waste responsibly.

The VSC has regular monthly camping trips to the golden triangle in groups of 20-60 members, mostly into state forests with permits from the relevant authorities, for periods of 4-7 days.

The reason for prospecting by most members is not just hopefully to strike it rich with a lucky find, but also to enjoy the richness that comes with sharing the environment and social interaction with like-minded friends, while maintaining a high level of fitness walking in the bush. Many members find very little gold after many years of prospecting with the club.

The VSC have regular trips into the areas of this Central West Investigation, particularly the Beaufort – Pyrenees block where we have camp sites in Beaufort, Chute, Mountain Hut, Warenmang, Landsborough, and Avoca- Homebush areas, with lesser interest in the Wombat district (except the areas to the north of Daylesford). The main concern to the VSC is that we will lose access to these areas, particularly if the status of these areas change from forests to parks which may mean that we will have restrictions placed on us for prospecting and camping, firewood availability for camp fires, designated camp sites (usually too

small and away from the diggings), or having to move out of the areas altogether which will be a loss to the local shop traders who get a lot of business from us. It would also mean that we would be more concentrated in other permitted areas causing a greater impact there.

We are one of many regulated prospecting clubs in Victoria who operate similar to us, and due to the age group represented, should be encouraged to access these areas for members to benefit from the healthy exercise and mental wellbeing, instead of vegetating at home in the city. As stated in the Parks Victoria motto 'Healthy parks healthy people'.

In conclusion, as prospectors, we hope that common sense decisions are reached based on fact, and that the status quo remains for our access to our parks.

Yours Faithfully

Eric Grummett, Vice President, The Victorian Seekers Club