



**VICTORIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
COUNCIL**

ANNUAL REPORT
16/17

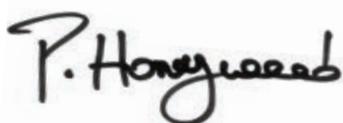


www.veac.vic.gov.au

Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Parliament House
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14(1) of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is pleased to submit to you its sixteenth Annual Report, covering our activities for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.



Phil Honeywood
Chairperson
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
30 June 2017

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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to provide this annual report for the year ended 30 June 2017 to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP.

This year was a very busy one for the Council with the completion of four significant investigations and assessments, including the publication of seven reports during the year, and the commencement in March 2017 of a major land use investigation in central west Victoria.

The year began with submission of VEAC's final report on the Historic Places Investigation to the Minister in August 2016. The Government's response to the investigation was tabled in June 2017, with 10 of the 11 recommendations accepted fully, in principle or in part.

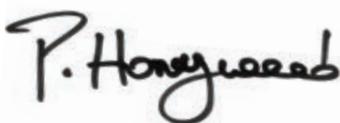
Work continued during the year on the Statewide Assessment of Public Land with the joint release of the discussion paper and the draft proposals paper in August 2016 for an extended period of public consultation. The Council considered all the submissions and inputs from the wide range of consultation throughout the investigation in developing its final recommendations. The recommendations were also intended to address some of the pressures and challenges facing public land into the future. The investigation was completed with a final report submitted to the Minister in May 2017. Additional information was also provided in a supplement to the discussion paper to ensure that the inventory of the types of values on public land is comprehensive. The Council has welcomed the opportunity to conduct this major assessment of public land in Victoria.

A number of important amendments were made to the VEAC Act during the year. The amendments to the Act allow the Minister to request VEAC to provide advice or conduct assessments in addition to conducting investigations. Two assessments were requested and completed during the year under the new legislative provisions : the Conservation Values of State Forests Assessment, conducted from September 2016 to February 2017 and the Fibre and Wood Supply Assessment, conducted from November 2016 to April 2017. While the assessments were challenging to complete in the available timeframes, the Council is confident that they are a useful contribution to the information base for government in its consideration and decision making about native forests in eastern Victoria.

The year also saw the tabling of the Government's response to VEAC's 2014 Marine Investigation.

This year marked the sixth year of the Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships. In 2017, scholarships were awarded to five recipients. More than 30 scholarships have now been awarded since they were established in 2011 to assist Honours, Masters and Ph.D students with some of the costs of research on public land.

The Council again acknowledges the support it receives from its community reference groups, and from state government departments and agencies, local government, community organisations and interested members of the public. Council members extend their sincere appreciation to the dedicated team of professionals, ably led by Joan Phillips, in the VEAC secretariat. Thanks also to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning which provides the administrative support for Council to carry out its work.



Phil Honeywood
Chairperson

VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL

OUR PURPOSE

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council was established under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* (the VEAC Act) to provide independent and strategic advice to the Victorian Government on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of Victoria's public land (refer to Sections 4 and 6 of the VEAC Act).

OUR VALUES

Our organisational values reflect our attitude to the public land estate, the community and the environment. The Council:

- seeks to understand and meet community needs from public land
- is committed to excellence and continuous improvement
- values ethical, accountable, transparent and responsible behaviour
- encourages public consultation and input into VEAC's investigative processes.

OUR FUNCTIONS

The Council:

- carries out investigations and assessments and provides advice as requested by the Minister on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land
- carries out any other functions that are conferred on the Council by the VEAC Act or any other Act (refer to Section 6 of the VEAC Act).

In carrying out investigations and making recommendations the Council is required to have regard to:

- the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- the need to conserve and protect biological diversity
- the need to conserve and protect any areas which have ecological, natural, landscape or cultural interest or significance, recreational value or geological or geomorphological significance
- the need to provide for the creation and preservation of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of parks and reserves within the State of Victoria.
- the existence of any international treaty ratified by the Commonwealth of Australia which is relevant to the investigation
- any agreement at a national, inter-state or local government level into which the Government of Victoria has entered, or under which the Government of Victoria has undertaken any obligation in conjunction with the Commonwealth, a state, territory or municipal council, which relates to the subject matter of the investigation
- the potential environmental, social and economic consequences of implementing the proposed recommendations
- any existing or proposed use of the environment or natural resources.

Powers held by the Council include the ability to appoint committees and, with the consent of the relevant Minister, make use of the services of any person employed in the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (refer to Section 7 of the VEAC Act).

A website containing general information about the Council's role, operation and current and past investigations is available at www.veac.vic.gov.au. The site also contains links to past investigations and studies conducted by the Environment Conservation Council (ECC) and the Land Conservation Council (LCC).

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP



(L-R) Hon. Phil Honeywood, Ms Joanne Duncan, Ms Anna Kilborn, Dr Charles Meredith, Dr Geoffrey Wescott.

Members of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council are appointed under the provisions of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. Members for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 were Hon. Phil Honeywood (Chairperson), Ms Joanne Duncan, Ms Anna Kilborn, Dr Charles Meredith and Dr Geoffrey Wescott. Mr Honeywood was appointed for a term of two years commencing 7 July 2015, concluding on 6 July 2017. The remaining members were appointed for three years from the same date.

HON. PHIL HONEYWOOD (CHAIRPERSON)

Phil Honeywood was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of Warrandyte in 1988 at 28 years of age. Over the 18 year period that he represented Warrandyte he became a strong advocate for this environmentally sensitive area with its important urban fringe State Park and significant Green Wedge areas. With the election of the Coalition State Government in 1992, Mr Honeywood became Chairman of the Melbourne Parks and Waterways Advisory Council and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. From 1996 to 1999 he was Minister for Tertiary Education and Training and Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs. From 1999 to 2002 Mr Honeywood was Shadow Minister for Education and from 2002 to 2006 Deputy Leader of the State Opposition during which time he also served for several years as Shadow Minister for the Environment.

Since retiring from politics in 2006, Mr Honeywood has worked in senior management positions in the international education industry. He is currently Chief Executive Officer of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) a peak industry body. Community involvement includes Chairman of Victech (370 Degrees) a not for profit Group Training Company and being a volunteer adviser to the Bennelong Foundation.

MS JOANNE DUNCAN

Joanne Duncan was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of Gisborne in 1999 (later transferring to Macedon in 2002) which she represented until her retirement from politics in 2014.

During her time in Parliament, Joanne was a member of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee (1999 to November 2010 and May 2011 to November 2014).

Joanne Duncan recently chaired the stakeholder reference group for the review of the native vegetation permitted clearing regulations.

MS ANNA KILBORN

Anna Kilborn is an environmental planner and consultant, with extensive experience across Australia in natural resource management, regional infrastructure projects, strategic planning and policy development. She has previously served on the Regional Development Australia's Gippsland Committee and Planning Panels Victoria, and is currently a non-executive director and deputy chair on the board of South Gippsland Water Corporation. Anna lives in regional Victoria and is committed to integrated planning and community involvement in planning and decision-making.

DR CHARLES MEREDITH

Charles Meredith is an ecologist and consultant with extensive experience in natural systems and conservation planning. After an early career in wildlife research, Dr Meredith founded the ecological and heritage consulting firm Biosis Research P/L and was CEO there from 1984 until he retired in 2011. During that time, he worked on environmental impact assessments of many major projects, prepared a broad range of natural area management plans, and provided strategic and policy advice on environmental matters to a diverse array of organisations, both public and private. Dr Meredith has regularly served on committees and advisory boards for NGOs, professional bodies and government. He is an Inaugural Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia.

DR GEOFFREY WESCOTT

Geoff Wescott is Associate Professor of Environment in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at Deakin University's Melbourne (Burwood) campus. He is a past Chair of the Marine and Coastal Community Network and the Victorian National Parks Advisory Council and has served on many government bodies including the board of Parks Victoria, the Victorian Coastal Council and the federal government's National Oceans Advisory Group. He is currently a Director of Zoos Victoria and recently chaired the Expert Panel aiding the preparation of a new Marine and Coastal Act.

Geoff has authored/edited five books and has published over 170 papers, chapters and articles and is a Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, was the responsible Minister for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The Council met formally eleven times during the 2016-2017 financial year.

Council members also attended community forums, Community Reference Group meetings, information sessions, field inspections and briefings in relation to the Historic Places, Statewide Assessment of Public Land and Central West investigations and the Conservation Values of State Forests and Fibre and Wood Supply assessments.

Council members' attendance at Council meetings from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017

NAME	ATTENDANCE (number of meetings)
Phil Honeywood	10 of 11
Joanne Duncan	9 of 11
Anna Kilborn	11 of 11
Charles Meredith	9 of 11
Geoffrey Wescott	11 of 11

ADMINISTRATION

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council office is located on level 6, 8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne, 3002.

Telephone	(03) 9637 9902
Fax	(03) 9637 8024
Toll Free Number	1800 134 803 (from landlines)
Email	veac@delwp.vic.gov.au
Website	www.veac.vic.gov.au
Executive Officer	Ms Joan Phillips

The Executive Officer is responsible for managing the office and staff.

AMENDMENTS TO THE VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL ACT

A number of amendments to the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* were passed during the year. The National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016 was debated in the Legislative Council on 16 August 2016, received royal assent on 23 August 2016 and commenced on 7 September 2016.

These amendments establish a second process by which VEAC is able to provide advice and assessments, in addition to being able to carry out investigations. The amended Act allows VEAC to provide advice or carry out assessments on matters that, because of their limited scale or scope or their technical nature, might not require an investigation under the provisions of the Act.

Two assessments were requested and completed during 2016-17 under the amended provisions (see pages 14–17).

INVESTIGATIONS

INVESTIGATION INTO HISTORIC PLACES

In March 2014, the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to conduct an investigation into historic places on public land across Victoria. The investigation considered the current arrangements for the management of information, the management of places and opportunities to improve the current arrangements. In addition, the terms of reference specified a particular focus on historic places that were difficult to manage.

Early 2016-2017 saw the conclusion of the Investigation into Historic Places with the Final Report being submitted to the Minister on 31 August 2016. The report was publicly released on 7 September 2016.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation met for a final time in September 2016. The membership of the Community Reference Group can be found on page 20.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Investigation into Historic Places for the 2016-17 financial year was \$181,356.

The government response to the Investigation into Historic Places was tabled in Parliament on 7 June 2017.

The terms of reference for the Investigation into Historic Places are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This notice is made pursuant to section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (the Council) to carry out a statewide investigation into historic places¹ on public land in Victoria.

The purpose of the Historic Places Investigation is to:

- a) review current information and information sources on historic places on public land, including the representation of historical themes;
- b) examine and provide an assessment of current information, management arrangements for historic places in Victoria and any issues and opportunities related to their future protection, use and sustainability; and
- c) make recommendations for opportunities to improve management arrangements to conserve, protect and enhance the historic, community and educational values of these places, including the potential for sustainable use and adaptive re-use of historic assets.

In undertaking the investigation, the Council is requested to consider how best to manage and conserve the wide diversity of historic places on public land in the context of available resources, pressures on heritage places and emerging trends in heritage conservation. In particular, the investigation should focus on options for managing historic places that are currently difficult to manage.

In addition to the considerations in section 18 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must take into account the following matters:

- i. relevant State Government legislation, policies and strategies, Ministerial statements and reports by the Victorian Auditor-General;
- ii. agency databases for historic places assets;
- iii. relevant regional programs, strategies and plans; and
- iv. relevant agreements under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

A draft proposals paper and a final report are to be prepared, allowing two public submission periods. A separate discussion paper is not to be prepared.

The Council must report on the completed investigation by 31 March 2016.*

1. For the purposes of this investigation, the term 'historic places' includes historic sites, buildings and associated objects. It does not include places associated with Aboriginal cultural heritage prior to contact with non-Aboriginal people (these are addressed by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*). It may include places relating to the post-contact period such as Aboriginal mission buildings.

* On 19 February 2016 the Minister for Environment and Climate Change granted an extension of time by which the Council must complete the investigation to 31 August 2016.

INVESTIGATIONS

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LAND

In September 2014, the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to conduct a Statewide Assessment of Public Land. On 2 April 2015 the request was amended by the then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

The amended terms of reference provided for the preparation of a discussion paper and a draft proposals paper for public comment. It also required an interim report on the first term of reference by September 2015 and a final report to be submitted to the Minister by February 2017.

The interim report was updated as required and included in the draft proposals paper, which was released concurrently with the Discussion Paper for public comment in August 2016. The extended submission period following the release of both the Discussion Paper and the Draft Proposals Paper closed in November 2016 and 64 submissions were received.

On 16 January 2017 the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change granted a five month extension of the date by which the Council was required to complete the investigation to 1 May 2017. The Final Report was submitted to the Minister on 1 May 2017. The Final Report along with a supplement to the Discussion Paper was publicly released on 8 May 2017.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation met three times during 2016-2017. The membership of the Community Reference Group can be found on page 20.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Statewide Assessment of Public Land for the 2016-17 financial year was \$611,760.

The terms of reference for the Statewide Assessment of Public Land (as amended) are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change requests the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council to carry out an investigation into public land in Victoria.

It is more than 25 years since the Land Conservation Council's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Use* was published and it is timely to consider revisiting aspects of that assessment in order to provide updated information for public land management.

The purpose of the investigation is to carry out a statewide assessment of public land in Victoria which considers the recommendations of the council and its predecessors (as accepted by government) and the system of public land use categories established as a result. The focus of the investigation is to provide information to assist management effectiveness and is not intended to change the current levels of protection underpinning Victoria's protected area system.

In particular, the council is requested to investigate and provide:

1. an assessment of the current system of public land use categories, including identification and evaluation of approaches adopted in other jurisdictions nationally and internationally, and consideration of options for changing or consolidating the existing categories to result in a system of categories that is simple and clear and that supports effective and efficient public land management;
2. an assessment of the current reservation status of public land, including areas where land use has changed since government accepted a recommendation; and
3. an inventory of the types of values on public land.

The council is requested to provide an interim report on the first term of reference that includes options for the consolidation of the existing public land categories by April 2015. To ensure there is an opportunity for public comment, the council is requested to publish information to assist in the making of submissions on this term of reference in the notice of investigation.

The council must prepare a discussion paper. A draft proposals paper is not required.

The council must report on the completed investigation by September 2016.*

* On 16 January 2017 the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change granted an extension of the date by which the Council must complete the investigation to 1 May 2017.

INVESTIGATIONS

CENTRAL WEST INVESTIGATION

On 20 March 2017, VEAC was requested by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change to conduct a Central West Investigation. The investigation covers public land in the vicinity of the Wombat, Wellsford, Mount Cole and Pyrenees Range forests. The request to VEAC followed advertisement by the Minister of the proposed terms of reference in November 2016. A public submission period on the proposed terms of reference ran until 2 December 2016.

The purpose of the investigation is to:

- a) identify and evaluate the condition, natural and biodiversity values and cultural, social and economic values and the current uses of public land in the specified area; and
- b) make recommendations for the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural values.

A draft proposals paper and a final report are to be prepared, with the final report due by March 2019.

A business plan, including an estimate of resources required for the investigation, was submitted to the Minister in April 2017, as required under the VEAC Act, and approved in May 2017.

The Council has begun a process of engagement with relevant Traditional Owner entities and other relevant Traditional Owner groups.

The Notice of Investigation was published in statewide and regional papers at the end of June 2017 together with notification to stakeholders Crown land licence holders, and other interested individuals. Submissions in response to the Notice of Investigation will be accepted until 21 August 2017.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation was in the process of being established as at 30 June 2017. The membership of the Community Reference Group will be finalised early in 2017-2018.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Central West Investigation for the 2016-17 financial year was \$159,331.

The terms of reference for the Central West Investigation are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to carry out an investigation into public land in the vicinity of the Wombat, Wellsford, Mount Cole and Pyrenees Range Forests within the area shown on the accompanying map.

The purpose of the Central West Investigation is to:

- (a) identify and evaluate the condition, natural and biodiversity values and cultural, social and economic values and the current uses of public land in the specified area; and
- (b) make recommendations for the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural values.

In addition to the considerations in section 18 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must take into account the following matters:

- (i) relevant State Government policies and strategies, Ministerial statements and reports by the Victorian Auditor-General; and
- (ii) relevant regional programs, strategies and plans.

The Council must also consult with the relevant Traditional Owner Group Entities and any other relevant Traditional Owner groups in the specified area, particularly where the area is subject to an agreement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*. This includes the area covered by the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

A draft proposals paper and a final report are to be prepared, allowing for two public submission periods during the investigation.

The Council must report on the completed investigation within two years from the commencement date.

ASSESSMENTS

CONSERVATION VALUES OF STATE FORESTS ASSESSMENT

In September 2016, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to undertake an assessment of the conservation values of state forests in the Central Highlands, North East, Gippsland and East Gippsland regional forest agreement areas.

This assessment of the Conservation Values of State Forests was the first assessment requested under the recently amended VEAC Act (see page 7).

During November 2016 Council members and VEAC staff conducted a field inspection in the forests of the Central Highlands to familiarise themselves with issues in the area.

The report on VEAC's Conservation Values of State Forests Assessment was submitted to the Minister on 28 February 2017 and publicly released on Tuesday 7 March 2017.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Conservation Values of State Forests Assessment for the 2016-17 financial year was \$160,647.

The terms of reference for the Conservation Values of State Forests Assessment are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 26B of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to carry out an assessment of the conservation values of state forests¹ in the Central Highlands, North East, Gippsland and East Gippsland regional forest agreement areas.

The purpose of the investigation is to:

- (a) identify the biodiversity and ecological values in the specified area
- (b) identify the current and likely future threats to these values
- (c) report on public land use and management.

The Council is required to take into consideration landscape-wide biodiversity at the relevant state, regional and local levels, including biodiversity and ecological values in existing protected areas and other public land.

The Council must take into account the following matters:

- (i) relevant agreements under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*
- (ii) relevant Victorian government policies and strategies
- (iii) relevant national and international agreements, policies and strategies
- (iv) relevant regional programs, strategies and plans.

The Council is required to consult with the Forest Industry Taskforce.

In addition, as specified in section 26D of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must confer with any Department or public authority which may be affected by the provision of the assessment including VicForests, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; and the departments and public authorities must give practicable assistance to the Council in preparing the assessment.

The Council must report on the completed investigation as soon as practicable but by no later than 28 February 2017.

1. For the purposes of this assessment, state forest is defined as the areas of public land depicted as General Management Zone, Special Management Zone and Special Protection Zone in the maps accompanying the regional forest agreements as updated from time to time and expressed in the DELWP forest zoning data set (FMZ 100) as at the time of commencement of the investigation.

ASSESSMENTS

FIBRE AND WOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT

In November 2016, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change requested the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council to undertake an assessment of the viability of and capacity for, current volumes and potential fibre and wood supply areas in state forests in the Central Highlands, North East, Gippsland and East Gippsland regional forest agreement areas.

The assessment of fibre and wood supply was the second assessment requested pursuant to the new section 26B of the Act.

VEAC members and staff conducted a field trip to the assessment area in January 2017 to inspect VicForests operations.

The report on VEAC's Fibre and Wood Supply Assessment was submitted to the Minister on 3 May 2017 and publicly released on 10 May 2017.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Fibre and Wood Supply Assessment for the 2016-17 financial year was \$155,042.

The terms of reference for the Fibre and Wood Supply Assessment are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 26B of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to carry out an assessment of the viability of and capacity for, current volumes and potential fibre and wood supply areas in state forests' in the Central Highlands, North East, Gippsland and East Gippsland regional forest agreement areas.

The purpose of the investigation is to:

- (a) Identify the current, and currently projected, fibre and wood supply to industry from the specified area. The Council is required to take into consideration current contractual supply commitments;
- (b) Identify the current and likely future constraints to this supply;
- (c) Report on public land use and management; and
- (d) Report on the viability of and capacity for current and potential wood and fibre supply over appropriate time scales.

VEAC is required to consult with technical and industry experts to gather and confirm source data, and to document any relevant caveats to this data.

The Council is required to consult with the Forest Industry Taskforce, including providing the taskforce with information on progress by 28 February 2017 in line with the reporting requirements for the Conservation Values of State Forests Assessment.

The Council must take into account relevant state or federal regulation and legislation.

As specified in section 26D of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* the Council must confer with any Department or public authority which may be affected by the provision of the assessment including VicForests, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources; and the departments and public authorities must give practicable assistance to the Council in preparing an assessment.

The Council must report on the completed assessment as soon as practicable but no later than 28 April 2017.

1. For the purpose of this assessment, state forest is defined as the areas of public land depicted as General Management Zone, Special Management Zone and Special Protection Zone in the maps accompanying the regional forest agreements as updated from time to time and expressed in the DELWP forest zoning data set (FMZ 100) as at the time of commencement of the investigation.

BILL BORTHWICK STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS 2017

The Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships assist with some of the costs of research for students undertaking Honours, Masters or PhD research projects relating to public land in Victoria in the fields of natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, economics or politics. The scholarships were established in March 2011 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the first meeting of the Land Conservation Council (LCC) and to honour the vision of the Hon Bill Borthwick, a central figure in establishing the LCC to advise government on the use of Victoria's public land.

The 2017 scholarships were presented to the recipients by VEAC Chairperson, Hon Phil Honeywood and Mrs Muffie Borthwick, wife of the late Bill Borthwick, at a function at the Royal Society of Victoria on 28 April 2017. Scholarships totalling \$8,023 were awarded to five recipients.



L-R Joanne Duncan, Linda Riquelme, Phil Honeywood, Melissa Lord, Mike Weston, Arabella Eyre, Zoi Banikos, Muffie Borthwick, Carol Richardson and Charles Meredith

The recipients for the 2017 scholarships are:

Ms Zoi Banikos, University of Melbourne

'Responses of critical weight range mammals to fox control'

Zoi's research for her Master of Science seeks to quantify the short-term responses to the Otway Ark fox baiting program of feral cats and native digging mammals – the southern brown bandicoot, long-nosed bandicoot, and long-nosed potoroo. Promoting the recovery of threatened native mammals is the key aim of the Otway Ark program. Working with the Otways Conservation Ecology Centre, Zoi will establish several survey sites in baited and non-baited sections of the Great Otway National Park. The sites will be surveyed using cage traps in 2017 to establish baseline data and resurveyed in 2018 after fox baiting.

Miss Arabella Eyre, University of Melbourne

'Searching for the critically endangered Leadbeater's possum outside its known distribution'

Arabella's Master of Science research will explore surveying outside the known range of Leadbeater's possum and identifying candidate areas for translocation. This will be achieved by developing habitat suitability models, consulting with experts and investigating areas with historical records or unverified sightings to determine where the possums are most likely to occur. Highly suitable sites will be visited and assessed, and then the most suitable sites will be surveyed using camera traps.

Ms Melissa Lord, La Trobe University

'A history of deer in Victoria'

The aim of this PhD project is to investigate the historical relationship between deer and human communities, particularly the relationship between individuals and groups who seek either to preserve Victoria's deer populations or to eradicate them. Melissa is seeking to analyse how attitudes to wild deer have manifested in private and public records. This will be done by consulting print media, government files, personal interviews and scientific, hunting and conservation sources.

Miss Caitlin Orr, Deakin University

'Interactions between dogs and foxes on Victoria's public beaches'

Caitlin's Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) research will test the possibility that domestic dogs may alter the usage of beaches by foxes. If this is the case, it may be that dog presence could be manipulated as a management tool to keep foxes away from critical areas. It will also provide insights into whether domestic dogs provide bird populations with protection from fox predation by causing changes in fox behaviour. It will also test if the addition of dog urine to the vicinity of bird nests confers protection from foxes.

Ms Linda Riquelme, University of Melbourne

'Estimating biomass for the management of total grazing pressure in the endangered Buloke woodlands of Wyperfeld National Park'

Linda's research for her PhD aims to determine the extent to which the widespread failure of Buloke woodlands to regenerate is the result of grazing by kangaroos. Linda will integrate remote sensing with field and climatic data to develop a biomass estimation model for grassy and herbaceous understorey in Wyperfeld National Park. The model will aid decision making in the management of total grazing pressure in the Buloke woodlands of the park. Linda's field work will involve the analysis of biomass and species composition of vegetation samples.

COMMITTEES

VEAC is required to establish a Community Reference Group to provide advice in respect of each investigation. Community Reference Groups are not required in respect of assessments or advice unless directed by the Minister. The Council may also appoint any committees that it considers necessary to assist with conduct of investigations. Membership of committees is not restricted to members of the Council.

HISTORIC PLACES INVESTIGATION COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

The Historic Places Investigation Community Reference Group met once in 2016-2017.

NAME *	ORGANISATION
Mr Robin Crocker	Chairperson
Assoc Prof Don Garden	Royal Historical Society of Victoria
Ms Judith Dwyer	Mechanics' Institute of Victoria
Mr Paul Roser	National Trust of Victoria
Ms Bonnie Chew	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Ms Melissa Crane and Ms Lisa Gervasoni	Municipal Association of Victoria
Mr Peter Hiscock	Victorian Tourism Industry Council
Ms Sue Wright	Victorian National Parks Association
Mr Peter Evans	Light Railway Research Society of Australia
Mr Ian Travers	Heritage Consultant
Mr Gary Vines	Heritage Consultant
Ms Helen Martin	Heritage Consultant

*Membership at 31 August 2016

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LAND COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

The Statewide Assessment of Public Land Community Reference Group met three times during 2016–2017.

NAME *	ORGANISATION
Mr Don Saunders	Chairperson
Mr Nick Aberle	Environment Victoria
Mr Michael Coldham	Four Wheel Drive Victoria
Ms Megan Davison	Minerals Council of Australia
Mr Alex Green	Municipal Association of Victoria
Mr Daniel Erna	Native Title Services Victoria
Mr Mark Dingle	Outdoors Victoria
Ms Jill Gallagher	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Mr Ian Cane	Victorian Apiarists' Association
Mr Tim Morrissey	Victorian Association of Forest Industries
Mr Gerald Leach	Victorian Farmers Federation
Mr Phil Ingamells	Victorian National Parks Association
Mr Barnaby McIlrath	Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association
Ms Dianne Smith	Victorian Tourism Industry Council

*Membership at 1 May 2017

CONSULTANCIES

A consultant is a particular type of contractor that is engaged primarily to perform a discrete task for an entity that facilitates decision making through:

- provision of expert analysis and advice; and/or
- development of a written report or other intellectual output.

In 2016–2017, there was two consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultant were \$10,000 or greater. The total expenditure incurred during 2016-2017 in relation to these consultancies was \$68,350 (excl. GST).

Details of individual consultancies (valued at \$10,000 or greater)

CONSULTANT	PURPOSE OF CONSULTANCY	TOTAL APPROVED PROJECT FEE (EXCL. GST)	EXPENDITURE 2016–17 (EXCL. GST)	FUTURE EXPENDITURE (EXCL. GST)
Biruu Pty Ltd	Historic places final report business feasibility consultancy	\$15,000	\$15,000	Nil
University of Melbourne	Fibre and wood supply modelling	\$53,350	\$53,350	Nil

In 2016-2017, there were two consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000.

DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

The Chairperson and all members completed Declarations of Private Interests, which were forwarded to the Minister. Executive Officer, Ms Joan Phillips, completed a declaration which has been forwarded to the Minister.

All returns are confidential.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Council's operating funds were provided as part of recurrent funds appropriated to DELWP.

The financial operations of the Council have not been separately audited. Audited statements are incorporated into the overall Financial Statements of DELWP's Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2017. The table below shows expenditure incurred.

There were no significant changes in financial position during the reporting period.

EXPENSES	2016–2017	2015–2016	2014–2015	2013–2014	2012–2013
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Salaries and oncosts	1,129,791	1,049,113	744,707	794,435	825,252
Operating	505,048	272,314	302,852	444,465	514,745
Total	1,634,839	1,321,427	1,047,559	1,238,900	1,340,027

WORKFORCE DATA

EMPLOYMENT	2017 (A)			2016 (B)		
	Male	Female	Total staff	Male	Female	Total staff
Total	2	8	10 (FTE 8.8)	3	7	10 (FTE 9.4)

Notes:

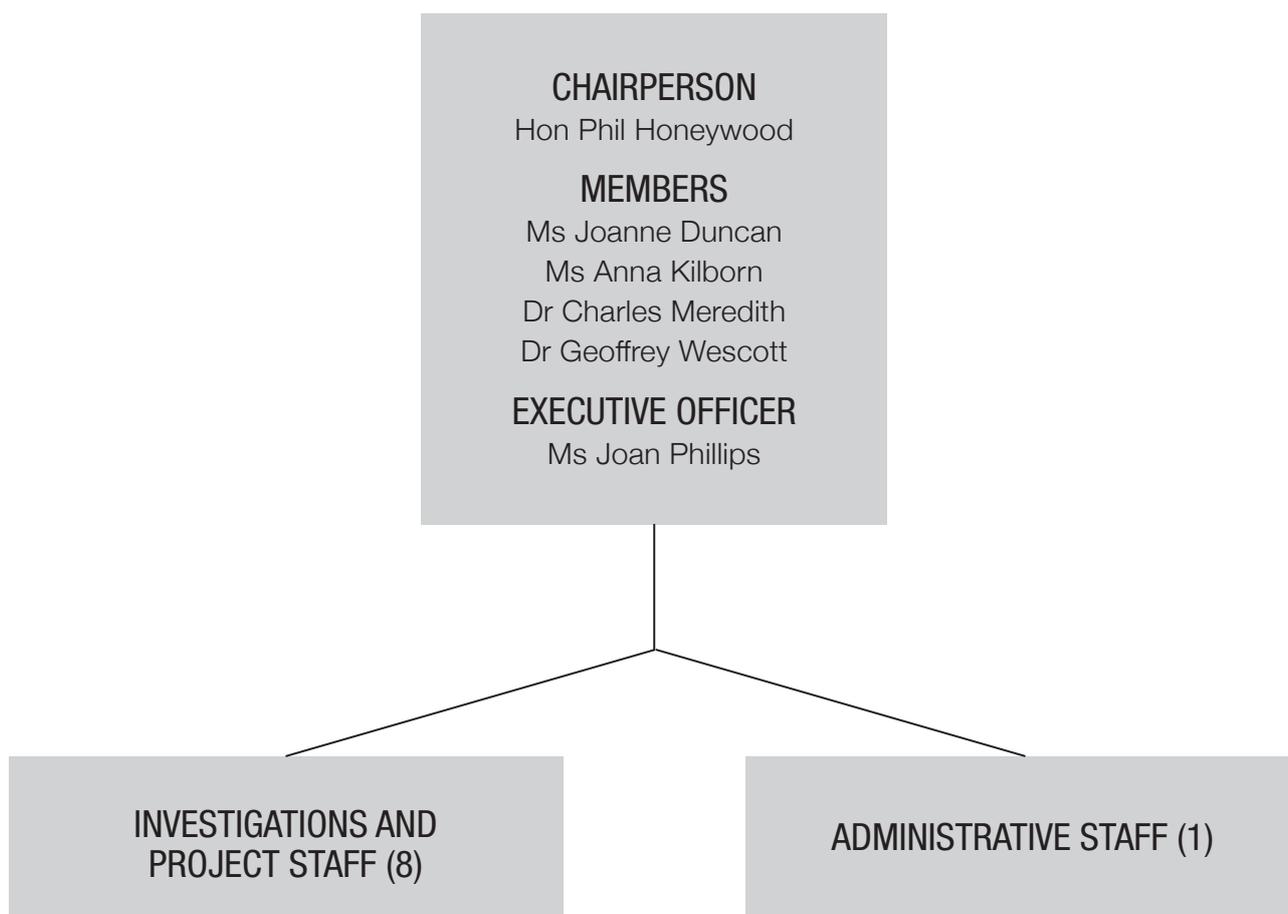
(A) relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2017

(B) relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2016

Note:

VEAC staff are also included in employment statistics for DELWP for 2016-2017.

ORGANISATION CHART



Council members as at 30 June 2017

MERIT AND EQUITY

Victorian Public Service merit and equity principles are applied in the appointment and management of staff. VEAC follows the merit and equity principles used by DELWP, in accordance with Government directives and the Public Administration Act 2004.

Three primary goals have been assumed by VEAC with regard to people management practices:

- develop and sustain organisational culture in which policies, practices and services are adapted to the needs of the community
- ensure a workplace free from policies and practices that discriminate against staff or potential staff
- ensure that staff have access to a fair, efficient grievance review process to resolve perceived breaches of merit and equity.

COMPLIANCE

The Council adheres to the principles of the National Competition Policy (NCP) to ensure that any business competition with private entities takes place in an environment where the Council has no unfair competitive advantages.

During the year the Council did not enter into any contracts to which the *Local Jobs First–Victorian Industry Participation Policy* applied.

In accordance with the reporting directions, the annual report must include a statement about compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the *Building Act 1993*. The Council makes use of buildings and facilities controlled by DELWP to perform its functions and does not own or control any buildings.

The Council utilises DELWP's Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.

There were no major changes or factors affecting performance.

The Council is committed to the requirements of the Premier's Circular 2006/1, in relation to community inclusiveness, and applies these requirements in its operations where possible.

Government policy requires disclosure of all Government Advertising Expenditure with a total media buy of \$100,000 or greater (exclusive of GST). No Government Advertising Expenditure was incurred by the Council during the reporting period.

During 2016-2017 VEAC did not enter into any contracts valued at over \$10 million.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The Government's aim of improved environmental management is supported by a requirement that Departments disclose their ongoing performance in managing and reducing the environmental impacts of their office-based activities. The Council makes use of DELWP offices and facilities to perform its functions and the reporting requirement of the office is met by DELWP. The Council secretariat participates fully in a range of environmental programs undertaken by DELWP, including:

- separation of reusable, recyclable, compostable and landfill waste;
- use of Green Power;
- use of flow restricted taps and waterless urinals;
- use of recycled paper and use of duplex printing;
- environmentally sustainable fitouts; and
- regular use by staff of public transport, cycling or walking to and from work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) EXPENDITURE

VEAC falls under the umbrella of DELWP in regard to ICT and providing business enabling ICT services. Please refer to DELWP Annual Report 2016-17.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* gives everyone the right to seek access to documents held by the Council. It is worth contacting the Council in the first instance to find out if you can access the information without making an FOI application.

FOI requests have to be made in writing and requests can be submitted to the Council by email to veac@delwp.vic.gov.au or in writing to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
8 Nicholson St
East Melbourne Vic 3002

The cost of an FOI application is \$28.40; however there may be further charges depending on the time it takes to find the documents and photocopy them and the number of pages to be photocopied. Further information is available from the website FOI Online (www.foi.vic.gov.au).

OPERATIONS

For the 12 months ending 30 June 2017, there were no valid requests. There were no requests outstanding as at 30 June 2017.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT

The *Protected Disclosures Act 2012* (PD Act) enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. The Act aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE *PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT 2012*

The PD Act was part of a package of integrity reforms introduced by the Victorian Government, which also established the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

The PD Act enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct within the public sector without fear of reprisal. It aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

WHAT IS A 'PROTECTED DISCLOSURE'?

A protected disclosure is a complaint of corrupt or improper conduct by a public officer or a public body.

VEAC is a "public body" for the purposes of the Act.

WHAT IS 'IMPROPER OR CORRUPT CONDUCT'?

Improper or corrupt conduct involves substantial:

- mismanagement of public resources; or
- risk to public health or safety or the environment; or
- corruption.

The conduct must be criminal in nature or a matter for which an officer could be dismissed.

HOW DO I MAKE A 'PROTECTED DISCLOSURE'?

You can make a protected disclosure about VEAC or its board members, officers or employees by contacting DELWP or IBAC on the contact details provided below.

Please note that VEAC is not able to receive protected disclosures.

HOW CAN I ACCESS DELWP'S PROCEDURES FOR THE PROTECTION OF PERSONS FROM DETRIMENTAL ACTION?

DELWP has established procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action in reprisal for making a protected disclosure about VEAC or its employees. You can access DELWP's procedures on its website at: www.delwp.vic.gov.au.

CONTACTS

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

Address: PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002

Ph: 1800 903 877

Website: www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Independent Broad Based Anti Corruption Commission (IBAC) Victoria

Address: Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Victoria 3001.

Mail: IBAC, GPO Box 24234, Melbourne Victoria 3000

Internet: www.ibac.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 735 135

INFORMATION PRIVACY ACT

VEAC complies with the ten information privacy principles in place that help to form the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. This includes handling the collection of personal information in a responsible manner. The coordinator of privacy issues for DELWP is:

Manager, Privacy
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
PO Box 500, East Melbourne VIC 3002
Telephone: (03) 9637 8697

RISK MANAGEMENT

While VEAC examines the risk of delivery of its particular work functions and objectives on an ongoing basis, it relies on DELWP's risk management framework and internal audit of financial and other administrative systems which are used by the VEAC's secretariat. Please refer to the DELWP annual report for further information.

GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY ATTESTATION

I, Joan Phillips, Executive Officer of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, certify that:

- my public entity has policies and procedures in place that are consistent with the minimum requirements and accountabilities outlined in the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy Framework issued by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner; and
- staff are informed about these gifts, benefits and hospitality policies and procedures.

COMPLIANCE WITH DATAVIC ACCESS POLICY

Consistent with the Victorian Government's DataVic Access Policy (2012), the Council intends that data tables that it may produce in the future will be available at <http://data.vic.gov.au/> in machine readable format.

DISCLOSURE INDEX

The 2016-2017 Annual Report of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation. This index has been prepared to facilitate identification of the Council's compliance with statutory disclosure requirements.

LEGISLATION	REQUIREMENT	PAGE NO
ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER'S DECLARATION		
SD 4.2(j)	Sign off requirements	2
CHARTER AND PURPOSE		
FRD 22H	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	3
FRD 22H	Manner of establishment and responsible Minister	3 & 6
FRD 22H	Nature and range of services provided	8–15
FINANCIAL INFORMATION		
FRD 22H	Operational and budgetary objectives	22
FRD 22H	Summary of the financial results	22
GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE		
FRD 22H & SD2.2(f)	Organisational structure	23
FRD 22H	Occupational health and safety policy	24
FRD 22H	Employment and conduct principles	23
FRD 29 & 22H	Workforce data disclosures	22
FRD 15E	Executive officer disclosures	0
OTHER INFORMATION		
FRD 10	Disclosure index	21
FRD 25	Victorian Industry Participation Policy disclosures	24
FRD 22H	Details of consultancies in excess of \$10 000	21
FRD 22H	Details of consultancies under \$10 000	21
FRD 22H	Disclosure of government advertising expenditure	24
FRD12A	Disclosure of major contracts	24
FRD 22H	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	25
FRD 22H	Compliance with <i>Building Act 1993</i>	24
FRD 22H	Statement on National Competition Policy	24
FRD 22H	Application and operation of <i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>	26
FRD 22H	Summary of environmental performance impact	24
FRD 22H	Statement of availability of other information	30
SD 3.7.1	Risk management	27
	Gifts, benefits and hospitality attestation	27
SD 4.2(g)	General information requirements	Entire document
MRO	Compliance with DataVic Access Policy	27

LEGISLATION		
<i>Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001</i>		0
<i>Building Act 1993</i>		0
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>		0
<i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>		0
<i>Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003</i>		0
PRINT AND DESIGN		
FRD 30	Standard requirements for the design and print of annual reports	Entire document

ACRONYMS

FRD – Financial Reporting Directions

SD – Standing Directions

MRO – Model Report of Operations

STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY OF OTHER INFORMATION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

In compliance with the requirements of the Standing Direction of the Minister for Finance, details in respect of the items listed below have been retained by the Council and are available on request, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

This information is available on request from:

Joan Phillips
Executive Officer
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Phone: 9637 9902
Email: veac@delwp.vic.gov.au

- Publications produced by the entity about itself, and how these can be obtained

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION INCLUDED IN ANNUAL REPORT

Details in respect of the following items have been included in this report:

- Major research and development activities undertaken – see Investigations and Assessments
- Major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken to develop community awareness of the Council and its services – see Investigations
- A list of major committees sponsored by the entity, the purposes of each committee and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved – see Committees

INFORMATION THAT IS NOT APPLICABLE TO THE COUNCIL

The following information is not relevant to the Council for the reasons set out below:

- Overseas travel undertaken including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit – Nil
- Details of changes in prices, fees, charges and levies charged – Nil
- Assessments and measures undertaken to improve the Occupational Health and Safety of employees #
- A general statement on IR within the entity and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes #
- Major external reviews that were carried out on the Council – Nil

See DELWP Annual Report 2016-2017.