

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC)

Re. Opposition to VEAC Central West Investigation Draft Proposals Paper 31st August 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to present to VEAC our view with respect to the area under review.

Sandhurst 4WD Club is a not-for-profit incorporated association started in 2017 focused on four-wheel-driving, camping, nature and socialising with like-minded people and families from the Greater Bendigo Region and Central Victoria.

Our club conducts trips and camping in areas impacted by the review. We believe that the multiple use management of these forests has served the four-wheel-drive community and broader public well in the past, and is a critical resource from an economic, tourism and social equity perspective. We feel the current protections in the area are effective in managing any risks to vegetation or habitat, and the enhancement of camping facilities and tracks would be welcome.

The club does not support further restrictions on access or use that would affect utilisation or access to national resources within these areas by the club and local community.

We believe there is little to be gained by reclassifying these areas as national parks or regional parks, and that it will place additional burden on an already critically under-resourced Parks Victoria, while unnecessarily restricting the public's access and use of these areas.

Key Points:

- The report does not provide a compelling case or compelling evidence for the reclassification to be needed and in the interests of local communities
- The club is concerned that the government will act on the recommendations of VEAC without due regard for impacts, wishes and needs of local communities
- Four-wheel-driving is permitted in National Parks, however track access and activities such as camping and firewood collection are heavily restricted or banned in national parks (90% of our club's trips involve camping in addition to four-wheel-driving)
- The current funding model for all national parks is inadequate, adding additional land to Parks Victoria's management will dilute resources in PV, to the detriment of all National Parks
- Many club members also participate in activities such as camping, prospecting, hunting, horse-riding that will be banned or restricted in the proposal, and members are concerned about the impacts the recommendations would have on their other interests and hobbies

Conclusion

We do not support the draft VEAC recommendations that reclassify public land as national park or otherwise restrict access to public land, and we reasonably believe that the proposal will restrict our club and the public's access and use of the area unnecessarily and impact a huge range of recreational pursuits that the club and public have built a strong family and community culture around.

Flexible management provides greater diversity in activities resulting in greater community interest, community participation and better mental and physical health outcomes for our club members and members of the community.

We believe the Central West Region is already meeting community expectations as a multipurpose recreational resource and there is no compelling case for change.

Sandhurst 4WD Club

Bendigo, Vic