



The Executive Officer,
Rural – Regional Committee
Parliament House
Melbourne 3002

The Victorian Seekers Club Inc.
P.O. Box 15,
Mt Waverley, Vic, 3149.

May 18, 2007.

We are a group of Recreational Prospectors with family having other interests – bushwalking, bird watching, flora and fauna observing, local history and photography. We, as do members of similar Clubs, hold Victorian Miners Rights of which approximately 5,000 are issued.

We align ourselves with other “Bush user groups” – fishermen, 4x4 and caravan clubs, orienteers, mountain bikers, etc., all requiring access to State, Crown Land, public parks and reserves.

(1) The economic benefits of tourism in regional areas, including tracking the flow-on benefits through other businesses and industry:

We are not in a position to measure the financial benefits of our recreational activity to local economies. We can say we regularly contribute with organised monthly outings as do many other recreational “Bush user groups” supporting hotels, motels, caravan parks and camp sites, purchasing food, provisions, fuel, market produce, cellar wine sales, not forgetting initial vehicle and caravan purchase. Plus all type of recreational equipment and clothing, much of this in regional areas, supporting local enterprise.

(2) Potential impediments to the sustained growth of regional tourism, economic activity and jobs:

As recreational land users, we rely entirely on access to State, Crown Land, public parks and reserves, We consider “Parks Victoria” have an underlying exclusionist policy which they regard as the most desirable way to protect the environment for the future: restriction of access, track closure or non clearance, special area management closures and exclusion zones.

If this policy continues the number of visitors and recreational users will dramatically decline, devastating the tourism and allied commercial enterprises.

This exclusionist policy has many other detrimental effects, it creates large areas of neglected dense bushland, encourages the expansion in number of feral animals – foxes, wild dogs and cats etc, exacerbates the damage caused when extreme heat wildfires occur, devastating forests and communities.

The original inhabitants of “our Country” understood land management. They maintained access, employed cool mosaic burns which ensured regeneration and preservation of the natural flora and fauna required to live off the land.

(3) The effectiveness, at a National, State and local level, of current programs to promote and enhance tourism in regional Victoria:

The continual promotion by Federal and State governments does generate interest and visitors from all parts of the Globe, interstate and local, as can be verified by our contacts with these visitors who are looking for our unusual and diverse offerings; Local history, flora & fauna, geological features, ecotourism, life style pampering and unique experiences.

The Department of Primary Industries provides great support with topographic and geological maps plus on-line "Geovic", and personal attention when requested. Our local tourism operators and book publishers must be commanded for their new initiatives and efforts (of note: "Travellers Guide to the Goldfields – Best Shot Publications P/L)

(4) Initiatives to increase both international and domestic visitor nights in regional Victoria:

Parks Victoria revert to a pro-visitor policy, change image from "Policing Ranger" to an all inclusive "Teacher / Guide" providing access & information to bush users in understanding, maintenance, preservation and visitor participation:

- visitor report form, hotline for noxious weed site locations and feral animal sighting
- tree / seed planting programme with specific Clubs
- wildlife , bird spotting and flora reports

backed-up by expanded, clear track network in all State or National Parks.

(5) The efficacy of existing mechanisms at a National, State and local level to address the impact on regional tourism of natural events such as bushfires, floods and drought, and effective measures to drive long term economic recovery:

Not in a position to make a meaningful contribution.

(6) Opportunities to leverage private investment and commercial activity in regional tourism infrastructure, including ecotourism:

Not in a position to make a meaningful contribution.

SUMMARY: all responsible "Bush user groups" must have a code of ethics which clearly focuses on members responsibility in the preservation for the future of our land, flora and fauna.

It is the government responsibility to provide Legislation that balances the interests of all community members in their development, economic growth, recreational health and wellbeing, whilst ensuring that the natural assets of our land are not degraded to a point where its existence is put in jeopardy.

That balance can be attained with a well managed scientific and economic plan and community support.



Francine GILBERT
President of the Victorian Seekers Club



Peter MAFFEY
Vice President