

Removal of VEAC

christa botsman [REDACTED]

Sat 10/24/2020 4:00 AM

To: epc council <epc.council@parliament.vic.gov.au>

Dear Sir/Madam,

I strongly support the removal of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council. This group has proved to be incompetent and biased, with a green agenda, completely dismissing and ignoring the wishes of many bush users. VEAC purports to be an independent body, but is appointed by the State Government, is paid by the State Government and obviously feel obliged to do the right thing by the State Government.

I am in favour of the establishment the Victorian Public Land Use Commission, a truly independent body, with firsthand knowledge of the bush.

The VPLUC would:

Be open and transparent.

Have true accountability and integrity.

Be completely independent of any ministerial portfolio.

Be completely independent of influence by VNPA and ultra -green ideology.

Be staffed with interested people from industry and the public.

Be concerned with ecological preservation alongside bush users' needs.

I envisage the VPLUC would:

Address Climate Change and what this means for our beautiful forests.

Assess Bush Fire Risk and how to prevent further catastrophic bushfires.

See that there is proper management of all public land, removal of noxious weeds, feral animals and fuel loads.

Protect waterway and wildlife corridors, while encouraging people to utilise our precious forests.

Work closely with Indigenous people who have both the knowledge and expertise to correctly manage the bush.

There were many problems with VEAC's 'lock up and leave' National Parks agenda, but one of the most important was the deliberate lack of consultation. My family and I have lived for over 30 years, with the majestic Wombat State Forest bordering our property. We understand the importance of conservation, of being environmentally aware, but also know that we can live harmoniously with the flora and fauna that surrounds us. As stakeholders, with a true interest and strong personal connection with the forest, we were never contacted by VEAC during their Central West Investigation. When VEAC finally did hold (very poorly advertised) community meetings, they found that many local people were against the VEAC recommendations. We were told by a VEAC representative from Melbourne, that we could still 'bushwalk, picnic and birdwatch' in a National Park, most other activities would be banned, severely restricted or confined to very small designated areas, and some areas would incur a charge. At present our forest, our open space, our mental health and well-being sanctuary, is freely open to many bush users, who love to recreate in our State Park, not only bush walking, bird watching and picnicking, but also horse riding, dog walking, dispersed free camping, 4 Wheel Driving, prospecting, motor and mountain bike riding and firewood collecting. Our very way of life would be severely impacted if our forest was to be locked up into a mismanaged, restrictive National Park. We, along with many other stakeholders, made submissions to VEAC, stating that we did not want The Wombat State Forest becoming yet another noxious weed, feral animal, fuel-laden National Park. 65% of submissions were against VEAC's recommendations and yet VEAC chose to completely ignore these statistics and push forward with their National Parks agenda. Their decision reeks of corruption.

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council should be immediately disbanded and a truly independent body should be established, one that is unbiased, transparent and accountable, and one that has integrity and a true knowledge of the bush, its flora, fauna and its people.

Yours sincerely,

Christa Botsman.

[REDACTED]



Virus-free. www.avast.com