

Submission re Assessment of River Red Gum Forests

Dear Sir/Mdm,

I live on the Victorian and New South Wales border, I have lived amongst the red gum forests for 49 years. The recent decision by the Victorian Labour party to turn the bulk of our red gum forests into national parks is devastating to the forests, fauna and flora and the already drought stressed communities.

Worst still the forest and the environment are not going to benefit from this change in management, quite the opposite will happen as is evident enough around Victoria from the Hattah-Kulkyne National Park in the north to the cinders of the national parks down South after the Black Saturday fires.

Please consider carefully and do not make the same mistake as Victoria, this environmental vandalism will carry forth to our future generations. The fires early and mid 2000 destroyed large national park land around the Beechworth and Warrnambool, in addition to the Black Saturday fires, large areas of baron land with seed beds totally destroyed, never to regrow are wastelands with only weeds and bracken growing.

The promised funding and programs to support and compensate the timber cutters and the communities has not materialized, people have mortgages on homes and equipment they cannot sell and no jobs to generate income in our drought stressed communities.

1. The current forest management plan is working just fine and has done for over 150 years.
2. "Biodiversity" is thriving despite the drought, the trees are alive, although some are stressed, they will survive as they have done through every other drought they and us have lived through. Red Gums are woody weeds, the next flood and they will be up in abundance.
3. It is vital to maintain the current thinning program to protect the trees and the communities. The Nyah Venifra state forest in Victoria (which has been managed under national park style regulations for many years) is a perfect example of a stressed forest ready to burn. It is impassable, the leggy, straggly trees are too numerous to grow properly, they are an overcrowded, scrubby mess.
4. The wetlands always recover once it rains, the wildlife always return, they do not die off as some believe they just move on and come back, currently due to the drought birds and animals are living and thriving in our back yards and farm paddocks.
5. Fire wood is the only form of affordable heating, many still have wood stoves and the hot water for homes goes through the stove. Already with the Gunbower State Forest in Victoria declared national park, but not decreed yet, fire wood is very scarce as the timber cutters had to cease operations at June 30. There is insufficient area left for the timber industry to allow the wood needed for the locals.
6. National Park management is a proven failure with overgrown weeds and feral animals, which overflow to pasturelands, straggly, unhealthy trees too numerous to grow properly and unserviceable tracks preventing access by the public and emergency services.

Drought is a natural occurrence here in Australia, we are the driest continent on the earth. The drought wont last forever, we will get rain, and too much as is the normal pattern of things. You cannot and you never will be able to change that fact of nature.

The VEAC study in Victoria was so full of holes it leaked like a sieve, but still the politicians of the day accepted it and have condemned our communities to high unemployment, severe drop in our house values (for anyone who has been able to sell) and devastation of a thriving industry all for quasi Native Title Claims and greenies who don't know where toilet paper comes from.

Areas of the Gunbower State Forest have been managed under Ramsar Convention rules for over 20 years, very successfully. However the Victorian Labour government does not accept this internationally recognised convention of which Australia is a signatory, preferring to accept untruths, manufactured statistics and ignoring actual facts because they do not fit with the governments agenda to appease the greens and certain political activists.

It is folly to justify the destruction of our back yard for political purposes alone? There is no need to fix something that is not broken.

Annette Hollingworth