



# Voice of the Mountains

JOURNAL OF  
THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC.

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No.29 (2006)



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Journal of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc.

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### COVER ILLUSTRATIONS

Front Cover: MCAV Secretary Tim Barker with Harry Ryder and Simon Turner laying claim to the  
Bogong High Plains. Back Cover: (background) Turner stock up the Tambo with  
Rowena shifting the mob up Nunniong (top insert) and James at Emu Plain (bottom insert).  
Also the rider on the back cover of last year's cover was Ken Stuart of Mt Taylor near Bairnsdale.

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# President's Message 2006

DOUG TREASURE

**The past year has been one of the most momentous years in not only the association's short history, but in the whole 170 year history of alpine grazing in Victoria and Australia.**

The decision of the current Victorian government to ban grazing from the Alpine National Park I believe is one of political expediency. When the area was originally proclaimed a National Park, it was to be a multi-use park to include the activities that had traditionally been practised in that area. However, as the political power has leaned more heavily to the urban areas, the urban voter has been appeased. Our political culture is changing.

Why?

Australia is one of the most urbanized nations on earth and we enjoy a very high standard of living.

We use, and demand to use, much cheap energy, which results in big holes in the ground, and a high CO2 level into the atmosphere.

While the average Australian voter cares about their environment, they still expect cheap energy for the car, the airconditioner and the annual holiday.

Then the conscience kicks in !! "We need to do something!"

"Let's kick a few cows off the high country - that'll save the environment!"

This may sound like a positive move to voters who are out of touch with realistic environmental management but cattle grazing is the only controlled grazing in public land. Removing cattle does nothing to address the problem of uncontrolled grazing by deer and pigs, or the problems of weeds, feral cats and dogs.

This suggests the debate and management is ideological rather than practical, and that the Bracks government move to evict mountain cattlemen was a political move. It was not based on any ethical or common good considerations and used only one dimensional science that suited its political ends.

To quote Peter Attiwell, Professor and Principal Fellow Botany, University of Melbourne:

*"There is no doubt that the opponents of grazing use science to achieve their end of stopping grazing completely. That is, there is no point of compromise despite the fact that both the intensity and extent of cattle grazing has reduced dramatically over the years."*

We have moved towards a centralist control of management that is dominated by urban values.

"If fire is bad in urban areas, it must be bad everywhere, so let's put out all fires in native bush." This type of thinking leads to unnatural fire suppression of natural fires, such as lightning strikes.

Where to next?



The 2003 fires give us an insight into where our modern management is taking us.

The fire fighters laboured under a centralised command system that was cumbersome and out of touch. Military operations are run by the personnel at the front line, not by far away command posts.

The reasons for the fires are many fold, but I believe centralistic control of management allowed fuel load build up.

For a healthy community in rural Australia, we need managerial input at a local level for all aspects of control of land, water and social services. The successful working of the land care movement, and to a lesser extent local government [because it is suffering centralised control pressures] illustrates this.

However public land management, particularly National Parks, are having their management controlled increasingly from the cities.

This does not give sound environmental management. It tends to give headline stuff that makes the masses feel good.

The MCAV thanks all our supporters, especially associate members, and looks forward to an interesting phase ahead in the management of public land. In Spain there is World Heritage listed areas of National Park that include cattle grazing, and there has been reintroduction of grazing into alpine areas of central Europe after it had been banned for a period. There is also grazing in National Parks in Tasmania. This tells me that the debate here in Victoria is not yet over.

**The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria will be right in there in the High Country management debate, to reclaim what we have currently lost, and to ensure a vibrant and sustainable alpine area.**

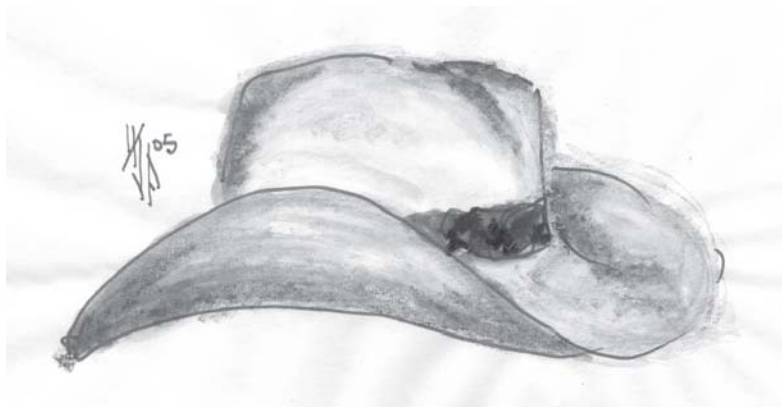
Best wishes,

Doug Treasure

President

Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria

January 2006



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# The attempted murder of the High Plains Cattleman:

## An overview of recent events

To arrive at a starting point for the current position we could start at European settlement of this country, but for the purpose of this article we should start with the Caledonia fires of 1998-1999.

The cost to cattlemen affected by this fire was to say the least, devastating.

The post Caledonia fire grazing ban was the first of its kind. Never before had fire been used as a reason to exclude grazing. Historically grazing was increased post a fire event to deal with the enormous explosion in vegetation that fire brings through the release of nutrients, increase in available light and the removal of competing species.

Parks Victoria tried to implement a return to prefire condition before grazing could return, the implications were enormous, for example if fire had been removed from an area for forty years than it may take forty years to reach that condition.

Eventually a process based on bareground percentage and vegetation cover of grasslands was to be used. It was at this point that the Kennett Government lost power in Victoria.

The licensees were all offered financial incentives not to graze their licences for the rest of the current licence period which expired in August 2005.

Only half of the licensee's accepted the offer, the rest of the families were convinced that common sense would prevail and they would soon have access.

After a harrowing struggle, and the obvious need for MCAV to place our own members on the survey monitoring teams, the benchmarks were quickly met and the cattle returned. Then new issues were arising, cattle were supposedly destroying peat bogs and sphagnum beds, even though the science of the day acknowledged that these vegetation communities were not preferred grazing areas with cattle spending no more than 5% of their time in these communities.

The period between the Caledonia fire and the 2003 Alpine fires saw an increase in pressure from the anti-grazing fraternity.

Parks Victoria (PV) and Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) had been opposed to alpine grazing for many years and were now working vigorously to achieve this goal.

It was suspected that PV knew that a combination of licences expiring in August 2005 and the fires could be used as a catalyst to remove alpine grazing.

The Victorian National Parks Association, working very closely with PV, increased the profile of its campaign against the cattlemen. By now VNPA had completely reversed its earlier statements that it was not opposed to grazing but for a few areas.

The Victorian Government and its agencies were now receiving criticism for the 2003 fire, both in the way the fire was managed and for the lack of land management that preceded these fires. It must be pointed out that no single government is at fault, it has been a collective achievement. A game of political football with the "environment" as the ball.

The State Government now decided to review alpine grazing with a backbench Labor Taskforce. As it was not a bipartisan committee, and consisted of only ALP members, the Taskforce was justifiably accused of being used to rationalise the end of alpine grazing.

This was a lengthy and exhaustive process in which members of the association met head on with absolute determination. Arguments floated back and forth about whether the Government wanted to ban alpine grazing to strengthen the likelihood of getting preferences from the Greens or whether a ban would effectively demolish a part of the Green's platform.

The MCAV fought back with visits, papers and a sustained media campaign and it appeared that public support was swinging behind the mountain cattlemen.

Some of those newly involved in this issue, seemed to swing more in our favour as they became exposed to our arguments.

There was a significant amount of scientific argument about the adverse impacts of cattle. We had our eminent scientists but were outweighed by

the sheer volume of work highlighting adverse impacts. Argument will continue about the validity of much of the scientific work and whether it too often sought to identify and measure adverse impacts. The fact is, of course, that cattle do have an impact, the same as tourism, skiing and other visitor use. Fundamentally, the issue often got down to philosophical positions about whether cattle grazing was an appropriate use of a National Park.

Throughout the long review by the Alpine Grazing Taskforce, the only political party to support the mountain cattlemen was the National Party.

In January 2005, a major rally was considered but there was support for a smaller group of mounted cattlemen to come to Melbourne at the end of January for a few days. The purpose of this trip was to conduct a series of meetings and to raise our profile in main stream Melbourne.

By March 2005 it seemed that some sections of Government were wishing it had not raised the issue and had allowed the licences to be renewed.

In meetings with Minister Thwaites in April and May, it seemed that he was unlikely to completely ban alpine grazing and was looking for

a compromise position. On leaving meetings with the Minister, mountain cattlemen remarked that he did not seem to be leading up to a complete ban.

A similar situation occurred when we met with the Commissioner of emergency services on a post 2003 fire tour of the Bogong High Plains. In this instance the impressions that we were left with did not match the outcomes.

Eventually pushed to make a decision, the Government seemed to decide to stick to its earlier apparent policy, get on with it and ban alpine grazing from the Alpine National Park.

As the announcement unfolded, the amount of investment by the Government in this decision became clear. Moreover, the Government almost painted itself into a corner from which it could not compromise or change its mind. The investment included the Premier who was involved with the Deputy Premier in this announcement. This means the whole Government had a stake in making this decision acceptable and for it to stick.

Full page colour advertisements in newspapers and radio advertising had been created well in advance.

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The Government introducing legislation on the same day as the announcement.

Co-ordinated support for the decision by eminent scientists and green lobby groups along with questions lined up for Question Time in the Legislative Assembly, the DSE website was set up with the news of the decision, the PV website was set up to ask for volunteers to register to help “fix up” the Alpine National Park.

The Government had the balance of power in the Legislative Council and could pass the required legislation without hindrance from across the floor, and to cap it all off a sustained and obviously orchestrated blaze of letters from people supporting the ban flooded newspapers around the state.

The investment supporting the decision could not have been put together in the last few days when we thought we were still negotiating with the Minister and his office. Clearly the decision was in prospect and the public relations investment was being put together well before the announcement.

That last gasp negotiation came to nothing and the decision was announced and the public relations investment was unleashed together with the scurrilous advertising and hyper-spin.

Giving the enormity of the announcement several in our community of interest proposed a major rally at Parliament House. The grazing ban became the “lightening rod” to galvanise together, a group of rural people disenchanted with the Government.

Country Voice and the June 9 rally was born. There is fierce anger in the country across many issues and we expect there to be several occasions when this can be expressed. The alpine grazing issue will prove to be a catalyst that will galvanise many rural people and public land user groups into action. The intense feeling is not just in the country.

Many urban based people who access public land are incensed and fearful about their own activities. Clearly there is a growing list of groups disenchanted with a series of Government decisions and the name of the MCAV has now been added. As recently as November 2003, the Environment Minister said, in Parliament, “Alpine grazing is a licensed activity and will continue as a licensed activity.”

Sadly the Alpine Grazing Taskforce report utterly failed to come to grips with the most perplexing issue about the grazing of cattle in the Alpine National Park. This issue is why textbook and urban based theory conflicts with on-ground experience based knowledge. Unravelling this conundrum is the key to understanding the conflict about grazing cattle in the Alpine National Park.

We have been disappointed at the continuing misrepresentation of the area of the Alpine National Park that has been grazed. Even recently, in Parliament, Labour members were talking about half the park being grazed.

For the past year, and direct to the Minister and the taskforce, we have been saying that licence areas could be reviewed to give a clear indication of the actual area that is grazed. This could have resulted in a fall from a perception of 50% of the Alpine National Park being grazed to less than 20% and probably about 15%. More recently our estimates have taken this percentage down to 10%. To this extent, the decision is based on a misrepresentation.

At the end of the day, we should remember that the land was good enough, with alpine grazing, to be proclaimed as a national park.

We met with the Federal Government to consider this as a national heritage issue. We know we have the strong and unequivocal support of the Australian Government, this is not a Victorian issue but a national issue and the Victorian Government has defied national sentiment.

During the Federal election campaign, Coalition members including the Prime Minister all supported alpine grazing. After the election, Environment and Heritage Minister, Ian Campbell, wrote: “The Australian Government supports the continuation of alpine grazing as the embodiment of a key element of our outstanding national heritage.

Federal Coalition obviously saw the electoral advantage in supporting the mountain cattlemen. Mountain cattlemen were supported by the Member for Gippsland, the Minister for Environment and Heritage and the Prime Minister.

We will look forward to the day when sense prevails and cattle grazing is reintroduced to remove fire fuel and to keep a healthy and dynamic grassland.

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## Those who have been TEMPORARILY removed

The Bracks Government may have decided that the removal of cattle from the Alpine National Park was the best decision for them and voters of Victoria. But no doubt many Australians and especially the actual people this decision affects would beg to disagree.

This decision has cancelled 44 licences held by members of the MCAV and others but up until now, these **families** have remained relatively nameless. These are the leaseholders and families who have had their lives turned upside down and their family heritage removed by the Bracks government:

**Dick Chester** of Glenmaggie who ran stock in The Sisters/Mt Clear area; **Anthony, Brian and Kevin Higgins** along with **Michael and Mary** of Glenmaggie and Licola who ran stock on Mt Tamboritha, Bennison High Plains and Wellington Plains; **Jeff Gell, Bill Cummings and the Dunsmuir family** of Heyfield who operated on Riggall Spur, the Bennison, Wellington area and in the Moroka. **The Treasure family** grazed on the Dargo High Plains including Lankeys, Omeo and Gows plains, Kings Spur, Long Spur and at Blue Rag Range, **David Guy** from Waterford who also ran stock on the Pinnacles and **Freeman and Pritchard** of Lindenow who held a run at Bleaks Hill. **Clive and his son Chris Hodge** have lost their Moroka run with the remaining forest area adjacent being difficult to contain stock to.

From Mansfield area **Graeme and Chris Stoney** are affected on The Bluff; **Bruce, Adam and Judy McCormack** were on Mt Speculation along with the **Purcell family**; the **Lovick family** have lost Mt Clear. **John Gough** is out of King River and **Terry Murphy** is gone from Mt Howitt.

**Max Blair** from Whorouly has been removed from Pretty Valley on the Bogong High Plains along with **Barry Hicks and the Cooper family** and **Ian and Peter Roper and family** are out of Rocky Knobs. The **Maddison family** have been removed from

Damsite Hill along with **Barry and Tony Fitzgerald** of Omeo are gone from Rocky Valley, Basalt Hill and Rocky Knobs

**Mary and Bill Goldsworthy**, Eurobin, **Ron Briggs** and daughter **Sue** from Everton upper have lost Weston Spur run and the upper end of Youngs top on the Bogongs; and **Harry and Sue Ryder and family** have all been removed from Mt Jim and High Plains creek. **Richard and Peter Faithfull** of Omeo have also lost their Bogong runs at Raspberry Hill, Buckety Plain, Mt Jack (Cope) and Trapyard.

**Jack and Stewart Hicks** at Dederang are gone from the Fainter through to Tawonga Huts and **Cobungra Station** stock will no longer delight visitors to JB Plain which is pretty ironic when you consider the proximity of the mooted Cattleman's Hall of Fame at Dinner Plain.

**Heywood, Macquire and Connley** have been removed from Youngs Top as have the **Kelly family** of Omeo, who have also lost a number of smaller runs on Mitta River. Even the smaller run holders have lost out. The **Horvat and Krombach families** at Anglers Rest lost a run on Cobungra River; **Brett Lee** of Benambra lost access to the Gibbo; **Bluey Minchin** at Wulgulmerang lost his run and **Danny Cook** and **Vince Pendergast** at Benambra lost runs at Buenbah. **Louis Pendergast** also at Benambra is a direct descendant from the original pioneer family, has lost his family run at the Limestone.

**Bruce, Chris and Phillip Commins** of Ensay have lost access to Diggers Holes and after years of having **Buff and David Rogers and families** from Black Mountain they have also had their licences cancelled.

**Glenn Chalwell and Ken Heywood** at Katherine Station have lost their runs on Buffalo and **Frank Ryan and family** from Cheshunt no longer runs on the Dandongadale lease.

The **Hall family** from Buckland Valley are gone from Barry Range and **Tom Groggin Station** no longer run on the Serpentine and Davies Plain. **Ken, Graeme and Roger Connley** and families have lost Charles Creek and Bukwong and **Gordon and Sally Moon** at Wulgulmerang have lost their run on Seldom seen and down on to Buchan River.

These **families** are not faceless business enterprises. They are ordinary Victorian families and voters who, unfortunately for them, do not live in political hotseats that require appeasing. They have a deep affinity with the land under their stewardship which spans generation and is deeply rooted in everyone of them. The land they attend is often

referred to as pristine Alpine country after 170 years of grazing.

When the rally was held in Melbourne, supporters and opponents of the National Park legislation equally had the ability to “show” the government how they felt about the legislation. The families listed here had **hundreds** of supporters – on horseback and on the footpath. Yet a handful of supporters for the legislation who “showed” up have the political clout to bring such hardship to others.

Our challenge is to bring about the restitution of these grazing rights for all concerned and to ensure that their removal is only temporary.





## Our Australia

**You caress me with the warm winds, swirling in from Western Plains  
You delight me with a vision when wildflowers rise with rain  
And the Shooshing sheoaks comfort me in ways I can't explain  
No wonder that we love you, our Australia.**

**I hear your laughter in the currents rippling round a river bend  
And your great red heart keeps beating to a rhythm without end  
I can feel that rhythm in the handshake of a friend  
It's what we call the spirit of Australia.**

**I'm reminded by the crimson of your flaming sunset sky  
Of the blood that flowed like rivers when our Anzacs had to die  
Each year we will remember them, and it is no shame to cry,  
Their sacrifice bought freedom for Australia.**

**But there still a fight worth fighting on the Great Dividing Range  
Our cattlemen denied their home, now don't you think that strange?  
Because they are this country's heritage, and that can never change  
So we must stand beside them for Australia.**

*Jim Brown*



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# Taking it to the Streets: The January Visit and June Rally 2005

REPORT BY ROWENA TURNER AND  
BRUCE McCORMACK

## January, Melbourne

With the potential threat of the Victorian Labor Government destroying the last remaining links to our history, heritage and culture; and as part of an ongoing campaign, we mustered six horses and set off for Melbourne with a tight schedule of meetings and appearances. Arriving at Lawrence Webb's property at Kangaroo Ground on Sunday 23 January final arrangements were confirmed and accommodation sorted, ready for an assault on peak hour traffic the next morning.

After negotiating Monday morning peak hour, the horses arrived on cue. We saddled the horses in Lansdowne Street and set out for a midday meeting with the Hon. Peter McGauran MP (Federal Minister for Agriculture and Member for Gippsland), and several key members of the Federal Coalition including Senator Kay Paterson (Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues) and Senator Mitch Fifield with Federal Treasurer Peter Costello lending support from the steps of his Melbourne office in Treasury Place.

After lengthy informative discussions and a continuing pledge of support for our cause from the Federal members, we again saddle up and in the company of Peter McGauran, cantered a few laps around Treasury Gardens negotiating the century old fig trees with ease.

Next on the agenda was a city tour around Bourke and Exhibition streets to meet and discuss the issue of Alpine Grazing with members of the public. It came as no surprise that the average person on the street was very supportive and wished us well in our campaign.

Filled with enthusiasm we then rode down Collins Street, right into Swanston, right up Bourke Street, right into Exhibition Street and down to the



*Top: Taking a break on the banks of the Yarra.  
Centre: The media and then President,  
Simon Turner at Rod Laver Centre.  
Right: Spreading the word via one of the Yarra trams.*





*Left and above:*

*Martina Navratilova with the cattlemen at the Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne during a break at the "Australian Open".*

"Australian Open" at Rod Laver Tennis Centre for a photo shoot with Martina Navratilova. Along the way discovering a large eel floating dead up side down in the Yarra river. It is believed the eel was one of hundreds that had died in the river just days before as a result of high E.coli levels. One has to wonder where the real environmental issues are.

Once we arrived at Rod Laver Arena we became aware of a large throng of media being cordoned off behind rope - this must be the spot.

After introductions and discussions about Alpine Grazing, Martina, dressed in an oilskin and akubra hat, mounted Charlie Lovick's trusty mountain pony and displayed her equine abilities

led by Jack Hicks with the next generation, Nathan Hicks and Adam Ryder lending support.

With the day drawing to a close we loaded the horses and headed out to Laurence Webbs to prepare for the next day.

Day light came and it was time to load horses and head back to Treasury Gardens, unload and meet the leader of the State Liberal Party, the Honourable Robert Doyle, and many of his team on the forecourt of Parliament House . We explained that the imagery of "*The Man from Snowy River*" lives but will be killed off if our alpine grazing licences in the Alpine National Park are not renewed. At the time of writing we now know we have the total support of the State Liberal party who have committed themselves to restoring Alpine Grazing in the Alpine National Park.





*Top: Leader of the State Liberal Party, the Honourable Robert Doyle with Rowena Turner and Mary Goldsworthy on the forecourt at Parliament House.*

*Above: Our group pondering the questionable state of Melbourne's precious Yarra River and below, in the gardens.*



The next move was to ride to R.M. Williams store in Collins street to have Bruce Commins fitted with a new pair of elastic sided R.M. boots. Bruce had suffered a severe leg injury while working stock on his horse. His boot had to be cut from his foot destroying the boot that Bruce no doubt hoped to wear for many more years. While at the store Bruce was also presented with a hat courtesy of R.M. Williams and fortunately for Virginia, Bruce's daughter, the hat fitted her perfectly.

Then it was back in the saddle with the support of a team of Akubra clad foot men and women we continued to interact with the people on the street who were continually offering encouragement and support. More than 2,500 "Information Sheets" were distributed by the team during these events.

Next stop we met Craig Ingram, Independent Member for Gippsland East, on the front steps of Parliament House, where we discussed our achievements and future directions. Craig offered his continuing support and emphasised the need to maintain a public profile to the people of Melbourne and let them know that their living history and heritage was under threat.

After two days successful campaigning, it was time to turn our attention to what was happening on the home front, so we bid the bricks and mortar farewell.





*On the forecourt of Parliament House. Included in our group are Rowena Turner and Ron Briggs on the left, Simon Turner discussing issues with Robert Doyle, Phil Davies and other Liberal MPs. To the right are David Treasure and Charlie Lovick on horseback talking to other parliamentarians.*

## June, Melbourne

Never have cattlemen had so much to fight for. In the past there have been hard times, struggles and lot of up hill roads to travel, but when over 500 cattlemen converged on Melbourne last June a way of life was on the line.

The Brack's Government had decided to put an end to high country cattle grazing and though the threat had been made before by different people and different governments, this time it was different,

The wheels that would see over a century year tradition disappear were already in motion.

It was with heavy but ever hopeful hearts that the riders made their way from the MCG to Parliament House, and though the rally did not change Mr

Thwaites mind, thousands of Victorians saw the cattlemen plea for their history to live on.

It was an amazing feeling being part of that ride. The sight when you looked around and saw the line of riders go for more than a block, the noise of the horses on the bitumen and feeling of anger, disappointment was something I'll never forget.

For now the message must remain clear, Victoria's Mountain cattlemen will continue to fight, no matter what the cost or the odds that face those in battle.

Let's make 2006 the year that the state Government learns you can't mess with a cattleman, his family, his heritage or his herd!









*The maths says it  
all.*

*One cow per 80  
hectares for 16  
weeks per year.*

*Simple.*



*This battle is not  
over.*

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# Droving by the Homestead

It was the cattle that made their home by Kosciusko side,  
till the politicians bowed to Greenie whims and claimed it National Park  
for the towns folk to walk about.

Now Nature always watching, could see the wilful waste,  
so sent an electric charge to clear the bureaucratic bungle.

Now it started up the Snowy several weeks ago, an unattended burn towards the open plain.  
Now the cockies with their sheep and cattle that feed the country wealth,  
had gathered to defend their homes and livelihoods.

It was the parkies that set forth, to save their blackberry valleys and scrubby hillsides, but  
retreated for the want of better knowledge, of a fire so big and fierce.

It was the cockies with their planes at hand and their dozers  
that set a plan to save the freehold land.

But it was the parkies that said no to the phoscheck of the planes  
and the dozers oh so big, they claimed they were environmentally damaging.

Now with only charred remains the vegetation on the northern slopes,  
and burnt leaves falling all about.

It was hard to be amused with parky philosophy.

When the fire had burned up by a homestead on the open plain  
and perished sheep lay on its path and others crawled in agony.  
cast a searching look for the greenie and the socialistic voter,  
where are the bastards now?

A year or two had passed and I received an invitation unexpected  
from a rely on his mountain cattle station.

As it read 'drought is on my station, feed is very scarce , the stock are weak and hollow  
but I found a pick of grass where rangers seldom pass  
and we would be glad to show you of our ways that you are missing in the south'.



From work I drove most of the night and tiring from my journey  
the kindly lads they left me sleeping, till the horses they had saddled.  
My mount was tied to a tree and freely sweating,  
I enquired, "was he trained to the aides"  
The reply I got will paint the picture plain for you to see.  
"Can you ride?"  
"I'm, I'm all full of knowledge, I've been through pony club,  
both zone and state and pride my trophies for dressage I must relate."  
"He'll go if you kick him."

The loading of the pack horse was the main event, big and strong,  
and the lofty carriage of his head, a grander beast was rare to see.  
But the constant rolling of his eye made me wonder why?  
The blankets packed the billy too, I strode up to give the horse a pat,  
but soon was told to "give him room."

The billy gave a rattle and the horse went into battle,  
his head went down between his legs and half way up his belly,  
is front hooves pounded on the ground, his heels high in the sky,  
he roared a frightening roar, he hit the fence he nearly fell,  
he bounded past his holders and down a timbered slope he fled.  
I followed on his trail, I found my blanket torn  
and on a jagged stump my red pyjamas hung.

The cattle gathered the trek was set to start.  
I took the lead on my given steed,  
but he looked behind from where he'd come and not to where he had too go.  
Till a half feathered parrot flapped out on the track,  
it made him jump back, the daylight between us was growing,  
I yearned for he pig skin to greet me, but the gravel came to meet me,  
that's how the horse beat me.

I flew to my feet and I ran to the corner,  
it was my only chance to catch him, but the mob I did meet  
and they're a breed that seldom sees man on his feet,  
it made 'em rush back.  
The stockmen behind were now in the lead,  
they were singing in verses so blue,  
their whips were cracking, their dogs were yapping,  
but they couldn't stop the bolting mob,  
now chased along by my riderless horse.

I sat in the shade by the track for I couldn't keep up with no hack.  
A stockman rode back to check my wellbeing - I suppose -  
but he just said "I think it best by the homestead now for you my lad."

*Ken Stuart*

*Ken received third place in the 2005 Don Kneebone Competition at Junction Plain with this poem.*



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# The Therapeutic Value of Writing Bad Poetry

HARRY RYDER

Whilst rolling up the fence around the mustering paddock that is no longer needed at Campbell's Yards on the Bogong High Plains, my mind took a light hearted wander. I considered writing a thesis on *The Therapeutic Value of Writing Bad Poetry*. (Some examples of this poetry will inevitably – I'm sorry – follow).

The hut and mustering paddock was constructed at Campbell's Yards by Wally Ryder in 1975 with help from Jimmy Condon and several others working on the job. Initially it was a single hut and paddock but this was subsequently added to. A sleeping hut and feed hut and an additional paddock were added the following year.

The history of Campbell's Yards is a bit sketchy but we do know that H. and I. Campbell had Ensay Station in the mid 1800s and it is a reasonable assumption that this site was associated with their activities on the Bogong High Plains. There are also remnants of an old sheep yard still visible that was built by Lindsay Rowe and Syd Ryder in the early 1940s.

Wally Ryder decided to move his camp out of Tawonga Huts as that site was fairly busy at mustering time with Hicks and Coopers in business from that location. The Campbell's Yards site offered easier vehicle access being located close to the State Electricity Commission's Cope West aqueduct. It was now possible to truck horses, chaff and other requirements right to the camp and also load the odd cow with young calf and any late mustered stock to be trucked home. This site was more central to where the cattle grazed and was felt to be better all round.

*On Bogong fields the wildflowers blow  
beneath the snow gums that we know,  
the crows still loudly carking fly  
still heard amid the noise below.*

*We are the cattlemen, short months ago  
we lived, felt dawn, saw sunsets glow.  
We mustered gullies, ridges, plains  
with dogs and horses in the rain.*

*Now to those still grazing forest runs we  
throw  
the torch be yours, hold it high.  
If you break faith with us who go,  
we shall not sleep though wildflowers grow  
on Bogong fields.*

I remember an early droving trip to the plains as a child of about nine with my father's mob. The early start from home (at what seemed to be just after midnight) to ride across the property to a little paddock by the East Kiewa River that the mob had spent the night in. I recall old Syd Ryder saying to me, "Where's your whip? ... No whip ... that's like a soldier going to war without his rifle." I had one next time.

*No more alarm clock at two thirty, catching  
horses in the dark.*

*No more riding by the starlight to that wire  
yard in the trees, can I find the Southern  
Cross?*

*No more glowing of a cigarette or its whiff  
upon the breeze, nor  
the clatter of horses hooves as the stockmen  
make their way.*

*No more crisp, clear morning while we're  
waiting for the light,  
when kookaburras and cicadas let us know  
they're on the job.*

*No more anticipation, did that wire yard hold  
the mob  
or did wombats send them rushing in the  
dark?*

*No more long days on the track then a stubby  
and a handshake  
with the blokes that will be back.*

*These memories are all just book stuff now in  
the new State Government way,  
no more endless rounds of meetings while a  
calving heifer tries in vain.  
Our taxpayer funded foe just turns his guns  
to the next campaign,  
as we pick up the pieces and go on.*



*"Ryder's Hut" photographed by Craig Vine*

The Ryder family ran cattle on the Bogong High Plains on the Ryder Bros run uninterrupted since 1887 and somewhat earlier on a less formal basis along with most of Upper Kiewa Valley landholders. Wally Ryder left the High Plains run in about 1933 to take up a run on Mt Bogong that continued until 1965. With the closing of the Mt Bogong country, he came back to the Bogong High Plains and in conjunction with his cousin Syd, they ran an allocated 360 head plus calves. Syd retired to Wodonga in the early 1970s and Wally continued running that number of cattle until his death in 1988. The allocation was dropped from 360 head plus calves to 306 adult equivalents in 1991 to make room for displaced cattlemen from Mt Nelse. Harry and Sue, and their two boys Adam and Phillip, continued on the licence until its conclusion in 2005.

*The stock routes of our grandparents took a  
strange turn at the end  
that saw five hundred horsemen dodging  
trams,  
Between the stately House of Parliament and  
the doorman at the Windsor  
rode this most unlikely bunch  
In a campaign of desperation to keep our  
history going strong  
we rode and gave it our best shot, but all to  
no avail*

*For the shiny shoed department men with well  
practiced handshakes  
firm but insincere  
had gave advice to some new minister that  
the cattle had to go,  
The science is unequivocal they chorused  
loudly one and all,  
this same bunch that loudly advocated DDT  
and Dieldrin  
on our food crops fifty yeas ago,  
Water quality they cried, it shall improve  
right out of sight,  
just shift the cows and then stand back, let  
sphagnum do the rest,  
Millions hectare bushfires, pigs, deer,  
English Broom and blackberry too  
will be but a memory,  
We have a new management plan they cried  
that shall indeed fix all  
So while Labor did the dirty work,  
most Liberals quietly applauded  
that this long vexing problem  
would be gone by their next term.*

Over recent years we have been ably assisted by our regular mustering crew whose efforts and persistence have been greatly appreciated in making the job possible. In no particular order – Dick Dale and family, Les Evans and family, Anthony Ferrari and family, Bruce Ross, Kevin and Nigel Ryder and all the others that came from time to time.



*Top: The mustering team and friends of the Ryder family at Springs Saddle and, below, the team who have been hard at work at the Wire Yard.*







## Graeme Alcard Foard Turner

2 April 1931 - 4 April 2005

Graeme Turner was born to Marie Belinda (nee Foard) and William Henry Turner on 2 April 1931.

Graeme's mother died when he was 10 years old and his sister Allison had also predeceased him.

He went to Primary School at Bengworden and Secondary School in Bairnsdale before finishing at Geelong Grammar. He returned to the family property "Deighton", at Bengworden from where he started his life long career in agriculture. When "Deighton" was sold in 1951, Graeme went with his father to "Yarrowalla" at Coldstream where they farmed for a short while. It was during this time when he met Janet and they were married in Lilydale – then when Graeme's father retired to Metung in 1956, Graeme and Janet moved to their property at Bindi.

Bindi was an isolated place in those days – both geographically and in terms of community so a healthy working partnership in the farming endeavours was most necessary.

Graeme was a man who loved farming – his motto was the "Farm comes first" an attitude he

learnt from his father, especially as he worked hard during the depression to maintain the family property. Graeme also had a tendency to like things being done by yesterday! I guess that is what happens for a 'doer' – not a man of pomp and pageantry. As a hard task master I can imagine that Graeme has passed on many of these characteristics to his son Simon.

Graeme loved both the land, and its environs, and he loved the animals that thrived on land under his stewardship, he took great care of his animals – sheep and cattle, the working dogs and his working horses which was so much a part of him – and he worked from light to dark making things better for the land and stock. Graeme also took great pride in the way he presented his stock.

He was drawn to the mountains, they seemed to hold Graeme, he just loved the High Country, whether it was tending to his cattle on the leases, catching a trout, yarding a brumby or sharing the company of old friends.

One of these old friends was Mick Murphy, especially in their younger days, they spent many hours working together both on the freehold and on the leases.

It was the terrible fires of 2003 that took a toll on Graeme as land he loved fell to the wild fire. Just last December (04) he pushed himself for his last ride, sheer determination to be on the horse for the first six hours with the cattle going up to the summer pastures.

During his rehabilitation from his stroke he showed how his fitness enabled him to cope so well and during his palliative care Graeme sought quality of life rather than quantity.

Graeme's service was held at St. John's Anglican Church Bairnsdale. St John's is the spiritual home of Graeme and his family, with a number of windows testifying to that – His mother's window, Rex Foard his uncle, the narthex window; his grandfather Robert's window and Grandmother Caroline's window.



## Ronald Lee “Ron” Rogers

24 July 1942 - 30 September 2005

Ron Rogers was descended from the very early settlers of Gelantipy — the McDonnells of Gelantipy and the Tye Rogers family of Wulgulmerang. Both of these families arrived at various times to the district. They came by horse and dray and on horseback. It was not an easy trip — winching drays and wagons on steep mountains, droving horses and cattle to stock the land and begin their new lives in this remote area.

These families were tough, resilient, hardworking and self sufficient people — they had to be to survive — but they were kind and caring of people less fortunate than themselves — and acts of kindness are legendary. This was the way of pioneers and it lives on in the old residents of the district.

Madeline McDonnell of Gelantipy married William Rogers of Tye station, Wulgulmerang in

1888. This young couple, as pioneers and early settlers, selected some of the best Gelantipy country that overlooks the mighty Snowy River gorge.

They did a huge amount of work to develop the country from rugged forest and native grassland to the fine pastures and cattle breeding properties of today. They built their own homes from pit sawn logs and the fences were dogleg — they were very much self sufficient.

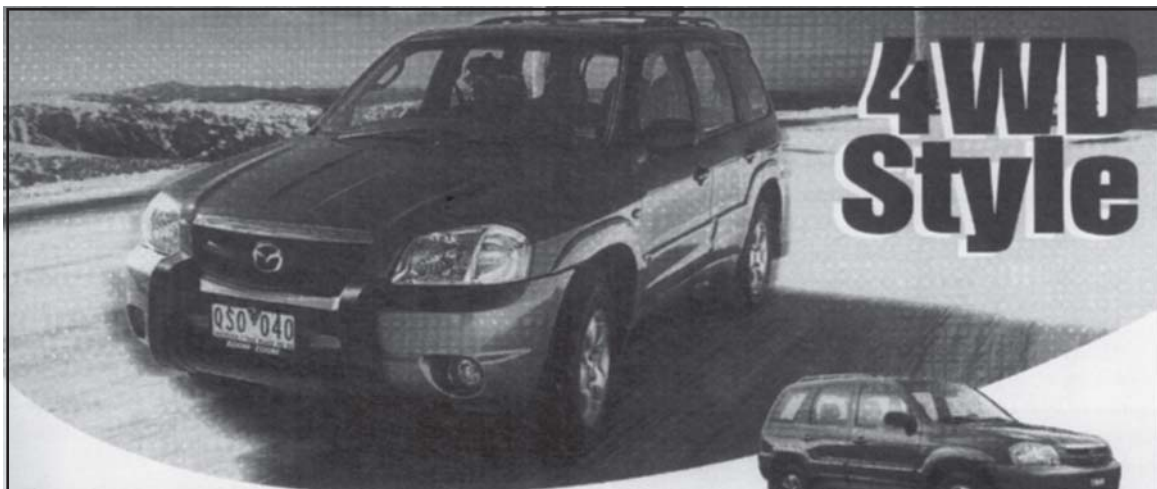
Ronald’s father, Alec Rogers was a son of William and Madeline Rogers. He married Vera Wilson Lee and had two sons — John and Ronald. For many years they farmed as A.G. Rogers and Sons, working both their farms at both Buchan and Gelantipy. John and Ronald continued the development started by their parents and carried on by their father until his death — an unbroken line of well over one hundred years. John and Ronald worked together, but Gelantipy was always Ronald’s place to live — it as his well loved home territory.

Ronald married Julie Vincent, a distant relation and a descendent of the McDonnells of Gelantipy. They had three children – Amy, Alex and Sarah. After John was killed tragically in an accident, John’s son Dale continued to work the farms with Ronald — this is a sad time for him too.

Ronald greatly loved his family, his horses, his stock and the country of Gelantipy. He will be sadly missed for many reasons — his wisdom and knowledge of stock (cattle and horses), his kindness and as a person of integrity. The loss to his family is immense and the loss to the district is irreplaceable.

A large gathering of family, friends and fellow cattlemen farewelled Ron from the Buchan Community Hall on 6 October 2005.

May his pioneering spirit continue in Julie, Amy, Alex, Sarah and Dale.



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# The Interview

"It's hard alright," he sighed, as he wiped his sleeve across his cheek,  
"You city people wouldn't understand.  
We don't want to leave our home! God knows it's the only place I know."  
I watched a single tear splash on his hand.  
He said "We've farmed this piece of country for generations past  
- Great Grandad, Grandpa, my old man, then me.  
It always was the plan to keep it within the family name  
- now a hollow dream as far as I can see.  
As years rolled by and family swelled, plots of land were sectioned off  
for wedding gifts or via Grandad's will.  
This family's fought for services in this little country town,  
half of them are gone but some are struggling still.  
My wife and I are frail. I know it would be difficult to stay  
though we're more comfy than we've ever been.  
We've got handgrips in the bathroom, ramps up to house and shed  
with rails to guide my wheelchair in between.  
We need to do what's best for everyone - not just my wife and me.  
Isn't that what 'Handing on the Farm's' about?  
Our children (in their fifties) can't agree - or even talk!  
What THEY want is too hard to figure out.  
One son's a lot like me, but his brothers see the dollars to be made  
and want value for what they think is due.  
You're saying 'work it out, sell up or hand it on.'  
We can't receive a pension till we do.  
Our daughter insists we're ready for the Nursing Home in town.  
My strong-willed wife won't have a bar of that!  
No Meals-on-Wheels or Home Help - but I've watched her go downhill  
and now I'm seeing where my daughter's at.  
What's the future for farmers and their sons and daughters now?  
A different life from when I was a lad.  
Family farms like ours can't make it any more - young ones have to move away.  
What was the use of all those dreams we had?  
It's acknowledged aboriginals have attachment to the land  
but don't you know that whites can feel it too?  
Help's available, but all the family fighting makes me ill  
What will happen next, I wish I knew.  
I put my arm across his shoulder until his sobbing ceased,  
despite the fact he'd tried to turn away.  
I offered him my handkerchief, he took it silently.  
I couldn't think of anything to say.

*Jan Lewis*

# The Cattle Are Back

The creeping weeds are claiming back the well-worn stockyard path,  
as he strides with restless energy to the Bluff Hut's warming hearth.  
It's fifty years since first he axed the timbers for the beams,  
and packed the tin up for the roof, five thousand feet from the stream.

His horses' snorts are carried through the crisp cold mountain air,  
and enter the hole in the rooftop, reminding him why he's there.  
Though it saved his life from storm and snow he's forbidden to fix his hut,  
the government's thrown the cattlemen out, and the National Park gates are shut.

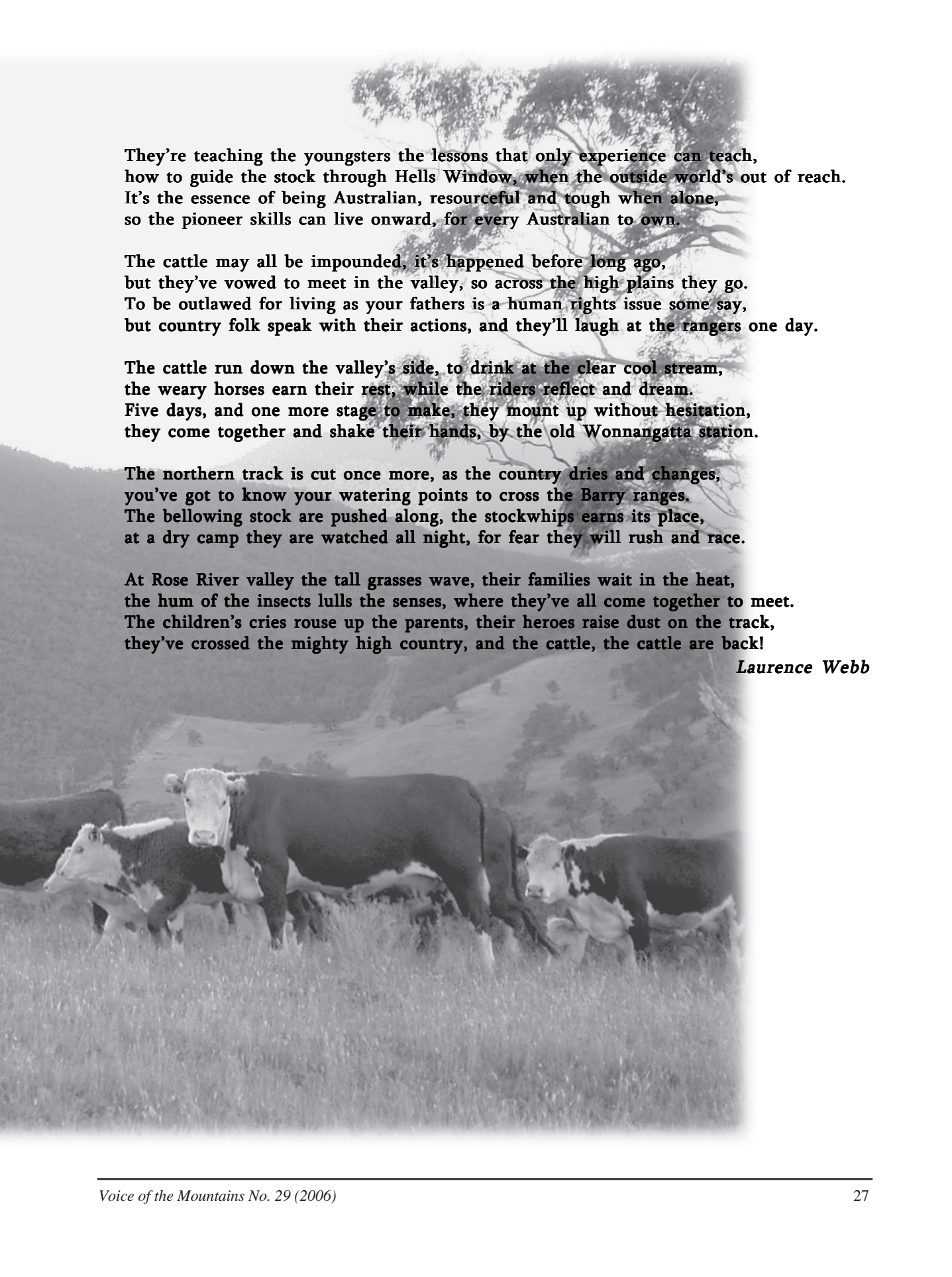
He lies in wait for his neighbour as the dawn's pink blushes the gums,  
he was rivals and worse with the father, hard men on neighbouring runs.  
But adversity always enjoined them, he was saved when his stock stuck in snow,  
once more they're in strife to their eyeballs, they must face it together they know.

A cattle camp is stirred to life, men emerge from their swags with a yawn,  
soft whump of a saddle and clank of a girth, the cattlemen ride with the dawn.  
The eager stockhorse pricks his ears, faint hoofbeats thud on the track,  
it's the Merrijig crew and would you believe, they've bought the cattle back!

Yes the cattle are back in the mountains, the drovers unite with a roar,  
and they swear they'll be back every year, 'till the mountains are shared once more.  
They're droving from Heyfield and Dargo to meet in the high countries' heart,  
where the valley is locked in by mountains only stockroutes and rivers should part.







They're teaching the youngsters the lessons that only experience can teach,  
how to guide the stock through Hells Window, when the outside world's out of reach.  
It's the essence of being Australian, resourceful and tough when alone,  
so the pioneer skills can live onward, for every Australian to own.

The cattle may all be impounded, it's happened before long ago,  
but they've vowed to meet in the valley, so across the high plains they go.  
To be outlawed for living as your fathers is a human rights issue some say,  
but country folk speak with their actions, and they'll laugh at the rangers one day.

The cattle run down the valley's side, to drink at the clear cool stream,  
the weary horses earn their rest, while the riders reflect and dream.  
Five days, and one more stage to make, they mount up without hesitation,  
they come together and shake their hands, by the old Wonnangatta station.

The northern track is cut once more, as the country dries and changes,  
you've got to know your watering points to cross the Barry ranges.  
The bellowing stock are pushed along, the stockwhips earns its place,  
at a dry camp they are watched all night, for fear they will rush and race.

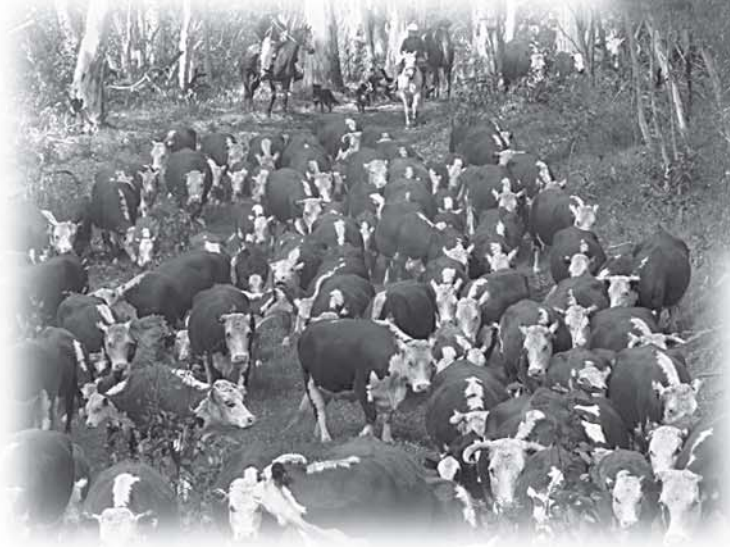
At Rose River valley the tall grasses wave, their families wait in the heat,  
the hum of the insects lulls the senses, where they've all come together to meet.  
The children's cries rouse up the parents, their heroes raise dust on the track,  
they've crossed the mighty high country, and the cattle, the cattle are back!

*Laurence Webb*





## CATTLE BELONG IN T



**Despite the loss of the licences in  
are still taking herds**

**The Turner mob was shifted back**

**We await similiar returns to t  
the Alpine N**

# THE HIGH COUNTRY



the Alpine National Park, cattlemen  
into the high country.

k to Nunniong in December 2005.

the iconic alpine meadows of  
ational Park.



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# The Auction

One hundred years of history will be auctioned here today  
One hundred years of history will be auctioneered away.  
One hundred years of labour, of sweat and dust and fight  
One hundred years of farming, to me it don't seem right.

The local paper ran the add ... let all the district know  
A 'clearing sale' on Thursday, all items had to go.  
The terms were strictly cash or cheque and auction rules applied  
The show would start at 12-oo clock ... local agents would preside.

Well a picnic atmosphere prevailed when I arrived at ten  
The parking lot was full of utes and sturdy farming men.  
The CWA was catering and had the Bar B Que fired up  
In the back of every second ute was a Kelpie and a pup.

I studied all the people there, they came from 'round the place  
Hard working folk in working clothes, the lined and weathered face.  
They all yelled a hearty "g'day mate" or "ow yer goin bloke"  
And they studied all the items as they slowly rolled a smoke.

Well the crowd had built up nicely as they studied all the gear  
At 12-o clock the hammer banged, then yelled the auctioneer.  
"step right up and don't be shy, call your bid out nice and loud"  
I felt a ripple of excitement, as a hush befell the crowd.

They started on the sundries first, all the shovels, picks and barrows  
Then through to farm machinery, the tractors, spreaders and harrows.  
Saddles and bridles, a horse drawn Jinker, all from a by gone day  
When all was gone ... just the property left ... I heard the Agent say.

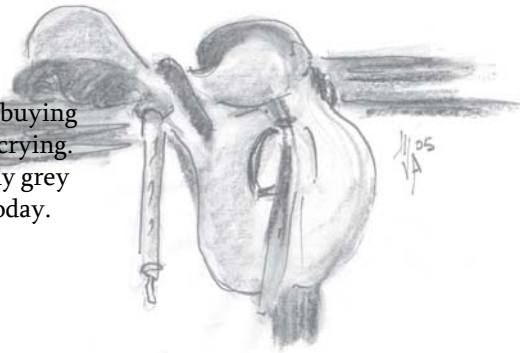
"One hundred years", he began, "one families worked this place  
but the drought and rising dollar have seen them fall from grace.  
so here's your opportunity, you could sub divide, you could expand  
what am I bid" said the Auctioneer "for this priceless piece of land"?

I went to the back of the crowd, for I would not be buying  
When I noticed an elderly couple, the Lady quietly crying.  
The old man stared ahead, his worried face a deathly grey  
One hundred years of history was auctioned here today.

One hundred years of memories .... the good times and the bad  
This land first cleared and farmed, by this mans fathers dad.  
The droughts and floods have always come, that's life upon the land  
But free trade talks and politics .... he could never understand.

Well my heart broke as I stood there, why must it come to this?  
The old man hugged his weeping wife, and soothed her with a kiss.  
"It's over now" he said to her "we'll be alright in town"  
as he turned away I saw his tears, his heartache and his frown.

One hundred years of history will be auctioned here today  
One hundred years of history will be auctioneered away.  
One hundred years of labour, of sweat and dust and fight  
One hundred years of farming, to me it don't seem right.



*Dennis Carstairs*

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# Still Battling: Fictional extracts from the diary of a mountain cattleman

SHARNA JOHNSON (OMEQ)

**24 May 2005**

## **(Day of Government Decision)**

A fully-grown man crying seems a little stupid, maybe even a little weak, but today I wasn't ashamed and I certainly wouldn't have been alone.

This morning I turned on the radio and with much apprehension listened to the familiar sounds of the ABC. I knew the news would be on and I worried about what I might hear. The words were like daggers to my heart. "Today a landmark decision was made, a decision that may see the end of an era for the Mountain Cattlemen of Victoria. The government has, after much deliberation, decided not to renew grazing licenses within the Alpine National Park," the announcer stated.

As a tear ran down my cheek I thought about my land and my family tradition. How could this be the end? Could we somehow keep on fighting? Could we somehow convince a higher power to let us continue with this practice. My family has successfully doing this for 170 years.

As a Mountain Cattleman I have endured many things, endless droughts, flooding rains and raging bushfires, yet I carry on working my land and moving my stock just as my father and his father before him had done. Writing this now I can't help but think that today's decision by the Bracks Government will be the end of my family tradition. I know at the very least it will be an emotional and financial strain to continue, not just for my family but for the 44 other families with licenses who, like me, have been denied any future grazing rights within the park.

We must continue, we have to continue ...

**9 July 2005**

## **(Day of Rally in Melbourne)**

Today we marched as one, a country voice united by our cause. Our army was strong with over five hundred riders and a thousand more on foot.

Like so many before us, we were battling for the right to be heard. We were fighting to claim a land that had been a part of us for longer than most could remember.

We were up before the sun, loaded the horses and left our camp in Berwick for the city. Arriving at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, I was pleased to see a large number of supporters, not only cattlemen, farmers and alike, but others from all walks of life. The place was packed with country people from all walks of life. There were bakers and publicans to schoolchildren. These community members too will be affected by the ban as our farming often provides the basis on which outback life and towns are formed. It is as much their plight as it is ours. Without the cattlemen, financial and social pressures will soon be passed on to these people, of this I am sure. I was surprised to see the range of other interest groups who were there to support us. From the expected four-wheel drive clubs and The Australian Deer Association to the obscure apiarist associations. These groups, like us, believe that this latest decision may be just the tip of an iceberg in the restriction of our livelihoods.

We left the MCG at around 11am. It was an astonishing feeling to be part of such a rally. It really reflected the spirit of the community and their disappointment in the government decision. I think this was exactly what we wanted to show the people of Melbourne. I rode beside Bruce McCormack, a fifth generation cattlemen, who carried Jake, his young grandson. As we rode into a sea of Akubras I saw an awe inspired grin spread across the young boys face. I wondered if he would ever get to experience a high country muster. But it is even more basic than that – would he even get to start school at his local primary. Would the people of Victoria just stand by as an inconsiderate government desecrated our culture and our livelihoods? Would they leave little Jake and his family to struggle until the almost inevitable day when they must leave their property?



On the steps of Flinders Street station was a young bloke, couldn't have been more than 25 years old and dressed real suave. I guess he was on his way to or from work. As I rode past I shot him a smile and to my delight he turned to me and with a big wave shouted, "Good on ya mate, stick up for your rights." It gave me a renewed sense of pride in what we were doing. We were there to show everyone that there were people out in the country and that needed their support so that they could continue supporting this great nation.

If that bloke was anything to go by, it seemed to be working! I guess I will just have to wait and see. The next election could prove interesting. Hopefully by then the people of Victoria will come to realise the devastating impact this decision will have on us and be able to do something about it.

As we reached Parliament House I looked across to those who oppose us. There couldn't have

been more than fifty of them. In a way I know what they were there for because I too know and cherish the beauty of the alpine region. I just wish they could understand that as a Mountain Cattleman I care for the high country as much as they do.

It is my home and my life, it is more a part of me than anything else, and I would do everything to protect it.

During the fires of 2003, many other cattlemen and I, were the first at the front and the very last to leave, defending, while the same bureaucracy taking away our grazing rights forced many others to stand by and watch the land burn. Our dedication to protecting this great land should be unquestionable yet this minority seems to be able to manipulate sections of the media and the government into portraying us as a destructive force out to ruin the environment.

Leaving Melbourne I could only think of one thing, how could I survive if nothing more could be done, if the decision was final? Tonight I turn to God, the creator of this great land we are all fighting to protect, and ask for his support and the support of all Victorians in this battle.

#### *A Simple Question?*

*If the cattle grazing that has been in the high country for more than a century is so bad, how come it is such a "pristine alpine environment" that the environmentalists must protect it from the very thing that has maintained it?*

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# Junction Plain 2005

It was hot and dusty, as per usual, and a large crowd gathered at Junction Plain in January 2005. Good food, good fun, good entertainment and a good time was had by all.

Our grateful thanks go to the management and staff of Cobungra Station, particularly Mark Shur for allowing us back at Junction Plain. Our thanks also to our main event sponsors Telstra Countrywide and Mazda.

Congratulations to all the winners of the events and good luck for this year!

Thanks to Frances Westbury and Sue Ryder for their photographs. As always, Frances particularly has thoroughly covered the weekend.

## ***Telstra Country Wide Great Australian Packhorse Race***

### **Ladies**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Ros Knight
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Prue Erikson
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Ann-Marie Forge

### **Mens**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Graeme Forge
- 2<sup>nd</sup> David Olsson
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Jim Keily

## ***Mazda Cattlemen's Cup***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Steven Boulton riding Harvey
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lincoln Adams riding Pilgrim
- 3<sup>rd</sup> David Olsson

## ***Mazda Junior Cattlemen's Cup***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Matt Maliki riding Missie
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Mitchell Ward riding Splash
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Darcy Wright riding Elle
- 4<sup>th</sup> Tim Wright riding Kena

## ***Wally Ryder Walking Race***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Michelle Seamons riding Skuta
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Robyn Cook riding Bloke
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Charles Connely riding Chev

## ***Junior Whipcracking***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Jenelle Kiely
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Jessica Bardebes
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Caleb Jenkins

## ***Juvenile Whipcracking***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Emma Higgins
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Luke Higgins
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Jack Stoddart

## ***Ladies Whipcracking***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Diana Hurley
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Aleshia Seivers
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Suzannah Keyte

## ***Open Whipcracking***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Diana Hurley
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Brad Goonan
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Rodney Decker

## ***Ladies Haystacking***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Annette Miller and 'Mitta'
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Chantelle and Bridget Fleming
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Rebecca Wright and Sarah Waite

## ***Mens Haystacking***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Trenton Day and David Mitchell
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Chris and Rex
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Bruno and Pickles

## ***Relay Race***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Team Higgins
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Team Hicks

## ***Tug-o-War***

- Ladies Fig Jam
- Mens To and Fro

## ***Dog High Jump***

- 1<sup>st</sup> Suzanne Sims with Jessie
- =1<sup>st</sup> Suzanne Sims with Rocca
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Brett Lancaster with ?
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Ros Knight with ?

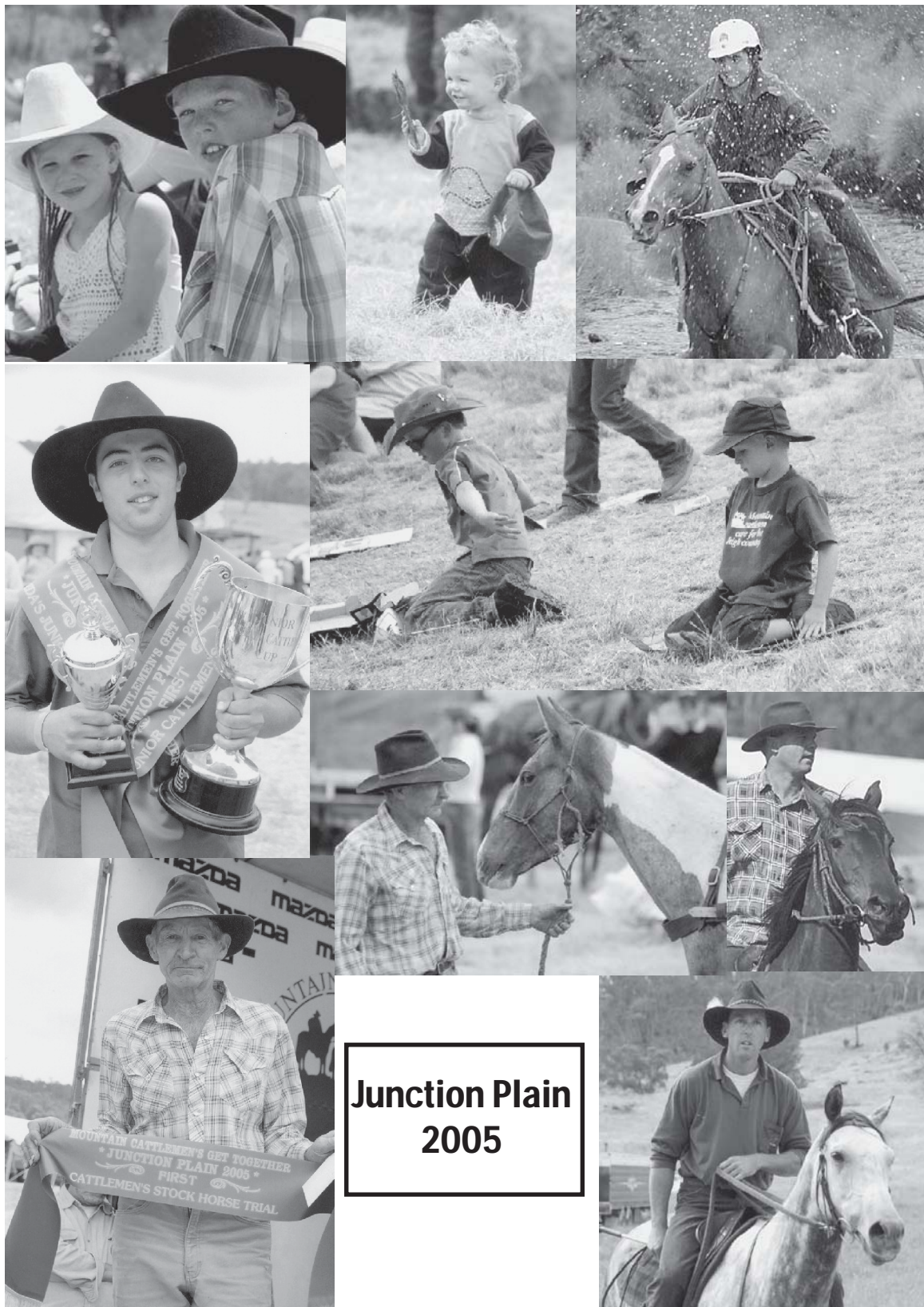
## ***Bushmens Challenge***

### **Ladies**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Allison Mitchell & Sharlee Connley
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Diana Hurley & Aleshia Sievers
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Kelly Lovick & Megan Rysenberg

### **Mens**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Jim & Aaron Kiely
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Craig Eaton & Ashleigh Day
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Paul Zabilowich & Matt Kiely



**Junction Plain  
2005**





**Junction Plain  
2005**







**Junction Plain  
2005**



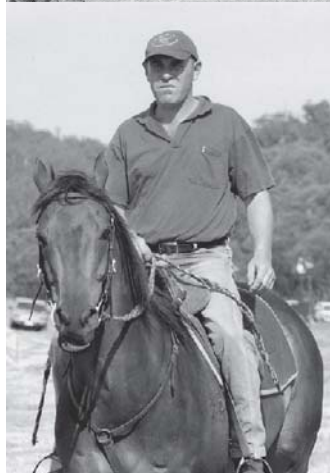
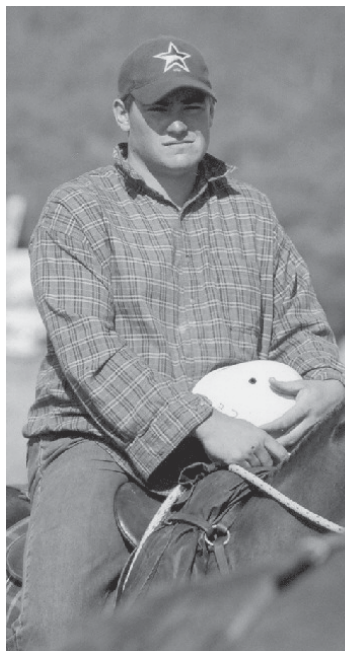




**Junction Plain  
2005**







**Junction Plain  
2005**



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# Presidents, their spouses and families

**Since its inception in 1969, the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria has had only eight Presidents.**

They were

- Jack Treasure was the inaugural President and a founding member of the association. Jack served from 1969 to 1976.

- Jim Commins from Ensay followed and spent an incredible ten years in the hot seat.

- David Treasure from Castleburn then served three years from 1987 to 1989.

- Doug Treasure of Stratford followed with a four year term ending in 1993.

- Mary Goldsworthy was the association's only female President and served from 1994 to 1996.

- Harry Ryder from Tawonga continued the north-east tradition from 1997 to 1999.

- Simon Turner from Bindi spent an enormous six years at the helm completing his term in 2005.

- Doug Treasure became the only cattleman to hold the position for two non-consecutive terms when he was elected in 2005.

Sadly our first two Presidents are no longer with us but their achievements and thoughts on various issues are well documented in a number of issues of *Voice of the Mountains*.

But how many of us know about our other Presidents? The opening message in each issue of *Voice* gives us only a brief hint of the magnitude and enormous contribution each of them made to the association. A close read of the Annual General Meeting minutes (at the end of each issue of *Voice*) only serves to re-inforce the fact that each and every one of them gave an incredible amount of time and effort to the association.

How did they do it? Well behind every President is a very understanding spouse and family - although some of the littlies at that time may not totally agree!

One common theme that all spouses eschewed was the never ending telephone calls day and night. By the end of a President's term, all spouses and even the youngest of children, had gained the skills

equal to the top receptionist! Some even gained the ability to cleverly deflect those callers who always 'had to talk with. ...and no-one else would do'. And not forgetting those callers who just liked to ring up 'for a chat' just as you were sitting down for tea as a family for the first time that week!

Perhaps one of the most tangible results at the end of a term was the sudden decrease in the telephone bills. And these days, the electronic rubbish bin is just wonderful.

Another common theme shared by all was what felt like an endless round of meetings which all seemed to be held in far away places. These of course would invariably last for half an hour but took four hours to get there and four hours to get home. And of course they were only organized the day before, so either the calves didn't get their 5-in-1 or the wool classer had to be put off for another day.

Although there are still meetings to attend, the new meeting system - telephone conferencing - has helped with the pressure of attending so many meetings. While it has taken a lot of travelling off the agenda, it doesn't help when the President demands quiet when the conference call is on. That invariably occurs at the same time as piano (clarinet - just name the instrument) practice or just as world war 47 has erupted all over again (kids arguing for uninitiated). But as one President is reported as saying '.... the best bit (of the conference call) is the trip home'. Amen from all of us.

Having Dad as a President wasn't all fun. In fact, the kids often got a raw deal. No matter how well organized and pre-booked the President was, there always seemed to be that missed sports day, no help with the homework or the taxi service for footy practice was AWOL.

When Dad was away, suddenly the kids became the unpaid workforce. While many of the kids were older and could help after school and on weekends, some of the smaller children made great advancements in learning various facets of farm work. They should all take a bow and receive a thunderous round of applause for everything they helped with, or did 'just to get the job done' (especially so Mum could have five minutes rest).

Thanks kids!

And then there was 'THE MEDIA'.

It didn't matter whether it was print or television. They all wanted to come on the same day, but never at the same time. And they always wanted cattle and a horseman for THAT photo! So either the other half or the unpaid workforce were sent to catch a horse and bring in the nearest mob of cattle. And then everybody waited. And waited; sometimes for half an hour, sometimes for half a day and sometimes, even until the next day.

In the meantime, the kids had eaten the scones, 'el Presidente' has become a caged lion with a headache and the work piles up on farm and in the house.

Radio – now that was another ball game altogether. First there was the general enquiry. Easy. The kids screaming in the background, Big Bird and the Sesame Street gang full on in the next room (sounded like it was right beside the telephone) and a rooster telling the world of his prowess. Yes, yes. All will be quiet at the time. Grab the kids and down to the front of the house or out into the garden.

Kids are easy but why do dogs know when a radio interview is on? Ditto for bulls. The dogs start barking at the bull that's busted the gate down and is bellowing out challenges to all, both near and far - precisely at the moment the radio interview begins!

Was it a good interview? Did you hear it? How did it go? You know darn well that the ten to fifteen minutes of interview will end up as thirty seconds to one minute of airplay. And when you listen to the interview, you just know that the most pertinent bits will be left out, courtesy of the outside sound effects.

Anything else about being a President's better half? Well those Get-togethers and invited guests give us all a set of jelly legs and a burning desire to hide in the camp or get back in the car and go home. By the Sunday, all thoughts of looking clean, fresh and full of enthusiasm to meet the pollies has been left at home. Your clothes smell of smoke or are covered in dust, the portable shower trailer has no hot water and all that you want is a long hot soaking bath. And that's just you.

Presidents in white moleskins? Clean white moleskins? After three days in camp?

We have to give it to the pollies. They arrive on Sunday all fresh and squeaky clean and in their



best 'cattlemen's clobber'. A quick look up and down but nary a word although there's an occasional raised eyebrow. Still after three days camping, just being nice is a big call.

If you're really lucky and you're a President's wife with small children, then that's even more fun. Just as you are about to shake hands with the VIP, up comes a melting ice cream with a kid attached. The damp face washer isn't stuffed in the back pocket and the VIP gives a lovely grimacing smile with a look that says 'don't let that near me'.

Of course, Get-togethers with older kids aren't much better. There you are being nice and at the same time, trying to see whether big brother is drowning little sister in the river. Or giving that teenager the dragon look – don't approach under any circumstances – but they do and yes here's another \$5 and don't come back.

As time passes, we spouses can look back and have a chuckle over the little things that seemed so major and so demanding at the time. The role of President isn't just a one person show. Family play an integral role in supporting the President. Each of us is very proud of our own President and what he/she achieved for the association.

*This article was contributed by Bill Goldsworthy, Sue Ryder, Jenny Treasure, Mary Treasure and Rowena Turner.*

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## Graeme Stoney to leave Parliament

Graeme Stoney (former political animal and Executive Officer for the MCAV) has decided not to seek pre-selection for the 2006 state election.

He is proud of his contribution to the Liberal Party and to the people of the Central Highlands during both the Kennett Government and Opposition years.

At the next election, he will have been in Parliament for fourteen years. He will have served eleven years on the all-party Road Safety Committee, four years as the Upper House Opposition Whip and as the Liberal Spokesperson for Forestry.

In one of his most recent speeches to Parliament he said:

*I have been involved in the cattlemen's fight for survival since I was 20, and that fight led me to be elected to this place.*

*The announcement of the total removal of the cattle from the park breaks a legislated promise to have seven-year renewable licences. The promise was made by the Cain government in order that agreement could be reached to create the massive Alpine National Park, and that happened in 1989. Part of the agreement was that cattle were to be taken off the higher exposed peaks on the north Bogongs and the Bluff. The cattlemen*

*sacrificed vast tracts of grazing land, with 10 families losing everything, which meant 90 per cent of the new park was closed to grazing back then.*

*The Bracks government has broken the agreement; it has now taken the remaining 10 per cent of the land for cheap political gain.*

*I believe the Bracks government has been shift in the way it went about destroying the cattlemen. The government says the cattlemen can move to adjoining forest areas — this is complete rubbish! The government has miscalculated the deep support for the cattlemen in the general community, and it has miscalculated the latent anger about poor public land management. People are going to hate the advertising campaign which is taking money away from proper land management measures, for example, to control blackberries and feral animals.*

*Destroying the cattlemen may be the catalyst to eventually bringing down the Bracks government. There are thousands of people in this state who say this cannot come soon enough.*

The MCAV will miss his contribution to the debates in Parliament but no doubt the present government will not! When he leaves Parliament in November 2006, he intends to pursue business interests and will continue to be involved with the rural issues that put him in Parliament in the first place.

David and Dianna Guy  
invite you to stay at the

### *Wonnangatta Caravan Park*

Powered Sites, Kiosk, Mechanical Repairs  
and Petrol available

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# When will they learn to listen to us?

## Letters To The Editor

### FIGHTING FIRE MENACE WITH PLANES

To the Editor of "Stock and Land"

Sir,—Disastrous grass fires sweep through some parts of the State almost every summer doing an enormous amount of damage, destroying livestock, homes and property amounting to hundreds of thousands of pounds, and in many cases resulting in the loss of human life. I would like to make a few suggestions on what I think is a feasible means of controlling the fire menace in both the forest areas and grasslands.

Why not fight this menace with modern weapons—aircraft specially fitted for the purpose of carrying water or fire-extinguishing chemicals? Planes capable of carrying up to say 2000 gallons of water each, manned by efficient crews standing by during the summer months for a call to any point in their allotted district could be situated at, say, three different posts in the State: Central Gippsland, North-east and Central Victoria.

Look-out towers radio equipped could immediately report any sign of fire to headquarters and within about half an hour a fighting force of ten planes carrying 20,000 gallons could be in action against the fire.

No grass fire could stand up to the onslaught of say ten planes each coming in one behind the other just in front of the advancing line of fire jetting downwards under pressure a stream of water from a height of two or three hundred feet. Where natural obstacles seriously delay land vehicles planes could handle the situation expeditiously.

Even the burning of breaks to check an oncoming fire could be done by planes at great speed and the line of fire thus lit could be followed up on the side to be extinguished by other planes jetting water. In a similar manner, planes could be used to protect forest areas throughout the mountains of Victoria. Look-out stations could be situated at such vantage points as to command a maximum view of the surrounding districts.

Immediately any indication of fire was seen, its exact location could be reported to headquarters.

If by the use of planes, fire could be completely controlled throughout Victoria and adjoining States, and I don't see why it could not be, visibility would be considerably improved as there would be no continuous pall of smoke during the summer months. Fires starting under this pall, whether by natural means, accident or

deliberately lit, gain great proportion before they are located.

If fires were immediately extinguished, smoke from other fires starting could be seen at a great distance from towers or planes sent out for the purpose of spotting.

I do not advocate absolute cessation of burning in the bushy country because this policy means a hoarding up of bush debris for years which is a continuous menace. In the non-forest areas it would be necessary to burn at the "safe" time of the year by judicious responsible people qualified for the job and under the direction of the Forestry Commission. This would give great protection to the forest areas.

I know it would involve great expense to set up these outposts, plane bases, and man team. But those people who have lived in and seen the devastating destruction to country scorched by fire know the enormous losses involved.

If a start is made along these lines there should be no limit to the modern science of fire-fighting by planes and we would soon be looking back on the dark days of the fire menace.

This is just a rough outline of what could be done if we want to preserve our forests and save the enormous losses from grass fires.

S. J. TREASURE.

Dargo High Plains, Dargo.

Who was listening back in the fifties when founding MCAV cattleman Jack Treasure advocated the use of aerial bombing of fires in the alpine country?

Harry Ryder recently found a copy of this letter that Jack sent to the *Stock and Land* where he advocates the investigation of the establishment of "lookout towers with radio equipment" that could immediately report any sign of fire and the development of a fleet of planes. Planes with the potential to carry water to bomb any fire outbreak.

The cattlemen have always had the insight into the how to care for the Victoria's iconic alpine country. It just seems that you must have a string of letters after your name and not just a lifetime of your own experience and the knowledge of those before you before anyone will listen.

Below: "Elvis" during the 2003 fire campaign.



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## What makes Simon Turner tick?



*Simon and Harry deep in conference.*

How many bright young and fresh faced 35 year olds would volunteer to give away twelve years of their life to a cause that had a lot of hope, but eventually died because of the hand of politics?

Simon Turner is just such a person.

In October 1999, Simon Turner was elected President of the MCAV. Although he was known around Omeo and district, many cattlemen and supporters knew little of Simon or his credentials for the position. But as time passed, Simon's flair for politics combined with his shrewd negotiating skills, endured him to all.

So who is this Simon Turner?

Simon was born in Omeo and grew up at Bindi. He attended Swifts Creek Primary School and after completing his secondary schooling (at boarding school in Melbourne) gained his Wool Classers Certificate from the Melbourne College of Textiles.

Going home to the farm straight away wasn't on Simon's agenda. He was off to see the world. Wanderlust saw him head for West Australia, but the rest of the world awaited. So off to Bangkok and from there, all parts west until he reached England.

But like all young bucks, true love had to be somewhere. And lo and behold, in the backyard – so to speak – he found Rowena Soutter of Benambra. In fact, Simon didn't attend the Omeo branch Get-together at Junction Plain one year. He was too busy helping Rowena move into a flat at Bairnsdale. (He was a little bit smitten as the future mother-in-law noted!).

Love won out and in 1987 he married Rowena. They settled at Bindi and in 1991 Lauren was born, followed by James in 1994.

A gallivanting young bloke. Doesn't sound like a mountain cattleman. Just how many mountain CATTLEmen are wool classers anyway? Field lice were banned from the alps well before Simon was even a twinkle in his parent's eyes.

But at Bindi there were cattle on the farm and in the bush. And an old cattlemen with a lifetime of experience in the bush – Mick Murphy.

Mick's family were amongst the earliest settlers in the Omeo region and there are many Murphy descendants still living in the district. Mick Murphy owned a small farm at Bindi and in

conjunction with Fred Harding, held a grazing licence on Nunnet on the Nunniong Plateau.

Mick was to become Simon's mentor for all things 'bushie'. Mick was once quoted as saying Simon has 'a real affinity for the bush'. Over the years Simon gained a solid understanding of the interaction of the seasons with the local flora and fauna. And of course, about cattle. And horses too. Especially ones who liked to sit down.

"Fair Dinkum"! You'd have thought Mick Murphy would have taught Simon how to ride a horse and keep it moving. Not let it sit down like a dog.

After Fred Harding died, Graeme and Janet Turner took over Fred's share in the grazing licence. When Mick Murphy died his family retained their share thus continuing their connection with bush grazing.

So with all this knowledge, Simon joined the Omeo branch of the MCAV and was elected Vice-President in 1993 and Branch President in 1995. From there it was a logical step-up to being President of the association.

The mountain cattlemen have been very fortunate to have Simon as their President for a very long six years. Likewise Simon's family who often found themselves put in second place (and the farm in third place).

Now that he's had his time as being top dog, what next? But whatever he does in the future, it will be done with the cattlemen's blessing for a job well done over the last ten years.

Thank you Simon.



*There once was a bushie called Turner,  
who reckoned he wasn't a learner.  
He could ride any horse  
whatever the course  
but "Fair Dinkum" turned out to be sterner.*



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Mountain Cattlemen's  
Association of Victoria Incorporated held on Tuesday 30 August 2005  
in the boardroom of the  
Victorian Farmers Federation, Farrer House,  
24 Collins Street, Melbourne commencing at 10.30 a.m.**

***Present***

David Treasure, Doug Treasure, Jim Treasure, Philip Maguire, Charlie Lovick, Glenda Lovick, Chris Commins, John Cook, Rusty Connley, Graeme Stoney, Sue Briggs, Frank Ryan, Kathy Junor, Rosemary Osborne, Bruce McCormack, Pauline Venn, Chris Hodge, Clive Hodge, Harry Ryder, Brian Higgins, Ross Brown, Peter Monds, Janine Cooper, Simon Turner, Tim Barker

***Apologies***

Bill and Mary Goldsworthy, Ian and Peter Roper, Sue and Colin Reynolds.

***Minutes***

It was moved by Bruce McCormack and seconded by Doug Treasure, "That the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 21 October 2004 and circulated in issue 28 of the *Voice of the Mountains*, be adopted. CARRIED

***Annual Report***

President and Secretary reported on activities of the past year.

**1 What happened in 2004/05**

This first section sets down a description of what culminated in the banning of cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park. It includes a few assumptions that people might query and some guesswork about internal government machinations.

Parks Victoria has been opposed to alpine grazing for many years.

The mining and forestry industries gave up access to National Parks in the 80s (forestry) and the 90s (mining). Cattle grazing was the last commercial utilisation of National Parks in Victoria, outside tourism.

In the 1980s the MCAV took a political stance and opposed the ALP in the Nunawading by-election. It is now a matter of conjecture as to whether this influenced the decision by the Bracks Labor Government.

The 2003 alpine fires burnt many grazing runs and, within some sections of Parks Victoria considered that it would be up to ten years before they could be utilised for grazing.

It was suspected that Parks Victoria knew that a combination of licences expiring in August 2005 and the fires could be used to remove alpine grazing.

The Victorian National Parks Association increased the profile of its campaign against alpine grazing.

The Government decided to review alpine grazing with a backbench Labor Taskforce. As it was not a bipartisan committee, and consisted of ALP members only, the Taskforce was justifiably accused of being used to rationalise the end of alpine grazing.

Arguments floated back and forth about whether the Government wanted to ban alpine grazing to strengthen the likelihood of getting preferences from the Greens or whether a ban would effectively demolish a part of the Green's platform.

The MCAV fought back with visits, papers and a sustained media campaign and it appeared that public support was swinging behind the mountain cattlemen.

Some of those newly involved in this issue seemed to swing more in our favour as they became exposed to our arguments.

There was a significant amount of scientific argument about the adverse impacts of cattle. We had our eminent scientists but were outweighed by the sheer volume of work highlighting adverse impacts. Argument will continue about the validity of much of the scientific work and whether it too often sought to identify and measure adverse impacts. The fact is, of course, that cattle do have an impact, the same as tourism, skiing and other visitor use. Fundamentally, the issue often got down to philosophical positions about whether cattle grazing was an appropriate use of a National Park.

Throughout the long review by the Alpine Grazing Taskforce, the only political party to support the mountain cattlemen was the National Party.

In January 2005, a rally was considered but there was support for a smaller group of mounted cattlemen to come to Melbourne at the end of January for two days.

By March 2005 it seemed that the Government was wishing it had not raised the issue and had allowed the licences to be renewed.

In meetings with the Minister in April and May, it seemed that he was unlikely to completely ban alpine grazing and was looking for a compromise position. On leaving meetings with the Minister, mountain cattlemen remarked that he did not seem to be leading up to a complete ban.

Eventually pushed to make a decision, the Government seemed to decide to stick to its earlier apparent policy, get on with it and ban alpine grazing from the Alpine National Park.

As the announcement unfolded, the amount of investment by the Government in this decision became clear. Moreover, the Government almost painted itself into a corner from which it could not compromise or change its mind. The investment included:

- The Premier was involved with the Deputy Premier in this announcement. This means the whole Government had a stake in making this decision acceptable and for it to stick.
- Full page colour advertisements in newspapers and radio advertising
- Introducing legislation on the same day as the announcement
- Support for the decision by eminent scientists and green groups
- Questions lined up for Question Time in the Legislative Assembly
- The DSE website was set up with the news
- The Parks Victoria website was set up to ask for volunteers to register to help “fix up” the Alpine National Park.
- The Government had the balance of power in the Legislative Council and could pass the required legislation without hindrance.
- A sustained and obviously orchestrated blaze of letters from people supporting the ban flooded newspapers.

The investment supporting the decision could not have been put together in the last few days when we thought we were still negotiating with the Minister and his office. Clearly the decision was in prospect and the public relations investment was being put together well before the announcement. If we had been able to strike a deal, the public relations investment supporting the ultimate decision could have been switched off.

That last gasp negotiation came to nothing and the decision was announced and the public relations investment was unleashed together with the scurrilous advertising and hyper-spin.

Some within the MCAV have been prepared to reluctantly accept the inevitable decision, “move on”, accept the compensation, look for a better deal in the State Forest. Even if the decision was reversed, the war about alpine grazing would continue.

Several in our community of interest proposed a major rally at Parliament House. The grazing ban became the so-called “lightening rod” to galvanise together, a group of rural people disenchanted with the Government. Country Voice and the June 9 rally was born.

The rally consisted of five hundred on horseback and about seven hundred and fifty on foot.

The Federal Government granted emergency national heritage listing. At the time of writing, where this listing might take us is only starting to crystalize.

The Liberal Party now swung in favour of the mountain cattlemen and promised a return of alpine grazing. This commitment was dulled by the possibility that, even if the conservative parties regained government, the Upper House might be controlled by the Greens.

The legislation sailed through both Houses in four days. The Association was able to achieve just one minor amendment. The opposition parties spoke valiantly but their lack of numbers meant they would have no impact.

## **2 Why the licences should have been renewed**

A paper outlining all the reasons why alpine grazing licences should have been renewed is on the MCAV’s website.

Go to [mcav.com.au](http://mcav.com.au)

Go to “News”

Go to “The case for renewal of alpine grazing licences in 2005 (pdf file 500kb)”

You can also read the MCAV’s submission to the Alpine Grazing Taskforce.

Go to “2004 campaign”

## **3 Dismay at the Government’s decision**

The savage nature of the Government’s decision to ban alpine grazing from the Alpine National Park is now sinking in. There is an overwhelming sense of bitterness, resentment and betrayal.

One supporter said that when she heard news she sat in front of the television and sobbed.

Some of our members will be forced off their farms and have been devastated. We know of one member who has already been forced to sell part of the farm. Others may well become unviable and not be able to hand their operations on to their children.

We are grateful for the many messages of strong support from associate members, from members of the public and from other groups representing people who access public land.

There is fierce anger in the country across many issues and we expect there to be several occasions when this can be expressed. The alpine grazing issue will prove to be a catalyst that will galvanise many rural people and public land user groups into action. The intense feeling

is not just in the country. Many urban-based people who access public land are incensed and fearful about their own activities. Clearly there is a growing list of groups disenchanted with a series of Government decisions and the name of the MCAV has now been added. As recently as November 2003, the Environment Minister said, in Parliament, "Alpine grazing is a licensed activity and will continue as a licensed activity."

We have met with the Federal Government to consider national heritage issues. We know we have the strong and unequivocal support of the Australian Government. We are now waiting to see how this will translate into positive action. The main point however is that the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia supports mountain cattlemen and alpine grazing.

Sadly the Alpine Grazing Taskforce report utterly failed to come to grips with the most perplexing issue about the grazing of cattle in the Alpine National Park. This issue is why textbook and urban based theory conflicts with on-ground experience based knowledge. Unravelling this conundrum is the key to understanding the conflict about grazing cattle in the Alpine National Park.

We have been disappointed at the continuing misrepresentation of the area of the Alpine National Park that has been grazed. Even recently, in Parliament, Labor members were talking about half the park being grazed. For the past year, and direct to the Minister and the taskforce, we have been saying that licence areas could be reviewed to give a clear indication of the actual area that is grazed. This could have resulted in a fall from a perception of 50% of the Alpine National Park being grazed to less than 20% and probably about 15%. More recently our estimates have taken this percentage down to 10%. To this extent, the decision is based on a misrepresentation.

At the end of the day, we should remember that the land was good enough, with alpine grazing, to be proclaimed as a national park.

#### **4 The MCAV media release on the Government's decision**

The decision to remove cattle grazing from the Alpine National Park has devastated mountain cattlemen, consigned a 170 year-old widely loved tradition to the dusty shelves of history and killed off some of the cattle industry's crucial store of post-drought breeding stock.

This decision will force some of our members off their farms. It will be the end of the generational transfer of some farming properties that have had licences in the Park area for 170 years. It will be a devastating and

tragic day for some members of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria.

We are now looking to the Federal Government to honour its pre-election promise. We will be calling the Federal Government's lifeline. The Australian Government has supported alpine grazing. During the Federal election campaign, Coalition members including the Prime Minister all supported alpine grazing. After the election, Environment and Heritage Minister, Ian Campbell Minister wrote: "The Australian Government supports the continuation of alpine grazing as the embodiment of a key element of our outstanding national heritage." The Federal Minister for the Environment, the Hon, Ian Campbell has said, "I have stated publicly that if the Victorian Government does make a decision that threatens alpine grazing, I will reconsider the question of emergency listing."

Federal Coalition obviously saw the electoral advantage in supporting the mountain cattlemen. Mountain cattlemen were supported by the Member for Gippsland, the Minister for Environment and Heritage and the Prime Minister.

Future generations will condemn this Government for killing off living history. Minister Thwaites has plunged a knife deep into the heart of Victoria's history.

We will look forward to the day when sense prevails and cattle grazing is reintroduced to remove fire fuel and to keep a healthy and dynamic grassland.

#### **5 The Alpine Grazing Taskforce Report**

The report of the Alpine Grazing Taskforce is on the Victorian Government website.

[dse.vic.gov.au](http://dse.vic.gov.au)

Go to "Parks and Reserves"

Go to "A new beginning for the Alpine National Park"

Here are some comments on the report:

- The report sometimes gives the impression that the Alpine National Park is wall-to-wall with cattle. The 650,000 hectare Alpine National Park carries less than 8000 cattle for about 16 weeks each year. This is a stocking rate equivalent of one cow per 80 hectares.
- The report sometimes reads as if the cattlemen do not think their cattle have any impact. Obviously there are impacts. The real issue is, that these impacts are acceptable.
- There is considerable reference to water quality. There are accusations that alpine grazing damages water quality. However, it needs to be remembered that if the cattle were not in the high country, they would be on their home properties, dropping the same cowpats in catchments that



eventually flow into reservoirs etc. Furthermore, on their home properties, these cowpats would be dropped much closer to reservoirs. There are millions of domestic, native and introduced creatures on Victorian land, which is all part of our water catchment. Whether about 8000 cows are located on alpine pastures or their home properties would not make the slightest difference to water quality. It would be interesting to estimate the amount of water actually held in mossbeds and compare this with the amount of water held in reservoirs.

- The report contains a reasonable review of the heritage issues. However, the question still arises, if there are heritage and cultural values, why now remove alpine grazing. In Melbourne, if a building is regarded as having heritage and cultural values it is retained. It is not just photographed and then pulled down.

- The report diminishes the importance of a study that supports alpine grazing and then embraces, without substantiation, a study that opposes alpine grazing.

- The report has a curious view of the input by the Australian government. It quotes a submission to the task force from the Department of Environment and Heritage that opposes alpine grazing but does not report the comments of the Minister and the Prime Minister which are supportive of the continuation of alpine grazing.

- It is questioned in several places as to whether it is necessary to continue alpine grazing in order to maintain heritage and cultural values. The report is supportive of the cattlemen but suggests that the cultural values can be respected and displayed without a continuation of alpine grazing. In several sections it is suggested that the traditional activity (alpine grazing) does not have to continue to exist for the community to benefit from the traditions. On the other hand, how much more valuable are the cultural and heritage values if the activity continues? In several places the report seeks to drive a wedge between cattlemen and their cattle.

- The report talks about wilderness zone being "little-modified" areas even though some of these have been grazed for more than 100 years and continue to be grazed today. The report seems to waft too easily between the damage that has been caused by cattle and the near pristine environment of the Alpine National Park.

- The report notes the emergency nomination for heritage listing. To be fair, the report should have included the statement by the Minister that indicated that an emergency nomination could be reconsidered should alpine grazing be threatened.

- The report notes the MCAV as putting to the task force that "some individual licence areas could be reduced in size to better reflect where cattle actually grazed." Actually, the Association has put the following note to the Minister: "Licence areas to be reviewed by Parks Victoria and MCAV to give a clear indication of the actual area that is grazed. This should result in a fall from a perception of 50% of the Alpine National Park being grazed to less than 20% and probably about 15%. Boundaries need not be redrawn, just a more accurate perception developed."

- There are good references to the Association's "Alpine Grazing Management Plan" and this, together with some suggested inclusions, clearly points to how alpine grazing could have been continued.

## 6 Final proposal to Government

Most of the material we put together in the course of this work is on our website. One submission not on the web is the final proposal we put to the Government. These are the main components of this submission:

6.1 Renew all the licences. The loss of any more alpine grazing licences would cut out the heart and soul of alpine grazing. The MCAV cannot accept any more licence reductions. This "line-in-the-sand" time.

6.2 Parks Victoria to deal with MCAV on when burnt licence areas can be accessed again.

6.3 Parks Victoria and MCAV develop a cattle management plan along the lines proposed by Professor David Kemp (a member of the Parks Victoria Scientific Advisory Panel). It should include environmental management systems and adaptive management and draw on the management plan proposed, and widely circulated, by the MCAV. (Put simply, adaptive management involves putting some cattle on licence areas, assessing the impact and then gradually increasing numbers to the full licence allocation.)

6.4 MCAV to undertake administration of the licences to reduce the cost to Parks Victoria. Currently cattlemen on Snake Island collect licence fees and hand this on to Parks Victoria.



*The inspection party, including Professor David Kemp and cattlemen on the Bogong High Plains.*



6.5 Selected cattlemen to become "Licence Supervisors" in conjunction with Parks Victoria, to lessen need for Parks Victoria to undertake supervisory work.

6.6 Parks Victoria and MCAV to develop a plan to have mountain cattlemen take on a more formal role in monitoring the Alpine National Park, performing some "ranger" roles and being involved in the "co-operative ventures" outlined in the MCAV's management plan.

6.7 Licence areas to be reviewed by Parks Victoria and MCAV to give a clear indication of the actual area that is grazed. This should result in a fall from a perception of 50% of the Alpine National Park being grazed to less than 20% and probably about 15%. Boundaries need not be redrawn, just a more accurate perception developed.

## **7 Alpine grazing licences - just another campaign to the greens, but it's the heart and soul for the mountain cattlemen.**

Prior to the release of the Alpine Grazing Taskforce report and the Environment Minister's decision, MCAV President, Simon Turner, said the loss of any more alpine

grazing licences would cut the heart and soul out of the tradition of taking cattle up onto the high plains each summer.

There is a sorry tale of licence terminations that stretches back over several decades. Each time there has been a termination, the ecological lobby group opposing us have said that is all they want. On every occasion, the new licence terminations have been the starting point for their next campaign.

The mountain cattlemen have had enough of this death by a thousand cuts. We cannot accept any more licence reductions. This is "line-in-the-sand" time.

Past experience makes it very clear that the ecological lobby groups will never be satisfied. We doubt the current issue is of great importance to those opposing us. It is just another part of the long campaign by the VNPA to maintain their relevance and funding. Remember, there has already been a series of terminations of licences over the past 40 years, at least, and each time the greens have said that is all they want.

The greens are already lining up their next battle along the Murray and in the Barmah forest. They live for these battles and the alpine grazing licence issue is just another stoush along the way. This is becoming increasingly obvious to the community.

The community is turning away from the carping of the strident greens. A recent poll has shown that people now regard 'jobs' as more important than the 'environment'. This is a significant reversal on recent years.

The Australian Government was awake to the greens in the Federal Election and saw the obvious electoral advantage in supporting the mountain cattlemen. Mountain cattlemen were supported by the Member for Gippsland, the Minister for Environment and Heritage and the Prime Minister. They knew what the community wanted and were re-elected despite the worst protestations of the greens.

## **8 Strengthening the hold on State Forest licences**

Mountain cattlemen are now moving to strengthen their hold on State Forest licences. At the time of the Government's decision, the Minister said, "...some areas of state forest in the general vicinity of the park that are currently unlicensed or may be under allocated may be able to accommodate additional cattle. The Department of Sustainability and Environment will work with licensees to assess areas which licensees may consider to be suitable to their needs." (Second Reading Speech)

We expected that this would be virtually impossible because on several previous occasions such as following the 2003 fires, the State Forest licence area was scoured for more grazing areas.

Since July, mountain cattlemen have been making inquiries about cattle grazing issues and the availability of State Forest licences.

There have been requests for:

- meetings on the containment of cattle on State Forest licences
- information regarding location of current licences
- clarification of changes to occur with expiration of Alpine National Park licences and impacts on managing forest licences

Outcomes from the inquiries had resulted in:

- A state forest licensee agreeing to accommodate expired Alpine National Park licence within his forest licence allocation.
- Provision of information to licence holders regarding boundaries.
- Distribution of Expressions of Interest forms to licensees.
- Facilitate resolution of specific licence issues by providing links to other DSE staff.

Some licensees have indicated an interest in new licences or changes to boundaries or allocations.

Members have been urged to make application for State Forest licences or send expressions of interest to DSE for new licence areas.

## 9 10,000 cattle in State Forest licences?

The Government's statement included the following statement regarding the supposed 10,000 cattle on State Forest licences. Clearly the Government considered this important in gaining the community's support for its decision.

"Mr Thwaites said high country grazing was a significant part of our history but those heritage values would not be lost with cattle grazing to continue outside the boundaries of the Park. There will still be high country grazing in State forests, with licences continuing for about 10,000 cattle, covered by about 150 licences," he said. "Many of those who hold licences for the Alpine National Park also hold licences to graze in State forests."

Closer examination of this statement revealed that the number of cattle might be substantially less than 10,000.

### 9.1 *Licences adjacent to the Alpine National Park*

The following sets out the manner in which many mountain cattlemen are left with State Forest licence area adjacent to the Alpine National Park

- Before the proclamation of the Alpine National Park, a licence holder had a run with an allocation of, say, 100 cattle.

- The licence area under consideration here is not in an iconic area such as the Bogong High Plains. The licence area is in a relatively "out of the way" area which has low visitation levels. There are four-wheel-drive tracks in the area, but no major tourist roads.

- The Alpine National Park was proclaimed and the boundary went through the pre-existing run.

- The pre-existing single licence was split into a licence for the Alpine National Park and a licence for the remaining State Forest licence area.

- There was some movement of cattle between the licence areas but, in general, the numbers allocated to each run (Park and Forest) were approximate enough for no-one to worry about head counts.

- The Alpine National Park licence will not now be renewed.

- Naturally, the remaining State Forest licence area abuts the Alpine National Park.

- The boundary between the State Forest licence area and the Alpine National Park, might be 20 kilometres long and not on a cattle proof geographical feature such as an escarpment or river.

- Cattle are likely to wander into the Alpine National Park.

- The individual State Forest licenceholders could not afford to fence the boundary, even if this was acceptable to the Government.

- It would be routine to inspect the cattle several times during a 20 week season and any straying cattle could be moved back onto the State Forest licence area. In a general sense, cattle would gradually learn to stay on the State Forest licence area but this could take 10 years.

- Salt could be used hold cattle on the State Forest licence area but would not prevent, absolutely, any cattle from straying into the Park.

- What will the attitude of the Government be to cattle wandering into the Park?



The Alpine Grazing Taskforce itself admitted that some licence areas abutting the Alpine National Park would become “unmanageable”.

#### *9.2 Some State Forest licences carry no cattle*

Local on-ground knowledge indicates that some landholders hold State Forest licences but do not use them for a range of reasons including the fact that the area that might have been grazed has become unpalatable to cattle because there has been too little fuel reduction burning.

#### *9.3 Some State Forest licences are not alpine runs*

It is difficult to get a clear picture on which runs are generally in alpine locations. There are a significant number of bush runs in lower altitudes and it is suspected that these runs have been included in the Government’s claim of 10,000 cattle on “high country grazing in State forests”.

#### *9.4 Not 10,000, more like 2,000 cattle*

In considering the Government’s statement that mountain cattlemen are running 10,000 cattle on State Forest licences, we need to:

Deduct 3,000 cattle that will not be able to graze on State Forest licences adjacent to the Alpine National Park unless boundary issues are resolved in a favourable and permanent manner.

Deduct another 3,000 cattle which are allocated to State Forest licences in mountain areas that are not used because of their poor quality following years of inadequate fuel reduction burning.

Additionally, many of the State Forest licences are not suitable for summer grazing because they have no water and are too fire prone.

The MCAV estimates that this brings the number currently on State Forest licences in mountain areas down to about 2,000.

## **10 National Heritage**

This is the media release issued by Australian Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator the Hon. Ian Campbell, on 26 May 2005

“The man from Snowy River - a unique heritage under threat

The Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Senator Ian Campbell, has agreed to initiate an emergency listing assessment of the Alpine National Park under the National Heritage Act. Senator Campbell today met representatives of the Mountain Cattlemen’s Association of Victoria to discuss the Victorian Government’s decision to unilaterally end 170 years of grazing in the Victorian high country.” In light of the decision by the Bracks

Labor Government to tear up the grazing licences held by these Australian families for six generations, I will be asking my department to provide an assessment on the emergency listing within 10 days,” Senator Campbell said.

“I intend to hold the Victorian Government accountable for the protection of this unique part of our Australian heritage. ”Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the Minister must make a decision on emergency listing within 10 working days.

“The Man from Snowy River is deep in the Australian psyche. This legend is part of Australia’s heritage that simply cannot be lost. It should be noted that these ‘men from Snowy River’ work just 7900 cattle over an enormous high country area of 340,000 hectares - the equivalent of just one animal every 23 MCGs.

“We need an outcome that fully protects both the natural and cultural heritage values of the park,” Senator Campbell said. We have discussed the nomination and what might flow from it on several occasions with the Minister and his staff.

We are monitoring developments in this area.<sup>11</sup> Government’s announcement banning alpine grazing

For the sake of the record, the following is the Government’s statement ending cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park

“High country grazing continues outside national park Cattle grazing will no longer be permitted in Victoria’s Alpine National Park, but will continue elsewhere in the high country, Premier Steve Bracks, said today.

Mr Bracks said the Government had made the decision to protect one of Victoria’s most significant natural assets and important water catchments. The Government will now work with the NSW and ACT Governments to seek World Heritage listing for the National Park.

“The decision on grazing will benefit future generations who wish to experience the beautiful Alpine areas,” Mr Bracks said. “At the same time the cultural and heritage values of cattle grazing will be preserved with grazing continuing in high country State Forests.

“The Alpine Park has high tourism potential, high conservation value and is home to 300 rare and threatened flora and fauna species, as well the headwaters to many of the State’s major rivers – including tributaries to the Snowy and Murray.

“There is overwhelming scientific evidence that cows as hard-hooved heavy animals are damaging the sensitive Alpine environment. ”The Alpine Grazing Taskforce established last year to investigate cattle grazing in the National Park found it damaged soil, with cattle trampling mossbeds and watercourses, threatening rare native flora and fauna and spreading weeds. There



*MCAV President Doug Treasure and Federal Environment Minister Senator Ian Campbell on the launch of the Federal Government's package aimed at returning alpine grazing to the Alpine National Park.*

are 61 cattle grazing licences in the Alpine National Park held by 45 nominated licensees. Most expire in August and will not be renewed, with the remaining four expiring in June next year. At present, it costs \$5.50 per head of cattle per season to graze in the Park. Mr Bracks said while the expiry of licences meant there was no obligation to buy them out, the Government believed it was fair to provide payments to allow licensees to make any transitional arrangements required, such as grazing cattle in other areas. The Government detailed a \$5.4 million package to accompany the announcement, including \$1.8 million for transitional payments to graziers of up to \$100,000 per operation\* over three years. The Government will also contribute toward the \$6.5 million upgrading and sealing of the Bogong High Plains Road, creating a vital link between Omeo and Falls Creek.

"There is currently a 31 kilometre unsealed stretch and this upgrade will ensure it becomes an all year all weather road," Mr Bracks said.

"The Alpine Shire Council will contribute \$2.5 million and the State Government will seek to share the balance of the funding with the Commonwealth Government." The Minister for the Environment, John

Thwaites, said the findings of the Alpine Grazing Taskforce supported previous research showing the damage cattle grazing caused to Alpine environments.

"It seems incongruous while the National Parks Act provides fines of up to \$2000 for people caught removing or damaging vegetation, cattle have still been free to roam over these areas and destroy vegetation," he said.

"The maximum number of cattle allowed to graze in the park is 7914, or about one per cent of the State's cattle. Last season, because of the 2003 bushfires, only about 740 grazed in the park." The Taskforce also considered a Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) report into the damage caused by the Alpine fires in 2003. The report found grazing should not return to high elevation and burnt areas for at least ten years.

Mr Thwaites said high country grazing was a significant part of our history but those heritage values would not be lost with cattle grazing to continue outside the boundaries of the Park.

"There will still be high country grazing in State forests, with licences continuing for about 10,000 cattle,



*The Minister with one of the proposed "cattle collars."*

covered by about 150 licences," he said. "Many of those who hold licences for the Alpine National Park also hold licences to graze in State forests."

On top of the transitional assistance, the Government announced a range of supporting initiatives:

- additional weed and pest animal control programs in the park (\$2.2 million);
- rehabilitation of damaged areas of the park, particularly mossbeds (\$650,000);
- support for cultural heritage events and festivals in the high country (\$200,000);
- signage and information on the history of the high country, including grazing (\$240,000);
- support for historic hut maintenance by volunteers (\$60,000) and implementation of aspects of the Omeo Tourism Destination Plan (\$265,000).

Mr Thwaites said Victoria would now work with the NSW and ACT Governments, to pursue listing the parks in the three jurisdictions covering the Alpine area on the National and then World Heritage lists.

"There has been no grazing in ACT Alpine Parks since 1908, and all grazing licences in the Kosciuszko National Park in NSW were phased out by 1972," he said. (\*operation referring to a single licence or set of licences for which there is a common group of licencees with one nominated contact person.)

## ***Marketing Report***

Pauline Venn presented a marketing report that was included in the agenda. It was moved by Ross Brown and seconded by Doug Treasure, "That the marketing report be adopted." CARRIED

## ***Setting membership and associate membership subscription fees***

Member:

The minimum fee is \$220 (includes GST) and covers the first 100 head. Thereafter an additional \$3.30 (includes GST) should be added for each additional head.

Associates:

Single \$27.50, Family \$38.50

It was moved by Doug Treasure and seconded by Chris Hodge, "That the membership subscription fees remain the same." CARRIED

## ***Election of Office Bearers***

Simon Turner indicated that he would be standing down as President of the Association. He thanked his wife, Rowena, former Secretary Sue Reynolds and current Secretary, Tim Barker for their support.

The following members were elected to office bearer positions:

<b>President:</b>	Doug Treasure
<b>Vice Presidents:</b>	Bruce McCormack
	Chris Commins
	Chris Hodge
	Charlie Lovick
<b>Secretary:</b>	Tim Barker
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Doug Treasure
<b>Marketing Officer:</b>	Pauline Venn

Branches reported on office bearers for 2005/06

### ***Gippsland Branch***

President:	David Treasure
Secretary:	Rose Faithfull
Council:	Brian Higgins
	Clive Hodge
	Chris Hodge
	Doug Treasure



### Mansfield Branch

President: Chris Stoney  
Secretary: Bruce McCormack  
Council: Bruce McCormack  
Chris Stoney  
Charlie Lovick

### North-east Branch

President: Ron Briggs  
Secretary: Jack Hicks  
Council: Frank Ryan  
Harry Ryder  
Peter Roper

### Omeo Branch

President: Bruce Commins  
Secretary: Chris Commins  
Council: John Cook  
Phil Commins  
Rusty Connley

### Appointment of Auditor.

AGREED that Terry Quirk continue as the Association's auditor.

### Any Other Business

#### 9.1 Simon Turner

Tim Barker, Graeme Stoney and Doug Treasure paid tribute to Simon Turner's untiring work for the Association. CARRIED with acclamation.

#### 9.2 2006 Get-Together

The meeting briefly reviewed some aspects of the 2006 Get-Together.

### Conclusion

The meeting then concluded.

## Stop Press

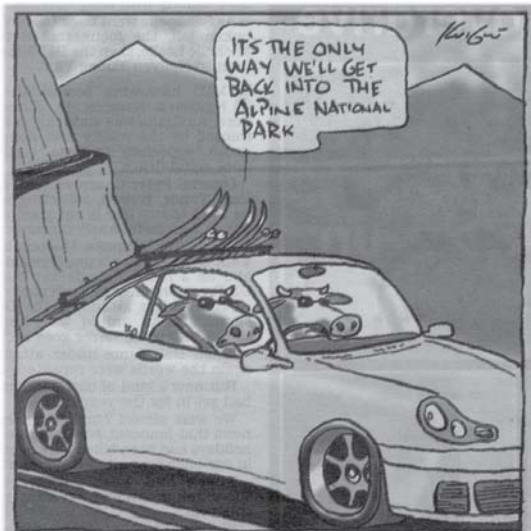
Herald Sun ISSUES SURVEY		YOUR VIEWS			
	TOTAL	Male	Female	Metro	Country
■ Should Muslim head scarfs be allowed in schools?					
Yes	49	45	52	51	42
No	51	54	48	48	57
■ Should cattle grazing be allowed in the Alpine National Park?					
Yes	67	67	67	63	77
No	32	32	32	35	23
■ Do you think there are too many abortions?					
Yes	41	42	39	40	43
No	57	55	58	58	54

*All figures are in percentages*

In December 2005, the *Herald-Sun* conducted an issues survey of over 20,000 to gauge current community feelings. An independent survey company analysed the responses from a sample of Victorians larger than that commonly used in most opinion polls. Researchers weighted the data to reflect the Australian Bureau of Statistics' population figures. One of the questions raised was **Should cattle grazing be allowed in the Alpine National Park?** An overwhelming majority of respondents voted YES in all breakdown groups. Clearly not just special interest groups but the broad spectrum of the community support us.

## Stop Press

## Stop Press



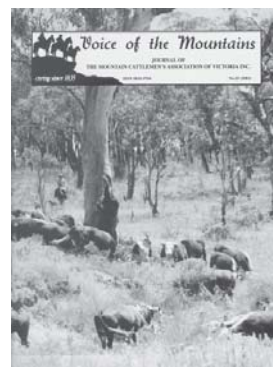
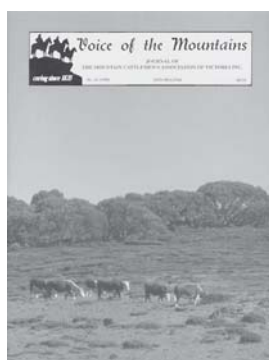
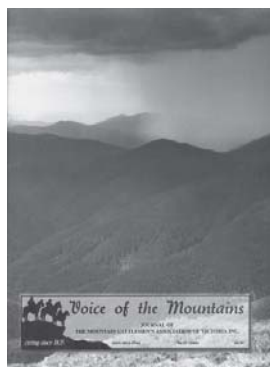
AFTER the removal of cattle from the Alpine National Park, surely the next step will be to close the ski resorts. But then again, when was the last time you saw a cow on skis?

**Mick Stormer, Warburton**

A couple of days later the above wonderful Mark Knight cartoon above also appeared in the *Herald-Sun* along with a simple letter of support.

The sort of 50/50 comment that we have all made at some time or another.

# Back Issues and Acknowledgements



A consolidation of back issues of *Voice of the Mountains* has taken place and we are able to offer **SPECIAL PRICES** for you to complete your sets. Be warned - some of these are in limited numbers and it will be those who are first in who complete their sets!

We have the following available at just \$2 a copy !

**No. 10 - 11 - 17 - 18 - 19 - 21 - 22 JUST \$2 EACH**

No. 13 and 20 @ \$4.50

Volume 26 @ \$6.00

Volume 27 and 28 @ \$8.00

All other volumes are sold out and unavailable.

Available by post from the MCAV, P.O. Box 5083, Burnley 3121

I would like to thank all who have helped and given assistance in the production of *Voice of the Mountains* this year. Simon and Rowena Turner, Harry and Sue Ryder, and Tim Barker have been on the other end of the phone and emails at all odd hours for written material and photographs;

Doug Treasure, Bruce McCormack, Laurie Webb (for chasing up poetry), David Brown, Jan Lewis, Dennis Carstairs, Ken Stuart, David Oldfield, Shellie Jones, Sharna Johnson, Bill and Mary Goldsworthy, Graeme Stoney and Phil Davies, Frances Westbury, have all contributed articles or photographs, poems or their time. The artwork dotted throughout comes courtesy of Jenny Flexeder.

Each of these contributions helps with the production.

Each year Stephen Baggs, (my employer) gives me *carte blanche* time, computer facilities, internet, phone and e-mail access to complete *Voice*. Thank you.

E-Gee Printers, particular Tatts and the boys out the back, continue to produce the goods for us even though we continue to give them less time.

Had it not been for all of these people - there would be no *Voice of the Mountains*.

If you have something to contribute to the next edition please feel free to send it to me, Debbie Squires, at P.O. Box 816, Bairnsdale 3875.



