

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **PARLIAMENT PASSES BILL TO DESTROY THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN**

“The cattlemen are gone, and now we will see an incremental closing down of the Alpine National Park to people and other uses,” local Upper House member and life member of the Mountain Cattlemen Association, Graeme Stoney, told Parliament last week.

Mr Stoney spoke for nearly an hour as lead speaker in the Upper House on the Bill which he described in his opening sentence as “The Bill to destroy the Mountain Cattlemen”.

The Upper House process allows for scrutiny of Bills in what’s called “The committee stage” and during that time the Leader of the Upper House, Philip Davis (Gippsland Province) and Graeme Stoney probed the Government about the implications of the Bill.

During that stage the two Liberals extracted from the Minister at the table, Candy Broad, the admission that the Forest section of any Alpine National Park cattle run has not been considered part of the future management or compensation process.

“It will be impossible to keep cattle out of the Alpine National Park section of these runs. The Government say Cattlemen can keep the Forest leases but this means most Mountain Cattlemen will be unable to stock the Forest section of their lease either.” Mr Stoney explained this week.

“The Government has been trumpeting that 10,000 cattle will still be grazed on Forest leases outside the Park. This is only Government spin and it appears only about 1,000 head will be left on the Mountain State Forest leases,” Mr Stoney said this week.

In Parliament Mr Stoney said,

“The numbers are listed on the licences whether they are grazed or not. By the look of it the government has added up all the listed numbers on the licences and said, 'There are 10 000 cattle; the cattle will be there the cattlemen will be there. Everything is fine. Get them out of the park. The culture and heritage is still there'. That is one of the most fraudulent claims ever, and it will be hard to get up as an issue. It is like the \$250 000 advertising campaign. It is an absolute and fraudulent sham. There might be 1000 head of cattle left and a handful of families, but it means that the cattlemen have been destroyed. It means that the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria will be gone.

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“It means the annual get-together will be gone. Some 3000 people attend that get-together at a different venue in the mountains every year.

“It means that the heritage, the culture, the knowledge and the skills will be gone. Every other user of public land in Victoria knows that and knows that they will be next.”

Later in the debate the Minister virtually admitted there will be no compensation for the Forest section of the runs even when it can be proved conclusively they cannot be used because of the closure of the Alpine National Park section of the same run, Mr Stoney said later

Mr Stoney said in his speech, “I heard that you will not be able to ride a horse up Mount Eadley Stoney soon. Let me say this: I will be riding my horse up the mountain, and I will be taking my grandchildren. We will stay at our hut, if it's still left.

“They do not take long to get busy. There is a circular going around inquiring or 'consulting' on whether they should pull down most of the Bluff hut. My four kids were at the rally: Chris, Anne, David and Kate. My three grandchildren were there: Harry, Angus and Connor. Their heritage has gone. Debbie and Bruce McCormack were there. Their grandchild, Jake, is a seventh generation cattlemen. His heritage has gone.

“There are lots of huts around the high country. There are several Ryder huts at Campbell's yards. I would not mind betting they pull down all but one. There are a group of huts called the Tawonga huts run by the Hicks family and the Coopers. I would not mind betting they pull all but one down. Charlie and John Lovick are rebuilding their hut; they have got the poles up. I hope they are allowed to finish it. I know that Charlie and John will still ride up Mount Lovick even if they ban horses from it.

Towards the end of his long speech Mr Stoney demonstrated, by quoting from a historical book, that the Man from Snowy River was a Mountain Cattleman because the Government speakers had been deriding claims “The Man” was a Cattleman .

In concluding his speech Mr Stoney told Parliament,

“The process that has brought us to this point has been absolutely disgusting. It has exposed the government for what it is and what it stands for. I make the point that country people are generally pretty polite, but they have long memories. I predict that what this government has done to the cattlemen and the way it has ignored history and the cattlemen's contribution to the heritage and culture of this nation will sow the seeds of this government's destruction. For me that cannot come soon enough.”

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