



High anxiety: cattlemen protest against their removal from the Alps. Picture: TREVOR PINDER

Police corral cattlemen

PARKS Victoria officers and police swooped on mountain cattlemen yesterday as they continued droving cattle through the Alpine National Park in protest over grazing bans.

The rangers took details from cattlemen and searched the area near Wonnangatta Station in the state's northeast, where about 20 cattle had been driven across the high country.

But the cattlemen had the last laugh after the Parks Victoria four-wheel drive became bogged during the search.

Liberal MP Graeme Stoney, travelling with the cattlemen in support of their protest, came to the aid of the stricken rangers, pulling them out with his four-wheel drive.

Drovers risked fines of \$1000 a cow as they led them through the national park on old stock routes, to the historic Wonnangatta Station, as the Mountain Cattlemens'

Sarah Wotherspoon

regional reporter

Association of Victoria stepped up their protest against grazing bans.

MCAV President Doug Treasure vowed the drive would become an annual protest until cattle were allowed back in the park.

"We have decided to use our democratic right to protest," Mr Treasure said.

"If you don't have civil disobedience nobody takes any notice.

"This is positive and passive and not doing any damage to anyone."

In May last year the Bracks Government decided against renewing 64 alpine grazing licences.

Acting Premier John Thwaites said yesterday only a few cattlemen were protesting.

"Most of the cattlemen have accepted that the decision's been made and the majority of cattlemen have accepted transition payments, extra payments, that they've got," he said.

"But there are still some . . . that are going to continue to protest."

He said new legislation allowed for cattle to be moved through the park from one area of private land to another.

"In this case, they seem to be doing a protest and what I've said is people have a right to protest but they shouldn't be breaking the law or doing something that could damage the park."

He urged Opposition Leader Robert Doyle to discipline Mr Stoney. "I don't think it's appropriate for a Liberal member of parliament to put himself in a position where he may be breaking the law. I can't say whether he is, it's really a matter for Parks Victoria and the rangers to determine," he said.

"But certainly if Mr Stoney is urging people or inciting people to break the law that wouldn't be appropriate and I think it is incumbent on Robert Doyle to certainly ask his member of parliament what he is doing."