

# Lands report under fire **BIG PARKS 'THREATEN SAWMILLS'**

**PROPOSED major extensions to Victoria's national parks could cripple the State's sawmilling industry and ultimately the economy, a protest meeting was told at Bright yesterday.**

The extensions have been recommended in a report by the Lands Conservation Council.

A former member of the Forests Commission of Victoria and a consultant to the Victorian Sawmillers Association, Dr Frank Moulds, said the recommendations would lead to a severe shortage of timber for construction.

This would in turn lead to an increase in building costs, as well as causing significant job losses.

Dr Moulds was addressing a meeting called to discuss the final report and recommendations of the Land Conservation Council for the alpine area.

He said the LCC report, which calls for the establishment of an alpine national park from south of Mansfield to the Murray River, could halve production capacity of alpine sawmills, at a cost of \$80 million.

By GERARD WRIGHT

"There is no doubt a serious situation has been created for the timber and housing industries, and for the Government in lost revenue and the lack of fire protection," he said.

The meeting, convened by the Bright Shire Council, was attended by 80 local government, sawmilling industry and mountain grazing representatives.

They resolved that a deputation from the meeting should discuss the issue with the Premier, Mr Cain, Government Ministers and Opposition spokesmen.

The meeting also called on the Government not to implement the final recommendations of the Land Conservation Council.

Instead it suggested a study of the social and economic effects of the LCC report on local communities and the extent they affect the area beyond.

The managing director of A Dunstan & Son of Wodonga, Mr Neil Carr, called for changes to the Conservation, Lands and Forests Department.

He said it should include a socio-economic investigative section.

Mr Carr criticised the LCC for its decision to ignore public comment on the issue.

He said less than a third of the submissions it had received supported a national park extension.

A member for North Eastern Province, Mr Evans, told the meeting the Government was "stretching the loyalty of the public service" by its banning of two officers from attending the meeting.

He said he was concerned the Conservation Minister, Mr Mackenzie, had ordered the district superintendent of the National Parks Service, Mr Mike Gardiner, and the Divisional Forester of the Forests Commission, Mr Ross Ritchie, not to attend the meeting.

"They know they have to get out and inform the public of the position of their departments," Mr Evans said.

Dr Mould said both the 1979 and 1983 LCC reports could severely hamper fire protection and prevention if they were implemented.

He said that in the past, fire prevention had been based on the Forests Commission working with experienced sawmillers, their staff and equipment.

"There is no other effective force with the necessary knowledge and experience that could be used to replace this unique combination of skilled and highly motivated industry and Government personnel living and working in the alpine area," he said.

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