

LIBERALS RE-AFFIRM VOTE AGAINST BIG ALPINE PARK

The Liberal Party has re-affirmed its intention to vote with the National Party to defeat legislation relating to declaration of a contiguous Alpine National Park.

Speaking from Parliament House in Melbourne, Mr Bruce Reid, M.L.C. for Bendigo Province and Liberal spokesman on Conservation, Forests and Lands, confirmed that the Liberal Party will join with the National Party in the legislative Council to block the Alpine National Park legislation.

Mr Reid reaffirmed the position taken by his party prior to the Nunawading bi-election and said the Liberal Party was firmly opposed to the Alpine National Park legislation.

Questioned about rumors that when the time came for a vote on the issue, some Liberal Party members may be absent from the Legislative Council Chamber, Mr Reid refuted the suggestion.

"The party considered its position on the legislation, made a decision and will vote accordingly," he said.

Mr Reid referred to a Liberal Party policy statement made in July this year, saying the policy announced at that time still stood.

In the July statement it was said that while the Liberal Party supported the continued existence of Victoria's present National Parks, it was opposed to the new legislation for a number of reasons, namely:

- "The State Government's Alpine National Park proposal contains land that does not meet the international standards for a National Park."

- "The State Government has failed to provide adequate financial and management facilities to maintain our current national parks and to safe-guard them against fire."

- "The State Government has failed to make any commitment in the current legislation to provide adequate resources for the proposed contiguous national park and fire prevention there in."

- "The legislation fails to deal adequately with the timber and tourism industries and the their families and employment in the state generally."

Mr Reid said that although the Government had announced its intention to bring the legislation into the Legislative Council in the spring session of Parliament, he was unaware of when it would be brought before the House.

He commented that its introduction may be delayed as the Minister for Conservation Forests and Lands, Mrs Joan Kirner, M.L.C., has had her attention diverted by the furor surrounding the revelation that 1,500 vehicles operated by the Department of Conservation Forests and Lands were unregistered and with third party insurance for more than a month.

On Tuesday night, Mr Reid moved an Urgency Motion against Mrs Kirner. He told the Legislative Council the minister had produced no satisfactory answer for failing to pay motor vehicle registrations and bills owed by her department.

Moving the motion, Mr Reid said that the Minister had failed to ensure the safety of departmental staff, who had been placed in the position of using unregistered and uninsured departmental vehicles. Employees of other agencies attached to the Ministry had been placed in the same position.

Mr Reid claimed some of the unpaid bills owed by the Department dated as far back as October, 1984.

"The Minister has failed to comply with an instruction issued by the Premier on August 8 this year, that State Government Departments and Authorities are to pay their bills within 30 days of accounts being received," Mr Reid said.

"Despite this instruction, Mrs Kirner has allowed 1,500 vehicles operated by her department to go unregistered and without third party insurance from August 1 to September 9."

Mr Reid said the registration renewals were not paid until after he had raised the issue publicly.

The Minister, Mr Reid said, seemed to rely on a defence that "She didn't know", and this was simply not good enough.

Mr Reid said that staff of the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands had not been paid at times and this was further proof of the chaos and incompetence that was rife under the Minister's administration.

"The Minister has admitted she has 'absolutely no excuse' for this situation," Mr Reid said.

"If major blunders occur in a Department, and the Minister is unaware of them, then that Minister should accept responsibility and offer to resign."

"The Minister in this instance, Mrs Kirner, has demonstrated that she is incapable of managing a department which employs almost 5,000 people and manages a budget of 153.5 million in Victoria," Mr Reid said.

The legislative council approved the urgency motion, 21 to 19.

A new chairman was appointed for the coming year at the September meeting of Orbost Water Board.

He is member G. Young who will replace former chairman, the retired Mr. P. Coulton.

The allowance was fixed at the same rate as last year, that is \$400.

A 22-year-old bachelor from Boisdale in Central Gippsland has been named share dairy farmer of the year.

Brian Walker, who has been sharefarming for only four years, won the \$250 award from a strong field of 25 competitors.

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'NO COSTING ON PARK PROPOSAL'

Mr Jim Commins, President of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, has confirmed that the State Government has not properly costed the proposed Alpine National Park.

He explained that for quite a long time the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, "Suspected that there had not been much costing done."

Mr Commins said his association had sought information on costing from the State Government, however no information had been forthcoming.

"The Cattlemen's Association then sought costing information under the Freedom of Information Act," he said.

"Seven months later, and after appealing to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, Mrs Kirner's representative revealed, in answer to a

question by the Tribunal Chairman, "Little or no costing has been done," Mr Commins reported.

It is now believed the Government are taking steps to cost the proposals," he said. "Our enquiry seems to have sparked them into getting something together."

Mr Commins expressed concern over the implications of the lack of costing. He said it seemed more than reasonable to assume that if the government had not done any proper costing studies, neither would they have done any studies on the social consequences of declaring the park.

Speaking of mountain

cattlemen, Mr Commins said, "We only represent part of the alpine community, timber workers and everyone else who lives in the region will be effected if the Alpine National Park is declared."

"If you take the timber workers and cattlemen out of our local communities, the social and economic consequences will be devastating," he said.

Mr Commins said that the Mountain Cattlemen's Association is confident that the Liberal Party and National Party will combine to reject the Alpine National Park legislation when it is brought forward in the Legislative Council.