

Welcome!

ROSE RIVER GET TOGETHER
FOLLOWING ALPINE GRAZING
PROTEST

DOUG TREASURE

To me this is a very humbling experience.

Thank you for all being here.

What a success!

To the North East branch of the MCAV, thankyou.

There are so many people to thank and naming them all would take too long.

But a special thanks to Get-together Chairman, Jack Hicks and a big thankyou to the Secretary, Sue Briggs. Sue, you have been wonderful!

Thank you to Stephanie Speakman and Margaret Brokaw the owners of this magnificent property and to Matt and Lindy Roberts, managers.

A special welcome also to our elected representatives, Peter Ryan, Phillip Davis, Bill Sykes and to the radical one, who will not be disciplined, local Upperhouse member/cattleman, Graeme Stoney.

So from the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, where is it at?

Grazing in the National Park has become a political football and the Bracks Government is using politics in place of good management.

For the past 18 months, the cattlemen have been deceived by the Bracks government.

I am going to tell you what happened..

1. The Government Backbench Committee to look at the future of Alpine grazing pretended to listen to us for 12 months.

We drove thousands of kilometres, spent thousands of dollars on submissions, took the government people into our homes.

And they turned around and kicked us in the guts.

2. They made a pretence of still talking to us in the same week as they were writing the legislation to kick us out.

3. They doctored a photo to portray that our cattle looked to be in a black bog on the High Plains...the truth was, the cattle were in a silt-trap dam beside a road at low-altitude.

But the government did get caught out by the media, but our reputation was still damaged but the deception.

4. Minister Thwaites claimed 10,000 head would still graze in State forest which would protect our culture and heritage and knowledge of the bush.

This was untrue, but many Victorians and the media believe him.

5. They stole our huts and now Parks Victoria claim they are the owners.

6. They announced 7.5 million dollars to fix damage supposed to be by cattle, but cannot point out where it is. It's all SPIN!

7. The latest deception is Minister Thwaites telling everyone that by accepting compensation, the Cattlemen are accepting that it is all over.

This is untrue. It is important for the public to know that the compensation is for the loss of this year's and next year's income only. It is not compensation for the long term loss of our licences.

For most cattlemen, it is a small amount of money.

The cattlemen have accepted the money to keep going, but they would rather have their licences back.

I want to tell you why we drove the cattle through the Park.

It was a protest because the government took away our licences.

When they took our licences they took away 170 years of living heritage.

And they stole our connection with the land.

This isn't about money. This is about what we do.

And it is about our connection with this land.

The drive was a small symbolic protest carried out on behalf of every Mountain Cattleman in Victoria and every user of public land.

These cattle have just walked through Wonnangatta Station. What a disgraceful mess it is.

This government is strong on rhetoric and poor on management.

Wonnangatta is full of weeds and blackberries and is a massive fire hazard, and Parks Management is claiming the valley is in a healthy state. That's like talking about health in a mortuary.

In Wonnangatta at the meeting of the two mobs of cattle, two National Park Rangers were present and stated they were there to observe.

After the media left, with reinforcements and police, they chased us across the Wonnangatta flats on foot and interviewed us and wrote down some names and addresses.

Why didn't they do it at the protest in front of the TV cameras.

Wonnangatta was closed to grazing in 1988, but it is quite obvious the cattle should go back to Wonnangatta and to our licences which is only 15 per cent of the Alpine National Park.

The government is happy to use our huts and our image for tourism, but they want us in a museum.

Well I am here to tell you we are not going to a museum.

WE ARE STAYING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

There is no doubt the Mountain Cattlemen are a scapegoat for the guilty conscience of a community that is using fossil fuel at an unsustainable rate and creating climate change in the process.

To kick a few cows off the High Country is a vote catching exercise, when the same government do not have the guts to face the real issues.

Rural people care for their environment and have immense knowledge of their environment.

Much of the High Country is deteriorating, not because of cattle but because of poor management, weeds and feral animals.

I say to the people here, there is now a serious threat to your future access of the High Country.

I want to warn you all that if the cattlemen can't get back into the High Country your access will diminish.

So you need to be on your guard and stand up and fight with us.

Let me tell you what you can do to help us and help yourselves.

There's only one thing to do and that's to vote against the labour government at the next State election in November.

The political reality is that we have a labor government kicking us out and the opposition saying they will put us back if they win government.

As I said earlier the cattlemen have become a political football so we have to play a political game... whether we like it or not.

I have a message for every one here who supports us. We have no option but to ask you to vote against the Bracks Government in your area at the next election.

We also need to have other country groups defy the Bracks government in similar ways – they should do it for their own sakes.

This is not the first time the Cattlemen have had to be political – in 1985 at Nunnawadding, we went political and had magnificent results. Today we have to go political again because we have to option.

I say to you again – we now have no option but to go political.

I am going to finish by announcing the Cattlemen are going to drive stock thought the Alpine national Park each year until we get our licences back.

The only thing that will stop this protest action is for the minister to give us meaningful concessions.

We are going to do this to teach our young people the skills.

To retain our culture and our heritage.

And retain our connection with the land that goes back 170 years.

I ask you all to stand with us in this fight we need your help.