

MCAV MEDIA

PROTEST CATTLE ARRIVE AT WONNANGATTA

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MOVEMENT AT THE STATION, AS THE CATTLE COME BACK AFTER 17 YEARS

After a long journey from different parts of the High Country, symbolic mobs of cattle will join up at Wonnangatta Station at 10am this morning in a protest at the taking away of Alpine grazing and subsequent loss of the cattlemen's heritage and culture.

Wonnangatta Station was freehold until resumed by the Cain Government in 1988 which immediately banned grazing. Since then the once open and trim natural flats have become choked with long grass and weeds and are a serious fire hazard.

Tended by Mountain Cattlemen families, the cattle have travelled this week over several original stock routes that all lead to the site of the historic Station.

The Cattlemen say they are carrying out the drive and ride to protect their culture and skills and are likely to do the same every year until grazing is returned. They point out that all the higher sensitive grazing land was removed from grazing years ago which was appropriate. They say the country in question now is less than 15% of the Alpine National Park and mostly below the tree line.

"To be able to ride in the bush, tend to your horse, muster cattle in all weathers, camp under the stars and find your way home in a fog, you have to constantly continue to do those things or the knowledge is quickly lost. We are showing our young people these skills and many more on this valuable trip," President of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association, Doug Treasure said today.

"Mountain Cattlemen are self-reliant and only ask to be left alone to continue their craft and in doing so the skills, heritage and culture will continue. You can't protect living heritage in a Museum and the Government ignored that aspect when they threw us out of the Park," he said.

"The Government also totally ignored the ramifications of removing grazing, with the absolute proof the environmental disaster in the Wonnangatta Valley before us today. The Government chose to listen to the conservation movement in 1988 and closed Wonnangatta; it listened to it again last year

and closed the Alpine National Park to grazing. Both decisions were wrong for the land and were for pure political gain. Some scientists take a narrow view on "the science" while other eminent people take a different view. The Government has chosen the former view because it suits its political agenda because it's all about City votes," Mr Treasure said.

'I think these protest cattle drives and heritage rides will continue each year until we get our leases back, which were taken last year. That is the best solution for the land and the only way we can keep up our skills and culture to pass on to our children," Mr Treasure concluded.

A protest meeting with speakers and entertainment will be held by the Wonnangatta River at 2pm today. The cattle and drovers will then leave for the annual cattlemen's get together to be held next weekend at Rose River near Whitfield.

More info Doug Treasure .