

MEDIA RELEASE FROM COUNTRY VOICE FOR JANUARY 9, 2006

CATTLEMEN DEFY ORDER TO TURN CATTLE BACK

Mountain Cattlemen droving a small mob of cattle throught Victorian's Alpine national Park were intercepted by rangers yesterday and told they would have to turn back. A senior ranger informed the cattlemen they would have to take the cattle back the way they had come.

Country Voice members travelling with the cattlemen looked on as the rangers recorded the names of the travelling stockmen, including that of upper house MP, Graeme Stoney, himself a mountain cattleman

The small but determined group of bushmen declined the order to turn back and the cattle continued on through difficult terrain deep in the Great Dividing Range into the remote and legendary Wonnangatta Station.

Wonnangatta is the site for a prearranged rendevous between Cattlemen droving small mobs of cattle from Merrijig, Dargo, and Heyfield. Country Voice member groups are also attending the protest.

Country Voice chairman, Bob Richardson, said that Wonnangatta, long regarded as the 'jewel in the crown' of alpine grazing properties was now a neglected and overgrown bush

fire hazard.

"Since the State Government purchased Wonnangatta in 1988, the station has deteriorated seriously and is now in a disgraceful condition and is a testimony to the mismanagement," he said.

"We have observed deer wallows and invasive weeds throughout the valley."

"A comprehensive management plan is needed for the station and the State Government should work closely with the Mountain Cattlemen's Association to achieve this before Victoria lose a significant heritage property forever."

"This protest cattle drive has highlighted to members of Country Voice and the wider Victorian community that removing grazing from Alpine National Park is the worst management decision for the environment." Mr. Richardson concluded.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT BOB RICHARDSON WHO IS IN THE WONNANGATTA VALLEY TODAY ON SATELITE PHONE; 0420 104 684.

We enclose 4 photographs taken of the protest drive moving along the floor of the Wonnangatta Valley today, Monday, the January 9, 2006.

* 4 photos & captions to follow *