



The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc.

AFFILIATED WITH
THE VICTORIAN FARMERS' AND GRAZIER'S ASSOCIATION

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Notes on National Parks (Alpine National Park) Bill.

Proposed park does not offer or assure the public of any benefits that are not already enjoyed and if adopted, many additional restrictions will be imposed.

The management machinery already exists to guide and advise visitors and the law now provides penalties for a wide range of abuses. These include littering and off-road vehicle use, noise pollution, land mis-use and so on.

It is suggested that tourism will greatly boost the economy of the area. If tourism is to grow and grow profitably, it is best to remain in the control of private operations and National Parks are only likely to add to the tour operator's costs. Many tourists will stay in the National Park only as long as it takes to drive through it and others will stock up with provisions bought more cheaply in metropolitan supermarkets than save on transport costs by carrying it themselves. A survey of thousands of people visiting the alpine area during Easter of 1977 (USA) showed this to be the case.

If State budgets provide insufficient funds, it is likely that essential services now provided, such as weed and vermin control and road maintenance may easily be reduced because of transfers of staff to National Park duties. Eleven rangers and eight vehicles were estimated as additional requirements when introducing the Bill to Parliament, while the Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands on the same day announced plans for "a multi million dollars commitment to the area".

An appealing announcement of plans to "involve extensive public participation" is made.... It should be remembered that in the last round of public submissions to the Land Conservation Council in respect of the alpine area, that less than 30% of the thousands of respondents called for the extended National Park...the resultant recommendations made a mockery of democratic input.

It is intended to have no cattle grazing on yet another area (Howitt Plains). No sensible reasons have been put forward for this. Any sort of pollution caused by cattle is never likely to be as serious as that caused by the people passing through and camping in that area. It also means more land and water catchment areas are at increased risk from fire and erosion damage. The Land Conservation Council reports have never publicised the fact that grazing is the only agency that regularly reduces the risk of serious soil erosion that could follow in the wake of wildfire. Other positive values from grazing that benefit the public at no cost to the taxpayer have been overlooked by the planners.

Research staff that prepared the Land Conservation Council Reports for the public and the Council members are now in charge of planning for National Park Management.

There is no doubt that misleading information from the Land Conservation Council about cattle grazing is largely responsible for the Government being vague about the future of cattle grazing.

Notes on National Parks (Alpine National Park) Bill cont'd:.

It is also strongly suspected that some members of the Government (and the Australian Conservation Foundation) are philosophically opposed to cattle owners (and any others) that have any part of their private enterprise based on Crown Land and that they are more keen to remove them than their cattle. After all there is little or no agitation to remove or reduce the feral animals (rabbits, pigs, deer, horses etc). In fact deer are protected to the extent that a licence is required to hunt them.

It is hoped that the Parliamentary opposition will make a most determined stand to contain the Alpine National Park to no more than the area that they adopted for National Park when in Government.

There are other developments that have not been aired much in Victoria. The N.S.W. Government with strong support from the Australian Conservation Foundation, are on course to have the great contiguous National Park included on the "World Heritage List", and any citizens who are concerned for State rights, should be aware of the ramifications of this.

The Alpine National Park must not be extended as currently proposed because:-

1. It is far too large an area to commit to any intensive Departmental management without first producing a budget of costs and effects. This does not appear to have been done and that the Government is acting irresponsibly to implement an unresearched pre-election idea on such a huge scale.
2. It is not a vitally important issue with the vast majority of people, and the area adopted by the former Government would amply satisfy them. Difficult questions are likely to emerge when the costs of administering that very large land mass becomes known.
3. Land with the most beautiful scenery in Victoria is already designated for National Parks. If the Governments' present plans are blocked then it will be possible to compare all aspects of the area already committed to National Park with the remainder of the alpine area.
4. It could be a reasonable assumption that every country community and municipality in Victoria are now opposed to the current proposals for National Park extensions and when the facts are truthfully presented, urban communities will also oppose it.
5. The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria is just one voice in the wider community that is most strenuously opposed to ceding a huge extended area to rigorous bureaucratic control before performance record of such management is tested.

paper by JAMES A. COMINS
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