



The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Inc.

AFFILIATED WITH
THE VICTORIAN FARMERS' FEDERATION

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ANNUAL REPORT - 1996/1997

26th September 1997

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This has been a year of behind the scenes work for your Executive.

I managed to attend all Branch AGMs and found that to be very worthwhile. It is a great opportunity to catch up with members who aren't delegates to Central Council.

On public land any long term security can only come from having community acceptance of what we do. This is something we as an organisation must never lose sight of when plotting our future course.

Over the past 12 months there has been much negotiating with Department (NRE) staff in relation to conditions for seven year bush grazing licences and other matters.

This is all vital activity but I feel it is critical not to rely just on the bureaucratic negotiations but to ensure that we do maintain a very public face. Whilst we have public support we will get a hearing from the Government, but the moment they feel we have lost our popularity the end will be nigh.

In the next 12 months we will be facing a number of other serious issues. The major one currently being discussed will be the renewal of the seven year Alpine grazing licence. This has the potential to cause as much headache as anything we have had to face in the past. The Department has indicated that it wants to discuss almost every issue on the licence.

The Regional Forest Agreements and the associated Forest Management Plan have potential to impact considerably on bush grazing and everyone will need to be vigilant when the plans are discussed in each area. This will require members to write submissions responding to proposals.

Over the next 12 months we face perhaps the most crucial time since the inception of the Association.

As a group we have compromised more than enough over the years and there is no more room for further compromise. I want to take this opportunity to urge all members to become active and not leave the job to the regular few.

The Omeo Branch ran an excellent Get Together at Gibbo Park this year and all members who were involved are to be congratulated on the success of the weekend. The program was great with many events that invited crowd participation as well as the regular horse events. The Cattlemens Cut-out event was tremendous. It captures a bit of the everyday work of the cattleman and puts it on display for the public to enjoy. I would like to see this event continued at future Get Togethers. The weekend had a great atmosphere. Also special thanks to Pauline Venn and Janine Bonney for their very dedicated effort in the Marketing Tent which was such a financial success.

Special thanks must go to Linda Barraclough and Debbie Squires for their enormous effort every year in producing Voice of the Mountains and also in organising the Don Kneebone Heritage Award.

Our gratitude must also go to Don Porter for his regular efforts with the photo competition and work on the port label. Without support like this the Get Together and the Association would be very much diminished.

The Association is also immensely appreciative of Annie Whittam's untiring efforts in doing all the mailouts.

Another special mention must go to Bruce McCormack, Chris Stoney and Terry Murphy for all the time and effort they put into talking to school groups that request speakers up at Mansfield.

Lastly another big thanks to our hardworking Secretary Sue Silvers who gives our organisation its very professional touch and who strikes fear into the heart of the bureaucracy.

SECRETARY/TREASURERS REPORT

This will be the 12th annual report I have presented to members and associate members of the Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria Incorporated, and once again I must report to you that the major concern over the past twelve months has been the lack of progress in obtaining the seven year bush grazing licences.

In my report for 1995/1996 I stated that these licences would issue on 1st October 1996. That statement was made as a result of a promise by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The promise was broken, and the licences have not yet issued. The facts are as follows:

When the licences did not issue in October 1996 the Association again contacted the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. After a deal of passing the parcel, the Minister informed the Association by letter to contact the Manager of the Forests Section. This was done, and a meeting set up to take place in Mansfield in early December. This meeting was a talk-fest, with the only outcome being an agreement that the licences would issue by end March. Numerous letters to the Department failed to rouse a response. The Association then contacted David Treasure and Graeme Stoney, and a meeting was held in Melbourne with the Hon Philip Davis MLC, Parliamentary Secretary DNRE in early March. It was at this meeting that we learned that the file had not even been touched since the previous December. At the request of Mr Davis negotiations opened on special conditions and guidelines, and were concluded in early April to the satisfaction of both parties. These agreed conditions were approved by the Minister, and the Association was informed by letters at end June and early July. Another meeting was then held in Mansfield to clear up minor matters in the licence document, and the Department officer informed us that the licences would be issued 'by the end of the month'. That was July. Then

the Department flung a bombshell into the works by claiming that clauses relating to transferability and renewability were contrary to the Forests Act, and would have to be withdrawn from the licence. By this time we were feeling a little punch-drunk, but grimly battling on. The Forest Act does not prevent transferability at all, and the Act is silent on the subject of renewal of grazing licences. We resolved the transferability clause. On the subject of renewability, however, the Department has shut the door. It will not include any form of wording acceptable to the Association. Furthermore, and at the risk of causing members and associates to fall about laughing, the Department wishes to put in a clause the wording of which will 'mention the fact that the Department will enter into 'meaningful negotiations' with MCAV in respect to any further licence. Makes you wonder, doesn't it. To this point we have been conducting 'meaningful negotiations' with DNRE for six years. So you will excuse me for taking a cynical view. We have, on your behalf, refused to adopt any 'meaningful negotiation' clauses.

There are a couple of interesting twists to all of this. One is that, as you are aware, various Department officers are forever talking about a 'body of scientific evidence' (and the words are theirs), in respect to the damage cattle do by trampling. In this case trampling regeneration seedlings. DNRE was put on the spot, and had to produce this 'body'. It consists, you may be interested to hear, of one research document which clearly demonstrates that the percentage of mortality of regeneration seedlings directly attributable to cattle and horses is less than 1 percent. A list of logging coupes supposedly damaged by cattle grazing, which DNRE has promised to supply to the Association is not yet forthcoming. Despite repeated requests. We are rapidly coming to the conclusion that there is no list because there is no damage caused by cattle.

We have not, and do not intend to give up on this. A meeting has been arranged in October, and we still have hope that this will be the final and deciding meeting, and that there will be a successful outcome.

As your President has told you, the next 12 months will involve a great deal of work and a great deal of talking with Parks Victoria regarding the renewal of the 7 year Alpine Park licences. The Association has been given a list of issues to be reviewed and they are: Stocking rates; existing licence boundaries; areas they claim demonstrate continuing damage caused by cattle; protection of significant conservation areas; fees; stock identification (they suggested tail tags for this one. To read a tail tag, provided it had remained attached to the beast, a Ranger would have to stand directly behind the beast and hold the tail in his hand. Perhaps we should agree to this proposal?); stock ownership; dogs and horses; public liability; weeds; licence transfers; and lapsed licences. The more serious issues are stocking rates, supposed cattle damage, and fees. The other issues will surely be resolved by using common sense.

A word of caution here. Now is not the time to be airing disagreements and old grievances in public. This is a time for strong solidarity amongst members. If disagreements are taken to Parks Victoria to be resolved, they will not even make the slightest attempt to do so. What they will do, however, is use the issue to make further rules which will ultimately lead to cutting back that particular stocking rate, and to ultimately remove that area from grazing. Parks Victoria are looking for every possible reason to further limit grazing in the Victorian High Country, and particularly

within the Alpine National Park. We have already seen evidence in our preliminary discussion with them. So beware.

Members will be aware that the local advisory committees which consisted of local DNRE staff and Rangers, and Cattlemen were disbanded some time ago. The Association has spoken to Bob Jones, Chief Ranger Alpine area about this, as it was seen to be very much a backward step in the resolution of local issues. Bob Jones believes that the local committees are very important and should continue on an informal basis. Two Branches have kept the practice going - North East and Mansfield. On Bob's advice, I have written to Omeo and Gippsland with the names of people to contact with a view to getting those committees working again.

We come now to another long drawn out issue - travelling livestock on Victorian Roads. This is another matter we thought resolved after a tremendous amount of work done largely by Mary Goldsworthy and Alan Brewer from 1995 onwards. The Minister for Roads and Ports has now advised the Association that he will be extending the date for implementation of the new Traffic Regulations until February 1999. At that time the following regulations will become law:

- * Uniformity of signs. The Association had pushed for a yellow sign with black silhouette. The Minister advises that these are warning signs with no regulatory significance. New South Wales has given regulatory significance to the Australian standard yellow and black sign, but Victoria will opt for a white sign with black silhouette - and New South Wales will be asked to adopt the Victorian regulatory sign, and Standards Australia will be asked to add it to the standard.
- * MCAV had worked very well with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Municipal Association to provide for exemptions from the need to obtain permits when moving stock to high country runs and back home again. This was done with by a simple method of definitions and exemptions. The Government, however, finds itself unable to influence individual municipalities or shires. So, whilst there is a 'model local law', there is no method to ensure that it is adopted. Hence, for example, in Delatite Shire, a new local law has been drafted which is a hotch-potch of ideas, and Mansfield Branch has had to make a submission to include definitions and exemptions, as well as having to try to solve a raft of other problems. This will need careful watching by all members in all localities, as local shires seek to implement their own ideas on travelling stock within their areas. Once again the simple idea of uniformity has flown out of the window.
- * The one issue embraced by the Minister for Roads and Ports is the inclusion of material on drivers' obligations when encountering stock on roads in the Victorian Traffic Handbook.

I fail to understand Government. It seems that every Department is singing a different song, and believes that all the others should join *them*. Nobody seems to be

prepared to work with the other fellow. It's every man for himself and blow the poor old tax paying public. I often find myself wondering just who is steering the ship? Whoever it is is perfectly invisible, I can assure you of that.

On a brighter note I am pleased to report that the MCAV school information booklet is now on the Net. The address is <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~mcavic/>. The difference this has made to answering requests for school information is invaluable. I would like to thank Tim Barker of the Policy Consultants for undertaking this work for us, and getting it up and running. Our school information is now readily available to both students and teachers alike, and has saved a lot of work, a lot of printing, and a lot of postage.

The Association decided, last year, to conduct a survey about the Get Togethers, and forms were handed out to all who attended at Gibbo Park in January, and then were posted to all members and associate members with the July Newsletter. To date I have had 95 returned, and they still keep coming in in dribs and drabs. A very clear response showed that the Get Together was considered good value for money, there were many comments that there should be more heritage type displays, the facilities were considered pretty good. One of the most interesting results was that people who attended were evenly divided between having read about the Get Together in the Newsletters - obviously members and associates, and others who had heard about it by word of mouth - obviously not members or associates. It would be nice to think that we could increase the associate membership significantly by persuading the latter group to join up during the event. Another result of the survey clearly showed that people did not like standing around in the hot sun waiting for events to start. There were many comments that events should start on time, and anybody who was not ready should miss out.

It was a very good exercise to conduct. A great many of the suggestions were good ones, and I am sure will be taken up. The Association would like to thank all those who took the time to fill in the form and return it.

I have been the Association's representative on the Alpine Advisory Committee. I have to report that the Minister has not asked the Committee to meet this year. A meeting is scheduled, however, for October.

The Public Land Council of Victoria meets regularly during the year. Heather Mitchell who was its first President, and remained in that position for 10 years, resigned this year, and will be very sadly missed. However Heather Mitchell is to be asked to become Patron of the Council. The new President is Mr Ian Hamilton from the Victorian Association of 4 wheel drive Clubs. We all look forward to working with him.

Last year the Association had a problem with the marketing division, and it was decided not to appoint a marketing officer for the year, but bring the marketing back to the central office to be sorted out, so to speak. This has been done, and it has been pleasing that a small loss last year has been turned around to a reasonable profit this year. This has been achieved, in the main, by careful buying and by very thorough and responsible stocktaking. Harry Ryder has thanked Pauline Venn and Janine Bonney

for taking on the marketing responsibility for the Gibbo Park Get Together, and I would like to add the Association's thanks to his. We must not forget either, all those who assist with the marketing over the weekend. Without that assistance the whole job would be unworkable. I recommend that the Association appoint a Marketing Officer this year, and that the systems put in place for stocktaking and recording sales and purchases be carried forward.

As Treasurer I would like members to know that the Association is in good shape financially, with a small profit made this year. The financial statements are presented to members for consideration and acceptance.

William G. Crump FCPA

CERTIFIED PRACTISING ACCOUNTANT

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AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Members:

THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA INC.

I have examined the records of the Association for the year ended 30 June 1997 and in my opinion the attached Trading & Profit and Loss Statements reflect the operations of the Association for the year ended thereon and that the Balance Sheet shows the the state of affairs as at that date.



WILLIAM G CRUMP FCPA

2 September 1997

THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VIC INC.

MARKETING ACCOUNT
Trading Account
For the year ended 30 June, 1997

	\$
Trading income	
Sales - Events & shows	20,129.95
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Total trading income	20,129.95
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Cost of sales	
Add:	
Opening stock (at cost)	11,016.66
Purchases	9,317.05
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	20,333.71
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Less:	
Closing stock (at cost)	13,808.76
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Cost of sales	6,524.95
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Gross profit from trading	13,605.00
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THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VIC INC.
Balance Sheet
As at 30 June, 1997

	\$
Current Assets	
Cash	67,878.72
Stock on hand (at cost)	13,808.76
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Total current assets	81,687.48
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Non-Current Assets	
Property, plant and equipment (at cost)	17,019.36
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Total non-current assets	17,019.36
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Total assets	98,706.84
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Current Liabilities	
Creditors and borrowings	
Unsecured liabilities	
Advance - Fighting Fund	4,549.47
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Total liabilities	4,549.47
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Net Assets	94,157.37
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Members' Funds	
Accumulated surplus	94,157.37
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Total Members' Funds	94,157.37
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THE MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF VIC INC.
Income & Expenditure Statement
For the year ended 30 June, 1997

	\$
Income	
Trading profit from marketing	13,605.00
Advertising - V.O.M.	570.00
Donations	342.00
Get Together - Gross Proceeds	41,301.80
- Less Expenses	21,699.24
	19,602.56
Interest received	4,847.00
Subscriptions - Members	9,611.25
- Associates	8,227.00
Sundry sales	15.00
Total income	56,819.81
 Expenses	
Audit fees	1,100.00
Bank fees and charges	566.84
Catering & hall hire	473.60
Conferences & courses	595.00
Electricity	321.80
Expenses - President 1995/96	1,310.70
- President	349.28
- Secretary	2,015.65
Fees & subscriptions	1,762.00
Honorariums - President	3,000.00
- Snr Vice Pres.	1,000.00
- Secretary	19,992.00
- Spec. Projects 1995/96	1,000.00
- Spec. Projects	1,000.00
- Executive Officer	1,000.00
Insurance	2,820.00
Legal fees	5,315.60
Marketing Van - Registration	28.00
Postage	1,253.41
Printing & stationery	52.07
Printing/stationery- Central	4,704.46
Rates	835.07
Rental - Office	3,120.00
Sundry expenses	618.08
Telephone	2,263.28
Total expenses	56,496.84
 Operating surplus for year	 322.97
Add	
Accumulated surplus at the beginning of the financial year	93,834.40
 Accumulated surplus at the end of the financial year	 94,157.37