



Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria

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Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria held on Thursday 27 September 2007 in the office of the Victorian Farmers Federation, 24 Collins Street Melbourne commencing at 10.30am

1. Present

Harry Ryder, Chris Commins, Anne Patterson, Judy Gunter, Christa Treasure, Ron Anderson, Jack Hicks, Neville Wright, John Dowdle, Ron Briggs, Simon Turner, Bruce McCormack, Sue Reynolds, Graeme Stoney, Chris Hodge, Chris Cooper, Doug Treasure, Tim Barker.

2. Apologies

Keith & Annie Whittam, Buff Rogers, Brian Higgins, Clive Hodge, Janine Cooper, Ross Brown, Sue Briggs, David Treasure, Charlie Lovick, Bruce Commins and Stewart Hicks.

3. Minutes

It was moved by Chris Commins and seconded by Neville Wright, "That the meeting confirm the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 21 April at Glenfalloch Station and attached to the agenda." Carried.

4. Annual Report

The Secretary presented the Annual Report which was provided to the meeting as a separate document. The President, Doug Treasure, thanked Tim Barker for his work as Secretary over the past year.

5. Financial Report

The Secretary presented the financial report and some amendments to the figures as presented. It was moved by Sue Reynolds and seconded by Graeme Stoney, "That the meeting ratify the financial report as amended." Carried.

6. Marketing Report

Pauline Venn reported on marketing activities for the year and commented in particular on some stock outstanding. The President, Doug Treasure, thanked Pauline for her work as Marketing Officer.

7. John Dowdle

The President invited John Dowdle to report on some of his fund raising activities. John apologised for using an MCAV officer title during his activities and reported on trailers, flags and donations to the flood victims.

8. Setting membership and associate membership subscription fees

Member: The minimum fee is \$220 (includes GST) and covers the first 100 head. Thereafter an additional \$3.30 (includes GST) should be added for each additional head.

It was moved by Simon Turner and seconded by Graeme Stoney, "That the membership subscription levels remain the same". Carried.

Associates: Single \$30, Family \$40

It was moved by Sue Reynolds and seconded by Neville Wright, "That the Associate membership subscription levels remain the same". Carried.



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 September, 2007

Annual Report 2006-07

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1 In brief

- Fires again devastated the Eastern Highlands and the Licola area was later swamped by floods.
- The 2007 Get-Together at Licola was successful despite being delayed from January to April because of the fires.
- Decisions have been made to continue annual Get-Togethers and to put in place a more consistent structure.
- A Get-Together Committee consisting of Bruce McCormack, Rose Faithful, Sue Briggs, Brian Higgins and Simon Turner has been established.
- The Association employed Bob Richardson to undertake pre 2006 election activities. This included rallies in Warragul and Melbourne.
- We continue to strengthen access to State Forest licences.
- Cattlemen met with DSE on September 20, 2007 in Traralgon. Items on the agenda included, fire affected licenceholders, DSE grazing strategy, a field trip for DSE staff, a Mountain Cattlemens Landcare Group and Signage in the forests
- A management plan for the State Forest licences has been sent to DSE.
- Two groups of State Forest licences are still being assessed for national listing.
- In response to the 2007 bushfires and the unsympathetic response by the Government to the 2003 fires, the MCAV was involved in establishing a People's Review of the Bushfires.

2 Office Bearers for 2006/07

President: Doug Treasure
 Vice Presidents: Bruce McCormack, Chris Commins, Chris Hodge, Charlie Lovick
 Secretary: Tim Barker
 Treasurer: Graeme Stoney
 Marketing Officer: Pauline Venn

Gippsland Branch

President: David Treasure
 Secretary: Rose Faithfull
 Council: Brian Higgins, Clive Hodge, Chris Hodge

Mansfield Branch

President: Chris Stoney
 Secretary: Bruce McCormack
 Council: Bruce McCormack, Chris Stoney, Charlie Lovick

North-east Branch

President: Ron Briggs
 Secretary: Jack Hicks
 Council: Frank Ryan, Harry Ryder, Peter Roper

Omeo Branch

President: Bruce Commins
 Secretary: Chris Commins
 Council: John Cook, Phil Commins, Rusty Connley

3 Membership and associate membership subscription fees

The 2006 Annual General Meeting decided that the membership fees remain the same. The fees are \$220 (includes GST) and this covers the first 100 head. Thereafter an additional \$3.30 (includes GST) should be added for each additional head.

The meeting changed Associate fees from \$27.50 to \$30 for singles and from \$38.50 to \$40 for families.

4 Get-Togethers

The 2007 Licola Get-Together was successful and credit to all those involved especially considering it was delayed from January to April because of the fires.

The following emerged from a mid 2007 review, involving MCAV members who have run Get-Togethers:

- The MCAV needs Get-Togethers for the profile and the income.
- The MCAV has the resources to continue to run Get-Togethers.
- It might be preferable to have one or two permanent sites.
- If permanent sites were chosen, it might be possible to establish permanent infrastructure
- ~~The Get-Together needs to be managed by one person who delegates individual tasks to~~
There needs to be a permanent Get-Together ~~Committee~~ members.

~~was agreed that John Cook be the paid co-ordinator for the next Get-Together in early 2008. It was also~~
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Committee consisting of Bruce McCormack, Rose Faithful, Sue Briggs, Brian Higgins and Simon

~~was established~~

5 Pre 2006 election activity

At the July 2006 Council meeting, the President introduced Bob Richardson to the meeting and invited him to discuss a proposal for an election campaign for the MCAV and other groups.

The meeting considered employing Bob Richardson to co-ordinate a pre-election activities which would include a relay from country centres to Melbourne and a rally.

The prospect of campaigning against individual MPs in the areas surrounding the high country was also canvassed.

It was acknowledged that any arrangement would be with Bob Richardson, and not involve Country Voice.

The meeting agreed, "*That it be recommended to an MCAV phone conference that Bob Richardson be engaged on the basis of his presentation to the Council*".

The teleconference was held on Monday August 7 and it was agreed to employ Bob Richardson on specified terms and conditions.

It was also agreed that Graeme Stoney lead the co-ordination of the pre-election relay and rally strategy for the MCAV.

Subsequent meetings established the name *Push for the Bush* and it was under this banner that several activities were undertaken including a website and rallies in Warragul and in Melbourne.

6 The Warragul rally

About 150 mounted riders and 150 protesters on foot rallied outside the Warragul office of the Member for Narracan, Ian Maxfield, on October 20, 2006.

A group of mountain cattlemen brought a mob of cattle along Gippsland back roads for the protest in Warragul. This was the first time for many years that stock have been moved through the town of Warragul. The cattlemen and their cattle joined other people on horseback and other organisations, outside the Warragul office of Labor MP Ian Maxfield at 11.00am.

MCAV President Doug Treasure said, "*We decided to display our displeasure to the Government by targeting Mr. Maxfield who was chairman of the Government Committee that oversaw the demise of Alpine Grazing*"

"The Mountain cattlemen have sponsored this protest rally to show their continuing displeasure at having their licences cancelled and to warn other groups they will be next." Mr Treasure said.

7 The November 20 Melbourne Rally

A major Melbourne Rally was held in Melbourne on November 20, 2006. The "Push for the Bush" organisation, sponsored by the MCAV, released this statement following the rally:

"City Streets were choked today, the country had come to town to tell the Bracks Government that all is not well in the bush.

A mob of angry protestors on horses, on trucks, on tractors and on foot converged on Parliament House to rally about water and the loss of access to public land.

257 horses, 60 tractors, 40 trucks, approximately 1700 people and even 2 mules formed the rally. The Liberal and the National Parties addressed the rally and strongly supported the rally's message.

Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV) President, Doug Treasure spoke about why the MCAV set up the Push for the Bush lobby group. It was set up to support and give a voice to all public land users in Victoria.

Mr Treasure explained about the fate of the mountain cattlemen "the icon the Greens wanted was the mountain cattlemen. The cattlemen were seen by the Greens as the barrier holding back the tide to close down the bush."

Mr Treasure warned about the Bracks Government and the Greens "closing down our public land is the Greens long term objective; they wanted East Gippsland Bracks gave it to them, and he will keep giving our land to the Greens - every election - if he wins."

Simon Ramsay of the VFF congratulated the people for their efforts attending during such difficult times of drought and water shortages.

The rally was addressed by the Nationals and the Liberals, the Bracks Government were invited and as usual were conspicuously absent. It was mentioned the Government is always absent when you need them.

Both the Liberal Leader Ted Baillieu and National Party Leader Peter Ryan made strong commitments to The Justice for the Broken Valley for retaining Lake Mokoan, to the Northern Victorian Irrigators Inc to support their proposals and to the MCAV."

8 State election 2006

A new group "Recreational Environment Group" emerged during the election. The group involved many recreational interests including four wheel drivers, trail bike riders, prospectors and miners, sporting shooters, deer hunters, horse riders and fishing people. Its objective was to ensure that the Greens did not win the balance of power. It is not clear whether this group will continue to exist.

9 Entry & Exit Dates 2006/07

Following discussion and advice from Ryan Incoll, at meetings in Mansfield and Bairnsdale, the following entry and exit dates were established for the 2006/07 grazing season. These dates apply to Alpine and Alpine Contiguous licenses (not Bush Grazing Seasonal or Annual Licences).

Area	Entry Date	Exit Date
Heyfield	16 Nov	15 May
Omeo	16 Nov	15 May
Mansfield	1 Dec	30 Apr
North East	10 Dec	30 Apr

DSE officer, Ryan Incoll noted that, "The dates are similar to last year except for the entry date for Heyfield & Omeo Areas. As you will recall, licensees at the Bairnsdale meeting made a request for special consideration given the drought conditions and the entry date has been brought forward by two weeks to acknowledge the difficulties currently being experienced by licensees. This extension is only valid for 2006/07. Licensees will receive letters from DSE formally confirming these dates."

10 State Forest Licences Management Plan

A State Forest Licences Management Plan has been prepared and presented to DSE.

General Principles - recognition of the DSE and MCAV position in management of State Forest licences areas. Recognises that both the management agency and the MCAV seek to improve the environment and to enhance the value of the area to the Victorian community.

DSE/MCAV communication Regular annual meetings to discuss:

- entry and exit dates for the coming season
 - Stocking rates
 - Review of any breaches or infringement notices
 - Review vacant runs
 - ideas on joint ventures.
 - management, conservation and protection initiatives in accordance with this plan.
- Resolution of issues not resolved at the local level.** Any issues that cannot be resolved at the local level will be referred to a Joint Grazing Management Committee for consideration. The JMC would consist of DSE representatives and one MCAV representative from each region eg Mansfield, Gippsland, Omeo, and the North East.

Licence terms. The one year licence terms will remain.

Licence reallocation. As any licence holder vacates a run, the run will be available for allocation to another person. Unstocked licence areas could be made available to other cattle producers (with approval of the licence holder) who would then be able to apply to become a co-licencee.

Conservation management Licensed cattlemen will continue to protect and enhance conservation values and generally assist in the management of the land. The cattlemen will use their skills to develop innovative cattle management strategies which assist with the conservation of natural values. Cattlemen will ensure the conservation of important natural values, ensure that grazing activities are environmentally benign and the areas continue to be attractive for other bush users, visitors and tourists.

Land management Cattlemen form an important monitoring force as they move to and from the licence areas and while they attend to their herds. The cattlemen will continue to monitor and report inappropriate activities to the management agencies. Cattlemen will continue to be readily available to assist the management agencies in fire and other emergencies as CFA, SES, volunteers as

well, as experienced bushman and cattlemen. Co-operative management ventures could include positive signage relating to grazing cattle on State Forest licences.

Management of administration MCAV is willing to accept responsibility for collecting licence fees from member licenceholders for DSE. This offer by the MCAV remains on the table. Under such an arrangement, fees could be paid in one sum to the government agencies. This would alleviate the need for land management agencies to deal with administrative matters. This would free up the funds currently devoted to the administration of licences to be available for use in the practical management of land.

Management of pest plants and animals In the past, cattlemen have been involved in weed control and have used weedicides (their own and that supplied by DSE). Cattlemen will continue to monitor and control weeds and provide advice to the management agencies. They stand prepared to assist in control measures at the request of the authorities. In particular cattlemen will report new and emergent weeds to both the DSE and MCAV. MCAV will log these reports. Cattlemen will continue to actively assist in controlling the feral animals that are having an impact on flora and fauna.

Management of scientific research DSE and MCAV will share relevant scientific information and seek to ensure that scientific views are openly reviewed to promote consultative management.

11 State Forest licences - meeting with DSE

Cattlemen met with DSE on September 20, 2007 in Traralgon. Items on the agenda included,

11.1 Fire affected licenceholders

DSE letter to licence holders:

"Stock grazing arrangements for 2007/2008 in the Great divide Fire affected areas of state forest.

During the summer of 2006/2007 wildfires burnt substantial areas of State forest in Gippsland and North East Victoria. Broad-scale fire mapping undertaken by the Department has shown that your grazing licence(s) was within the burnt area..

The Department is currently undertaking desktop and field-based assessments of grazing licences within the burnt area to determine recovery since the wildfires.

You will be informed in writing of the outcome of the assessment. If the outcome of the assessment is that your licence should be put on-hold in 2007/08 season, you will have the option of requesting a re-assessment.

Licences that are placed on-hold will be reviewed annually to allow for the prompt resumption of grazing once licence areas have recovered.

The Department invites you to attend a meeting on XX September at DSE Mansfield/Ovens/Heyfield office to discuss this process and your grazing plans for 2007/08. Please contact XXX to confirm your attendance to this meeting and to discuss any other matters relating to the management of your grazing licence."

The Association sought to be involved in any re-assessments, have the licenceholder invited to attend and an agreement on the process of handling re-assessments.

11.2 DSE grazing strategy

DSE is developing a grazing strategy and this was to be discussed at the September meeting.

11.3 Field trip

DSE had written to the MCAV about a training day that was to have been held on September 3. Ryan Incoll wrote, "*The purpose of this day is to improve the understanding of our on-ground staff about grazing including growth of grasses, pasture management, cattle nutrition, interactions with native vegetation and issues for licensees. We would like the licensee to provide insights into how they integrate their state forest licence management with their farming business, their "pasture" management of the licence and observations regarding grazing suitability and changes between and within seasons. I think this session will help improve understanding between licensees and on-ground DSE staff.*"

The MCAV is proposing to run a field day for DSE staff who deal with grazing licences, possibly on a licenced run in the Omeo - Swifts Creek area.

11.4 Mountain Cattlemens Landcare Group

The MCAV has formed and registered a Mountain Cattlemen's Landcare Group. The purpose of this group is to have cattlemen report:

- where weeds have been eradicated or removed by licenceholders,
- locations of new and emergent weeds, particularly those likely to cause major problems,
- where weeds need DSE attention, and,
- information on pest animals

While cattlemen will be encouraged to make reports to DSE as identifications are made, the MCAV could request members to complete a report form at some point during their licence period.

11.5 Signage in the forests

The prospect of the MCAV having signage in the bush explaining alpine and bush grazing has been discussed with DSE and has some support. The construction of the signage needs to be considered.



Department of Sustainability and Environment
Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria

DSE

Cattle graze this area during summer months

The positive outcomes from cattle grazing include:

Weeds. Grazing helps control the growth of weeds. Cattlemen keep a lookout for new weed outbreaks, control them and send reports to DSE.

A presence in the bush. The use of this area for grazing puts people in the bush. Cattlemen keep a lookout for inappropriate or illegal behaviour and report this to DSE or the police. Their local knowledge is invaluable for rescues and fire fighting.

Climate change. Grazing reduces fuel for summer fires that can put tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere.

12 State Forest licence heritage nominations

Two groups of State Forest licences are still being assessed for national listing. The groups include the Turner/Commins and the Higgins group. It is hoped that this process will assist in cementing access to these important grazing licence areas. The National Heritage Database still records

- Alpine Grazing Licensed Areas in State Forests - Higgins Licence Area Jamieson Licola Rd Licola, VIC, Australia (Nominated place)
- Alpine Grazing Licensed Areas in State Forests - Turner Commins Area Bentleys Plain Rd Benambra, VIC, Australia (Nominated place)

13 Licola Floods

Licola and surrounding areas were devastated by floods in June 2007 and the President, Doug Treasure released the following statement headed, "Bad public land management allows the Gippsland floods to rip the guts and soil out of the high country."

"The Gippsland floods are bad enough but the soil being carried out of the mountains is a stark legacy of decades of bad public land management."

The President of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria, Mr. Doug Treasure said this today after surveying the damage and a teleconference discussion with other mountain cattlemen last night.

Mr. Treasure said, "This simple fact is that the severity of the floods and the extent of soil erosion is due to the intensity of the fires and this is directly linked to bad land management.

"Too little fuel reduction burning, fire and massive soil erosion are all linked. Inadequate fuel reduction burning over the past 20 years or so by successive governments allowed this year's fires to become intense holocausts which denuded the steeper slopes and bared the earth to the onslaught of massive rains. Those fires were so intense that in some areas now, we can't find even "jack jumpers" or bullants.

"Sure, bad land management didn't cause the heavy rain but fire ravaged steeper slopes let the rainwater rip out the soil and send this down rivers at a faster rate than if we had vegetation to slow the rate of runoff. Sure we would have still had floods but rivers that are peaking at 8 and 10 metres within a day would have peaked at lesser levels over a longer period of days.

"The strident conservationists would have seen the coffee colour of the water flooding down our rivers on the television news last night. I hope colour of their coffee lattes reminds these discredited greenies of the intense damage that their policies have caused to the high country. Whenever they sip a latte in the future, they should reflect on the environmental damage and the catastrophic impact on biodiversity to which they have contributed."

Mr. Treasure said, "Don't let anyone tell you this is a result of Mother Nature, drought or climate change. Without diminishing the prospects of climate change, the worst impacts of this rain are a direct result of green mantra and we hope the greenies who foisted this management onto successive Victorian Governments are hanging their heads in shame.

"It is some relief that we are beginning to see some belated recognition of the need for proper management including fuel reduction burning, rather than the ruinous implementation of green dogma. Realistically we don't expect governments to say they were wrong, some have been consigned to the history books anyway, but we do hope that lessons are learned and that this is reflected in better public land management.

"The floods, made worse by bad land management have damaged roads and this alone will have a huge recovery bill.

"The mountain cattlemen care for the high country and are distraught at the manner in which their beloved mountains are cascading down rivers, largely because of ill founded and now totally discredited green policies.

"The problems we face today were predicted 10 years ago by our former long time MCAV President, Jim Commins. Back in 1997 he even gave us the solutions. He wrote:

'A greater risk than ever now exists for the most calamitous bushfires in recorded history ... I suggest that the highest priority effort should be ... to reduce the fire hazard ...

- *Establish burnt fire breaks then set alight areas of limited size that will burn with low or moderate intensity to that which has already been burnt.*
- *As more fuel reduction burning is achieved, lightning fires should be recognised for their peril and value and should be allowed to make a natural contribution to fuel reduction.*
- *The grazing of animals perfectly complement fire by keeping regrowth in check. Domestic cattle can be managed to make many areas safe havens for man and beast.*
- *Public relation exercises should aim to inform people of the urgent need to address the dangerous condition of forest and educate them to understand and accept that accumulated forest litter and senescent pasture species must be reduced. This will protect native plants and animals as they have an intrinsic capacity to survive low or moderate fire but are devastated by holocaust wildfire.*

Let us hope that common sense will demand effective programming of mild-fire conservation before another major catastrophe by wild fire occurs.' MCAV President Jim Commins 1997.

"He was a real conservationist, had the environment at heart, cared for the high country and had the solutions for today. Perhaps now we will start implementing some of Jim's recommendations", Mr Treasure concluded.

14 Review of the MCAV

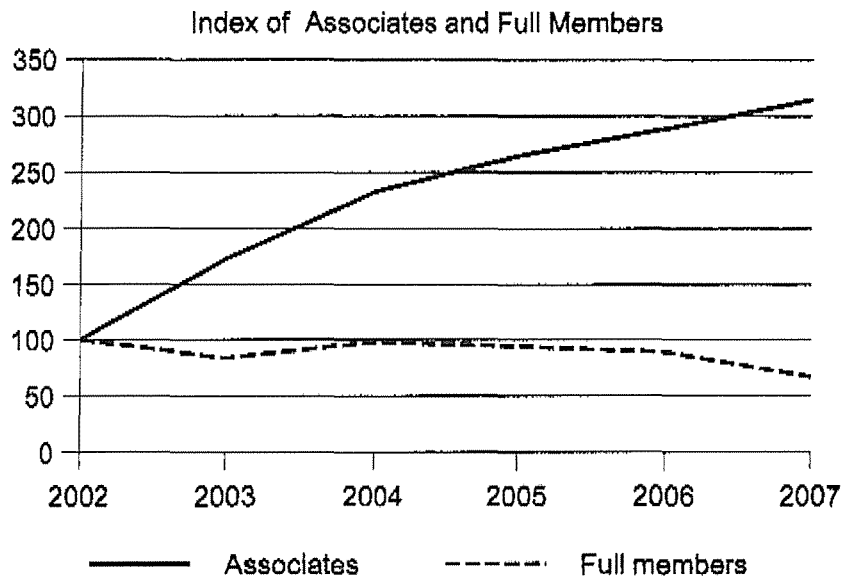
The 2006 Annual General Meeting discussed the aims and aspirations of the Association and agreed that a review committee make some recommendations to the next Annual General Meeting. The review committee was to include the President, four Vice Presidents and the Treasurer. Some items of this work are outlined below.

14.1 Membership

Year	Total Associates	Financial Associates	Total Cattlemen	Financial Cattlemen
2002		126		58
2003		224		49
2004		294		57
2005		334		55
2006		365		52
2007	609	398	80	39

The number of financial cattlemen has been stable but slumped in 2007. On the other hand, numbers of associate members have steadily increased from 2002 with the sharpest increase up to 2004.

The following chart illustrates the rise in numbers of financial associates compared to financial cattlemen. It is shown as an index with 2002 = 100



14.2 Cattleman membership by Branch

Branch	Total	Financial	% financial
Gippsland	32	18	56.3
Mansfield	7	3	42.9
North East	14	7	50.0
Ormeo	18	9	50.0
Total	71	37	52.1

15 People's Review of Bushfires

Considering the unsympathetic response by the Government to the 2003 fires, it was decided to instigate a People's Review of the Bushfires review the 2007 bushfires. Several like-minded organisations were invited to start the process off and the following statement was subsequently released.

"There is to be a People's Review of Bushfires in Victoria since 2000.

The People's Review is being organised by locally affected groups, has the services of two eminent fire experts and will meet with the public to hear their views.

The Review Experts are Professor Peter Attwill, and David Packham OAM. Importantly these experts have offered their services pro bono

The People's Review has been established by organisations including the Australian Deer Association, Mountain Cattleman's Association of Victoria, Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria, and the Victorian Apiarists Association. The Victorian Association of Forest Industries is highly likely to be a member. Other groups and organisations are now being canvassed to become participating organisations and to be part of the management of this review."

The intention of the People's Review is:

- To advance knowledge, and develop strategies that can avoid, or at least lessen, similar fires in the future.*

- *To gather people's stories on why more than 2,000,000 hectares have been burnt in the last 4 years.*
- *To capture people's history and experiences about actual situations so that this can contribute to lessening the impact of fires in the future. To capture these experiences before they are lost due to generational change.*
- *To prepare recommendations for action within the Government and the community that will lessen the extent and severity of bushfires.*
- *To give the Review a high profile.*
- *To conduct a rigorous and objective assessment that has impeccable integrity and regard for the truth.*
- *To review recent fires in terms of impacts on biodiversity and the conservation of natural species and processes. This means it will be necessary to comment on earlier fire regimes and human interventions, their impacts on the environment, the preferred future environment and how this might be achieved.*
- *To conduct an inclusive review including both local and scientific perspectives.*
- *To simplify and set out the complex interactions that make up the fire environment and capacities for human intervention.*
- *To prepare recommendations that will be embraced as positive influences on public land management policies.*
- *To produce a succinct and accessible report.*

It is already clear that the people support the People's Review and are now actively donating money to support this process.

This Review is committed to hearing the views of local affected people, many of whom have a great deal of experience in public land management and fire. The Review will take on board and base recommendations on widely and strongly held local views which are supported by scientific scrutiny. On the other hand, if local views are found wanting, do not provide Statewide solutions or are based on well-intentioned myths, the Review will do its best to explain how some conventional wisdoms have developed but are not supported scientifically and cannot be used in the development of future fire and land management policy.

The difference with this Review is the people with generations of experience will have the opportunity to have their views assessed and commented upon in an atmosphere where there is no overriding imperative to defend policies of any government or bureaucracy.

It is generally accepted that views within the government and the bureaucracy have changed over recent years. Attitudes generally seem to be more favourable towards more fuel reduction burning although there are still concerns about how and when this should be undertaken. The Review will acknowledge and support government policy where appropriate.

On some issues the People's Review may have to highlight divergent views and it may have to conclude there is no simple correct response to some aspects.

The People's Review is not about blame, mistrust or negative resentments. The Review will be open, wide ranging, frank and transparent. It will be run by the people and for the people.

The People's Review will visit local fire affected areas. It is envisaged that the Review will be meeting local people at Heyfield, Bairnsdale, Swifts Creek, Mt Beauty, Mansfield, Dunkeld and Anakie. As well as having public meetings, the Review Experts will meet with representatives of local groups and organisations."

A Parliamentary Inquiry into the fires has also been announced. Apart from promoting the information and recommendations of the People's Review in its own right, our material will be provided to any other inquiries to assist in their deliberations."

The Review Experts are

Peter Attiwill is Principal Fellow in Botany & Senior Fellow, School of Historical Studies, The University of Melbourne. He has been involved in research in forest ecology for more than 40 years, and is Editor-in-Chief of the international journal 'Forest Ecology and Management'. He has

published more than 100 papers in the scientific journals, and is co-editor of 'Ecology: An Australian Perspective' (Oxford University Press, 2nd edition, 2006).

David Packham, OAM, MAppSci, worked for 40 years in bushfire research with CSIRO, Monash University and the Australian Emergency Management Institute. He was responsible for fire-weather services in the Bureau of Meteorology. His extensive research concentrated on the physics of bushfires, and he applied this research to practical issues including the development of aerial prescribed burning, non-evacuation of properties, modelling of fire behaviour, and forensics. He consults extensively on survival of people during bushfires, on fire risk and on coronial inquiries into deaths during fire-fighting.

The People's Review has conducted a series of meetings and inspections at locations such as Mt Buffalo, Big Hill, Bogong High Plains, Mt Beauty, Porepunkah, Licola, Mt Taylor, Clifton Creek, Tambo Crossing, Bruthen, Anakie, Willaura, Dunkeld, the Grampians and Orbost. The People's Review provided this review to people who donated money to the program.

"As more people hear of our work we are getting requests to visit other areas and we have also been asked to convene a meeting in Melbourne.

Clearly the People's Review is tapping into attitudes, opinions and concerns within the community that people feel have not been adequately embraced and resolved. Interestingly, there are distinct similarities in comments across the State.

Many positive suggestions are being put forward. Of course there is some criticism of the government agencies and this often goes beyond the agencies that are immediately involved such as DSE and the CFA. In some cases it appears that current commercial imperatives, such as insurance, have adverse impacts on management of resources at the fire. In any event, rather than dwelling on the criticism of past events, we have been seeking to find ways to avoid these occurring in the future. We have been seeking to turn past criticisms into positive suggestions for the future.

A vast amount of emotional, social and economic devastation has been caused by the recent fires. We feel that the people who are still coming to grips with the disastrous impact of these recent fires deserve time and space to have their say and to have some adequate response to their concerns. The environmental impact also is severe, particularly the adverse impact on biodiversity and this has now been exacerbated by floods. We have been impressed by the concern of all of our participants, not just the conservation groups we have met, for the environment. Our public land is held in high regard and our participants want this high level of esteem to be matched in the management of these areas.

We expect our work will have considerable substance, give voice to many people who might have been subjected to "consultation" but not listened to, and cover many important issues.

We look forward to completing this significant work and the widespread presentation of our findings so that our important contribution will be properly integrated into the changes that are necessary in land and fire management in Victoria.

The following describes some of the issues drawn to our attention. There is nothing particularly new in these revelations - what will be new, and is eagerly awaited, is for something to be done about them.

The planning for fire on public land

- *Fuel reduction burning has been inadequate*
- *Considerable discussion about the method and extent of fuel reduction burning*
- *Limits on fuel reduction burning due to the bureaucracy hindering the ability to make the most of 'windows of opportunity'.*
- *Concern about fires getting away, causing damage resulting in compensation payments is excessively hindering fuel reduction burning*
- *Techniques of fuel reduction burning have been lost*
- *The 2007 fire burnt parts of area burnt in the 2003 fire.*

- *Grazing has been reduced or banned in many areas – grazing reduces fuel loads, and maintains people working in the bush*
- *There has been a reduction in government staff in local areas with the consequent loss of expertise and local knowledge. This means there are fewer government employees in the bush who are trained and ready to work on fuel reduction burning and fire fighting.*

Working on the fire front

- *There is need for a more aggressive first strike*
- *Access to public land is often difficult, especially as national parks tracks are no longer maintained.*
- *There are real difficulties with lines of command.*
- *More strident attitudes towards "Occupational Health and Safety" by the bureaucracy have prevented locals from "getting the job done". There seems to be more training in OH&S than in fire-fighting*
- *The off-site bureaucracy seems to be top heavy*
- *The requirements for accreditation and certification prevented local people, with extensive local knowledge and fire-fighting experience, from active fire fighting.*
- *Perhaps there should be one body responsible for fire-fighting*
- *Fires management has been characterised by inexperienced government people, lack of local knowledge, unwillingness to accept local knowledge.*
- *CFA crews were brought from great distances, were not utilized, and not advised why that was the case.*
- *Backburns were generally not well planned and many were too far in advance of the fire. In effect they became part of the fire.*
- *There were many concerns in logistics and flows of information.*
- *There is an issue about volunteers versus salaried fire-fighters. In general, CFA crews want to attack the fires, put them out, and get back to their homes and businesses. There is a feeling that pay structures provide a powerful incentive to maintain the fires.*

Impact of fire

- *Diversity has been destroyed over extensive areas by high intensity fires*
- *There will always been concerns about erosion, water yield and quality following high intensity fires*
- *Fire caused destruction of homes, sheds, livestock, fences and shelterbelts that have taken decades to establish/ death of stock.*
- *No access has been provided to the timber that has been burnt.*
- *Land-use in public land such as bee-keeping has been severely affected years into the future. Beekeepers need to be given alternative sites.*

Recovery

- *There are real concerns about the rehabilitation of public and private land*
- *The issue of boundary fences between public and private land needs to be addressed.*

There clearly has been a widening gulf between the upper echelons of the DSE, PV and to a lesser extent the CFA and on-ground local expertise and knowledge. In a fire situation this gulf results in some serious problems across areas of fire fighting, communications, logistics etc. The root cause of this widening gulf needs to be determined. Little has changed at the local level. The local communities, apart from a loss in numbers, are much the same as they have been for decades. In the higher echelons significant change has occurred in areas such as OH&S, fear of litigation and attitudes to managing incidents. At first glance therefore, the cause of the gulf appears to be in the upper echelons. We do not apportion blame here but we do report a dangerous gulf. It is critically

important for this gulf to be closed and something put in place to ensure that it does not re-emerge. This will be the area of one of our more important recommendations."

16 Wild Deer in the High Country

At the July 25 meeting, Max Rheese, President of the Australian Deer Association, joined the meeting and discussed an ADA brochure "*Control Wild Deer*" which outlined how graziers facing adverse impacts from wild deer can get some assistance in resolving these problems.

17 Thanks to our Associates

Our associate member base continues to grow and support some of the important activities of the Association. Thank you for your support. Join us at the 2008 annual Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria Get-Together. Keep an eye on our website, mcav.com.au for more details.