



MOUNTAIN CATTLEMENS NEWS

Newsletter of the Mountain Cattlemens Association of Victoria
PO Box 294, Mansfield Vic 3722

May 1992



GETTING IT TOGETHER

As the early morning Sun peeked through the majestic eucalypts lining the ranges above the campsite, began to trail its warming rays across the rows of tents and the smell of eggs and bacon gradually took over from the earthy smells of the bush, I had only one thought - "Did I really drink enough for this hangover?"

Yep, it was another annual Get-Together!

What about the site? The green grass, the superb surrounding mountain range and the cool cleansing waters of the Wonnangatta River.

What about Rusty running the Calcutta in the pitch black outside the beer tent. No-one had any idea what was going on and people reaching for another drink found they had bid on a horse they had never heard of!

Did you choke up at all at the inaugural Don Kneebone Mountain Heritage Award. They thought up that idea on the way to see the Hall of Fame at Longreach. Debra Squires did the organising and all the contestants got certificates. The Award will be an annual event at MCAV Get-Togethers and is for those who have a story to tell, a song to sing or a poem to recite. The inaugural was won by Peter Ayres, a

singer from Traralgon but for my money, old Don himself, will always be the winner.

Did you like Rusty Connely when he called for the starters in one of the horse races on Sunday - "If you hav'nt got your colours and you're not on the track - you're not in the race!" That's the sort of line we should have in the National Anthem!

What about the Stoney's battling out the Cattlemens Cup. What was Chris saying as he beat Kate into second place? - "Chivalry ain't dead Kate, I just can't slow up me horse!"

If the Get-Together is all about getting together, well, we sure as hell got it all together at that Get-Together. A special thanks to the Guys of Kilbride.

Did you meet up with some of your old friends and tell some new lies?

But the final accolade of the whole weekend must go to Angus. (If any of you are thinking, "Who's Angus?", you missed the funniest dog high jump we have ever seen.) Don't you remember the crowd chanting "ANGUS ANGUS ANGUS".

Anyway I'm off to the Wonnangatta River to cool off this hangover.

That was the good news - the rest isn't too good for cattle grazing in the high country.



T O M G R O G G I N S U P R E M E C O U R T C A S E W I N

Tom Groggin Station has won its case in the Supreme Court and the Department of Conservation and Environment has been ordered to provide the station with the licenses that cover the proposed Wilderness area of Indi.

These are the licenses that were promised by the 1989 cattle grazing agreement. Since then however, the Department has done everything in its power to delay and obstruct their provision.

There is little doubt that officers within the Department have been hoping that the Mountain Cattlemen would wilt under the combined pressure of legal costs and administrative and bureaucratic delay.

We have spent \$100,000 on legal costs and submissions and meetings just to defend our legal position. The Department of Conservation and Environment has been wasting taxpayers money pushing their hidden agenda.

The case cements the 1989 agreement as the law relating to cattle grazing. It would be a gross travesty of justice for the Parliament to now change its mind and, through the Wilderness Bill, wipe out some more cattle grazing areas.



A L P I N E N A T I O N A L P A R K M A N A G E M E N T P L A N S A N D W I L D E R N E S S B I L L

Alpine National Park plans

The plans for the Alpine National Park have been presented to the Parliament. How many pages? 1400. Do you believe that?

In yet another blow to the grazing of cattle in the high country, the plans propose the removal of grazing from the proposed Wilderness areas of Mount Darling/Snowy Bluff, Cobberas and Buchan Headwaters and now, of course, Indi. This would break the 3 year-old agreement that the Government established with us at the time of the passing of the National Parks (Alpine National Park) Act 1989.

In that agreement the Government promised the cattlemen 7 year licences. This promise covered areas that have subsequently been recommended for proclamation as Wilderness. There was no indication at the time of establishing the agreement that licences on any "wilderness" areas would be phased out.

Jim Commins and Ian Roper work long and hard on the Alpine Advisory Committee to get a better deal for cattlemen and to get it accepted that the grazing of cattle assists in the reduction of fuel for fires. They won the Committee over but despite last minute protestations this was ignored in the final drafts of the plans.

The plans contain some errors and omissions and it has been difficult to even get these corrected let alone change the strong philosophically based aversion to cattle grazing with the Department of Conservation and Environment.

The plans can only be disallowed by resolution of **both** Houses of Parliament. Even if the Legislative Council were to successfully move for their disallowance, the Assembly would do nothing and the plans will be passed.

Wilderness Bill

The Government has introduced its Wilderness Bill which, it hopes, will legislate for changes already incorporated into the Alpine National Park plans. It is in this Bill that the Government will propose the

phasing out of cattle grazing from areas proposed for wilderness.

It is the Wilderness Bill that would re-write parts of the 1989 agreement that was supported by the Supreme Court in the Tom Groggin case.

The agreement was established because, following the long history of terminations of grazing licenses, the cattlemen wanted a clear statement and understanding of where cattle could be grazed. The gradual whittling away of licences was unfair, unsettling and not conducive to long term business operations. It had to stop and the Parliament responded with a clear declaration of where the tenure for cattle grazing could be long term and secure. This is what we now have to defend.

We appear to have support from the Coalition as the Shadow Minister for Conservation and Environment is saying that the issue was resolved at the time of that 1989 agreement and that is the Coalition's position.

The Public Land Council has argued this issue with the Minister for Conservation and Environment, Mr. Barry Pullen and quoted his and Joan Kirner's words from 1989 when they said things along the lines of "These are not just licenses for seven years. They will, subject to good performance, be renewable." Finally the Minister just said it would be, "Up to the Parliament".



FLORA AND FAUNA

You won't believe all this but here we go!

The Government has a Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act which allows it to list things called "potentially threatening processes". In the absence of adequate management, these "potentially threatening processes" are

supposed to threaten the existence of individual or groups of flora and fauna. Once listed, the Government must prepare things called "Action Statements" and "Management statements" all designed to make sure that the "potentially threatening process" does not threaten the existence of any flora and fauna. All this happens in the Flora and Fauna Unit within the Department of Conservation and Environment.

Are you still with us? Well,

- ◆ despite the fact that we established an agreement with the Government and the Parliament in 1989 about grazing cattle and,

- ◆ despite the fact that the new Alpine National Park plans go into great detail about grazing cattle (although not in Wilderness areas), and,

- ◆ despite the fact that cattle grazing has already been removed from large areas of the high plains because of its alleged impact on plants etc,

Guess what? Cattle grazing in the alpine area has received preliminary listing as a "potentially threatening process".

We are going to try to claim this is a "vexatious" listing and have it thrown out. If we can't do that we will have to live with the nomination and try to get management guidelines that satisfy the Flora and Fauna Unit that cattle grazing is not potentially threatening.

We are not alone in this battle. Marble mining has also been listed as a potentially threatening process. Dr. Chris Waring, a Queenslander, who has patiently been trying to get mining approval at Bindi since 1987, sees it this way. "In a climate of bureaucratic incompetence by the DMID (Department of Manufacturing Industry and Development) deliberate misrepresentation by non-economically responsible D of C+E, the political ascendancy of enormous

regulatory bureaucracies, and general disregard for economically productive enterprises, it is not surprising that the recession is worst in Victoria."

We have no alternative but to keep on battling.



NEW BOGONG BOUNDARIES

The past grazing season has shown that the new boundaries on the Bogong High Plains have not been successful and some of the licensees have been seriously disadvantaged. The Department has assured us that a review of boundaries could take place so we have asked for a meeting with members of the Alpine Grazing Working Groups on the Bogong High Plains next month to work out a satisfactory solution.

RALLY AGAINST ALPINE NATIONAL PARK PLANS AND WILDERNESS

10.00AM
SATURDAY
MAY 23
PARLIAMENT HOUSE

The rally is being organised by four four-wheel-drive clubs within the Victoria Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs.

The main contact person is Heidi Alexander - 706 3596 - ring Heidi if you want to join a four-wheel-drive convoy to the Rally



ALLOCATIONS

The question of allocations on the 7 year licenses was resolved for this season only at a panel hearing in Wodonga in December. The MCAV has applied to the Supreme Court of Victoria for a review of the decision which does not allow for historic allocations, and will, in the future include calves in the allocation number, although a calf will be counted as half a cow. This application will be heard by the Court sometime in July this year.



THE OFFICE

Sue Silver is on some well deserved leave from early May until the end of June. Bruce McCormack will be attending the office from time to time to try to figure out what is going on. Please try to save up any major problems until Sue gets back (even better try to solve them yourselves).



WE NEED YOUR HELP NO OBLIGATION, SO PLEASE ENQUIRE

Are you a Spraypainter?

We need volunteers to repaint the Marketing caravan. If you can help please call Ros Andrews on (03) 818 7833

Are you a Signwriter?

We need volunteers to signwrite the Marketing caravan after it has been resprayed. If you can help please call Ros Andrews on (03) 818 7833.