

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

Statewide Assessment of Public Land in Victoria

Response to submissions on the proposed terms of reference

Introduction

Pursuant to the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* (the Act), a notice of the proposed terms of reference for a Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) investigation into the current system of public land in Victoria was published in a newspaper circulating generally throughout Victoria on 8 August 2014.

The public submission period on the proposed terms of reference ran until 5 September 2014. Section 16(2) of the Act states that within 7 sitting days of each House of Parliament after the close of the submissions period, each House must be provided with a statement of how any comments received on the proposed terms of reference have been dealt with.

Submission received

One submission was received during the submission period, from the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA).

Summary of submission

The submission from the VNPA supported the proposed investigation as assisting in informing broader government policies on biodiversity and nature conservation but requested two specific changes to the terms of reference.

- A draft proposals paper should be prepared as the proposed terms of reference state that VEAC is to provide options for changing or consolidating the existing categories. The VNPA considers this requirement to be recommendations and that a draft therefore should be provided for public input to allow a more transparent and informed outcome.
- There should be a clear statement that there will not be any future downgrading of levels of protection given for land that is already reserved.

Response to submission

The government will proceed with this investigation and the terms of reference have been amended to address the matters raised in the submission as follows.

- A draft proposals paper is not considered necessary as the terms of reference only require VEAC to provide options but a sentence has been added to request that council provides information on this term of reference to assist in the making of submissions in their notice of investigation.
- Additional wording to address the second concern has been provided in the paragraph on the purpose of the investigation to state that it is not intended to change the current levels of protection underpinning the protected area system or State forest.

Additions to the terms of reference are underlined in the attached request.