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**VICTORIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT
COUNCIL**

ANNUAL REPORT

15/16



Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Parliament House
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14(1) of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is pleased to submit to you its fifteenth Annual Report, covering our activities for the period 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016.



PHIL HONEYWOOD

Chairperson
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
19 July 2016

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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am very pleased to provide this annual report for the year ended 30 June 2016 to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, for the purpose of section 14 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* (VEAC Act). A new Council was appointed in July 2015. New members Joanne Duncan, Anna Kilborn and Geoffrey Wescott joined me as chairperson and member Charles Meredith in our second terms. In August the new Council picked up the reins of the two investigations commenced in the term of the previous Council: historic places and public land categories (statewide assessment)

The Council began work by rapidly familiarising itself with the Historic Places Investigation through field inspections and discussions with land managers and heritage specialists. A draft proposals paper for the Historic Places Investigation was released in October 2015 for a public consultation period to 22 December 2015. Information sessions and regional stakeholder forums were held from October to December 2015.

Compared with previous investigations, there was a wide divergence of views on possible ways forward on both governance, protection and maintenance prioritisation for historic places. As a result, Council sought and was granted a five-month extension of time to complete this investigation in order to work through the range of comments and points of view in the submissions collaboratively with stakeholders. This included further discussions with key heritage agencies and public land managers as well as receiving additional advice from the expert Community Reference Group for the investigation.

Work continued during the year on the Statewide Assessment of Public Land with a special interim report on public land classification provided to the Minister in September 2015 as requested. Council also decided to work towards jointly releasing both the discussion paper and the draft proposals paper in August 2016 for an extended period of public comment. Council's intention is that this joint release will facilitate preparation of submissions on both the information and analyses contained in the discussion paper and on the draft recommendations.

This year marked the fifth year of the Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships. In 2016, scholarships were awarded to seven recipients. This makes a total of 29 scholarships awarded since they were established in 2011 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the first meeting of the Land Conservation Council. A number of important amendments to the VEAC Act were proposed during the year and passed the Legislative Assembly in June 2016. The proposed amendments to the Act will enable VEAC to provide advice and carry out assessments, as well as continuing to conduct investigations as we do now.

The council again acknowledges the support it receives from its community reference groups, and from state government departments and agencies, local government, community organisations and interested members of the public. The council greatly appreciates both the dedication and high level expertise provided by Ms Joan Phillips and the VEAC secretariat team. Special thanks also to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning who provide the administrative services and support for council to carry out its work.



Phil Honeywood

VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL

OUR PURPOSE

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council was established under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* (the VEAC Act) to provide independent and strategic advice to the Victorian Government on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of Victoria's public land (refer to Sections 4 and 5 of the VEAC Act).

OUR VALUES

Our organisational values reflect our attitude to the public land estate, the community and the environment. The Council:

- seeks to understand and meet community needs from public land
- is committed to excellence and continuous improvement
- values ethical, accountable, transparent and responsible behaviour
- encourages public consultation and input into VEAC's investigative processes.

OUR FUNCTIONS

The Council:

- carries out investigations that are requested by the Minister on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land
- carries out any other functions that are conferred on the Council by the VEAC Act or any other Act (refer to Section 6 of the VEAC Act).

In carrying out investigations and making recommendations the Council is required to have regard to:

- the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- the need to conserve and protect biological diversity
- the need to conserve and protect any areas which have ecological, natural, landscape or cultural interest or significance, recreational value or geological or geomorphological significance
- the need to provide for the creation and preservation of a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of parks and reserves within the State of Victoria
- the existence of any international treaty ratified by the Commonwealth of Australia which is relevant to the investigation
- any agreement at a national, inter-state or local government level into which the Government of Victoria has entered, or under which the Government of Victoria has undertaken any obligation in conjunction with the Commonwealth, a state, territory or municipal council, which relates to the subject matter of the investigation
- the potential environmental, social and economic consequences of implementing the proposed recommendations
- any existing or proposed use of the environment or natural resources.

Powers held by the Council include the ability to appoint committees and, with the consent of the relevant Minister, make use of the services of any person employed in the Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (refer to Section 7 of the VEAC Act).

A website containing general information about the Council's role, operation and current and past investigations is available at www.veac.vic.gov.au. The site also contains links to past investigations and studies conducted by the Environment Conservation Council (ECC) and the Land Conservation Council (LCC).

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP



(L-R) Hon. Phil Honeywood, Ms Joanne Duncan, Ms Anna Kilborn, Dr Charles Meredith, Dr Geoffrey Wescott.

Members of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council are appointed under the provisions of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. Members for the period 7 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 were Hon. Phil Honeywood (Chairperson), Ms Joanne Duncan, Ms Anna Kilborn, Dr Charles Meredith and Dr Geoffrey Wescott. Mr Honeywood was appointed for a term of two years commencing 7 July 2015 with the remaining members appointed for three years from the same date.

HON. PHIL HONEYWOOD (CHAIRPERSON)

Phil Honeywood was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of Warrandyte in 1988 at 28 years of age. Over the 18 year period that he represented Warrandyte he became a strong advocate for this environmentally sensitive area with its important urban fringe State Park and significant Green Wedge areas. With the election of the Coalition State Government in 1992, Mr Honeywood became Chairman of the Melbourne Parks and Waterways Advisory Council and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. From 1996 to 1999 he was Minister for Tertiary Education and Training and Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs. From 1999 to 2002 Mr Honeywood was Shadow Minister for Education and from 2002 to 2006 Deputy Leader of the State Opposition during which time he also served for several years as Shadow Minister for the Environment.

Since retiring from politics in 2006, Mr Honeywood has worked in senior management positions in the international education industry. He is currently Chief Executive Officer of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) a peak industry body. Community involvement includes Chairman of Victech (370 Degrees) a not for profit Group Training Company and being a volunteer adviser to the Bennelong Foundation.

MS JOANNE DUNCAN

Joanne Duncan was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of Gisborne in 1999 (later transferring to Macedon in 2002) which she represented until her retirement from politics in 2014.

During her time in Parliament, Joanne was a member of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee (1999 to November 2010 and May 2011 to November 2014).

Joanne Duncan is currently chairing the stakeholder reference group for the review of the native vegetation permitted clearing regulations. The stakeholder reference group is a forum for key stakeholders to raise and share their views on the regulations to inform the review.

MS ANNA KILBORN

Anna Kilborn is an environmental planner and consultant, with extensive experience across Australia in natural resource management, regional infrastructure projects, strategic planning and policy development. She has previously served on the Regional Development Australia's Gippsland Committee and Planning Panels Victoria, and is currently a non-executive director and deputy chair on the board of South Gippsland Water Corporation. Anna lives in regional Victoria and is committed to integrated planning and community involvement in planning and decision-making.

DR CHARLES MEREDITH

Charles Meredith is an ecologist and consultant with extensive experience in natural systems and conservation planning. After an early career in wildlife research, Dr Meredith founded the ecological and heritage consulting firm Biosis Research P/L and was CEO there from 1984 until he retired in 2011. During that time, he worked on environmental impact assessments of many major projects, prepared a broad range of natural area management plans, and provided strategic and policy advice on environmental matters to a diverse array of organisations, both public and private. Dr Meredith has regularly served on committees and advisory boards for NGOs, professional bodies and government. He is an Inaugural Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia.

DR GEOFFREY WESCOTT

Geoff is Associate Professor of Environment in the School of Life and Environmental Sciences at Deakin University's Melbourne (Burwood) campus. He is a past Chair of the Marine and Coastal Community Network and the Victorian National Parks Advisory Council and has served on many government bodies including the Board of Parks Victoria, the Victorian Coastal Council and the federal government's National Oceans Advisory Group. He is currently a Director of Zoos Victoria and is Chairing the Expert Panel aiding the preparation of a new Marine and Coastal Act.

Geoff has authored/edited five books and has published over 170 papers, chapters and articles and is a Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Hon. Lisa Neville MP, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, was the Minister responsible for administering the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* from 1 July 2015 to 22 May 2016.

The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change was the responsible Minister for the period 23 May 2016 to 30 June 2016.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The Council met formally nine times during the 2015-2016 financial year.

In addition, in relation to the Historic Places and Statewide Assessment investigations, members attended Community Reference Group meetings, field trips, information sessions, additional meetings and briefings.

Council members' attendance at council meetings from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016

NAME	ATTENDANCE (number of meetings)
Phil Honeywood	9 of 9
Joanne Duncan	9 of 9
Anna Kilborn	8 of 9
Charles Meredith	8 of 9
Geoffrey Wescott	8 of 9

ADMINISTRATION

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council office is located on level 6, 8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne, 3002.

Telephone (03) 9637 9902
Fax (03) 9637 8024
Toll Free Number 1800 134 803 (from landlines)
Email veac@delwp.vic.gov.au
Website www.veac.vic.gov.au
Executive Officer Ms Joan Phillips

The Executive Officer is responsible for managing the office and staff.

AMENDMENTS TO THE VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL ACT

A number of amendments to the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* were proposed during the year.

The National Parks and Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Acts Amendment Bill 2016 was introduced to Parliament on 24 May 2016. The Bill was debated in the Legislative Assembly on 22 June 2016 and passed the Legislative Assembly on 23 June 2016. It has proceeded to the Legislative Council where it will be debated later in the year.

The proposed amendments will establish a second process by which VEAC will be able to provide advice and assessments, in addition to being able to carry out investigations as it does now. The amended Act would allow for VEAC to provide advice or carry out assessments on matters that, because of their limited scale or scope or their technical nature, might not require an investigation under the current provisions. This would enable more efficient and flexible use of VEAC and its resources.

INVESTIGATION INTO HISTORIC PLACES

In March 2014, the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to conduct an investigation into historic places on public land across Victoria. The investigation is considering the current arrangements for the management of information, the management of places and opportunities to improve the current arrangements. In addition, the terms of reference specify a particular focus on historic places that are currently difficult to manage.

The work program for the 2015-16 year included the following:

- During August the newly appointed Council members and VEAC staff conducted field inspections covering several historic sites and talking with land managers and heritage specialists.
- A draft proposals paper was released for public comment on 22 October 2015 followed by community forums across Victoria throughout November and December in Warrnambool, Ballarat, Bendigo, Traralgon, Benalla and Melbourne.
- The submission period following the release of the draft proposals paper closed in December 2015 and 59 submissions were received.
- In February 2016 the then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water, Hon. Lisa Neville, granted a five month extension of time for completion of the investigation. VEAC is now in the process of preparing the final report which will now be submitted to the Minister on 31 August 2016, followed by public release in early September.
- The Community Reference Group for the investigation met twice during 2015-2016. The membership of the Community Reference Group can be found on page 16.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Investigation into Historic Places for the 2015-16 financial year was \$506,363.

The terms of reference for the Investigation into Historic Places are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This notice is made pursuant to section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (the Council) to carry out a statewide investigation into historic places¹ on public land in Victoria.

The purpose of the Historic Places Investigation is to:

- a) review current information and information sources on historic places on public land, including the representation of historical themes;
- b) examine and provide an assessment of current information, management arrangements for historic places in Victoria and any issues and opportunities related to their future protection, use and sustainability; and
- c) make recommendations for opportunities to improve management arrangements to conserve, protect and enhance the historic, community and educational values of these places, including the potential for sustainable use and adaptive re-use of historic assets.

In undertaking the investigation, the Council is requested to consider how best to manage and conserve the wide diversity of historic places on public land in the context of available resources, pressures on heritage places and emerging trends in heritage conservation. In particular, the investigation should focus on options for managing historic places that are currently difficult to manage.

In addition to the considerations in section 18 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must take into account the following matters:

- i. relevant State Government legislation, policies and strategies, Ministerial statements and reports by the Victorian Auditor-General;
- ii. agency databases for historic places assets;
- iii. relevant regional programs, strategies and plans; and
- iv. relevant agreements under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

A draft proposals paper and a final report are to be prepared, allowing two public submission periods. A separate discussion paper is not to be prepared.

The Council must report on the completed investigation by 31 March 2016.

- 1. For the purposes of this investigation, the term 'historic places' includes historic sites, buildings and associated objects. It does not include places associated with Aboriginal cultural heritage prior to contact with non-Aboriginal people (these are addressed by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*). It may include places relating to the post-contact period such as Aboriginal mission buildings.
- * On 19 February 2016 the Minister for Environment and Climate Change granted an extension of the date by which the Council must complete the investigation to 31 August 2016.

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LAND

In September 2014, the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to conduct a Statewide Assessment of Public Land. On 2 April 2015 the request was amended by the then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water.

The amended terms of reference provide for the preparation of a discussion paper and a draft proposals paper for public comment. An interim report was also required on the first term of reference by September 2015. The final report is required to be submitted to the Minister by February 2017.

The Interim Report on Public Land Classification was submitted to the then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water on 30 September 2015. Public consultation was not required on the interim report, but the document was made available on VEAC's website. The interim report will be updated as required and included in the discussion paper, which is scheduled for release for public comment in August 2016. Council has determined that the with the discussion paper and the draft proposals paper will be released concurrently for an extended period of public consultation.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation met three times during 2015-2016. The membership of the Community Reference Group can be found on page 16.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Statewide Assessment of Public Land for the 2015-16 financial year was \$507,637.

The terms of reference for the Statewide Assessment of Public Land (as amended) are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water requests the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council to carry out an investigation into public land in Victoria.

It is more than 25 years since the Land Conservation Council's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Use* was published and it is timely to consider revisiting aspects of that assessment in order to provide updated information for public land management. National Parks are recognised internationally as the core element of nature conservation and protection. Victoria's protected area estate is significant but remains fragmented and incomplete.

The purpose of the investigation is to carry out a statewide assessment of public land in Victoria which considers the recommendations of the council and its predecessors and the appropriateness of the current system of public land use categories established as a result. The focus of the investigation is to provide information and recommendations to assist management effectiveness and is not intended to change the current levels of protection underpinning Victoria's public land system.

In particular, the council is requested to investigate and provide:

1. an assessment of the current system of public land use categories, including identification and evaluation of approaches adopted in other jurisdictions nationally and internationally, and consideration of options for changing or consolidating the existing categories to result in a system of categories that is simple and clear and that supports effective and efficient public land management;
2. an assessment of the current reservation status of public land, including areas where land use has changed since government accepted a recommendation; and
3. an inventory of the types of values on public land.

The council is requested to provide an interim report on the first term of reference that includes options for the consolidation of the existing public land categories by September 2015. To ensure there is an opportunity for public comment, the council is requested to publish information to assist in the making of submissions on this term of reference in the notice of investigation.

The council must prepare a discussion paper and a draft proposals paper.

The council must report on the completed investigation by February 2017.

BILL BORTHWICK STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS 2016

The Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships assist with some of the costs of research for students undertaking Honours, Masters or PhD research projects relating to public land in Victoria in the fields of natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, economics or politics. The scholarships were established in March 2011 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the first meeting of the Land Conservation Council (LCC) and to honour the vision of the Hon Bill Borthwick, a central figure in establishing the LCC to advise government on the use of Victoria's public land.

The 2016 scholarships were presented to the recipients by VEAC Chairperson, Hon Phil Honeywood and Mrs Muffie Borthwick, wife of the late Bill Borthwick, at a function at the Royal Society of Victoria on 5 May 2016. Scholarships totalling \$7,500 were awarded to seven recipients.



(L-R) Joanne Duncan, Lisa de Kleyn, Melissa Neave, Helen Corney, William Lugg, Phil Honeywood, Chris Davies, Anna Kilborn, Sarah McMaster, Muffie Borthwick, Sarah Murfitt, Daniel Ierodiaconou, Laura Tan, Geoffrey Wescott, Mike Weston.

The recipients for the 2016 scholarships are:

MS HELEN CORNEY, RMIT UNIVERSITY

"The relationship between public perceptions of amenity and biodiversity in urban river corridors"

Helen's PhD research will explore how to improve the usefulness of public perceptions of amenity as a component of river corridor and public land management by providing a clearer articulation of how amenity is perceived by the general public and how it relates to biodiversity.

This will be achieved by identifying broad themes in public perceptions of amenity of urban river corridors through audio recordings, questionnaires and interviews exploring relationships between these themes and differing levels of biodiversity.

MR CHRIS DAVIES, FEDERATION UNIVERSITY

“Combining genetics and GPS telemetry to inform Sambar deer management on public land in southeast Australia”

The aim of Chris’s work will be to assess how sambar deer utilise their habitat in the Alpine National Park, including daily and seasonal habitat preferences, through the use of GPS telemetry. He will also utilise genetic data to assess the population structure of sambar deer both within the Alpine National Park and across Victoria. The knowledge gained will assist in developing future sambar deer management strategies and control operations.

MS LISA DE KLEYN, RMIT UNIVERSITY

“Environmental justice and the management and use of Toolangi State Forest”

Lisa’s PhD research will provide important information on the potential for an environmental justice approach to address controversial use and management of native forests. It will also provide insights into how procedures can be changed to achieve procedural and recognition justice and support ongoing decision-making processes for cohesive, equitable and sustainable outcomes.

MR WILLIAM LUGG, UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

“Determining degradation and persistence of platypus environmental DNA”

Will’s research for his Master of Science degree seeks to understand and investigate eDNA detectability through a case study using an iconic Australian freshwater species, the platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*), as a model system. He will also look at how environmental factors influence DNA persistence and degradation. He will investigate the degradation of platypus eDNA in the platypus pools at Healesville Sanctuary.

MS SARAH MCMASTER, FEDERATION UNIVERSITY

“Aboriginal fire practices in Victoria: a historical exploration of its meanings, impacts and implications”

Sarah’s research project for her PhD will aim to critically examine how the interpretations and representations of Aboriginal burning practices were affected by the cultural position of colonists. This will allow for a more nuanced view of the fire practices that existed at the point of colonisation and for a better sense of how these can be translated into the contemporary setting.

MS SARAH MURFITT, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

“Application of unmanned aerial vehicles in intertidal reef monitoring”

Sarah’s honours project seeks to test and refine a new method for intertidal reef monitoring (IRMP) using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. Several of the current monitoring sites in Victoria (both in marine protected areas and reference sites) will be targeted and images captured using a waterproof multi-rotor airframe. This project will determine if there is potential for UAVs to be used in long-term environmental monitoring.

MS LAURA TAN, DEAKIN UNIVERSITY

“Adaptive predator management to protect ecotourism of an iconic species”

The aim of this project is to determine how to mitigate the high risk of loss of Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) clutches to raven predation, through investigating the genetics and skill transmission of Little Ravens (*Corvus mellori*). Laura will undertake an analysis of the genetic links between individual ravens and examining their predation of penguin clutches. She will aim to determine the relevance of genetic relatedness to transmission of egg predation skills.

COMMITTEES

VEAC is required to establish a Community Reference Group to provide advice in respect of each investigation. The Council may also appoint any committees that it considers necessary to assist with conduct of investigations. Membership of committees is not restricted to members of the Council.

HISTORIC PLACES INVESTIGATION COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

There were two meetings of the Historic Places Investigation Community Reference Group held during 2015-2016.

NAME*	ORGANISATION
Mr Robin Crocker	Chairperson
Assoc Prof Don Garden	Royal Historical Society of Victoria
Ms Judith Dwyer	Mechanics' Institute of Victoria
Mr Paul Roser	National Trust of Victoria
Ms Bonnie Chew	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Ms Melissa Crane and Ms Lisa Gervasoni	Municipal Association of Victorian
Mr Peter Hiscock	Victorian Tourism Industry Council
Ms Sue Wright	Victorian National Parks Association
Mr Peter Evans	Light Railway Research Society of Australia
Mr Ian Travers	Heritage Consultant
Mr Gary Vines	Heritage Consultant
Ms Helen Martin	Heritage Consultant

**Membership at 30 June 2016*

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LAND COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

The Statewide Assessment of Public Land Community Reference Group met three times during 2015-2016.

NAME*	ORGANISATION
Mr Don Saunders	Chairperson
Mr Nick Aberle	Environment Victoria
Mr Michael Coldham	Four Wheel Drive Victoria
Ms Megan Davison	Minerals Council of Australia, Victoria
Mr Alex Green	Municipal Association of Victoria
Mr Daniel Erna	Native Title Services Victoria
Mr Charles Berger	Outdoors Victoria
Ms Jill Gallagher	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Mr Ian Cane	Victorian Apiarists' Association
Mr Tim Morrissey	Victorian Association of Forest Industries
Mr Gerald Leach	Victorian Farmers Federation
Mr Russell Costello	Victorian National Parks Association
Mr Barnaby McIlrath	Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association
Ms Dianne Smith	Victorian Tourism Industry Council

**Membership at 30 June 2016*

CONSULTANCIES

A consultant is a particular type of contractor that is engaged primarily to perform a discrete task for an entity that facilitates decision making through:

- provision of expert analysis and advice; and/or
- development of a written report or other intellectual output.

In 2015-2016, there was one consultancy where the total fees payable to the consultant were \$10,000 or greater. The total expenditure incurred during 2015-2016 in relation to this consultancy was \$18,000 (excl. GST).

Details of individual consultancies (valued at \$10,000 or greater)

CONSULTANT	PURPOSE OF CONSULTANCY	TOTAL APPROVED PROJECT FEE (EXCL. GST)	EXPENDITURE 2015-16 (EXCL. GST)	FUTURE EXPENDITURE (EXCL. GST)
The Public Land Consultancy	Statewide Assessment of Public land investigation – local government management of Crown land	\$18,000	\$18,000	Nil

In 2015-2016, there were no consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000.

DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

The Chairperson and all members completed Declarations of Private Interests, which were forwarded to the Minister. Executive Officer, Ms Joan Phillips, completed a declaration which has been forwarded to the Minister.

All returns are confidential.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Council's operating funds were provided as part of recurrent funds appropriated to DELWP.

The financial operations of the Council have not been separately audited. Audited statements are incorporated into the overall Financial Statements of DELWP's Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2016. The table below shows expenditure incurred.

There were no significant changes in financial position during the reporting period.

EXPENSES	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Salaries and oncosts	1,049,113	744,707	794,435	825,252	914,003
Operating	272,314	302,852	444,465	514,745	506,972
Total	1,321,427	1,047,559	1,238,900	1,340,027	1,420,975

WORKFORCE DATA

EMPLOYMENT	2016 (a)			2015 (b)		
Type	Male	Female	Total staff	Male	Female	Total Staff
Total	3	7	10 (FTE 9.4)	3	5	8

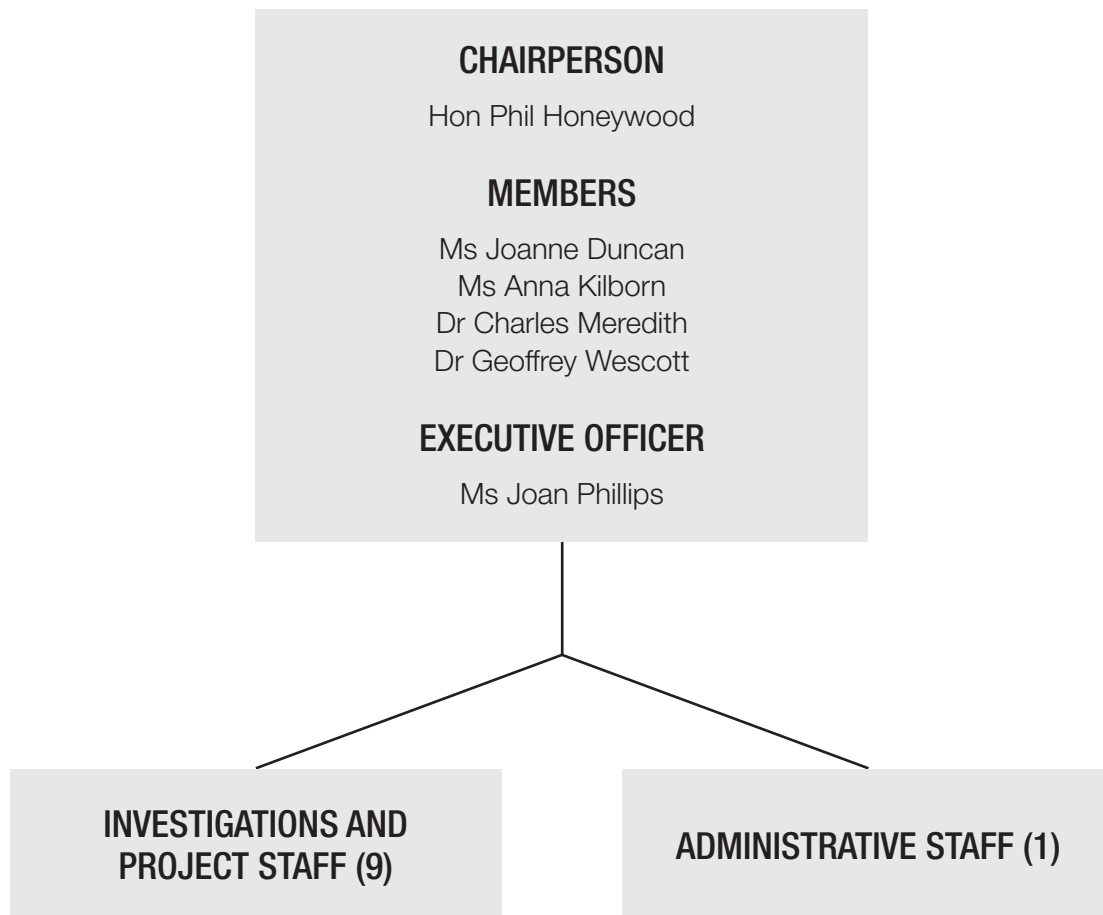
Notes:

a relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2016

b relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2015

Note: VEAC staff are also included in employment statistics for DELWP for 2015-2016.

ORGANISATION CHART



Council members as at 30 June 2016

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYMENT AND CONDUCT PRINCIPLES

Public Administration employment and conduct principles are applied in the appointment and management of staff. VEAC follows the merit and equity principles used by DELWP, in accordance with Government directives and the Public Administration Act 2004.

Three primary goals have been assumed by VEAC with regard to people management practices:

- develop and sustain organisational culture in which policies, practices and services are adapted to the needs of the community
- ensure a workplace free from policies and practices that discriminate against staff or potential staff
- ensure that staff have access to a fair, efficient grievance review process to resolve perceived breaches of merit and equity.

COMPLIANCE

The Council adheres to the principles of the National Competition Policy (NCP) to ensure that any business competition with private entities takes place in an environment where the Council has no unfair competitive advantages.

During the year the Council did not enter into any contracts to which the Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003 applied.

In accordance with the reporting directions, the annual report must include a statement about compliance with the building and maintenance provisions of the Building Act 1993. The Council makes use of buildings and facilities controlled by DELWP to perform its functions and does not own or control any buildings.

The Council utilises DELWP's Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.

There were no major changes or factors affecting performance.

The Council is committed to the requirements of the Premier's Circular 2006/1, in relation to community inclusiveness, and applies these requirements in its operations where possible.

Government policy requires disclosure of all Government Advertising Expenditure with a total media buy of \$100,000 or greater (exclusive of GST). VEAC's expenditure in the 2015-16 reporting period on government advertising expenditure did not exceed \$100,000.

During 2015-2016 VEAC did not enter into any contracts valued at over \$10 million.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE

The Government's aim of improved environmental management is supported by a requirement that Departments disclose their ongoing performance in managing and reducing the environmental impacts of their office-based activities. The Council makes use of DELWP offices and facilities to perform its functions and the reporting requirement of the office is met by DELWP. The Council secretariat participates fully in a range of environmental programs undertaken by DELWP, including:

- separation of reusable, recyclable, compostable and landfill waste;
- use of Green Power;
- use of flow restricted taps and waterless urinals;
- use of recycled paper and use of duplex printing;
- environmentally sustainable fitouts; and
- regular use by staff of public transport, cycling or walking to and from work.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) EXPENDITURE

VEAC falls under the umbrella of DELWP in regard to ICT and providing business enabling ICT services. Please refer to DELWP Annual Report 2015-16.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The Freedom of Information Act 1982 gives everyone the right to seek access to documents held by the Council. It is worth contacting the Council in the first instance to find out if you can access the information without making an FOI application.

FOI requests have to be made in writing and requests can be submitted to the Council by email to veac@delwp.vic.gov.au or in writing to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6
8 Nicholson St
East Melbourne Vic 3002

The cost of an FOI application is \$27.90; however there may be further charges depending on the time it takes to find the documents and photocopy them and the number of pages to be photocopied. Further information is available from the website FOI Online (www.foi.vic.gov.au).

OPERATIONS

For the 12 months ending 30 June 2016, there were no valid requests. There were no requests outstanding as at 30 June 2016.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT

The *Protected Disclosures Act 2012* (PD Act) enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct by public officers and public bodies. The Act aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROTECTED DISCLOSURES ACT 2012

The PD Act was part of a package of integrity reforms introduced by the Victorian Government, which also established the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC).

The PD Act enables people to make disclosures about improper conduct within the public sector without fear of reprisal. It aims to ensure openness and accountability by encouraging people to make disclosures and protecting them when they do.

WHAT IS A 'PROTECTED DISCLOSURE'?

A protected disclosure is a complaint of corrupt or improper conduct by a public officer or a public body.

VEAC is a "public body" for the purposes of the Act.

WHAT IS 'IMPROPER OR CORRUPT CONDUCT'?

Improper or corrupt conduct involves substantial:

- mismanagement of public resources; or
- risk to public health or safety or the environment; or
- corruption.
- The conduct must be criminal in nature or a matter for which an officer could be dismissed.

HOW DO I MAKE A 'PROTECTED DISCLOSURE'?

You can make a protected disclosure about VEAC or its board members, officers or employees by contacting DELWP or IBAC on the contact details provided below.

Please note that VEAC is not able to receive protected disclosures.

HOW CAN I ACCESS DELWP'S PROCEDURES FOR THE PROTECTION OF PERSONS FROM DETRIMENTAL ACTION?

DELWP has established procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action in reprisal for making a protected disclosure about VEAC or its employees. You can access DELWP's procedures on its website at: www.delwp.vic.gov.au.

CONTACTS

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

Address: PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002
Ph: 03 9637 8697
Website: www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) Victoria

Address: Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Victoria 3001.
Mail: IBAC, GPO Box 24234, Melbourne Victoria 3000
Internet: www.ibac.vic.gov.au
Phone: 1300 735 135
Email: see the website above for the secure email disclosure process, which also provides for anonymous disclosures.

RISK MANAGEMENT

While VEAC examines the risk of delivery of its particular work functions and objectives on an ongoing basis, it relies on DELWP risk management framework and internal audit of financial and other administrative systems which are used by the VEAC's Secretariat. Please refer to the DELWP annual report for further information.

GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY ATTESTATION

I, Joan Phillips, Executive Officer of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council, certify that:

- my public entity has policies and procedures in place that are consistent with the minimum requirements and accountabilities outlined in the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy Framework issued by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner; and
- staff are informed about these gifts, benefits and hospitality policies and procedures.

COMPLIANCE WITH DATAVIC ACCESS POLICY

Consistent with the Victorian Government's DataVic Access Policy (2012), the Council intends that data tables that it may produce in the future will be available at <http://data.vic.gov.au/> in machine readable format.

DISCLOSURE INDEX

The 2015-2016 Annual Report of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation. This index has been prepared to facilitate identification of the Council's compliance with statutory disclosure requirements.

LEGISLATION	REQUIREMENT	PAGE NO
Accountable Officer's declaration		
SD 4.2(j)	Sign off requirements	4
Charter and purpose		
FRD 22G	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	5
FRD 22G	Manner of establishment and responsible Minister	5, 8
FRD 22G	Nature and range of services provided	10–13
Financial information		
FRD 22G	Operational and budgetary objectives	18
FRD 22G	Summary of the financial results	18
Governance and organisational structure		
FRD 22G & SD2.2(f)	Organisational structure	19
FRD 22G	Occupational health and safety policy	20
FRD 22G	Employment and conduct principles	19
FRD 29 & 22G	Workforce data disclosures	18
FRD 15E	Executive officer disclosures	24
Other information		
FRD 10	Disclosure index	25
FRD 25	Victorian Industry Participation Policy disclosures	20
FRD 22G	Details of consultancies in excess of \$10 000	17
FRD 22G	Details of consultancies under \$10 000	17
FRD 22G	Disclosure of government advertising expenditure	20
FRD12A	Disclosure of major contracts	20
FRD 22G	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	21
FRD 22G	Compliance with <i>Building Act 1993</i>	20
FRD 22G	Statement on National Competition Policy	20
FRD 22G	Application and operation of <i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>	22
FRD 22G	Summary of environmental performance impact	20
FRD 22G	Statement of availability of other information	27
SD 4.5.5	Risk management compliance attestation	23
	Gifts, benefits and hospitality attestation	24
SD 4.2(g)	General information requirements	Entire document
MRO	Compliance with DataVic Access Policy	24

Legislation		
<i>Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001</i>		5
<i>Building Act 1993</i>		20
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>		21
<i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>		22
<i>Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003</i>		20
Print and Design		
FRD 30	Standard requirements for the design and print of annual reports	Entire document

ACRONYMS

FRD – Financial Reporting Directions

SD – Standing Directions

MRO – Model Report of Operations

STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY OF OTHER INFORMATION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

In compliance with the requirements of the Standing Direction of the Minister for Finance, details in respect to the items listed below have been retained by the Council and are available on request, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

This information is available on request from:

Joan Phillips
Executive Officer
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Phone: 9637 9902
Email: veac@delwp.vic.gov.au

- Publications produced by the entity about itself, and how these can be obtained

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION INCLUDED IN ANNUAL REPORT

Details in respect of the following items have been included in this report:

- Major research and development activities undertaken – see Investigations
- Major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken to develop community awareness of the Council and its services – see Investigations
- A list of major committees sponsored by the entity, the purposes of each committee and the extent to which the purposes have been achieved – see Committees

INFORMATION THAT IS NOT APPLICABLE TO THE COUNCIL

The following information is not relevant to the Council for the reasons set out below:

- Overseas travel undertaken including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit - Nil
- Details of changes in prices, fees, charges and levies charged - Nil
- Assessments and measures undertaken to improve the Occupational Health and Safety of employees [#]
- A general statement on IR within the entity and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes [#]
- Major external reviews that were carried out on the Council - Nil

[#] See DELWP Annual Report 2015-2016.