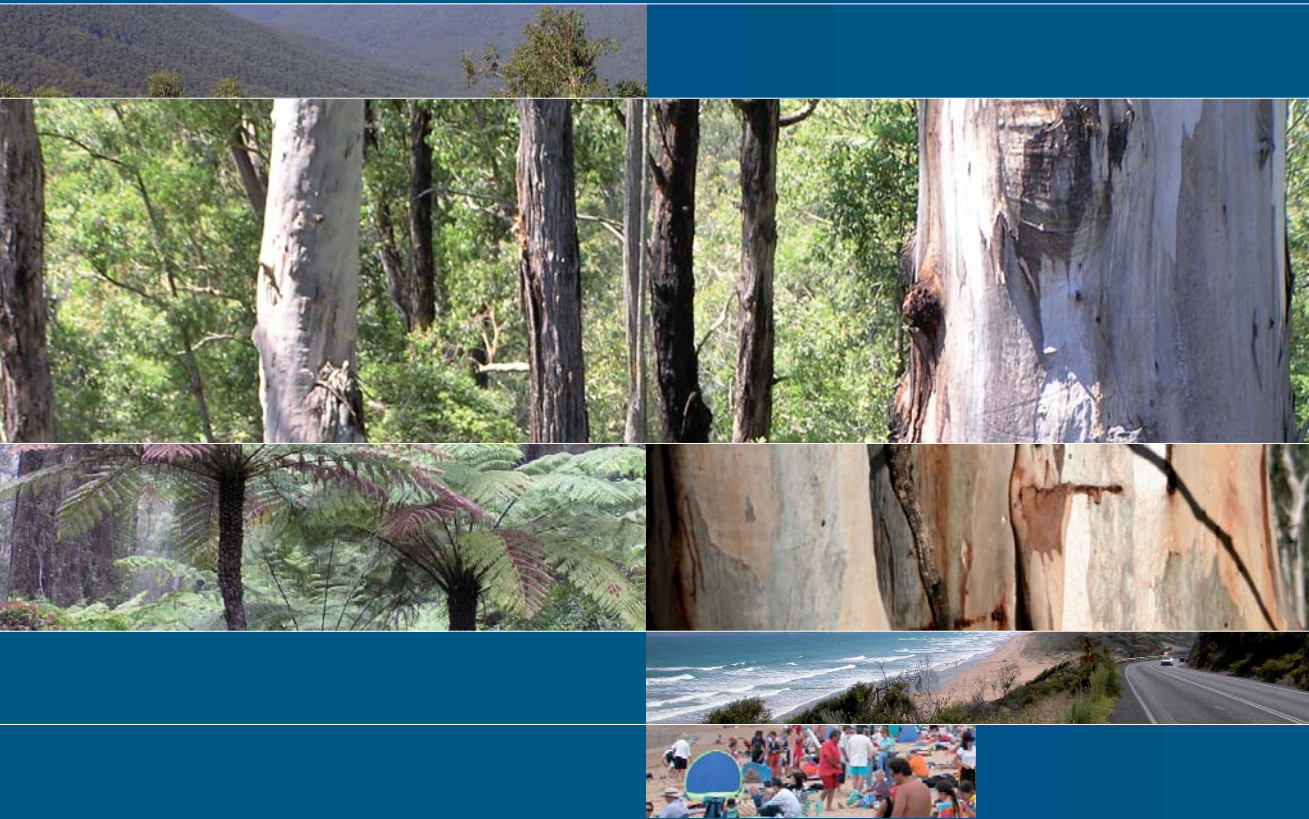


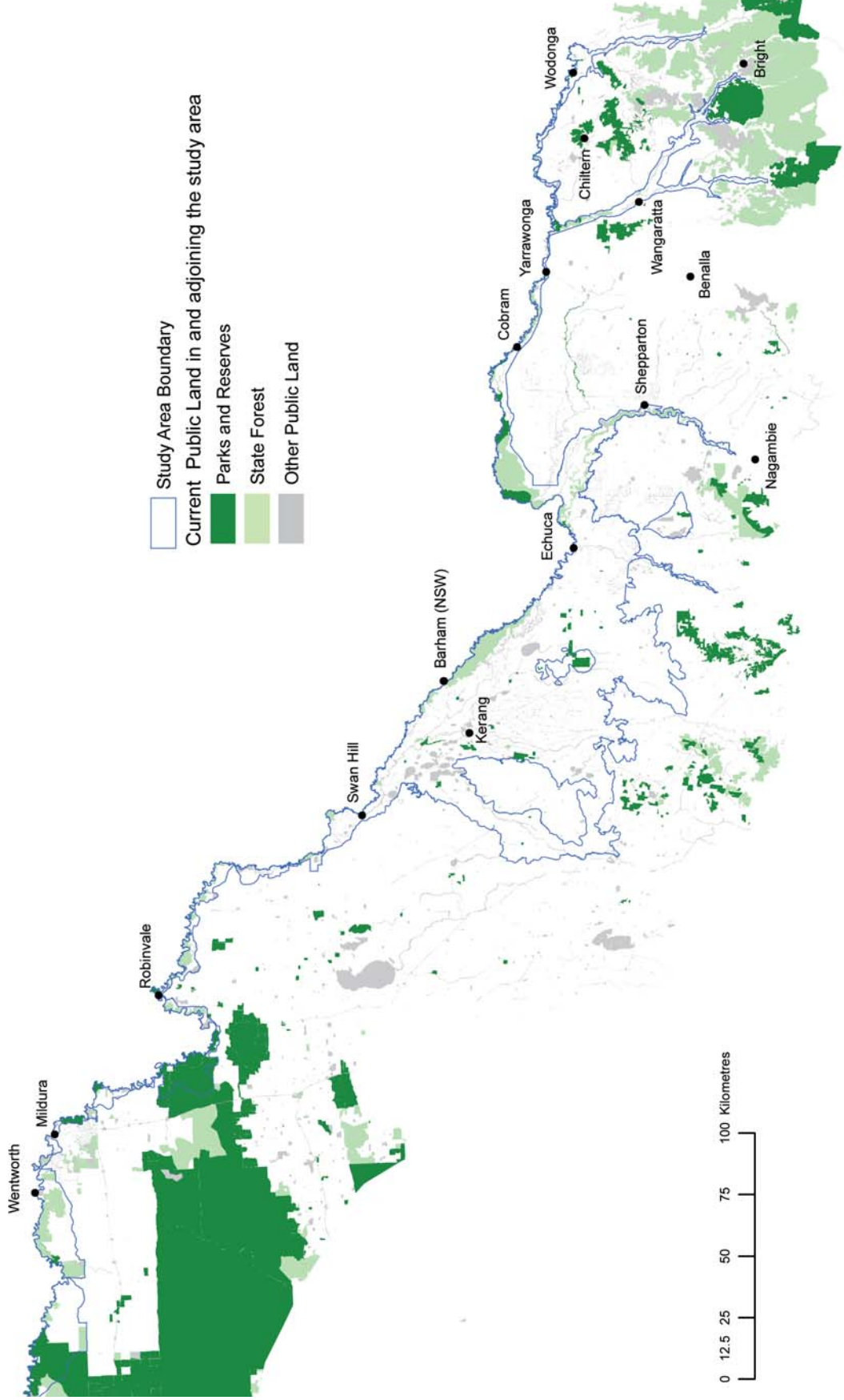


Victorian Environmental  
Assessment Council

Annual Report 2007



# River Red Gum Forests Investigation > Locality Guide



Victorian Environmental  
Assessment Council

Annual Report 2007

This report outlines the activities of the  
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council  
for the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007

The Honourable Gavin Jennings MLC  
Minister for Environment and Climate Change  
Parliament House  
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 sixth Annual Report, covering our activities for the period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007.



DUNCAN MALCOLM  
Chairperson

ISSN: 1832-925X

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River Red Gum Forests Investigation Area Map  
Goolengook Forest Investigation Area Map

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# Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

## OUR PURPOSE

Provision of 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 Section 5 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*).

## OUR VALUES

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

- seek to understand and meet community needs from public land
- are committed to excellence and continuous improvement
- value ethical, accountable, transparent and responsible behaviour
- encourage public consultation and input into the planning process

## OUR FUNCTIONS

We:

- carry out investigations as requested by the Minister on matters relating to the protection and ecologically sustainable management of the environment and natural resources of public land
- carry out any other functions that are conferred on the Council by the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* (the VEAC Act) or any other Act (refer to Section 6 of the VEAC Act).

In carrying out investigations and developing recommendations we take into account:

- 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 (refer to Section 7 of the VEAC Act).

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

# Council Membership

Members of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council are appointed under the provisions of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. Current membership is Mr Duncan Malcolm (Chairperson) and Dr David Mercer, Prof. Barry Hart, Ms Jan Macpherson and Ms Jill McFarlane (Members). All Councillors' appointments are until 5 September 2008.

Following are brief biographies of the Council members:



**Mr Duncan Malcolm AM** – Has a long and distinguished career in the area of natural resource management. He is currently the Chairperson of the Gippsland Coastal Board, Watermark Inc., a member of the Victorian Coastal Council, a Trustee of the Australian Landscape Trust, Deputy Chair, Monash Gippsland Campus Advisory Council and former Chair of Lakes and Wilderness Tourism and The Irrigation Association of Australia Ltd.



**Dr David Mercer** – Dr Mercer is an Associate Professor with the School of Social Science and Planning at RMIT University. He has a strong background in the areas of natural resource management, recreation and tourism and brings highly regarded academic experience to the work of the Council. The author of over 130 academic publications, he is an elected Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand and sits on the editorial board of the Australasian Journal of Natural Resources Law and Policy.



**Professor Barry Hart** – Professor Hart has expertise in environmental science, particularly in the fields of water quality management and ecological risk assessment. He has published his work extensively and has received several awards for his work in the scientific underpinning of natural resource management. Professor Hart also has considerable experience in catchment management issues across Victoria, having served on the Victorian Catchment Management Council for almost 10 years and as a Board member of the Victorian Environment Protection Authority (EPA). He chairs the Yarra Coordinating Committee and the Gippsland Task Force, and scientific advisory committees for the Great Barrier Reef, Victorian EPA, Melbourne Water and Gippsland Water.

# Council Membership



**Ms Jan Macpherson** – Ms Macpherson is a lawyer with an extensive background in indigenous heritage and land management having worked for several years with communities in northern Australia. Ms Macpherson also has gained formal qualifications in corporate governance and is a Board Member of Greening Australia.



**Ms Jill McFarlane** – Jill McFarlane comes from a background as partner/ manager in family farming enterprises in western Victoria and South Australia. She also spent many years as a social worker in regional hospitals in South Australia and New South Wales. She is now involved in primary production and lives in Central Victoria. Previous experience in natural resource management included six years as a board member of the North Central Catchment Management Authority, which ensures she is well aware of the complexities of land management issues on public and private land. She has a wide range of community contact with local organisations including the Wychitella-Wedderburn Conservation Management Network, Goldfields Region Environmental Employment Program and Friends of Kooyoora State Park.

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Honourable John Thwaites MP, Minister for Environment was responsible for administering the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* in 2006–2007.

# Council Activities

The Council met formally twelve times during the 2006–2007 financial year. Councillors attended two River Red Gum Forests Investigation and one Goolengook Forest Investigation Community Reference Group meetings. Council also made a number of field trips to both the River Red Gum Forests and Goolengook Forest Investigation areas.

## Council Members' attendance at formal Council meetings

<b>Name</b>	<b>Attendance</b> <i>(number of meetings during 2006–2007)</i>
Duncan Malcolm	10 of 12
David Mercer	12 of 12
Barry Hart	12 of 12
Jan Macpherson	11 of 12
Jill McFarlane	12 of 12

# Goolengook Forest Investigation

The Minister for Environment formally requested Victorian Environmental Assessment Council to carry out an investigation of the Goolengook Forest Management Block on 19 December 2005. The Terms of Reference were tabled in Parliament and published in the Government Gazette in February 2006. The investigation area included the Goolengook Forest Block – an area of approximately 9,000 ha, about 30 kilometres north-east of Orbost. See the inside back cover for a map of the investigation area.

VEAC continued its investigation into Goolengook forest, with Councillors and staff making a number of field trips to the area. Key stakeholder groups were represented on the Goolengook Community Reference Group. Members are listed under Committees later in this Report.

The Community Reference Group met once during the financial year, on 1 September 2006 in Orbost. A Community Forum was held in Orbost on 13 July 2006.

Two full time project officers were assigned to the investigation and a number of other staff were directly involved on a part time basis.

An Information Booklet was released on 1 June 2006 and submissions sought. The call for submissions was advertised in state-wide newspapers on 3 June 2006. The call for submissions was also advertised in local papers in Gippsland. Some 459 submissions were received by the close of the submission period on 4 August 2006 and a further 14 were received after this date.

Consultants were engaged to undertake fine scale delineation of ecological vegetation classes and rainforest communities in the Goolengook Forest Block, and to undertake surveys for the presence of Long-footed Potoroo and Spot-tailed Quoll in the study area. Research reports were received for both projects.

On 21 December 2006, VEAC received advice from the Minister for Water, Environment and Climate Change of the withdrawal of the request to investigate the Goolengook Forest. The withdrawal was signed by the Minister on 15 December 2006 and is pursuant to section 15(6)(b) of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. A letter of notification was sent by VEAC to all stakeholders informing them of the withdrawal.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Goolengook Forest Investigation for the 2006–2007 financial year until 15 December 2006, was \$229,169.

The Terms of Reference for the Goolengook Forest Investigation are contained in the following box:

## Terms of Reference for Goolengook Forest Investigation

Pursuant to Section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Environment hereby requests the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) to carry out an investigation of public land within the Goolengook Forest Management Block in East Gippsland.

The purposes of the investigation are to:

1. Examine the Goolengook Forest Management Block for its potential for all or part to be added to the Errinundra National Park, with particular reference to the need to protect old growth forest<sup>1</sup>.
2. Provide advice on the costs, benefits and implications, in terms of biodiversity, timber resource and other values, of options under 1 above.
3. Ensure that there is no net deterioration in timber production capacity.
4. Recommend preferred options and advise on implementation requirements to achieve the preferred option.

Note:

<sup>1</sup>Old growth, for the purposes of this investigation, is forest that meets the definition specified in the Nationally Agreed Criteria for the Establishment of a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative Reserve System for Forests in Australia.

In addition to the considerations specified in Section 18 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must also take into consideration the following matters:

- Policies, programs and reports, as well as obligations, resulting from International, Commonwealth-State agreements or arrangements, as they relate to the investigation;
- Existing State Government policies, programs, strategies and Ministerial Statements, as they relate to the investigation; and
- Regional programs, strategies and plans, as they relate to the investigation.

The Council is required to prepare a Draft Proposals Paper and must submit a Final Report on the results of its investigation within 18 months of the request.

There must be submission periods before the preparation of the Draft Proposals Paper and after its release, and each submission period is to be a minimum of 60 days.

# River Red Gum Forests Investigation

The River Red Gum Forests Investigation commenced in April 2005 following a formal request to VEAC by the Minister for Environment. The Terms of Reference for the Investigation are presented in the box below. This Investigation is identifying and evaluating the current uses and status of public land in an area extending from Lake Hume in the east to the South Australian border in the west and covering 1,215,545 hectares. See the inside front cover for a map of the investigation area.

During 2006–2007 the River Red Gum Forests Discussion Paper was finalised and released in October 2006 for public comment. This Paper describes the social, economic and environmental values in and around the Investigation area as well as the existing public land use categories.

After the release of the Discussion Paper, VEAC met with community members and groups to hear their views and to gain greater insights into their positions on public land use in the Investigation area. Seven community forums were held with over seventy people attending. The forums were accompanied by an extensive media campaign covering both print and radio media. Four briefing sessions were also held for government agency representatives following the release of the Discussion Paper. Over 1350 submissions were received in response to the Discussion Paper, from individuals, interest groups and organisations representing a broad cross-section of the community.

Development of the Draft Proposals Paper was the major focus for the second half of the 2006–2007 year and was based on information gained through the community forums, public submissions and VEAC's ongoing internal research.

An Indigenous Steering Committee was appointed in December 2006, under section 12 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, to provide advice on Indigenous consultation. Twelve workshops at eleven locations

within and near the Investigation area were held with Indigenous people and communities in early 2007, with a total of seventy-nine people attending. Views gained from each of these workshops helped formulate the proposed recommendations for Indigenous involvement in public land management for the Draft Proposals Paper.

VEAC Councillors and staff have continued to complete field trips across the entire length of the Investigation area. During these trips, Councillors have met with various regional agency staff along with community interest and Indigenous groups. Staff have also made a number of separate field trips to the Investigation area as well as meeting with technical experts during the development of the Draft Proposals Paper. Four full time, later two additional full time staff and two part time project staff worked on the Investigation during this period.

Two Community Reference Group meetings were held during 2006–2007. The group of 24 members represents a wide range of stakeholder interests. A Government Contact Group established at the beginning of the Investigation continued to provide information and assistance for both the Discussion Paper and the development of the Draft Proposals Paper. This group includes representatives from Victorian government departments and agencies, as well as interstate and national government agencies.

Consultants have been engaged, where particular areas of expertise are required, to assist with the development of the Draft Proposals Paper, including the Social and Economic Assessment of the recommendations in the Draft Proposals Paper and a project on the relationship between flooding regimes and vegetation health along the length of the River Murray in the Investigation area. The Draft Proposals Paper was released in July 2007.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the River Red Gum Forests Investigation for the 2006–2007 financial year was \$1,076,503.

The Terms of Reference for the River Red Gum Forests Investigation are contained in the following box:

## Terms of Reference for River Red Gum Forests Investigation

Pursuant to Section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* the Minister for Environment hereby requests the Council to carry out an investigation of public land within the area shown on the accompanying plan.

The purposes of the investigation are to:

- a) Identify and evaluate the extent, condition, values, management, resources and uses of riverine red gum forests and associated fauna, wetlands, floodplain ecosystems and vegetation communities<sup>1</sup>; and
- b) Make recommendations relating to the conservation, protection and ecological sustainable use of public land as specified in Section 18 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

In addition to the considerations specified in Section 18 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must also take into consideration the following matters:

- Policies, programs and reports, as well as obligations, resulting from International, Commonwealth-State and Interstate agreements or arrangements, as they relate to the investigation;
- Existing State Government policies, programs, strategies and Ministerial Statements, as they relate to the investigation;
- Regional programs, strategies and plans, as they relate to the investigation;
- Possible opportunities for indigenous management involvement;
- The Yorta Yorta Co-operative Management Agreement;
- Appropriate access for commercial opportunities (eg timber, grazing, apiaries, and other resource industries), for appropriate recreation activities, and for community values and uses;
- Nationally agreed criteria for a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system, and;
- Opportunities for a joint management regime with the New South Wales Government for the Murray River and public land on its floodplains.

The Council is required to release a Discussion Paper, a Draft Proposals Paper, and submit a Final Report on the results of its investigation. The Final Report must be submitted by 1 February 2008.

<sup>1</sup> This includes all Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) occurring within the study area boundary.

# Other Activities

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council continued with the following projects which were commenced by the Environment Conservation Council.

## **As If For A Thousand Years – A History of Victoria's Land Conservation and Environment Conservation Councils** by Danielle Clode

Dr John Landy, former Governor of Victoria and an original Member of the Land Conservation Council, launched the history on its publication in September 2006. The title refers to a statement by initial Minister Bill Borthwick at the first Land Conservation Council meeting, instructing members to “make their decisions as if for a thousand years.”

Danielle Clode's book explores political, geographic and land use themes, and records the key people, the factual basis, extensive public consultation and balanced outcomes associated with the Councils' 36 investigations and 109 publications. Near total acceptance by Government of the two Councils' 7560 recommendations illustrates the strength of the process.

The history is a fascinating, readable account of the many public land issues addressed and resolved by the two Councils, and the passionate interest in land use that many in the community hold.

## **Land Conservation Council / Environment Conservation Council Records Project**

VEAC's internet site [www.veac.vic.gov.au](http://www.veac.vic.gov.au) – under “Previous Investigations” – has files with ECC's final reports and maps, and versions of all LCC final recommendations annotated for Government decisions, with recommendation maps for each LCC investigation, scanned as published, and interactive key maps. Further work has focused on the VEACRECS25 dataset.

## **Large scale public land use mapping**

Public land managers, other agencies using public land, local government, industry, consultants and other land users increasingly need large scale (at least 1:25,000 scale) digital mapping of public land categories, to clarify boundaries and appropriate uses. The VEACRECS25 dataset provides accurate digital mapping of Government approved VEAC, ECC, and LCC recommendations for such purposes.

For this project DSE staff initially compile information using the VicMap digital parcel layer. VEAC staff then validate and confirm or correct the public land use for each parcel, providing detailed boundaries using LCC and ECC records and digital aerial imagery, as required.

Provisional data has been compiled for 57,540 Crown land parcels, 82 per cent of all parcels in Victoria. Completed VEACRECS25 data for 28,960 parcels in 17 municipalities – including 8,720 parcels added this year in Greater Bendigo, Wangaratta and Moorabool (confirmed) and Swan Hill and Golden Plains (provisional) – have been loaded into the Department's MapShare Intranet website. This mapping and associated data are available for all DSE staff.

# 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
E-mail	veac@dse.vic.gov.au
Web site:	www.veac.vic.gov.au
Chief Executive Officer:	Ms Joan Phillips

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

## Consultancies

A consultancy has been defined as an arrangement where an individual or organisation is engaged:

- to provide expert analysis and advice which facilitates decision making
- to perform a specific, one-off task or set of tasks
- to perform a task involving skills or perspectives which would not normally be expected to reside within the agency.

VEAC engaged nine consultants during 2006–2007 for the River Red Gum Forests and Goolengook Forest Investigations, at a total cost of \$234,193 (excludes GST).

VEAC also completed a separate economic consultancy during 2006–2007. URS Australia Pty Ltd was contracted to assess the value the community places on the non-consumptive (or non-use) values of public land in Victoria. These are the existence, bequest, option and altruistic benefits obtained from the existence of environmental attributes – such as threatened indigenous mammals, birds and fish species, healthy River Red Gum forest, rainforest and old-growth forest – that are not 'used'.

This project involved economic surveys based on the River Red Gum forests along the Murray River and the forests of East Gippsland. The study results have provided valuable input to the River Red Gum Forests Investigation. It is expected the results will be useful as a guide more generally to the non-consumptive values of public land across the State. The consultants' report was peer reviewed by Professor John Rolfe of Central Queensland University. Total expenditure on this consultancy was \$131,676 (excludes GST).

<b>Consultant</b>	<b>2005/2006 Expenditure</b>	<b>2006/2007 Expenditure</b>
URS Australia Pty Ltd	\$60,000	\$71,676

An introduction to the project, materials, the executive summary and full project report are available under "Economic Evaluation of Forest Environmental Attributes" on VEAC's internet site [www.veac.vic.gov.au](http://www.veac.vic.gov.au)

# 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.

Two meetings of the River Red Gum Forests Investigation Community Reference Group were held during 2006–2007. The group of 24 members represents a wide range of stakeholder interests, as follows:

<b>Organisation represented</b>	<b>Membership as at 30 June 2007</b>
Barmah Forest Cattlemen's Association	Mr Kelvin Trickey
Barmah Forest Preservation League	Mr Stan Vale
Birds Australia	Mr Euan Moore
Bush Walking Victoria	Dr Phillip Brotchie
Confederation of Australian Motor Sport, Victoria	Mr Ian Crook
Country Fire Authority	Ms Rachel Rogers
Environment Victoria	Mr Rod Orr
Four Wheel Drive Victoria	Mr Zac Powell
Friends of Nyah Vinifera Forest	Mr Joe Blake
Gannawarra Shire Council	Cr Neville Goulding
Goulburn Valley Environment Group	Ms Louise Costa
Horse Riding Clubs Association of Victoria	Ms Debbie Warne
Mildura Rural City Council	
Minerals Councils of Australia, Victorian Division	Mr Jeff Dunwoodie
Moira Shire Council	Cr David McKenzie
Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations	Mr Wayne Webster
Shire of Campaspe	Cr Neil Repacholi
Sporting Shooters' Association of Victoria	Mr Colin Wood
Timber Communities Australia	Ms Faye Ashwin
Tourism Alliance, Victoria	Mr Nicholas Hunt
Victorian Association of Forest Industries	Mr Paul Madden
Victorian Farmers' Federation	Mr Ian Lobban
Victorian National Parks Association	Mr Nick Roberts
VRFish	Mr John Corbett

The Community Reference Group for the Goolengook Forest Investigation was appointed in 2006. The group met once during 2006–2007. The membership of the group was:

<b>Organisation represented</b>	<b>Membership as at 15 December 2006</b>
East Gippsland Shire Council	Ms Kate Nelson
Environment East Gippsland	Ms Jill Redwood
Goongerah Environment Centre	Ms Fiona York
Save Goolengook Inc	Ms Nicky Moffat
Timber Communities Australia, Far East Gippsland Branch	Ms Margaret Hibbersen
Victorian Association of Forest Industries	Mr Bob Humphreys
Wilderness Bike Ride	Ms Liz Mitchell

An Indigenous Steering Committee for the River Red Gum Forests Investigation was appointed in December 2006. The group met twice during 2006–2007. The membership of the group is currently as follows:

## River Red Gum Forests Investigation Indigenous Steering Committee

### **Members\***

Henry Atkinson  
John (Sandy) Atkinson  
Rex Harradine  
Rose Kirby  
Sam Morgan  
Gary Murray  
Bobby Nicholls  
Darren Perry  
Sissy Pettit-Havea  
Ken Stewart  
Wayne Webster (Co-Chairperson)

*\* Meetings have also been attended by other Indigenous community members and other guests.*

# Declaration of interests

The Council Chairperson and all members completed Declarations of Interest, which were forwarded to the Minister.

Chief 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 a part of recurrent funds appropriated to the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The financial operations of the Council have not been separately audited. Audited statements are incorporated into the overall Financial Statements of the Department of Sustainability and Environment Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2007. The table below shows expenditure incurred.

<b>Expenses</b>	<b>2006/2007</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2002/03</b>
Salaries & Oncosts	945,685	974,151	845,969	842,457	600,878
Operating	1,044,810	489,489	576,524	495,919	245,473
<b>Total :</b>	<b>1,990,495</b>	<b>1,463,640</b>	<b>1,422,493</b>	<b>1,338,376</b>	<b>846,351</b>

There were no significant changes in financial position during the year.

# Staffing

Employment Type	2007 (a)			2006 (b)		
	Male	Female	Total Staff	Male	Female	Total Staff
Ongoing	4	6	10	4	6	10
Fixed Term	0	2	2	0	0	0
Temporary Employees	0	1	1	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>12</b>

Notes:

(a) Relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2007

(b) Relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2006

VEAC staff are also included in employment statistics for the Department of Sustainability and Environment

## Organisation chart



# Merit and equity

Victorian Public Service merit and equity principles are applied in the appointment and management of staff. VEAC follows the merit and equity principles used by DSE, 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 an 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.
- The Council uses Department of Sustainability and Environment facilities.
- The Council utilises Department of Sustainability and Environment 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.

## Freedom of information

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* allows the public a right of access to documents held by the Council.

Freedom of Information requests are made in writing describing the documents requested and including payment of the \$21.50 application fee. Further charges may be payable. Freedom of Information fees and charges are not subject to GST. Requests to the Council should be sent to the authorised Freedom of Information Officer. The telephone contact number is (03) 9637 9902 or enquiries can be e-mailed to [alex.sykes@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:alex.sykes@dse.vic.gov.au)

### **Principal Officer:**

Mr Duncan Malcolm, Chairperson

### **Authorised Officer:**

Ms Sharon Edwards, Acting Senior Administrative Officer (from 20 May 2006 to 31 May 2007)  
Ms Alexandra Sykes, Acting Senior Administrative Officer (from 31 May 2007)

### **Operations**

During the year there were no requests for access to documents under the Act.

# Whistleblowers Protection Act

The *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001* is designed to protect people who disclose information about serious wrongdoing within the Victorian Public Sector and to provide a framework for the investigation of these matters.

The Protected Disclosure Coordinator for the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) acts as an agent for the Council to receive disclosures under the Act, and applies DSE procedures in managing disclosures. Disclosures may also be made directly to the Ombudsman.

There were no issues arising from this Act during the year.

Disclosures of improper conduct by the Council or its employees may be made to the following:

**Deidre Egan**, Manager, Secretarial Services  
DSE, PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002.  
Telephone: 9637 8575 Facsimile: 9637 8129 Email: Deidre.Egan@dse.vic.gov.au

**The Ombudsman Victoria**  
Level 22, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Vic 3000  
Telephone: 9613 6222 Toll free: 1800 806 314

## Information Privacy Act

VEAC complies with the ten information privacy principles in place that help to form the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. This includes handling the collection of personal information in a responsible manner. The coordinator of Privacy issues for the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is:

**Jennifer Berensen, Manager, Privacy**  
DSE, PO Box, East Melbourne Vic 3002  
Telephone: 9637 8697 E-mail: [privacy.enquiries@dse.vic.gov.au](mailto:privacy.enquiries@dse.vic.gov.au)

# Assistance to Council

The significant assistance offered by both government and private organisations, their representatives as well as interested members of the public has been an essential component of Council's achievements in the past year.

Almost 2000 detailed submissions were received relating to the River Red Gum Forests Investigation. These submissions have contained much useful information from different viewpoints, and this information has been of immense assistance to both Council members and staff in preparing the River Red Gum Forests Discussion Paper and Draft Proposals Paper. VEAC is well aware of the amount of effort involved in writing these submissions and wishes to thank all those who have contributed to the process.

Council is also appreciative of the contribution of VEAC's project and administrative staff to the production of Council's reports and related work. Assistance from areas within the Department of Sustainability and Environment such as Human Resources, Finance, Occupational Health and Safety and information systems is gratefully acknowledged. Similarly, provision of information related to Council investigations by other Government agencies - in particular the Department of Sustainability and Environment - including the operation of Government Contact Groups for each investigation, is gratefully acknowledged.

# APPENDIX 1

## Investigations and written submissions

Investigation	First Submission Period	Second Submission Period	Third Submission Period
River Red Gum Forests	584	1359	Not yet completed
Goolengook Forest	473	N/A	N/A

Notes:

“Submissions” recorded here include letters received after the closing date.

# APPENDIX 2

## Disclosure Index

The 2006–2007 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.

Direction	Disclosure	Page No.
FRD 22B	Manner of establishment and the relevant Ministers	6
FRD 22B	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	4
FRD 22B	Nature and range of services provided	4
FRD 22B	Organisational structure, names and functional areas of responsibility of senior officers	17
FRD 22B	Names of board members	5, 6
FRD 22B	Statement of workforce data for current and previous financial year	17
FRD 22B	Merit and Equity	18
FRD 15B	Executive officer disclosures	N/A
FRD 22B	5 year summary of the financial results	16
FRD 22B	Significant changes in financial position during the year	None
FRD 22B	Objectives and performance against objectives	8-12
FRD 22B	Major changes or factors affecting performance	None
FRD 22B	Subsequent events which will affect operations in future years	None
FRD 22B	Details of consultancies over \$100,000 and total no. and cost under \$100,000	13
FRD 12A	Disclosure of major contracts	None
FRD 22B	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	18
FRD 22B	Application and operation of the <i>Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001</i>	19
FRD 22B	Compliance with building and maintenance provisions of <i>Building Act 1993</i>	18
FRD 22B	Statement on National Competition Policy	18
FRD 22B	Occupational Health and Safety	18
FRD 10	Disclosure index	22
FRD 22B	Statement of availability of other information	22

### STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY OF OTHER INFORMATION

- Changes in prices, fees, charges, rates and levies charged – N/A
- Major external reviews carried out on the entity – nil
- Overseas travel undertaken including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit – nil
- Statement on industrial relations within the entity and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes – N/A
- Assessments and measures undertaken to improve the Occupational Health and Safety of employees #
- Publications produced by the entity about itself, and how these can be obtained\*
- Major research and development activities undertaken – nil
- Major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken to develop community awareness of the Council and its services – see Investigations

# See Department of Sustainability & Environment Annual Report \* This information is held by the Senior Administrative Officer and can be made available to Ministers, Members of Parliament and the public on request.





# Goolengook Forest Investigation > Locality Plan

-  Goolengook Forest Block
  -  East Gippsland Forest Management Area
- Current Public Land in and adjoining the study area**
-  Parks and Reserves
  -  State Forest
  -  Other Public Land

