



Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
ANNUAL REPORT 14/15



Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water
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 fourteenth Annual
Report, covering our activities for the period 1 July 2014 to
30 June 2015.



PHIL HONEYWOOD
Chairperson
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
29 August 2015

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CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

I am very pleased to provide this annual report for the year ended 30 June 2015 to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water the Hon Lisa Neville MP for the purpose of section 14 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

During 2014-2015, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council continued work on the Historic Places Investigation and began a major new investigation. Terms of reference for the new Statewide Assessment of Public Land were provided to VEAC in October 2014. This investigation arose from the view of the government that it was timely to revisit the statewide assessment of public land use conducted more than 25 years ago by VEAC's predecessor, the Land Conservation Council. Amended terms of reference for the investigation were received from the incoming Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water in April 2015. The current assessment will provide updated information for public land management, and provide an excellent basis for future policy development.

Two public consultation periods were conducted during the year. The first public submission period for the Historic Places Investigation closed in September 2014. A public submission period also ran from April to June 2015 for the Statewide Assessment of Public Land. The council members also had two productive field inspections of historic places on public land, where we were able to discuss with public land managers the issues and challenges they face in managing the range of heritage places and values. Difficult to manage places are a particular focus of the investigation, and the insights gained from the field trips and discussions are invaluable.

During the year the council was very pleased again to assist students conducting research related to public land in Victoria with some of the costs of research. Seven students were awarded Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships in 2015.

This Council's term finished on 4 May 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to my colleagues, outgoing council members Mr Ian Harris, Mr Ian Munro PSM, both of whom served two terms on council 2009 - 2015, and Ms Angela Reidy, member from 2012 to 2015. Their individual and collective wisdom and experience were huge assets to VEAC, and I am grateful also for the support they provided to me as chairperson from 2012. I am very proud of the work we did together.

The council acknowledges the support it has received over the past year 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
Chairperson

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, Mr Ian Harris, Dr Charles Meredith, Mr Ian Munro PSM, Ms Angela Reidy

Members of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council are appointed under the provisions of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. Members for the period 1 July 2014 to 4 May 2015 were Hon. Phil Honeywood (Chairperson), Mr Ian Harris, Dr Charles Meredith, Mr Ian Munro PSM and Ms Angela Reidy. All members were appointed on 5 May 2012 for three years.

Brief biographies of the current Council members follow:

Hon. Phil Honeywood (Chairperson)

Phil Honeywood held the Legislative Assembly seat of Warrandyte from 1988 to 2006. During this time his roles included Chairman of the Melbourne Parks and Waterways Advisory Council, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, Minister for Tertiary Education and Training, Minister assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, Shadow Minister for Education, Deputy Leader of the State Opposition and Shadow Minister for the Environment. Since retiring from politics, Mr Honeywood has worked in senior management positions in the international education industry. He is currently National Executive Director of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), a peak industry body. Current community involvement includes Chairman of Victech (370 degrees), a not for profit Group Training Company, and being a volunteer adviser to the Bennelong Charitable Foundation.

Mr Ian Harris

Ian Harris has more than 30 years experience in the planning and management of land for public use and conservation at both state and local government levels, including responsibility for statewide policy development and program implementation for national parks and flora and fauna protection. He has been manager responsible for the City of Melbourne parks, convenor of the National Parks Advisory Council and board member of the Australian and New Zealand Parks Forum. Mr Harris is also a sessional panel member with Planning Panels Victoria.

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 Chair of the Land Prioritisation Advisory Group, and an Inaugural Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia.

Mr Ian Munro PSM

Ian Munro is a consultant to the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation and to Regional Development Victoria, a board member of the Metropolitan Planning Authority and a former Deputy Secretary and CEO, Invest Assist in the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development. He has a comprehensive knowledge of government across areas including regional development, infrastructure, technology, the environment, and has chaired or been a member of numerous government expert committees and policy review committees.

Ms Angela Reidy

Angela Reidy has qualifications in civil engineering and business management with more than 25 years work experience in both the public and private sectors. Ms Reidy has been involved in projects and programmes with a range of environmental challenges including works in coastal zones and natural resource management. Much of her work has focused on infrastructure policy, feasibility, procurement and delivery. Ms Reidy is also a member of the Central Coastal Board.

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 4 December 2014 to 30 June 2015.

The Hon. Ryan Smith MP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change was the responsible Minister for the period 1 July 2014 to 3 December 2014.

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.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The Council met formally eight times during the 2014-2015 financial year.

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

Council members' attendance at council meetings from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015

Name	Attendance (number of meetings)
Phil Honeywood	8 of 8
Ian Harris	7 of 8
Charles Meredith	7 of 8
Ian Munro	8 of 8
Angela Reidy	8 of 8

INVESTIGATION INTO HISTORIC PLACES

On 11 March 2014 the Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to conduct an investigation into historic places on public land in Victoria. The investigation will look at the overall arrangements for the management of information, the management of places and the 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 investigation includes two submission periods with a draft proposals paper to be prepared and then a final report to be provided to the Minister on 31 March 2016. A separate discussion paper is not to be prepared.

The work program for the 2014-2015 year included the analysis of submissions in response to the Notice of Investigation published in June 2014. This first submission period closed on 8 September 2014 with 30 submissions being received. Work continued on the preparation of a draft proposals paper to be released for public comment in the second half of 2015.

Council members and VEAC staff conducted two field inspections during the year - in August and October 2014 - visiting a range of historic sites on public land and meeting with land managers.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation was established during the year and met three times. The membership for the Community Reference Group can be found on page 10.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Investigation into Historic Places for the 2014-15 financial year was \$508,541.

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.

STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC LAND

On 17 September 2014, the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested that VEAC conduct a Statewide Assessment of Public Land.

On 2 April 2015 the request was amended by the 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 is also required on the first term of reference by September 2015. The final report is due to be submitted to the Minister by February 2017.

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 system of public land use categories established as a result. The focus of the investigation is to provide information to assist management effectiveness and is not intended to change the current levels of protection underpinning Victoria's public land system.

A Notice of Investigation was published on 18 April 2015 and advertised in daily newspapers calling for written submissions. The submission period closed on 22 June 2015, with 49 submissions received.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation was established during the year and met once. The membership for the Community Reference Group can be found on page 10.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Statewide Assessment of Public Land for the 2014-15 financial year was \$187,087.

AMENDED TERMS OF REFERENCE 2 APRIL 2015

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 2015

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 creation of the scholarships was announced by the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Hon. Ryan Smith MP, in March 2011 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the first meeting of the Land Conservation Council (LCC). The scholarships honour the vision of the Hon. Bill Borthwick, Victoria's first Minister for Conservation and Deputy Premier from 1981 to 1982, and a central figure in establishing the LCC to advise government on the use of Victoria's public land.

The 2015 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 17 April 2015.

Scholarships totalling \$14,027 were awarded to seven recipients.

The recipients for the 2015 scholarships are:

Mr Zak Atkins, La Trobe University

"Investigating genetic divergence and habitat connectivity in the conservation of the Guthega skink"

Zak's research for his PhD seeks to understand the relatedness between the Victorian and New South Wales Guthega populations to examine historic connectivity and the degree of divergence. He will also look at the relatedness between the local colonies to assess the species' dispersal ability and identify appropriate management strategies.

Mr Luke Barrett, University of Melbourne

"Ecological effects of an invasive seaweed in Port Phillip Bay"

Luke's PhD research will explore how native fish respond to *Undaria*, and determine whether *Undaria* patches in Port Phillip Bay are likely to function as either traps or refuges for native reef fishes. This will be achieved by observing habitat usage patterns and the intersection between attractiveness and quality of the novel habitat.

Ms Emmy Frost, La Trobe University

"Investigating Indigenous occupation and subsistence strategies at a marine shell midden in south-western Victoria"

Emmy's research for her Bachelor of Archaeology (Honours) involves undertaking an analysis of excavated material from the Brown Creek midden and then conducting a fat composition and nutritional analysis of modern shellfish to establish why particular species may have been targeted as a food source. Any changes

in subsistence strategies over time will also be observed. This will help to inform human exploitation of marine resources.

Mr Harry Moore, Deakin University

"Fire and its influence on predator-prey interactions in Big Desert National Park"

Harry's research for his Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) will provide important information on the role that dingos and other wild dogs play in altering the activity of alien mesopredator species. It will also investigate the non-lethal impacts both invasive and native predators have on native rodent species and assess the temporal and spatial relationship present from both a predator and prey perspective with the Mallee guild.

Mr Nicholas O'Brien, Deakin University

"Towards the survival of Mellblom's Spider Orchid – Caladenia hastata"

Nicholas's research project for his Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) aims to promote the conservation of *Caladenia hastata* by facilitating the success of reintroductions into the wild. It will do this by determining if there are any habitat specificities in existing populations, identifying the presence of the pollinator in nearby sites, and determining the genetic variability of the species from known population (wild specimens and propagated specimens).

Ms Melissa Wartman, Monash University

"Phytoplankton vertical migration in the Gippsland lakes"

The aim of Melissa's PhD research will be to investigate factors that cause and influence the vertical migration patterns of phytoplankton in the Gippsland Lakes. The knowledge gained will contribute towards elucidating the abiotic and biotic factors that influence vertical migration, the impact of vertical migration on competition between various species, and potentially quantifying the amount of nutrient redistribution through the water column.

Ms Ann Williamson, Deakin University

"Current status of New Holland Mouse in Eastern Otways"

Ann's research project for Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) seeks to find out what the current status and distribution of the New Holland Mouse is in the Anglesea Heathland and Great Otway National Park. This will be achieved by undertaking trapping sessions, floristic and structural analysis and examining the impacts of rainfall variability and fire regimes.

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 three meetings of the Historic Places Investigation Community Reference Group held during 2014-2015.

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 2015

Statewide Assessment of Public Land Community Reference Group

The Statewide Assessment of Public Land Community Reference Group met once during 2014-2015.

Name*	Organisation
Mr Don Saunders	Chairperson
Mr Nick Roberts	Environment Victoria
Mr Wayne Hevey	Four Wheel Drive Victoria
Dr Gavin Lind	Minerals Council of Australia
Mr Alex Green	Municipal Association of Victoria
Mr David Harden	Native Title Services Victoria
Mr Charles Berger	Outdoors Victoria
Ms Jill Gallagher	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Mr Ian Cane	Victorian Apiarists' Association
Mr Tim Johnston	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 2015

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.

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

Consultant	Purpose	Total approved project fee (exc. GST)	Expenditure 2014-15 (exc. GST)	Future expenditure (exc. GST)
		\$	\$	\$
Ray Supple	Analysis, writing and advice on communications and approach to management issues for historic places on public land	10,000	10,000	0

In 2014-2015, there was one consultancy where the total fees payable to the consultant were \$10,000 or greater. The total expenditure incurred during 2014-2015 in relation to this consultancy was \$10,000 (exc. GST).

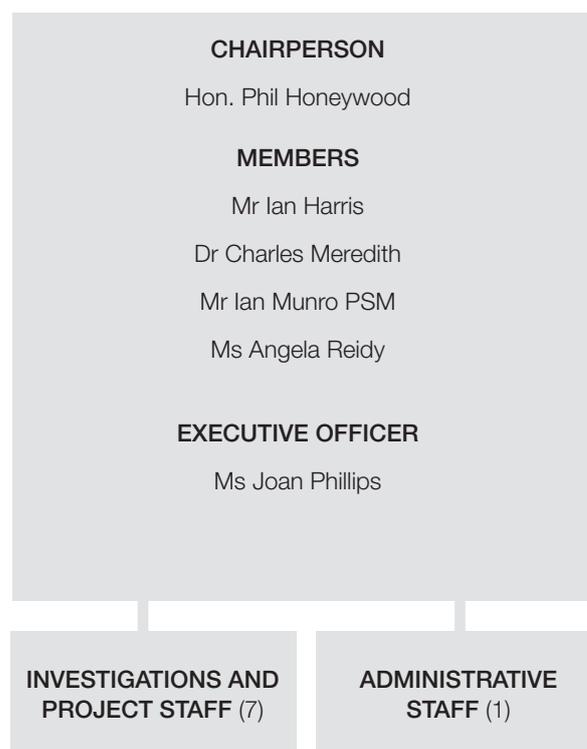
In 2014-2015, there were no consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000.

DECLARATION OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

The Executive Officer, Ms Joan Phillips, completed a declaration which has been forwarded to the Minister.

All returns are confidential.

ORGANISATION CHART



Council members at 4 May 2015 and staff as at 30 June 2015

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 2015. The table below shows expenditure incurred.

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

Expenses	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Salaries and oncosts	744,707	794,435	825,252	914,003	1,171,581
Operating	302,852	444,465	514,745	506,972	609,007
Total	1,047,559	1,238,900	1,340,027	1,420,975	1,780,588

WORKFORCE DATA

Employment	2015 (a)			2014 (b)		
	Male	Female	Total staff	Male	Female	Total Staff
Total	3	5	8	2	7	9

Notes:

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

b relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2014

Note: VEAC staff are also included in employment statistics for DELWP for 2014-2015.

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 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 \$150,000 or greater (exclusive of GST). No Government Advertising Expenditure was incurred by the Council during the reporting period.

During 2014-2015 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.

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 \$27.20; 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 2015, there were no valid requests. There were no requests outstanding as at 30 June 2015.

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

Phone: 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.

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 DELWP is:

Manager, Privacy

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
PO Box 500, East Melbourne VIC 3002

Telephone: (03) 9637 8697

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.

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.

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.

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 2014-2015.

DISCLOSURE INDEX

The 2014-2015 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.

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FRD 22F	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	3
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Financial information		
FRD 22F	Operational and budgetary objectives	11
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Governance and organisational structure		
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FRD 22F	Employment and conduct principles	12
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Other information		
FRD 10	Disclosure index	16
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FRD 22F	Details of consultancies in excess of \$10 000	10
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FRD 22F	Disclosure of government advertising expenditure	12
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FRD 22F	Statement on National Competition Policy	12
FRD 22F	Application and operation of <i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>	13
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SD 4.5.5	Risk management compliance attestation	14
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	<i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>	13
	<i>Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003</i>	12
PRINT AND DESIGN		
FRD 30	Standard requirements for the design and print of annual reports	Entire document

FRD – Financial Reporting Directions SD – Standing Directions MRO – Model Report of Operations