

# LAND CONSERVATION COUNCIL

## STRADBROKE

### SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

## FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

**November 1977**

This text is a facsimile of the former Land Conservation Council's Stradbroke Special Investigation Final Recommendations. It has been edited to incorporate Government decisions on the recommendations made by Order in Council dated 4 September 1979 and 4 December 1979, and subsequent formal amendments.

Added text is shown underlined; deleted text is shown ~~struck through~~.

Annotations [in brackets] explain the origin of changes.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Land Conservation Council, Victoria, established by the *Land Conservation Act 1970*, carries out investigations and makes recommendations to the Minister for Conservation on the balanced use of public land throughout the State.

In February 1977 the Land Conservation Council was directed to make an investigation of the Stradbroke area according to the following Order in Council:

“Where it is provided in Section 8 of the *Land Conservation Act 1970*, that where the Governor in Council is of the opinion that an investigation and recommendation of the Land Conservation Council in relation to any particular district or area of Victoria is necessary or expedient and the said Council may be required to make such investigation and recommendation within such time as fixed by the Governor in Council.

Now therefore, His Excellency, the Governor of the State of Victoria, by and with the advice of the Executive Council thereof, hereby requires the Land Conservation Council to make an investigation to determine in relation to all public land within the hatched area on the plan hereunder (the Stradbroke area) whether suitable land exists for alienation for private forestry purposes and to make a recommendation by the First day of February 1978.”

## **Procedure**

The final recommendations for the Stradbroke area comprise the third publication in a three-part process. The first - a factual report describing the resources and forms of land-use in the area - was published on June 1st 1977. In the following 60 days the Council received 68 written submissions on the future use of the land from the general public and interested organizations. After considering the submissions and visiting the Stradbroke area, the Council formulated its proposed recommendations which were published in August 1977.

The Council subsequently received 38 submissions commenting on the proposed recommendations. After due consideration, the Council now presents its final recommendations.

## A. SOFTWOOD PRODUCTION

At the government's direction, the Land Conservation Council has made a special investigation of Stradbroke to determine whether suitable land exists for alienation for private forestry purposes. Council has determined that an area of land is suitable for private forestry but has recommended that it be leased rather than alienated.

With the exception of areas rated Improved Site Quality III and IV—V, land at Stradbroke has a relatively low capability for softwood production. Although rated improved Site Quality VI, the area selected by Council is suitable for Softwood production because it will consolidate existing private plantations that are located within an economic distance of the processing plant. The size of the block - 670 ha - reflects a rationalization of boundaries, which takes account of existing plantations, roads, and the boundary of the coal reserves.

The area recommended for lease currently supports an open forest of yertchuk. The understorey consists of heathland plants and saw banksia may occur on slopes and in gullies. Investigations have shown that this vegetation type is well represented in the adjacent forests of Mullungdung and Won Wron.

An important factor influencing the Council's recommendation is the possibility that the area indicated above will be greatly changed by fire-protection measures needed to protect future coal open cuts to the south. Council notes that bushfires near Yallourn in 1944 caused the brown coal open cut to ignite.

Leasehold of the land is preferred to freehold because of possible compensation problems should the land be required by the State in the future. Any lease, which should initially be of 35 years duration, must take into account the importance of the area for fire protection and soil erosion. With respect to these matters Council considers that the lessee should consult the Forests Commission and the Soil Conservation Authority. Council points out that the coal resource extends under this area, but that recovery is not considered economic at present.

### Recommendation

**A1** That the area shown on the map and described below be leased for private forestry purposes:

670 ha west of Toms Cap Road and adjacent to allotments 1b, 1e, 121, 12g, and 29f, Parish of Willung

and that

- (a) the lessee be required to consult with the Soil Conservation Authority to ensure that stream sedimentation is minimized
- (b) the lessee be required to consult with the Forests Commission to ensure that layout and maintenance of the plantation do not conflict with fire-protection considerations for the adjacent public land
- (c) the lease be initially for a period of 35 years.

Note:

The proposed route of the Loy Yan—Bass Strait wastewater outfall passes through this land. Provision for a 20 m easement to allow construction and maintenance of this pipeline has been allowed for in the above area calculation.

(See Order in Council 22/1/80)

## B. FLORA AND FAUNA RESERVE

Information on the vegetation and fauna here and in the adjoining Mullungdung forest (located in South Gippsland area, district 2) indicates that the flora and fauna communities of the two regions are best represented in the Stradbroke area. Council has therefore recommended that a substantial reserve be located in the eastern portion of Stradbroke to include the areas of conservation value noted in the Proposed Recommendations.

### Stradbroke Flora and Fauna Reserve

This reserve encompasses parts of the Willung and Stradbroke land systems. The variety of associated landforms, including drainage lines, sand hills and ridges, sandy plateaux, and swamps support representatives of all the main vegetation units occurring in the Stradbroke area. Important occurrences are the peppermint—manna gum forests, shining peppermint woodlands, swamps, and swampland vegetation including forests of mealy stringybark.

The fauna is representative of forest, woodland, and swampland habitats with associated dense heaths and sedges. A number of vertebrates that current knowledge indicates are uncommon or have a sporadic distribution also occur in or adjacent to the reserve. These include the New Holland mouse, white-footed smithopsis, red-necked wallaby, southern emu-wren, chestnut-tailed heath-wren, and the brown quail.

Council notes the strategic importance of this area with regard to fire protection of adjacent public and freehold land. Fuel-reduction burning, as well as satisfying protection requirements, should be carried out with the aim of maintaining a diversity of habitats. The management authority and the Fisheries and Wildlife Division should therefore jointly prepare the management plan.

Council notes that in the future this reserve, which abuts the eastern edge of the economic brown coal resource, may have a role in the fire protection of open cuts and associated works.

### Recommendation

**B1** That the area (2300 ha) shown on the map:

- (a) be used primarily to conserve native plant and animal communities, and for public education and recreation where this does not conflict with the primary aim
- (b) be managed according to a plan prepared jointly and agreed upon by the managing authority and the Fisheries and Wildlife Division

and that it be permanently reserved under ~~section 14 of the *Land Act 1958*~~ section 4 of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and managed by the Forests Commission.

Note:

The proposed route of the Loy Yang—Bass Strait waste-water outfall and associated swabbing station passes through this reserve (see Utilities & Survey).

(See Order in Council 4/9/79)

## C. SCENIC RESERVE

Toms Cap is situated on a spur jutting from the easterly edge of the Strzelecki Ranges, and provides views to the coast and surrounding forested country. The point was climbed and named by Angus MacMillan in 1841 on his successful trek from Ensay to the present site of Port Albert.

### **Recommendation**

**C1** That the public land (150 ha) surrounding Toms Cap be used to preserve the scenic and historic values

and that it be permanently reserved under ~~section 14 of the *Land Act 1958*~~ [section 4 of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*] and managed by the Forests Commission.

Note:

Recommendations regarding the trigonometrical station at Toms Cap are included in the section on Utilities and Survey.

(See Order in Council 4/12/79)

## D. RECREATION

Recreational use, although currently low, includes some pleasure driving, picnicking, horse-riding, and nature study. The roads are occasionally used for car rallies and by motor-cyclists. Local historical societies and other interested persons occasionally visit Toms Cap.

Because considerable areas of Stradbroke overlie coal reserves, Council has recommended that for the time being these areas be uncommitted land. As portions of the area will eventually be mined, Council believes that some of this uncommitted land could be suitable for recreational activities - for example, trail-bike riding - that in general are difficult to accommodate on public land. Council suggests that the land management authorities should endeavour to locate an area overlying the coal reserves, which would not conflict with horse-riding or other recreational activities, within which trails for trail-bike riding could be established. Motor-cycle clubs should be consulted concerning the layout and design of trails.

The managing authorities should ensure that use of the area by motor-bikes does not cause the introduction of the cinnamon fungus to uninfected areas.

Council notes the submissions from those interested in areas for horse-riding. Council believes that public land is generally available for this form of recreation and suggests that horse-riding organizations discuss the more specific requirements associated with this activity with the land managers.

### Recommendations

**D1** That the public land continue to be available for the range of recreational activities normally associated with it.

**D2** That the Forests Commission, Department of Crown Lands and Survey, and the Soil Conservation Authority investigate the uncommitted land overlying the coal reserves with a view to designating appropriate areas and access for trail-bike riding.

Note:

Basin Swamp, Black Swamp, and the immediate surroundings should not be included in trail-bike areas.

## **E. UTILITIES AND SURVEY**

The trigonometrical station at Toms Cap is the only utility currently occupying public land in the Stradbroke area, and is one of the most important stations in South Gippsland.

Council notes that the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board is currently planning the route location of a waste-water outfall from the Latrobe Valley to Bass Strait. The proposed pipeline will pass through the northern edge of the Stradbroke area, requiring a 20 m easement adjacent to the existing road alignment. A small area adjoining the easement will be required for a swabbing station.

In the absence of firm planning proposals, the Council is not able to provide for future land requirements for surveys and utilities. The use of land for these purposes will need to be considered when definite proposals have been formulated for particular projects. The various recommendations in this report are not intended to preclude such use, and would be subject to review at the appropriate time.

Council believes that government agencies concerned with providing and installing communication equipment, transmission lines, pumped storage sites, power stations, pipelines, roads, etc. should be requested to submit to the Council during the early planning stages any major proposals that would involve occupation agreements or the settling aside of sites on public land. This would assist in achieving co-ordinated planning, and perhaps avoid the necessity for costly re-surveys.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Roads, powerlines, pipelines, and other utilities**

**E1** That new roads, powerlines, pipelines, and other utilities be planned to minimize disturbance to public land and protect the values associated with this land, and be compatible with fire protection requirements

and that they not be sited on public land without the agreement of the managing authority.

Note:

New pipelines and power lines should follow existing easements if possible.

#### **Trigonometrical stations**

**E2** That the Department of Crown Lands and Survey have the right to occupy a minimum area around Toms Cap trigonometrical station and maintain lines of sight.

(See Order in Council 4/12/79)

## **F. UNCOMMITTED LAND**

In the previous sections, Council has recommended additional land-uses not included in the Proposed Recommendations. The remaining land, which overlies economic coal reserves, is recommended to be uncommitted land.

Proved resources of brown coal occur beneath Stradbroke and the public land to the south. These resources have been identified and measured by exploratory drilling and geological assessment, and include reserves (hatched on the map) that are considered to be economically recoverable using current extraction methods.

Although no proposals have been formulated for the development of these reserves, their potential must be recognized. The Stradbroke coal resource is being investigated in accordance with the government's Statement of Planning Policy No. 9, which is concerned with the brown coal deposits of Central Gippsland. The coal reserves will be protected by suitable legislation to ensure they remain available for extraction in the future. Council believes that this land should be uncommitted until the government has determined plans for development of these reserves.

Council realizes that future investigations and improved recovery techniques may subsequently extend the area of public land from which brown coal can be economically extracted. At such time, the use of the overlying and adjacent public land will need to be reviewed.

### **Recommendation**

**F1** That the area (3510 ha) shown on the map be used to:

- (a) maintain the capability of the land to meet future demands, in particular the capability for extraction of coal
- (b) produce those goods and services required by the community, such as forest produce that
- (c) Black Swamp and Basin Swamp shown on the map be protected from potentially damaging uses (these two swamps and associated drainage lines support a rich flora, including sphagnum moss and bushy club moss; in the past they were used to water stock travelling the Old Rosedale Road)
- (d) in parts of the area overlying the coal reserves and excluding (c) above, the land management authorities endeavour to provide suitable areas for trail-bike riding
- (e) the removal of sands and gravels for road-making materials be confined where possible to areas overlying the coal reserves
- (f) military training be confined where possible to areas overlying the coal reserves excluding (c) above.

(See Order in Council 4/12/79)