

Inquiry into the Environment Protection
and Biodiversity Conservation Act



Submission made by:

Vanessa Richards

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Resident in Greater Bendigo National Park area,
owner 10 acre Woodvale with Trust for Nature
& Land for Wildlife property covenants.

INTRODUCTION

My comments are based on my experience owning a 10 acre property in central rural Victoria. They include the following experiences

- ① Owning a 10 acre property opposite the national park - Greater Bendigo National Park (declared recently).
A property with Land for Wildlife (25 years) and Trust for Nature (1 year) covenants, it is a property which has Vegetation Overlay protecting requiring Planning Permits (local government) before any flora can be removed.
- ② Living in an area covered with gold mining leases + a gold mining company (large) exploring (only) for gold for the past 20(?) years.
- ③ All levels of government legislation pertaining to protect this environment
- ④ A community of farmers (grazing + crops) and residential/rural blocks of 20 acres or more occupied by house owners, employed in Bendigo or unemployed. Low income groups.

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NON COMPLIANCE WITH CURRENT LEGISLATION

My major point is that my experience during the past 30 years, ~~to~~ working with all levels of government, politicians and the local community residents and businesses/companies shows that despite legislation frameworks already in use, protection and management of our valuable resources as outlined in the Green Paper are not being managed in line with the ^{current} legislative requirements.

There seem to be many reasons for this

- ① lack of ^{numbers of} compliance staff - is a major issue in this region.
- ② "buck-passing" between Govt departments so that no one government takes responsibility.
- ③ Laziness - i.e. government authorities seem unwilling to investigate matters reported to them. Maybe they lack an awareness of the importance of their role as protectors of our valuable biodiverse environments. Or a confusion of which govt. department is responsible for which layer of compliance makes an issue.

3] SHORT TERM MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

- 3.1 A short-term answer to better management practices would be firstly to ensure that compliance of ^{the} legislation already in place could be better implemented by
- ① employing more Compliance Officers
 - ② Training Compliance Officers so they understand the leg. framework requirements (i.e. the definition of industry)
 - ③ Educating local populations about their requirements under the legislation (mailouts)
 - ④ Signage in public national parks with information about requirements for protection + fines for non-compliance + phone numbers to report offences.
 - ⑤ 24hour contact points to report + gain information on all issues to do with protecting/managing our valuable resource (i.e. EPA do not work on weekends!)

3.2 Another short term option is to immediately research the necessity for bringing our valuable national parks to maintain fire breaks.

This practice of ~~was~~ bringing National Parks

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in Burdigo Region is unwarranted (Burdigo
Field Naturalists) because.

(1) there has never been a ~~major~~
major fire in this forest

(2) many of the plants are not
fire dependent

(3) little or no research has been
done to determine the effect of fire on
some flora + fauna

(4) they are burning in areas where
there have been listed sightings ^{made} of
endangered fauna + flora (?)

(5) regeneration does not happen
for many species so that areas
of monocultures are replacing diverse
environments.

[4] LONG TERM MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT OPTIONS

Long term management would benefit
from a simplification of legislation and
more centralization of management. A logic
answer would be for CMA (federal) to
coordinate and oversee all practices -
recreational, farming, mining etc.

The area of Central Victoria has some of the poorest rivers, streams, lakes-wetlands and groundwater. Despite this our local ^(+ gave approval) state and federal governments have been aware that Bendigo Mining (previously Westing Mining) have been using deep ground water aquifers as sump pits for mining wastes (heavy metals, salt and arsenic loads) to be dispersed into the groundwater as a waste management technique. This has been occurring for 20+ years!!

Our local community have spent many hours and much expense ^(during the past 5 years) and our works continues to have the site ^{at WOODVILLE} closed and rehabilitated. This is occurring (slowly!) at the moment. However our government authorities do little to expedite the process and it is only the constant agitation of the local community that has resulted in any clean up activities!!

Clearly our government authorities have not been working in the community's (Murray Darling catchment area) ^{best} ~~own~~ interest and are still disinclined to do so, without pressure from the **Public**.

There are numerous other examples I could give of how during the past 25 years our government authorities have been failing on our behalf to protect our valuable biodiversity environments. The urgency for the immediate improvement of management practices is warranted given climate change. This is especially so in this region of very low rainfall. Given the complexities of such systems to simplify and integrate public land (private lands) legislative, administrative and compliance arrangements is urgently required in this area of Central Victoria.