



Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
ANNUAL REPORT 12/13



Victorian
Environmental
Assessment
Council

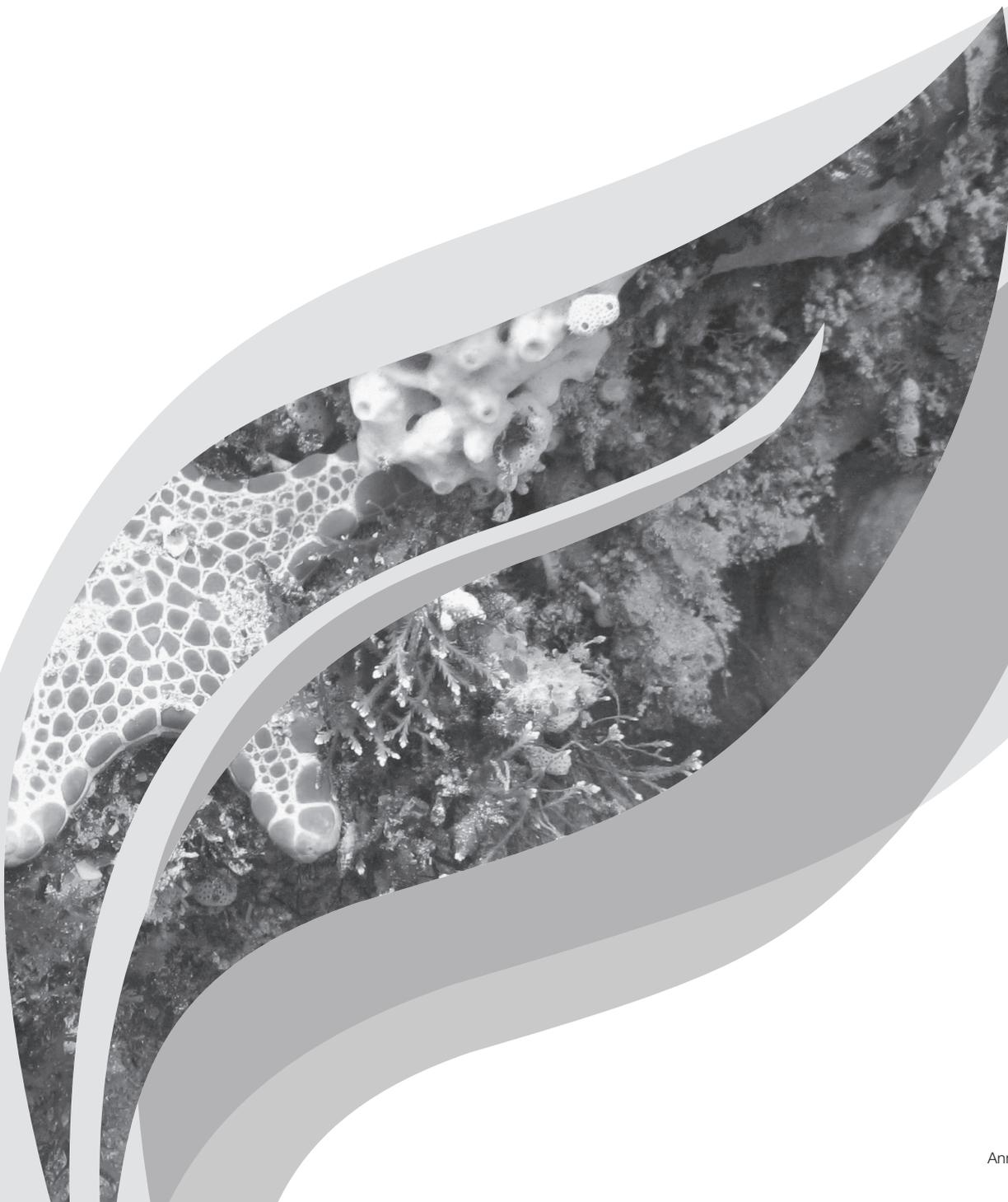
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Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2012-2013

This report outlines the activities of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.



Hon Ryan Smith MP
Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Parliament House
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14(1) of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is pleased to submit to you its twelfth Annual Report, covering our activities for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.



PHIL HONEYWOOD
Chairperson
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
30 August 2013

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Foreword	4
Our purpose	5
Our values	5
Our functions	5
Council membership	6
Ministerial responsibility	7
Administration	7
Council activities	7
Investigations	
Yellingbo	8
Marine	9
Additional prospecting areas in parks	10
Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships 2013	11
Other activities	12
Committees	12
Consultancies	14
Financial information	14
Workforce data	15
Declarations of private interests	15
Government advertising expenditure	15
Organisation chart	15
Merit and equity	16
Compliance	17
Information Privacy Act	16
Freedom of Information	16
Risk Management	17
Gifts, benefits and hospitality attestation	17
Whistleblowers Protection Act	17
Disclosure index	19

FOREWORD

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council had a very busy but fulfilling year in 2012 - 2013. Significant progress was made with the two investigations carried over from the previous Council: the Yellingbo Investigation and the Marine Investigation. A new investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks was then added to the mix with Council managing to complete this referral within the timeframe of October 2012 to May 2013. In all these investigations, VEAC was able to maintain its recognised high standards of community consultation, community reference groups and scientific advisory committee engagement as well as support for our ongoing public land and environment scholarship program.

VEAC was delighted to release its Draft Proposals Paper and engage in extensive public consultation for the Yellingbo Investigation from December 2012 to March 2013. Council members and staff were concerned to gain maximum input from local communities and other stakeholders regarding the proposal for a State Emblems Conservation Area. To this end, we engaged in a number of VEAC organised weekend and evening community consultation forums. Field trips were also organised to facilitate our understanding of environmental management challenges and gain further input from local stakeholder groups. The Council's Final Report was submitted on 31 July 2013.

The important investigation into the performance and management of Victoria's existing marine protected areas has also made good progress. The release of VEAC's Discussion Paper and summary brochure facilitated subsequent extensive public consultation from November 2012 to February 2013. Because of the technical complexities associated with this investigation, Council has been supported by both a well-qualified Community Reference Group and a specialist Scientific Advisory Committee.

VEAC approached its Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks with a determination to factor into our deliberations as much stakeholder input and engagement as possible. This determination ensured that Council met its goal of inspecting all nine parks across Victoria that the Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested advice on. Great benefit was gained from seeing, at first hand, some of the locally specific issues that expanded recreational prospecting access might involve. The Council was able to submit its Final Report in May 2013.

Council took great pleasure in being able to select and fund the second round of the annual Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships. This year we were able to support five recipients with scholarships to assist in the costs of Honours, Masters and PhD research relating to public land in Victoria.

None of the above achievements over the past year would have been possible without the exceptional support of VEAC's committed staff. Ably led by Executive Officer, Joan Phillips, our small team has gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that Council has maintained its strong community standing. This dedication to service was highlighted with the recent retirement of staff member, Mr Simon Ransome. Simon was the longest serving staff member of VEAC and its predecessor organisations, who joined the Land Conservation Council as a senior project officer in 1983. Equally, Council members and staff would not be able to perform their duties adequately without being able to access the specialist advice and participation of our Community Reference Groups and Scientific Advisory Committee.

As with previous years, VEAC wishes to acknowledge the important assistance that we receive from various state government departments and agencies, local government, community organisations and interested members of the public. Victoria is well served by a community that is passionate about preserving and, where possible, enhancing its natural environment. Special appreciation needs also to be extended to the Department of Environment and Primary Industries which ensure that Council is able to meet its investigation needs and requirements. I also extend my thanks to my fellow VEAC members for their commitment to working for the wider community.



Phil Honeywood
Chairperson

VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL

OUR PURPOSE

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council was established under Section 4 of 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 Section 5 of the VEAC Act).

OUR VALUES

Our organisational values reflect our attitude to the public land estate, our 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 and Primary Industries (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*. Current members are 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 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 Growth Areas 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. Ryan Smith MP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, was the Minister responsible for administering the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.

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 9024

Toll Free Number 1800 134 803

E-mail veac@depi.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 12 times during the 2012-2013 financial year.

In addition, in relation to the Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks, members provided briefings to Members of Parliament and stakeholders, attended Community Reference Group meetings and made six field trips. In relation to the Marine Investigation, members attended Community Reference Group meetings and Scientific Advisory Committee meetings. In relation to the Yellingbo Investigation, members attended Community Reference Group meetings, community consultation forums, and meetings and briefings with stakeholders.

Council members' attendance at council meetings from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013

Name	Attendance (number of meetings)
Phil Honeywood	11 of 12
Ian Harris	11 of 12
Charles Meredith	12 of 12
Ian Munro	12 of 12
Angela Reidy	12 of 12

YELLINGBO INVESTIGATION

In August 2011 the State government requested VEAC to investigate the biodiversity and ecological values of public land within the Yellingbo investigation area, identify threats to these values and to make recommendations relating to management to conserve and enhance these values.

The Yellingbo investigation area lies east of Melbourne in the Upper Yarra Valley. It is located between the Dandenong Ranges and Yarra Ranges national parks. The towns of Yellingbo, Woori Yallock, Launching Place, Yarra Junction, Hoddles Creek, Cockatoo, Emerald, Monbulk and Seville are within the boundary of the investigation area.

The work program for the 2012-2013 year included:

- release of the Draft Proposals Paper for public comment from 6 December 2012 to 25 March 2013
- development and launch of interactive web mapping to assist stakeholders and the general public view public land use proposals in the investigation area
- analysis of the views presented in written submissions and through the public consultation process
- preparation of the final report for release in early 2013-14.

Seventy-nine submissions were received during the second submission period in response to the Draft Proposals Paper. Three 'open house' community forums were also conducted in February 2013 at Yarra Junction, Healesville and Emerald, where a total of approximately 60 interested people met and discussed aspects of the investigation directly with Council members and staff. Meetings with government agencies and community organisations continued throughout 2012-13.

The Community Reference Group for the investigation continued to meet and provided valuable assistance to Council on aspects of the investigation. The Community Reference Group met three times in 2012-13. The membership for the Community Reference Group can be found on page 12.

With the development of interactive mapping for the investigation, users now have a choice of PDF maps or an interactive web map. The interactive web map enables a user to view the map, and information associated with the map, more easily than with a PDF. This is achieved by incorporating into the web map panning and zooming tools, bookmarks that zoom to recommendation sites, pop-up windows that display information about land use parcels, and annotation that changes in size as the user zooms in or out.

Expenditure including salaries and on-costs, for the Yellingbo Investigation for the 2012-13 financial year was \$470,908.

The Yellingbo Investigation terms of reference are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to carry out an investigation into public land in the vicinity of the Yellingbo Conservation Reserve¹.

The purpose of the Yellingbo investigation is to:

- a identify the biodiversity and ecological values in the specified area;
- b identify the current and likely future threats to these values and opportunities to reduce or remove these threats; and
- c make recommendations for appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance the biodiversity and ecological values.

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 policies and strategies, Ministerial statements and reports by the Victorian Auditor-General; and
- (ii) relevant regional programs, strategies and plans; and
- (iii) the option of consolidating land status.

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 25 February 2013. *

¹ For this investigation the area concerned includes multiple separate areas of public land located between (but excluding) Dandenong Ranges National Park, Yarra Ranges National Park, Warburton and Powelltown State Forest, Kurth Kiln Regional Park, Cardinia and Silvan Reservoirs and water production areas within the boundary specified on the attached map of the investigation area. The public land includes the following areas that are accepted government recommendations from the Land Conservation Council Melbourne Area District 2:

- (i) Warramate Hills, Yellingbo and Sassafra Creek Nature Conservation Reserves,
- (ii) natural features reserves including (streams and frontages, Streamside area and Bushland areas); and
- (iii) Hoddles Creek and Haining Farm Education Areas.

* On 19 July 2012 the Minister for Environment and Climate Change approved an extension of the date by which the Council must complete the investigation to 31 July 2013.

MARINE INVESTIGATION

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to investigate the outcomes of the establishment of Victoria's existing marine protected areas. The investigation covers the 13 marine national parks, 11 marine sanctuaries, and 6 marine parks, marine reserves or marine and coastal parks established under schedules seven, eight and four respectively of the *National Parks Act 1975*.

The Marine Investigation includes three public submission periods with a final report to be provided to the Minister by February 2014.

The work program for the 2012-2013 year included:

- release of the Discussion Paper and associated summary brochure for public comment from 13 November 2012 to 4 February 2013
- analysis of the views presented in written submissions and through the public consultation process
- completion of consultancy on 'enjoyment, appreciation and understanding' of marine protected areas
- preparation of material for the draft report to be released for public comment later in 2013.

A Community Reference Group was established in 2011-12 to provide advice to Council over the course of the investigation. The Community Reference Group met three times during 2012-13. The membership of the Community Reference Group can be found on page 13.

A Scientific Advisory Committee was also established for the investigation in 2011-12 and provides advice to the Council on:

- current scientific research and data applicable to the investigation
- techniques and approaches that would assist VEAC in the conduct of the investigation, particularly relating to assessing performance against ecological criteria
- key gaps in relevant scientific knowledge that could be addressed by research in both the short term and long term.

During 2012-13, three members joined the Scientific Advisory Committee to provide additional expertise in social sciences. The Scientific Advisory Committee met four times during the 2012-2013 period, and also provided advice to VEAC out of session. The membership of the Scientific Advisory Committee can be found on page 13.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Marine Investigation for the 2012-13 financial year was \$333,681.

The Marine Investigation terms of reference are contained in the following box:

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 15 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change requests the Council to carry out an investigation into the outcomes of the establishment of Victoria's existing marine protected areas¹.

The purpose of the marine investigation is to examine and provide assessment of:

- a** the performance and management of existing marine protected areas in meeting the purposes for which they were established, particularly the protection of the natural environment, indigenous flora and fauna and other natural and historic values; and
- b** any ongoing threats or challenges to the effective management of existing marine protected areas, particularly in relation to the biodiversity and ecological outcomes.

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)** all relevant State Government policies and strategies, Ministerial statements and reports by the Victorian Auditor-General;
- (ii)** all relevant national and international agreements, policies and strategies, including ecosystem-based management approaches; and
- (iii)** relevant regional programs, strategies and plans.

Three public submission periods are to be held and a discussion paper and a draft proposals paper are to be prepared.

The Council must report on the completed investigation by February 2014.

¹ For this investigation, marine protected areas means the 13 marine national parks, 11 marine sanctuaries, and 6 marine parks, marine reserves or marine and coastal parks established under schedules seven, eight and four respectively of the *National Parks Act 1975*.

INVESTIGATION INTO ADDITIONAL PROSPECTING AREAS IN PARKS

On 25 October 2012, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Hon. Ryan Smith, requested VEAC to conduct an investigation into additional prospecting areas in parks.

The investigation into additional prospecting areas in parks included one submission period with a final report to be provided to the Minister on 30 April 2013. The Council subsequently sought and was granted a one-month extension of time to complete the investigation.

A Notice of Investigation was published on 14 December 2012, calling for written submissions. During December 2012 and January 2013 VEAC prepared material to assist the public in making submissions, including a four-page leaflet with information about the investigation and how to make a submission, a five-page Q&A leaflet, and overviews for each of the nine parks specified in the terms of reference. Approximately 950 submissions were received, almost 900 of which were from individuals.

A Community Reference Group was established in December 2012 to assist Council with the investigation. The group met three times throughout the investigation, including a briefing on the report. The membership for the Community Reference Group can be found on page 13.

Council members and VEAC staff made six field trips between December 2012 and April 2013, visiting each of the nine parks and meeting with stakeholders.

The report on VEAC's Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks was submitted to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change on 31 May 2013, publicly released on 7 June 2013, and tabled in Parliament on 27 June 2013.

Expenditure including salaries and on-costs, for the Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks for the 2012-13 financial year was \$133,609.

The terms of reference for the Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks 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 an investigation into prospecting¹ in specified parks under the *National Parks Act 1975*.

The purpose of the investigation is to make recommendations on which areas (in general terms) of the following parks could be made available for recreational prospecting: Alpine, Baw Baw, Croajingolong, Errinundra, Lake Eildon, Lind, Mitchell River and Yarra Ranges national parks and Lerderderg State Park.

In addition to the considerations in section 18 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Council must take into consideration that the overall objective of the investigation is to increase the number of parks under the *National Parks Act 1975* where prospecting may be permitted.

The Council is required to publish information to assist in the making of submissions on the notice of investigation.

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 policies, strategies and Ministerial statements; and
- (ii) agreements under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 and the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 relating to the specified parks.

The Council must report on the completed investigation by 30 April 2013.*

¹ Prospecting means searching for minerals or gemstones under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority as defined in the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990.

* In March 2013, the Minister extended the time for completion of the investigation to 31 May 2013.

BILL BORTHWICK STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS 2013

The Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships assist with some of the costs of research for students undertaking Honours, Masters or PhD research projects relating to public land in Victoria in the fields of natural sciences, humanities and social sciences, economics or politics.

The scholarships were 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). They 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 2013 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 Old Treasury Building on 2 May 2013.

Scholarships totalling \$7548 were awarded to five recipients. Which brings the total number of scholarships awarded to eleven.

The recipients for the 2013 scholarships are:

Mr John Patykowski, Deakin University

"The role of rare plants in ecosystem function within the Central Highlands region of Victoria"

John's PhD research will provide important information on the role of rare plants in ecosystem function at both the individual species level and the collective level in Victorian ecosystems, particularly with respect to carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and the effects of fire on these processes, thus spatial as well as temporal variation. The scholarship will assist in the costs of the hire of a portable photosynthesis system.

Mr Thomas Miller, University of Ballarat

"Changes to the bird community of Mallee isolates across spatial and temporal scales"

Thomas's research for his Bachelor of Applied Science (Environmental Management) Honours, seeks to understand the temporal changes associated with landscape change and extinction debt through the re-examination of a bird community in central Victoria. This study will also examine the nature of the landscape bordering habitat patches and assess its influence on patch function. The scholarship will assist in the costs of fieldwork.

Miss Rachel Slatyer, University of Melbourne

"Estimating population connectivity in the Victorian high country"

Rachel's PhD research will explore the population connectivity within and among mountains for the four grasshoppers in the *Kosciuscola* genus. This will involve collecting genetic samples from populations on eight mountains, and at several elevations within each mountain. Using microsatellite genetic markers, Rachel will assess movement between populations at different elevations and test the hypothesis that high-elevation species have lower connectivity among mountains than low-elevation species. The scholarship will assist in the costs of fieldwork and mesh insect cages.

Ms Harriet Moore, University of Melbourne

"The problem of persistence: will riparian restoration projects on public land last?"

Harriet's PhD research involves assessing the future sustainability of current riparian management interventions with a focus on riparian fencing. Current riparian fencing projects will be assessed in terms of the likelihood of fences remaining functional in the long term. The scholarship will assist in the costs of conducting interviews (including car hire and accommodation).

Mr David Sparks, University of Melbourne

"Is long-term management of coastal tea tree being effective?"

David's research project for his Master of Science (Botany) will aim to ascertain if reclaimed *Leptospermum myrsinoides* urban heathlands are progressing towards or away from uninvaded heathlands in community structure and abundance. Secondly, recruitment of species will be analysed in relation to patch size to see if there are any correlations. The scholarship will assist in the costs of meeting with volunteers and related field work.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Public land use records management and large-scale mapping

VEAC and the former ECC and LCC have completed 38 investigations over 42 years. Those Government-approved recommendations of VEAC and its predecessors provide a framework for use and management of almost all public land across Victoria. Recommendations from these investigations have largely applied a consistent set of public land use categories, as appropriate to each investigation area, and adapted over time. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), Parks Victoria and others manage public land in accordance with the uses, and public land use boundaries, specified by past VEAC, ECC and LCC government-approved recommendations.

VEAC's website www.veac.vic.gov.au includes VEAC's and ECC's final reports and maps, and versions of all LCC final recommendation reports annotated for Government decisions. There are also recommendation maps for each LCC investigation, scanned as published. Further work has focused on a major dataset known as VEACRECS25.

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) mapping of public land categories, to clarify boundaries and appropriate uses, in association with Crown land parcels. The VEACRECS25 dataset provides accurate digital mapping of Government-approved VEAC, ECC, and LCC recommendations for such purposes.

VEAC virtually completed this dataset in 2012/13, with data for the last of Victoria's 79 local government areas (LGAs) – Golden Plains Shire and Swan Hill Rural City – processed and loaded into the Department's MapShare Intranet website. The dataset now contains 82,240 entries, representing all Crown parcels plus those divided into two or more categories. Only French Island (not in an LGA), with 53 parcels, remains to be completed.

Information is initially compiled 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 VEAC, ECC and LCC records and digital aerial imagery, as required.

Progress accelerated this year after completion of the difficult Gippsland LGAs. Fast tracking – involving less parcel verification but on-screen checking after loading – resulted in excellent progress, with 10,218 public land parcels in Greater Geelong and Warrnambool Cities, Swan Hill Rural City, Alpine, Bass Coast, Golden Plains, Latrobe, Southern Grampians and Surf Coast Shires, and Queenscliffe Borough, verified, processed and loaded into MapShare. These LGAs, the River Red Gum LGAs, and many other locations were checked online and corrected.

In addition this year, data for most LGAs have been refreshed to incorporate amendments, and a new parcel match/parcel split process was developed to facilitate maintenance and the use of these data in other processes.

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.

Yellingbo Investigation Community Reference Group

Three meetings of the Yellingbo Investigation Community Reference Group were held during 2012-2013.

Name*	Organisation
Mr Don Saunders	Chairperson
Mr Ben Cullen	Trust for Nature
Mr David Finger	Victorian Farmers Federation
Mr Phil Ingamells	Victorian National Parks Association
Aunty Diane Kerr	Wurundjeri Tribe Land & Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc.
Mr Jeff Latter	Woori Yallock Creek Park Alliance
Ms Dianne Luc	Yarra Valley Equestrian Landcare Group
Ms Sharon Merritt	Country Fire Authority
Mr Euan Moore	Birdlife Australia
Ms Irene Pearey	Yarra Valley and Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network
Ms Mary-Kate Hockey	Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
Mr Marty White	Yarra Ranges Council

*Membership as at 30 June 2013

Marine Investigation Community Reference Group

The Marine Investigation Community Reference Group met three times during 2012-13.

Name*	Organisation
Assoc Prof John Sherwood	Chairperson
Mr Simon Branigan	Victorian National Parks Association
Mr Andrew Christie	Bachelor of Aquaculture program, NMIT
Mr Geoff Fisher	VRFish
Dr John Hawkins	Scuba Divers Federation of Victoria
Mr Ray Lewis	Victorian Environment Friends Network
Ms Katrina Hall	Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association
Mr Andrew Mathers	(to October 2012)
Mr David Lucas	Native Title Services Victoria
Ms Denise Lovett	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Cr Michael Norris	Municipal Association of Victoria (to December 2012)
Mr Chris Smyth	Australian Conservation Foundation
Ms Renee Vajtauer	Seafood Industry Victoria
Ms Kat Vcekla	Dive Industry of Victoria Association
Mr Andy Warner	Boating Industry Association of Victoria
Mr Jeff Weir	Dolphin Research Institute
Mr Joel Williams	Australian Marine Sciences Association, Victorian Branch (to December 2012)

Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks

Community Reference Group

The Community Reference Group for the Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks met three times during 2012-2013.

Name*	Organisation
Mr Ian Voigt	Chairperson
Mr Graham Atkinson	Native Title Services Victoria
Ms Rita Bentley	Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria
Cr Nicola Davis	Municipal Association of Victoria
Mr Mick Harding	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council
Mr John Harris	Field Naturalists Club of Victoria
Mr Maelor Himbury	Victorian Environment Friends Network
Mr Philip Ingamells	Victorian National Parks Association
Mr David Moore	The Geological Society of Australia, Victoria Division

Marine Investigation Scientific Advisory Committee

The Scientific Advisory Committee for the Marine Investigation met four times during 2012–2013. The membership of the group at 30 June 2013 was as follows:

Members
Mr Rod Gowans, PSM (Chair)
<i>Ecological sciences</i>
Dr Alan Butler
Dr Scott Condie
Professor Allan Curtis (from April 2013)
Professor Peter Fairweather
Professor Gregory Jenkins
Professor Michael Keough
Associate Professor Sue Moore (from April 2013)
Dr Mark Norman
Associate Professor Mardie Townsend (from April 2013)
Dr Barry Wilson

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.

In 2012-2013, VEAC engaged 24 consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000, with a total expenditure of \$42,583 (excludes GST).

Details of consultancies over \$10,000 (excl. GST)

Consultant	Purpose	Total approved project fee (exc. GST)	Expenditure 2012-13 (exc. GST)	Future expenditure (exc. GST)
Designgrant	Design of Marine Investigation Discussion Paper	15,005	15,005	0
Designgrant	Design of Yellingbo Investigation Draft Proposals Paper	11,635	11,635	0
Charles Sturt University	Critical review of available information relating to enjoyment and appreciation of the natural environment (stages 1 to 3)	35,000	35,000	0

Note: Major Contracts – Government Policy requires disclosure of all contracts greater than \$10 million. No major contracts were entered by the Council during the reporting period.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Council's operating funds were provided as 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 2013. The table below shows expenditure incurred.

VEAC received additional funding during the 2012-13 for the Investigation into Additional Prospecting Areas in Parks (see page 10).

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

Expenses	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-09
Salaries and oncosts	825,282	914,003	1,171,581	1,084,026	960,229
Operating	514,745	506,972	609,007	566,885	683,096
Total	1,340,027	1,420,975	1,780,588	1,650,911	1,643,325

WORKFORCE DATA

Employment	2013 (a)			2012 (b)		
	Male	Female	Total staff	Male	Female	Total Staff
Total	3	6	9	5	7	12

Notes:

a relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2013

b relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2012

Note: VEAC staff are also included in employment statistics for the Department of Sustainability and Environment for 2012-2013.

DECLARATIONS OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

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

All returns are confidential.

ORGANISATION CHART



As at 30 June 2013

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE

No Government Advertising Expenditure was incurred by the Council during the reporting period.

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 DEPI, 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 area 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 building and facilities controlled by the DEPI to perform its functions and does not own or control any buildings.

The Council utilises DEPI 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.

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 DEPI is:

Manager, Privacy

Department of Environment and Primary Industries
PO Box 500, East Melbourne VIC 3002

Telephone: (03) 9637 8697

E-mail: privacy.enquiries@depi.vic.gov.au

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@depi.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 \$25.70; 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 2013, there were no valid requests. There were no requests outstanding as at 30 June 2012.

RISK MANAGEMENT

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

GIFTS, BENEFITS AND HOSPITALITY ATTESTATION

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

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

WHISTLEBLOWERS PROTECTION ACT

The former *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001* ('Whistleblowers Act') was repealed and replaced with the Protected Disclosure Act 2012 ('PD Act'), which came into force on 10 February 2013. As the change of legislation occurred midway through the 2012-13 financial year, this disclosure complies with the requirements of the PD Act and section 104 of the Whistleblowers Act, for each of the relevant time periods.

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 DEPI or IBAC on the contact details provided below.

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

How can I access DEPI's procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action?

DEPI 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 DEPI's procedures on its website at: www.depi.vic.gov.au

Contacts

Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI)

Jennifer Berensen, Senior Advisor, Privacy & Ombudsman
Department of Environment and Primary Industries

Address: PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002

Phone: 03 9637 8697

Website: www.depi.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.

Disclosures under the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001 (repealed)*

The archived procedures established under the Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001 are available upon request.

The disclosures detailed in the table below relate to the period commencing on 1 July 2012 and ending on 9 February 2013.

The number and types of disclosures made to DSE during the year (1 July 2012 to 9 February 2013)	2012-13 number	2011-12 number
Public interest disclosures	0	0
Protected disclosures	0	0
The number of disclosures referred during the year by the public body to the Ombudsman for determination as to whether they are public interest disclosures	0	0
The number and types of disclosed matters referred to the public body by the Ombudsman for investigation	0	0
The number and types of disclosures referred by the public body to the Ombudsman for investigation	0	0
The number and types of investigations taken over from the public body by the Ombudsman	0	0
The number of requests made by a whistleblower to the Ombudsman to take over an investigation by the public body	0	0
The number and types of disclosed matters that the public body has declined to investigate	0	0
The number and types of disclosed matters that were substantiated upon investigation and the action taken on completion of the investigation	0	0
Any recommendations made by the Ombudsman that relate to the public body:		
Recommendation regarding file security and management	0	0

DISCLOSURE INDEX

The 2012-13 Annual Report of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is prepared in accordance with all relevant Victorian legislation.

This index has been prepared to facilitate identification of the Council's compliance with statutory disclosure requirements.

Legislation	Requirement	Page No.
ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER'S DECLARATION		
SD 4.2(j)	Sign off requirements	4
Charter and purpose		
FRD 22D	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	5
FRD 22D	Manner of establishment and responsible Minister	7
FRD 22D	Nature and range of services provided	5
Financial information		
FRD 22D	Operational and budgetary objectives	15
FRD 22D	Summary of the financial results	15
FRD 22D	Major changes or factors affecting performance	N/A
FRD 22D	Subsequent events	N/A
FRD 22D	Significant changes in financial position during the year	15
Governance and organisational structure		
FRD 22D & SD2.2(f)	Organisational structure	16
FRD 22D	Occupational health and safety policy	17
FRD 22D	Employment and conduct principles	16
FRD 29 & 22D	Workforce data disclosures	16
FRD 15B	Executive officer disclosures	N/A
Other information		
FRD 10	Disclosure index	20
FRD 25 & 22D	Victorian Industry Participation Policy disclosures	17
FRD 22C	Details of consultancies in excess of \$10 000	13
FRD 22C	Details of consultancies under \$10 000	13
FRD12A	Disclosure of major contracts	14
FRD 22D	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	17
FRD 22D	Compliance with <i>Building Act 1993</i>	
FRD 22D	Statement on National Competition Policy	
FRD 22BC	Application and operation of the <i>Protected Disclosures Act 2012</i>	
FRD 24C	Reporting of office-based environmental impacts	N/A
FRD 22D	Statement of availability of other information	20
SD 4.5.5	Risk management compliance attestation	19
SD 4.2(g)	General information requirements	Entire document
FRD 22D	Disclosure of government advertising expenditure	15
PC 2012/02	Gifts, benefits and hospitality attestation	17
SD 4.5.5.1	Insurance attestation	N/A
LEGISLATION		
	<i>Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001</i>	7
	<i>Building Act 1983</i>	17
	<i>Financial Management Act 1994</i>	N/A
	<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	17
	<i>Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001</i>	18
	<i>Victorian Industry Participation Policy Act 2003</i>	17
PRINT AND DESIGN		
FRD 30	Standard requirements for the design and print of annual reports	Entire document

STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY OF OTHER INFORMATION

- Overseas travel undertaken including a summary of the objectives and outcomes of each visit – nil
- 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 *
- A general statement on IR within the entity and details of time lost through industrial accidents and disputes – not applicable
- Major research and development activities undertaken – nil
- Major promotional, public relations and marketing activities undertaken by the entity 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 – nil
- Major external review that were carried out on the Council - nil

See Department of Sustainability and 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.