



Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012



Victorian
Environmental
Assessment
Council

www.veac.vic.gov.au



Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

This report outlines the activities of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012.

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

Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of Section 14(1) of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council is pleased to submit to you its eleventh Annual Report, covering our activities for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012.



PHIL HONEYWOOD
Chairperson
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
14 August 2012

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FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to report on the activities of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council for the 2011-2012 year. During this year the final report on the Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation was submitted to government, and VEAC was requested to carry out two new investigations: the Yellingbo Investigation and the Marine Investigation. The first stage of public consultation has been completed for both new investigations and Community Reference Groups established.

The Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation was notable in providing for the first time an inventory of public land and public open space for metropolitan Melbourne. These datasets are proving to be valuable resources for government departments and local councils. The final report included maps showing the uses and ownership of more than 89,000 hectares of public land in the 29 municipalities within the investigation area. The report also included maps of public open space on land owned by the Victorian Government and local councils, providing details on the ownership and nature of more than 67,000 hectares of public open space. Since then, VEAC has compiled information on public land and public open space for the two remaining metropolitan municipalities to complete the datasets of public land and public open space across the metropolitan area.

This year was also marked by awarding of the inaugural round of Bill Borthwick Student Scholarships to six recipients to assist in the costs of their research. These annual scholarships were established in 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 a central figure in establishing the LCC to advise government on the use of Victoria's public land.

In May 2012, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change announced new appointments to Council. In addition to my appointment as Chairperson, Charles Meredith and Angela Reidy are new appointments and Ian Harris and Ian Munro have been re-appointed.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the major contributions during this year of the outgoing members of Council, Chairperson Duncan Malcolm and members Barry Clugston and Airlie Worrall.

On behalf of both the outgoing and the current members I also want to acknowledge the support the Council received during the year from its skilled and committed staff. The excellent reputation of VEAC and its predecessor bodies, the Land Conservation Council and the Environment Conservation Council, is very dependent on the knowledge and expertise of its staff. VEAC's investigation model has particular strengths in bringing together the best data and science and taking it to the community for input and discussion, before developing authoritative advice for Government. This is made possible through VEAC's specialist capabilities in areas such as spatial analysis and mapping, ecology, policy, community engagement and project management. All of these capabilities have been drawn on during the year.

Council receives significant assistance from government departments and agencies, local government, community organisations, and from interested members of the public. This assistance has been an integral part of Council being able to meet its objectives for the past year. Support from the Department of Sustainability and Environment is also gratefully acknowledged. In the year ahead, Council looks forward to continuing to work constructively with these agencies and organisations and with 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 community and 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 Sustainability and Environment (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, Dr Charles Meredith, Mr Ian Harris, 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, Mr Ian Munro PSM, Dr Charles Meredith and Ms Angela Reidy. All members were appointed on 5 May 2012 for three years. From 5 May 2009 to 4 May 2012, Council members were Mr Duncan Malcolm AM (Chairperson), Mr Barry Clugston OAM, Mr Ian Harris, Mr Ian Munro PSM and Dr Airlie Worrall.

Brief biographies of current Council members follow:

Hon. Phil Honeywood (Chairperson)

Phil Honeywood was elected to the Legislative Assembly seat of Warrandyte in 1988 at 28 years of age. In 1992 Mr Honeywood became Chairman of the Melbourne Parks and Waterways Advisory Council and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier. From 1996 to 1999 he was Minister for Tertiary Education and Training and Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs. From 1999 to 2002 Mr Honeywood was Shadow Minister for Education and from 2002 to 2006 Deputy Leader of the State Opposition during which time he also served for several years as Shadow Minister for the Environment. Since retiring from politics in 2006, 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. Community involvement includes Chairman of Victech (370 Degrees) a not for profit Group Training Company, Member of the Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation and being a volunteer adviser to the Bennelong Foundation.

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 Harris

Ian Harris has had over 30 years experience in the planning and management of land for public use and conservation at both state and local government levels. He has been responsible for on-ground land management in regional Victoria and urban Melbourne as well as 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, convener of the National Parks Advisory Council and board member of the Australian and New Zealand Parks Forum. He is currently a sessional panel member with Planning Panels Victoria.

Mr Ian Munro PSM

Ian Munro is a consultant to the Department of Business and Innovation and to Regional Development Victoria, a board member of the Growth Areas Authority and the former Deputy Secretary and CEO, Invest Assist for the then 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 is a civil engineer with over 25 years work experience in both the public and private sectors. Angela currently leads the Melbourne office of a consulting practice providing environmental science and engineering services in the specialist areas of water, soils, agriculture and natural resources. Throughout her career, 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 focussed on infrastructure policy, feasibility, procurement and delivery based around sustainable development practices.

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 2011 to 30 June 2012.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

The Council met formally 11 times during the 2011–2012 financial year. In addition, in relation to the completion of the Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation, members provided briefings to Members of Parliament, the Community Reference Group and stakeholders. In relation to the Yellingbo Investigation, members attended Community Reference Group meetings and attended a community workshop. In relation to the Marine Investigation, members attended a Community Reference Group meeting.

Council members' attendance at Council meetings from 1 June 2011 to 4 May 2012

Name	Attendance (number of meetings)
Duncan Malcolm	10 of 10
Barry Clugston	10 of 10
Ian Harris	9 of 10
Ian Munro	10 of 10
Airlie Worrall	10 of 10

Council members' attendance at Council meetings from 5 May 2012 to 30 June 2012

Name	Attendance (number of meetings)
Phil Honeywood	1 of 1
Ian Harris	1 of 1
Charles Meredith	1 of 1
Ian Munro	1 of 1
Angela Reidy	1 of 1

METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE INVESTIGATION

In July 2008 the Council was requested to carry out an investigation of Crown land and public authority land in 29 municipalities in metropolitan Melbourne.

The Notice of Investigation was published in February 2009, and 189 submissions were received. These submissions were considered during the development of a discussion paper. The discussion paper was published for public comment in October 2010. VEAC received 123 submissions on the discussion paper.

The final report for the investigation was submitted to the Minister for Environment and Climate Change on 1 August 2011 and released publicly on 8 August 2011. The report marks the completion of VEAC's role in the investigation. The Victorian Government released its response to the final report for the investigation on 13 March 2012.

The work program for 2011-12 year included:

- preparing material for the final report and finalising the publication
- briefings as requested to Government and stakeholders on the final report
- distribution of public land and open space spatial data (see below).

The Community Reference Group for the investigation met once during 2011-2012. The membership for the Community Reference Group can be found on page 14.

A number of major consultancies were commissioned during the course of the investigation and these significant reports remain available on VEAC's website. Mapping of public land and open space was developed with the cooperation of public authorities and all local councils, and the spatial data has subsequently been made available to these organisations and other government and academic users through data agreements. In addition to mapping of public land and open space in the 29 municipalities of the investigation area, VEAC has also compiled information on public land and open space in the Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Ranges municipalities to complete the information for all 31 municipalities in metropolitan Melbourne.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation for the 2011-2012 financial year was \$103,823.

The Metropolitan Melbourne 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 of Crown land and public authority land in the cities constituting metropolitan Melbourne* and the Shire of Cardinia.

The purposes of the Metropolitan Melbourne investigation are to:

- a systematically identify and assess the uses, resources, condition, values and management of Crown land, and public authority land in metropolitan Melbourne;
- b assess values of Crown land, and public authority land for areas not committed to a specific use, and report on appropriate future uses relevant to Melbourne's liveability and natural values; and
- c report on the contribution of Crown land, and public authority land to Melbourne's liveability and opportunities for enhancement of this contribution.

In addition to the considerations specified in section 18 of the VEAC Act, the Council would need to take into account the following matters:

- relevant State Government policies, programs, strategies and Ministerial Statements relating to the use of open space in Melbourne, including *Melbourne 2030* and *Planning for all of Melbourne and Linking People & Spaces*;
- public authority plans and strategies such as the Port Phillip Catchment Management Authority *Regional Catchment Strategy* and *Native Vegetation Plan*; and
- land required by transport and other utilities for their functions and appropriate access for social, recreational and community activities.

The Council is required to consult with the community in accordance with the VEAC Act, to release a Discussion Paper, and to submit a Final Report on the results of its investigation.

The Final Report must be submitted by 1 August 2011**.

* Cities of Banyule Bayside, Boroondara, Brimbank, Casey, Dandenong, Darebin, Frankston, Glen Eira, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Kingston, Knox, Manningham, Maribyrnong, Maroondah, Melbourne, Melton, Monash, Moonee Valley, Moreland, Nillumbik, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Whitehorse, Whittlesea, Wyndham, Yarra, Melbourne Docklands

** Originally May 2010

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.

A Notice of Investigation brochure was released in late 2011. The first submissions period closed on 20 February 2012, and seventy two submissions were received in response to the Notice of Investigation. These submissions are being used to help develop the draft proposals paper.

The work program for the 2011 – 2012 year included:

- a 73 day period of public consultation following the Notice of Investigation on 6 December 2011
- analysis of information and views provided by stakeholders through the public consultation process
- three Council field inspections
- preparation of material for the draft proposals paper.

A Community Reference Group was set up to assist Council in provide advice and input to VEAC on many aspects of the investigation and has made a particularly valuable contribution in advising on community views and public consultation. The Community Reference Group met three times in 2011-12. In addition, with the assistance of the Community Reference Group, a stakeholder workshop was held in Woori Yallock in March 2012, attended by government public land management agencies and representatives of community groups. These discussions will contribute to the development of the draft proposals paper. The membership for the Community Reference Group can be found on page 14.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Yellingbo Investigation for the 2011-2012 financial year was \$437,653.

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 Powertown State Forest, Kurth Kiln Regional Parks, 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 Sassafras 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.

MARINE INVESTIGATION

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change has requested the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (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 will include three public submission periods with a final report provided to the Minister by February 2014.

The first submission period following the Notice of Investigation closed on 25 June 2012, with 102 submissions being received. These submissions will assist in developing the discussion paper which will be released for public comment later this year.

A Community Reference Group was set up to provide advice to Council over the course of the investigation. The Community Reference Group met once during 2011-2012.

A Scientific Advisory Committee was also set up for the investigation and will provide 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

The Scientific Advisory Committee has exchanged information informally and formally met once during the 2011-2012 period. The membership for the Community Reference Group and Scientific Advisory Committee can be found on page 15.

Expenditure, including salaries and on-costs, for the Marine Investigation for the 2011–2012 financial year was \$246,989. In addition, several consultancies were commissioned utilising funding provided in 2011-12 from the Natural Resources Investment Program (see page 13).

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*.

BILL BORTHWICK STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS 2012

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. At the first meeting of the Land Conservation Council on 1 April 1971, Minister Bill Borthwick told the new councillors to make their recommendations on the use of public land "as if for a thousand years".

The inaugural scholarships were presented to the recipients by VEAC Chairperson, Duncan Malcolm and Mrs Muffie Borthwick, wife of the late Bill Borthwick, at a function at the Old Treasury Building on 20 April 2012.

Scholarships totalling \$9,000 were awarded to six recipients.

The recipients for the 2012 scholarships are:

Lisa Beilharz, Deakin University

Lisa's research project for her Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) will provide important information on habitat use and threats to the Broad-toothed rat, a potentially threatened small mammal species whose range in Victoria is almost entirely contained within public land in the subalpine and alpine regions. The scholarship will assist in the costs of purchasing radio-tracking collars.

Benjamin Cooke, RMIT University

Ben's Ph.D research seeks to understand how management practices of property owners are shaped by local and global interactions between people and landscapes, and contributes to understanding landholder engagements with public land. The regions studied are the east Corangamite region (Bellarine to Ballarat) and the Bass Coast region of West Gippsland. The scholarship will assist in the costs of presenting a paper at the International Geography Congress in Cologne (Germany) in August 2012.

Cynnamon Dobbs Brown, University of Melbourne

Cynnamon's Ph.D research will assess the urban forest structure and composition in the City of Melbourne (parks, gardens and streetscapes together with soil and water). The spatial analysis will include comparisons of public and private realms from different precincts within Melbourne, and will provide information that will assist in understanding how human preferences, policies and management regimes shape the urban forest. The scholarship will assist in the costs of purchasing a computer that will allow the more efficient processing of remote sensing imagery.

Fatemeh Poodat, RMIT University

Fatemeh's Ph.D research aims to develop a comprehensive methodology for studying ecological connectivity in Melbourne using a GIS environment. More than one third of native vegetation in Melbourne occurs on public land. Loss of connectivity poses a critical threat to many ground-based species living in highly modified areas such as urban landscapes. The scholarship will assist in the costs of field work and programming.

Thomas Schneider, Deakin University

Tom's research project for his Bachelor of Environmental Science (Honours) aims to determine the spatial use of the domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*) on Victoria's sandy shores. Results from this project will enable public land managers to better understand how dogs use beaches, to develop strategic dog-friendly coastal areas, education campaigns and effective management zones. The scholarship will assist in the costs of travel, accommodation and purchasing batteries for remote-sensing cameras.

Richard Stafford-Bell, Victoria University

Richard's Ph.D research aims to gain a detailed understanding of the biological and ecological role of the seagrass *Zostera muelleri* in four wave-dominated estuaries and inlets in eastern Victoria ranging from near pristine to extensively modified condition. The results will fill critical knowledge gaps, assist managers in predicting responses to human-induced change, and facilitate conservation and restoration programs. The scholarship will assist in the costs of fieldwork.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Public land use records management and large-scale mapping

VEAC and the former ECC and LCC have completed 38 investigations over 41 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. DSE, 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 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. The VEACRECS25 dataset provides accurate digital mapping of Government-approved VEAC, ECC, and LCC recommendations for such purposes.

Information is initially compiled using the VicMap digital parcel layer. VEAC continued this role in 2011/12 with provisional data now compiled for all Crown land parcels in Victoria. 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. DSE's SII group has previously processed and published the verified data, but in April this year VEAC took over that role also.

Progress in Gippsland LGAs remained slow, as the cadastre – and existing park and reserve boundary mapping – are substantially less accurate than in western and northern Victoria. Accordingly VEAC staff had to make many more corrections than in previous municipalities processed. Elsewhere there was excellent progress this year, with 11,864 public land parcels in Ballarat City, and Baw Baw, Mansfield, Mornington Peninsula, Murrindindi, South Gippsland, Towong and Yarra Ranges Shires verified, returned to DSE, and processed for loading into the Department's MapShare Intranet website (processing Mansfield Shire parcels is in progress). In addition, updating completed shires with recommendations from VEAC's River Red Gum Forests Investigation, following the Government Response, resulted in another 731 parcel changes.

VEACRECS25 public land use data has now been completed for 71,089 parcels in 66 of Victoria's 79 municipalities, representing 89% of all Victorian Crown parcels. Two more shires have been provisionally loaded into MapShare prior to verification. Updating of early data using the new data model is underway, and further amendments have been processed to maintain the data. This mapping and associated data are available for all DSE staff. The aim is to complete the initial publication of the VEACRECS25 dataset by the end of December 2012.

ADMINISTRATION

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council office is located on level 6, 8 Nicholson St, East Melbourne, 3002.

Telephone (03) 9637 9902

Fax (03) 9637 8024

Toll Free Number 1800 134 803

E-mail veac@dse.vic.gov.au

Website www.veac.vic.gov.au

Executive Officer Ms Joan Phillips

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

CONSULTANCIES

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

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

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

Consultant	Purpose	Total approved project fee (exc. GST)	Expenditure 2011-12 (exc. GST)	Future expenditure (exc. GST)
Wakelin Associates Pty Ltd	report on sites of geological and geomorphological significance in the VEAC marine investigation area	10,000	10,000	Nil
Bang The Table Pty Ltd	annual licence, additional page and moderation for online consultation	20,500	20,500	Nil
DPI	scientific advice to inform VEAC marine investigation	26,363	26,363	Nil
DPI	spatial and temporal scales of ecological processes	35,000	35,000	Nil
DPI	implications for future climate change on Victorian marine protected areas	30,000	30,000	Nil
Parks Victoria	visitor data and research for Victorian marine protected areas	55,454	55,454	Nil
Flinders University	assessing the outcomes of Victoria's existing marine protected areas for biodiversity and ecological processes	20,790	20,790	Nil
Plum Communication	accessible information about Victoria's marine environment: communicating the outputs of NRIP funded marine projects	21,272	21,272	Nil
DPI	assessment of anthropogenic threats to priority areas in Victoria's marine environment	100,000	100,000	Nil
DPI	additional priority scientific information to inform marine threat assessment project	20,000	20,000	Nil
Smyth & Bahrtdt	Indigenous consultation for marine investigation	21,600	21,600	Nil

In 2011-12, VEAC engaged four consultancies where the total fees payable to the consultants were less than \$10,000, with a total expenditure of \$6,784 (excl. GST).

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.

Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation Community Reference Group

The Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation Community Reference Group met once during 2011-2012. The investigation was completed on 31 July 2011. The group consisted of ten members (including an independent Chairperson):

Name*	Organisation
Ms Jan Macpherson	Independent Chairperson
Cr Sam Alessi	Municipal Association of Victoria
Dr Bob Birrell	Director of Centre for Population and Urban Research, Monash University
Mr Garry Brennan	Bicycle Victoria
Dr Phillip Brotchie	Bushwalking Victoria
Mr Pat Corr	Member of Arthurs Creek Landcare Group and WACMAC Landcare
Mr Maelor Himbury	The Victorian Environment Friends Network
Ms Diane Kerr	Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Heritage Council Inc.
Ms Anne McGregor	Victorian National Parks Association
Dr Mardie Townsend	Associate Dean of the School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University

*Membership as at 1 July 2011

Yellingbo Investigation Community Reference Group

Three meetings of the Yellingbo Investigation Community Reference Group were held during 2011–2012. The group of 11 members (including an independent Chairperson) represented a wide range of stakeholder interests. Membership consists of:

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
Mr Jeff Latter	Woori Yallock Creek Park Alliance
Ms Dianne Luc	Yarra Valley Equestrian Landcare Group
Ms Sharon Merritt	Country fire Authority, Eastern Metropolitan Area
Mr Euan Moore	Birdlife Australia, Victorian Conservation Committee
Ms Irene Pearey	Yarra Valley & Dandenong Ranges Landcare Network
Ms Mary-Kate Hockey	Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority
Mr Marty White	Yarra Ranges Council
Auntie Diane Kerr	Wurundjeri Tribe and Land Compensation Council

*Membership as at 30 June 2012

Marine Investigation Community Reference Group

The Marine Investigation Community Reference Group met once during 2011-2012. The group consisted of 14 members (including an independent Chairperson). Membership consists of:

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
Mr Andrew Mathers	Australian Petroleum and Production Exploration Association
Cr Michael Norris	Municipal Association of Victoria
Mr Chris Smyth	Australian Conservation Foundation
Ms Renee Vajtauer	Seafood Industry of 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

*Membership as at 30 June 2012

Marine Investigation Scientific Advisory Committee

A Scientific Advisory Committee for the Marine Investigation was appointed in early 2012, and has exchanged information informally and met once formally during 2011-2012. The membership of the group was as follows:

Members
Mr Rod Gowans PSM (Chair)
Dr Alan Butler
Dr Scott Condie
Professor Peter Fairweather
Professor Gregory Jenkins
Professor Michael Keough
Dr Mark Norman
Dr Barry Wilson

DECLARATION OF PRIVATE INTERESTS

The Chairperson and all members completed Declarations of Private Interest, 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.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Council's operating funds were provided as a part of recurrent funds appropriated to the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The financial operations of the Council have not been separately audited. Audited statements are incorporated into the overall Financial Statements of the Department of Sustainability and Environment Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 2012. The table below shows expenditure incurred.

Expenses	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Salaries and oncosts	914,003	1,171,581	1,084,026	960,229	798,952
Operating	*506,972	609,007	566,885	683,096	736,485
Total	1,420,975	1,780,588	1,650,911	1,643,326	1,535,438

*Includes deferred expenditure from 10/11.

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

WORKFORCE DATA

Employment	2011 (a)			2012 (b)		
	Male	Female	Total staff	Male	Female	Total staff
Ongoing	3	5	8	3	4	7
Fixed term	0	4	4	-	2	2
Temporary or contract employees	1	1	2	2	1	3
Total	4	10	14	5	7	12

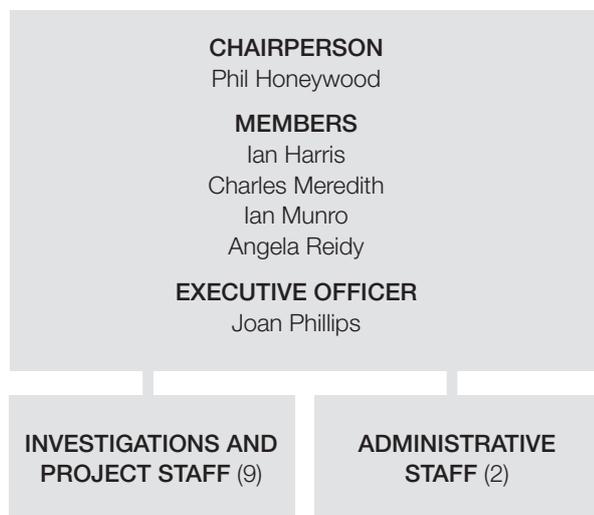
Notes:

a relates to payroll and contract staff as at 30 June 2011

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

ORGANISATION CHART



As at 30 June 2012.

MERIT AND EQUITY

Victorian Public Service merit and equity principles are applied in the appointment and management of staff. VEAC follows the merit and equity principles used by DSE, in accordance with Government directives and the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

Three primary goals have been assumed by VEAC with regard to people management practices:

- develop and sustain an organisational culture in which policies, practices and services are adapted to the needs of the community
- ensure a workplace free from policies and practices that discriminate against staff or potential staff
- ensure that staff have access to a fair, efficient grievance review process to resolve perceived breaches of merit and equity.

COMPLIANCE

- The Council adheres to the principles of the National Competition Policy (NCP) to ensure that any business competition with private entities takes place in an environment where the Council has no unfair competitive advantages.
- 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 DSE to perform its functions and does not own or control any buildings.
- The Council utilises Department of Sustainability and Environment Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.
- There were no major changes or factors affecting performance.
- The Council is committed to the requirements of the Premier's Circular 2006/1, in relation to community inclusiveness, and applies these requirements in its operations where possible.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* 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@dse.vic.gov.au or in writing to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

The cost of an FOI application is \$25.10; 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 2012, there were no valid requests. There were no requests outstanding as at 30 June 2011.

WHISTLEBLOWERS PROTECTION ACT

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

Written guidelines outlining the system for reporting disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the Council or its staff are available on the DSE website: www.dse.vic.gov.au.

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

- there were no disclosures made to the Council
- there were no disclosures referred by the Council to the Ombudsman for determination
- there were no public interest disclosures referred to the Council by the Ombudsman
- there were no disclosed matters referred by the Council to the Ombudsman to investigate
- there were no investigations of disclosed matters taken over by the Ombudsman from the Council
- there were no requests made under section 74 to the Ombudsman to investigate disclosed matters
- there were no disclosed matters that the Council declined to investigate.

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

Protected Disclosure Coordinator

Department of Sustainability and Environment
PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002

Telephone: (03) 9637 8697

Facsimile: (03) 9637 8128

E-mail: jennifer.berensen@dse.vic.gov.au

The Ombudsman Victoria

Level 9, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Vic 3000

Telephone: (03) 9613 6222

Toll free: 1800 806 314

INFORMATION PRIVACY ACT

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

Manager, Privacy

Department of Sustainability and Environment
PO Box 500, East Melbourne Vic 3002

Telephone: (03) 9637 8697

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

RISK MANAGEMENT

While VEAC examines the risks of delivery of its particular work functions and objectives on an ongoing basis, it relies on the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) 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.

DISCLOSURE INDEX

The 2011–2012 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	2
Charter and purpose		
FRD 22C	Objectives, functions, powers and duties	5
FRD 22C	Manner of establishment and responsible Minister	7 & 5
FRD 22C	Nature and range of services provided	5-15
Financial information		
FRD 22C	Operational and budgetary objectives	16
FRD 22C	Summary of the financial results	16
FRD 22C	Major changes or factors affecting performance	N/A
FRD 22C	Subsequent events	N/A
FRD 22C	Significant changes in financial position during the year	N/A
Governance and organisational structure		
FRD 22C & SD2.2(f)	Organisational structure	17
FRD 22C	Occupational health and safety policy	17
FRD 22C	Employment and conduct principles	17
FRD 29 & 22C	Workforce data disclosures	16
FRD 15B	Executive officer disclosures	N/A
Other information		
FRD 10	Disclosure index	19
FRD 25 & 22C	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	N/A
FRD 22C	Application and operation of <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982</i>	17
FRD 22C	Compliance with <i>Building Act 1993</i>	17
FRD 22C	Statement on National Competition Policy	17
FRD 22BC	Application and operation of the <i>Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001</i>	18
FRD 24C & 22C	Reporting of office-based environmental impacts	N/A
FRD 22C	Statement of availability of other information	20
SD 4.5.5	Risk management compliance attestation	18
SD 4.2(g)	General information requirements	Entire document
LEGISLATION		
	<i>Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001</i>	5
	<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 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.

