

Submission to the Draft Joint Management Plan for the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks

G Pridmore, June 2018

As a senior, farmer, prospector, member of PMAV, bushwalker, 4wd'r, camper and lover of the bush, I commend DDLMB on their aspirations to benefit from their rights as traditional owners and their very slick and professional production of the Draft Plan.

However, I do have concerns and some comments on the Draft Strategy and Resources documents.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- I have been prospecting and the holder of a miner's right since a boy (now a senior) and wish to be able to continue with this activity for many years yet.
- I regard and carry out my prospecting activities environmentally responsible and in accordance of all the principles of the PMAV Code of Conduct, but now strongly object to the proposed reduction of 10,000 ha of parks available to prospectors.
- The plan does not quantify, delineate, or provide any independent confirmation, for all effected stakeholders, that the areas concerned are indeed worthy of exclusion of prospectors.
- Places like sacred spaces, landscapes, song lines are intangible and not capable of being desecrated by prospectors. There is nothing there to dig up or remove. We have to ask, how much of the no go areas to prospectors do these areas include.
- Perhaps an equivalent less sensitive area of current exclusion to prospecting could be released to compensate.
- Prospecting for gold has been a pastime for many for the last 160 yrs and as our finds are ever decreasing with the passage of time, loss of area is of great concern. Only placing more pressure on the remaining available areas.
- If prospecting is forced into decline due to loss of area, so too will the local camping grounds and small town economies, where we buy fuel, food, meals and detecting equipment. If prospecting and 4wd access is denied in the proposed areas, I and most other prospectors will no longer have any reason to visit these towns.
- Most prospectors carry a rubbish pouch to collect and dispose of responsibly all metallic rubbish and bullets, so as not to find again. I personally separate out the collect lead shot/bullets for sinker production and so eradicate this heavy metal from the environment. Green groups or DDW cannot achieve this. (see my attached Photo)
- Prospectors help Keep tracks open, for increased fire protection
- Most prospectors are of a senior age and provide a healthy way to enjoy the outdoors.
- Parking access to prospecting areas on minor tracks and parking off track is a necessity to prospectors as most prospectors are of senior age and cannot walk great distances and we do not wish to see track closures or parking fees.
- Rubbish dumping in the bush is not done by prospectors, but we do report them and PMAV have regular bush rubbish collection days.
- Tourism will suffer. The Interstate and overseas tourists who come here specifically to detect, will go to other states.

Aspirations of DDW in this plan are admirable, but seem to take precedence over, and be at the expense of other park users. This may be seen as discriminatory and could lead to animosity.

RESOURCES

Conventions - "Joint Management" – With the majority members of DDWCAC. The remaining members, representing the State and the broader community, and nominated by the State to set the strategic direction for

the land as a meaningful partnership founded on mutual respect.

“Delegated Authority”-

“Owner and Ownership” – Term “owner” misleading and this document gives an impression to DDW peoples, and others, that they have ownership of land. (Only small parcels at Franklinford and Carisbrook owned). RSA 2013 recognised traditional ownership only and never granted full ownership. This Recognition and Settlement Agreement binds the State of Victoria and the Dja Dja Wurrung People to a meaningful partnership founded on mutual respect. “It is a means by which Dja Dja Wurrung culture and traditional practices and the unique relationship of Dja Dja Wurrung People to their traditional country are recognised, strengthened, protected and promoted, for the benefit of all Victorians, now and into the future”.

Change “owner/ownership” to recognised traditional owner or joint manager.

STRATEGY

4.5.7 Managing camping

Bush camping and being able to gather with friends around a camp fire on a cold night is also a part of our right and heritage, not just for privilege of the DDW. Random collection of firewood for campfires helps reduce the fire load of the bush and does not involve removal of live trees. Collection of fallen timber that is continuously replenishing, is not a limited resource .

By allowing free camping in the parks outside designated campsites and sensitive areas takes the pressure off the designated camp sites. Kara Kara has only 2 designated campsites, yet is the largest and remotest of the parks, with many sites suitable for camping, especially in the prospecting areas.

Prospecting is a very time consuming pastime and usually goes hand in hand with camping overnight, why can't areas allowed for prospecting also be available for bush camping?

Because of the remote location and the time consuming nature of the activity, it is often necessity to camp close to that area and use minor tracks for access.

As a responsible prospector, bushwalker and enjoyer of our parks, and having camped in the bush regularly since a child, now to be prevented from lighting a campfire, that has always been a traditional part of my life in the bush, I regard as a big impost.

The current CFA campfire regulations are severe enough to control this activity. At our prospecting group campfires in summer, we always have a knapsack spray on hand.

4.5.8 Prospecting

As far as prospecting/sluicing of stream beds is concerned, it is not carried out to the extent that you perceive, most prospecting these days is with a detector. It does not disturb stream beds any more than seasonal floods or tree falls that cause diversion of stream beds. The stream bed materials dug up are redeposited again at the first stream flow with no long term effect. Your comments in this section are totally misleading and unfounded. Large scale mining is a different matter. Echidnas dig up more ground and turn over more rocks than prospectors. Minor disturbance of the ground provide a seed bed for propagation of seeds.

Prospecting is usually confined to areas where gold has been found or explored for, i.e the diggings. These areas (upside down country) have previously been extensively dug up or turned over and it is highly unlikely that any cultural sites are left intact in these areas. As such I believe these areas should be annexed from cultural heritage areas and be made available for prospecting.

- Sentence "Inappropriate trail development can interfere with use of parks by others, for example by ruining orienteering spaces." A meaningless sentence. Orienteering (which I participated in my youth) involves running between points by map and compass, regardless of tracks or terrain.

If what you are really talking about is motor cycle and mountain bike trails, why not say this.

6.0 Recreation- If the current prospecting area, with a high density of heritage sites and 3 fauna areas, have been identified and are to be removed for prospecting, then as a gesture of goodwill, other potential prospecting areas, not so significant, should be made available for prospecting.

The new area of Paddys Ra, according to Geovic, is predominantly a gully of diggings and seems very unlikely to be of significance.

6.2 R16 "Maintain" should be "increase" camping and dispersed vehicle camping, especially for areas where prospecting is allowed, particularly Kara Kara which is a long travel distance from major towns.

R20 Manage prospecting. The PMAV should be nominated as the joint developer of codes of practice for prospecting.

8.0 Plants & Animals

The proposal to reintroduce the dingo is totally irresponsible in these small parks that adjoin grazing lands. It may be ok for outback areas. What does the Farmer's Federation think of this? Will you construct dingo fences and who will pay for them?

10.1 Healing Upside Down country.

Rehabilitation and remediation of old mining dumps should be outside the remit of this plan, as all mining areas are part of our mining history and should be left untouched. Disturbance of these sites that have been stabilising for over 100 years and continue to stabilise naturally, will cause greater release of toxic substances. The removal and disposal to a hazardous dump site, somewhere else, is just relocating the problem. Contaminated waste disposal costs are extortionate (I have had involvement with this industry) and I for one would not wish to see taxpayers money wasted this way, we pay the EPA to do this.

I am not convinced that any DDW heritage could be left in upside down country, as most of these mined areas were decimated by rushes of many thousands of gold diggers, moving from gully to gully, cut down most trees and removed and relocated stones for hut and fireplace building and ran their horses and carts all over. These areas should be all set aside for the use of recreational prospectors.

This upside down country has provided employment for many generations and been the source of income to many during the 30's depression and may still hold mineral wealth for future generations and as such should be excluded from the Plan area.

12.1 Enterprises -Code E6 ensures DDW people preferential contracts, and licencing and no fees for work within the Parks. This is discriminatory to other local businesses in the areas and will generate local resentment.

14. Strategic Initiatives

Management of camping - Relevant action numbers should have ref to page where detailed.