



**On behalf of a coalition of twenty environment groups**

27 June, 2010

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Anger at Brumby Government plan to axe key environment institution**

The future of planning for the protection of native plants and animals is under threat by a Brumby Government decision to abolish the independent Victoria Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC).

As the Council released a ground breaking discussion paper - possibly one of its last - today, a coalition of 20 environment groups called on the Brumby Government to abandon plans to abolish the highly respected Council.

Victorian National Parks Association Executive Director Matt Ruchel said it was vital to retain VEAC to ensure Victoria's wild places are kept safe for future generations.

"VEAC and its predecessors have played a key role in creating Victoria's world class conservation reserve system. This is a sneaky decision made without consultation and will lead to the dismantling of a key conservation body" Mr Ruchel said.

"Many of Victoria's most loved national parks are protected thanks to advice from VEAC, including Croajingalong National Park, Grampians National Park, our Marine Parks and Sanctuaries and the new River Red Gum parks" said Gavan Mc Fadzean, The Wilderness Society's Victorian Campaigns Manager.

"For almost 40 years VEAC and its predecessors have served Victoria well as an independent source of expert advice on complicated land use and ecological issues" said Don Saunders, Conservation Coordinator for Birds Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA).

"Importantly, VEAC's investigations require extensive community consultation, but this requirement could be lost if VEAC is absorbed into a larger organisation" added Mr Saunders.

"At a time of climate change impacts and many other threats we need VEAC more than ever, and it makes no sense for it to be abolished" said Cam Walker, spokesperson for Friends of the Earth.

"This essentially abolishes the role of an independent, standing investigative body, yet this major decision was never discussed formally with environment groups during two years of consultation on the strategy" said Mr Walker.

**Continued...**

VEAC today released a comprehensive discussion paper on Remnant Native Vegetation in Victoria, the most cleared state in Australia.

“The release of this groundbreaking paper on native vegetation in the most degraded and fragmented parts of the state shows why we need institutions which can grapple with complex ecological issues in a thoughtful, consultative and understandable way” said Sarah Durrant for BEAM - Mitchell Environment Group (Broadford region).

The groups have sent a letter to the Premier along with a petition with over 2400 signatures calling on him to support and expand VEAC and commence a number of new independent investigations.

A copy of the letter and petition are available from [www.vnpa.org.au](http://www.vnpa.org.au)

The VEAC Native Vegetation paper can be downloaded from <http://www.veac.vic.gov.au/>

For comment contact:

Matt Ruchel, VNPA 0418-357-813 or Don Saunders, BOCA 9877 5342 or Cam Walker, FoE 0419 338 047

## Other supporting groups



Goulburn Valley



Geelong Environment Council Inc



Bendigo and District  
Environment Council



Devilbend Landcare Group



Upper Yarra &  
Dandenongs Environment  
Council

