

Opinion

The WEEKLY TIMES

Balance a must for camping

THE public has a long-held right to access crown land water frontages.

But the Andrews Government needs to tread carefully in its bid to open up vast stretches of Victoria's waterways to camping.

The Victorian Farmers Federation is right to be concerned about the impacts of water frontage camping on adjoining landholders, given the risk of fire, litter and waste.

But just saying no to camping is not an option.

These river frontages are a community asset and surely we can sort out some rules on giving the public the chance to enjoy parts of the 26,000km of crown land adjoining some of the most picturesque waterways in the state.

The Bill before the Upper House extends provisions in other acts to water frontages, which allows regulations to be drafted on managing camp fires and protecting vegetation.

But policing these regulations will be the challenge. How will campers be held to be accountable if trees or fences are cut, a camp fire gets out of control or piles of rubbish are left behind?

Perhaps one option would

'For the sake of future generations now is the time to heed the scientists' call'

Climate action 'urgent'

Former chief veterinary officers and senior government veterinarians demand the Prime Minister take urgent action on climate change in this open letter

WE ARE writing to you to convey our growing concerns regarding the impact of climate change, a matter of vital global importance, and the need for far more urgent action to reduce greenhouse emissions.

It is now apparent that global warming is one of the key drivers of changes in disease distribution and emergence of new, potentially dangerous diseases, as well as increasingly severe extreme weather.

During our times of service, we witnessed the changing distribution of pests and diseases affecting Australia's land based and marine animals as climate zones began to shift. Like all Australians, we were also shocked by the devastating effects of this past summer's massive bushfires.

In recent decades, 60-70 per cent of all new diseases affecting humans have originated from animals, including COVID-19.

These diseases often emerge as a result of habitat or ecosystem disruption, leading to increased contact between humans and animal reservoirs

of pathogens.

Experts in their field agree that climate change is a major factor in the loss of animal habitat around the world.

For decades Australia's scientific community has been sounding the alarm on climate change.

The science is clear and unambiguous that anthropogenic climate change is occurring and having a major adverse impact on our environment and lives.

With COVID-19, we are in the midst of a global pandemic. However, we must not lose sight of the climate crisis and its long-term consequences, which will be much more serious if we do not act now.

We believe that sustained and urgent action based on the best available science and technology can reverse our current trajectory towards unsustainable and irreversible changes in climate.

For the sake of future generations, now is the time to heed the scientists' call, similar to your response to the



Bushfire destruction: Experts say climate change is a major factor in the loss of animal habitat around the world. Picture: GETTY IMAGES

pandemic, to hasten our transition towards renewable energy and other climate solutions.

Australians relied on us for sound scientific guidance during outbreaks of new diseases such as the highly fatal Hendra virus or the equine influenza crisis.

We urge you now to do all in your power to have governments and industry listen to and act on the best advice from climate scientists in framing Australia's response to climate change. We also urge you to adopt a national target of zero net greenhouse emissions by 2050 at the latest.

We also ask you to consider that scientists from the Climate Council now advise, based on updated information, that we need to reach zero net emissions by 2040 to remain below the upper Paris climate target of 20C.

As a nation we need to take immediate and determined action to meet this target. The future of our environment, our animals and our grandchildren depends on it.

● **This letter was signed by 18 former state chief veterinary officers and senior government veterinarians**

Dismantling MDBA will be the start of healing

WHILE it is heartening to hear fed

Continuing the Murray Darling Basin

century-old trees continue to fall into