



## **WHY DO WE NEED A GREAT FORESTS NATIONAL PARK?**

We understand that in the recent past pressure has been applied on and by governments in Victoria to create national parks and conservation reserves in order to squeeze out timber harvesting in native forests.

As environmentalists have succeeded in ceasing timber harvesting in native forest in Victoria, why do they need another national park? It appears that this move is in order to prevent a change in government restoring logging in the highly productive mountain ash forests encompassed by the Great Forests National Park proposal. It is difficult to see a timber industry being reestablished given the specialised harvesting, milling equipment and labour skills required.

National parks are meant to embody the special and vulnerable landscapes that deserve special and careful management of natural features and recreation within them.

National Parks are devalued by the widespread conversion of State forest, catering for a wide range of recreational use to parks and reserves with their restrictions on recreation.

Our sport took advantage of the high standard of state forest roads required for timber extraction. That is largely why 75% of rallies in Victoria are conducted in the area encompassed by this proposal. It is that critical to our future.

The state forest road network will inevitably decline with the cessation of timber harvesting. That will be bad enough, but the creation of this giant forest national park, will kill our sport in Victoria.

## **FOREST ACCESS**

Car rallies are generally considered incompatible with National Parks, where the aim is conservation of natural flora, fauna and landscape values, and passive recreation is encouraged. Parts of the route of car rallies have been permitted in National Parks, in more remote areas where the impact on other park users is minimal, and Parks Victoria staff are more accommodating.

We require all competitions to have closed roads for obvious safety reasons which means we are generally restricted to State Forests. We have seen the

transfer of a number of State Forests into National Parks which is severely limiting the number of events we can run as most foresters don't like to run more than two events per year in their designated area.

A similar process has been adopted in NSW and the ACT, but the difference is that they have access to the pine plantation roads whereas we do not – our plantations are owned by Hancocks who do not allow use of their roads, so without State Forests, we have nothing.

## **RALLY COMPLIANCE**

To conduct an event, the rally club must provide a team with recognised accreditation who would start the necessary groundwork about 12 months out. This involves liaison with all the stakeholders – foresters, CFA, police, the local shire, every landowner along the proposed route, and others.

We operate within a highly regulated space in which we readily comply to ensure all stakeholders are comfortable with the outcome – if people are left feeling disenfranchised we won't be invited back.

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

We doubt any group of people are more welcomed into a rural community than the rally fraternity. Rally people love the bush and treat it with respect, along with the communities we visit.

If 100 vehicles are entered into an event, this equates to at least 400 people comprised of the competing crew and their service crew. Add to this the 300 - 400 volunteers required to run the service park, control points in the forest, spectator points, etc...

The financial benefit this has on the local community is substantial, and not limited to fuel, food and accommodation. It's the unforeseen contribution:-

Hiring the shire hall, hiring the local sportsground for a service park and facilities with the money going to the local sporting clubs, the Lions club or Rotary running a food van, the CFA manning the refuel zones, etc..

We don't need others to do a lot of these tasks, but we like to inject as much financial support as possible which strengthens these relationships.

For example, after the devastating bushfires which claimed so many lives in Marysville, a traditional rally venue, we purchased a food van to be shared across all community groups as a means to raise funds and recover, and were the first people to get back in there to run an event, for the same reason.

We have a good relationship with the various foresters, involved in the planning of which roads we can or can't use, after which we get in there and remove fallen trees and fix damaged roads – they love it. As most roads are ex logging roads, once the loggers leave, the maintenance stops – repairing these roads assists in bushfire management.

## **CLUB MEMBERSHIP**

Like any recreational club, we are a microcosm of society.

For most members, the majority who volunteer but do not compete themselves, this is their tribe and the main focal point of their lives. I like to say that we are the biggest Mens Shed going around - but not restricted to men!

We are gender diverse, with a roughly equal split of men and women, we welcome LGBTIQ people, disabled people, those on society's fringe, young or old, and those with mental health issues. The cessation of rallying would leave many of these people feeling isolated and without a social network.

## **In Conclusion**

We don't sit in our city house or apartment feeling good that the forest is locked up. We get out there deep in the forest and enjoy it for all its values including extracting maximum value from the road network participating in our exacting and exciting sport. The Great Forest National Park proposal is not motivated by the best interests for all the community, particularly those that actually get out in the forest.

Thanking you