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VW Amarok test track

From the President



With the recent release of the final VEAC report covering the Central West Investigation, there has been commentary reflecting a broad range of opinions as to the proposals contained in the report. Unfortunately, consistent with the world we live in, there has also been a considerable amount of miss information and the accompanying keyboard warrior reaction. What is disappointing is that much of this angst has been generated and encouraged by the so-called celebrity faction. Interstaters who are more interested in their own agenda, for their own personal gain, rather than the interests of all Victorian bush users, including Victorian Four Wheel Drivers.

Member four wheel drive clubs, making up the Association, Four Wheel Drive Victoria, have for some three decades been collaborating closely with Government and Land Managers, helping with keeping tracks open along with access, defining tourist routes, clean up the bush programmes, track classification, and camp host, amongst other volunteer activities. As part of the Ministerial Advisory Committee, the Association is very proud to be working with all stake holders representing the interest of the four wheel drive community.

Along with a number of other community groups, including Bushwalking Victoria and Prospectors and Miners Association of Victoria, Four Wheel Drive Victoria has been an active member of the Community Reference Group, contributing to this review and report undertaken by VEAC.

Balancing the pressure on Public Land with the population growth not just in Melbourne, but in Victoria in general, along-side that of recreational and associated tourism users is no mean feat. However nowhere in the report is it recommending that car touring, including four wheel driving, on formed roads and tracks open to the public, be curtailed. Four Wheel Drive Victoria has ensured that the Committee acknowledges and recognises that four wheel driving is a legitimate pursuit, bringing benefit not just to participants

but the communities which they visit.

However, with the privilege of being able to pursue our recreation, comes the responsibility that accompanies it. The Tread Lightly and Code of Conduct commitment. Tracks are closed for a number of reasons, whether it be safety, seasonal, fire damage, water catchment protection. In all cases Four Wheel Drive Victoria is involved and a party to the process, and consequently tracks do get reopened when appropriate. Illegally accessing closed tracks is unacceptable and serves no one's interests, and Four Wheel Drive Victoria continues to promote and support the "dob in a hoon" programme. Parks are there for the whole community to enjoy, with the focus on Healthy Parks, Healthy People.

The Association continues to look at ways to further its communication with our Clubs and their members. To this end we will be inviting all our members to subscribe to our regular email news update. More details to follow and will be shared on Facebook and with Club Executives.

**Michael J. Martin,
President**

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Four Wheel Drive Tracks Not Under Threat in Western Victorian Forests

Four Wheel Drive Victoria is the peak body representing over 90 affiliated 4WD clubs and their families and represents the interests of all four wheel drivers in Victoria.

There has been much speculation and miss-information being communicated by some recreational interest groups and so called celebrity spokespersons stating that four wheel drive tracks will be closed if the proposal to change the status of some State Forests into National Parks is approved by the State Government. This is incorrect and track closures are not being proposed by the VEAC Central West Investigation Report. There is no mention in the report of changing access to four wheel drive tracks in any of the areas affected by this report.

Some recreational activities such as deer hunting, prospecting and mining, horse riding, dog walking and collecting fire wood will be affected or stopped by the proposed changes, but to make statements that four wheel drive access to tracks will be closed is false and misleading.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria is very active in ensuring that four wheel drivers will continue to access the tracks in Lerderderg State Forest, Wombat State Forest, Cobaw State Forest and the Pyrenees Ranges and other areas included in the VEAC report.

Four Wheel Drive Victoria has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DELWP and Parks Victoria where we must be consulted with if there are any tracks that are to be considered for change of access. There are strict criteria that must be followed by all parties if a track status change is being considered and Four Wheel Drive Victoria will always work with the Land Managers to ensure tracks are kept open to the public.

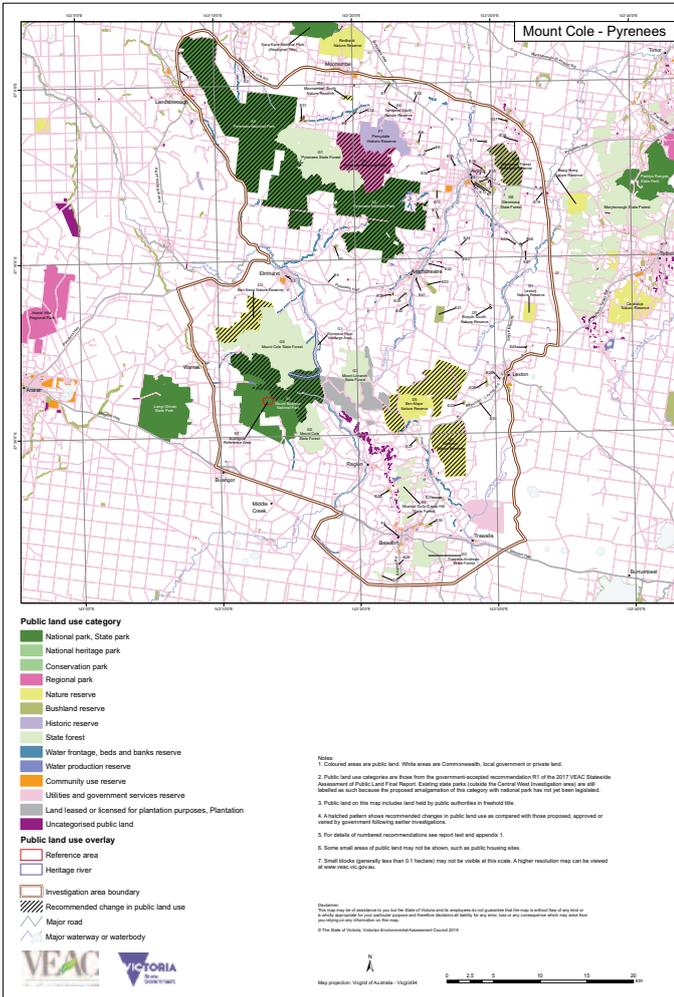
We have proven that by building strong consultative relationships with the State Government and Land Managers and working with them with volunteer projects such as track clearing and clean up the bush programs as well as our MOU we have maintained and built our track network which has become the envy of other states who don't have

the access to four wheel drive tracks that we have in Victoria. Since 1975 Four Wheel Drive Victoria has strived to keep continued access to our tracks for all Victorians.

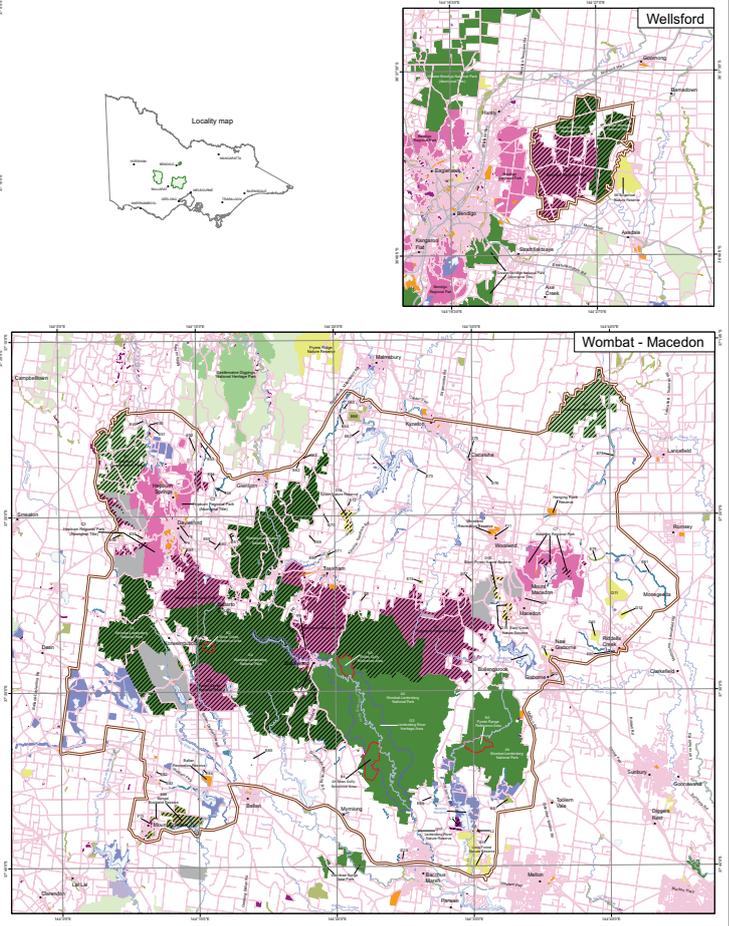
Four Wheel Drive Victoria affiliated clubs and their members adhere to the Tread Lightly principles of responsible, low environmental impact four wheel driving and camping.

Our mantra is "Driving in a sustainable environment." Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

Website www.fwdvictoria.org.au



Map A: Final recommendations for public land use in the Central West Investigation area



CHAINSAW COURSE



FWDV Chainsaw Course at TLCCV, 2019

Three of the main reasons our club chooses to run a chainsaw course is....

1: So our members can legally volunteer alongside Parks Victoria and other Land Managers to help with track clearing and other National Park and State Park programs that only allow this nationally accredited certificate.

2: For members to be able to help at working bees on our own TLCCV club property when chainsaws are required for firewood collection or track clearing. And most important of all.....

3: Personal Safety for our members.... **with chain speeds as high as 100km per hour, chainsaws have a tendency to react violently when cutting timber and may cause the operator to lose control, resulting in a severe injury.**

My name is Sharyn McGregor, I am the Education Officer of the Toyota Land Cruiser Club of Victoria. It was an easy decision to go through Four Wheel Drive Victoria's (FWDV) RTO to run this accredited chainsaw course for our 4WD club. There is simply no reason to re-invent the wheel, to go searching elsewhere or price shopping for a course that may not even qualify for our requirements.

The process was easy with FWDV.....

We put in a request for the accredited course to be run on our club's property, a date was agreed upon, the course was advertised within our club, which filled very quickly, participants details were sent to FWDV and everyone received their training packs and course details. I touched base with the trainers that had been allocated to us and confirmed camping and facilities at the club property, and that an area had been set aside for the course with plenty of timber on the ground to be used for training.

Before we knew it, the big weekend had arrived. Everyone was there early to set up camp and then head down to the clubroom for the Friday night theory to begin as planned. For the next few hours it was heads down and bums on seats while the trainers presented a slideshow and worked through the learner guide with our members.

Saturday morning the old dinner triangle chimed loudly through the campsite as a 15 minute pre start warning for everyone to be at the clubroom for an 8:00am start for training. Our instructors, Ian and David then promptly inspected everyone's safety gear and chainsaws to make sure they all met Australian safety standards before moving on to

the maintenance and chain sharpening part of the day, and by mid-morning the whole property was humming with the roar of chainsaws.

Over the weekend everyone spent time during the day mastering their chain sharpening between learning and practicing different stance and cutting techniques. The instructors kept a watchful eye over everyone all weekend, making sure each person was competent in the safe and correct use of their equipment. As the hours passed by, the piles of fresh cut firewood grew in size. (The hidden bonus of this course, being this firewood that would benefit all





the members of our club who came up and accessed the TLCCV property over the winter months).

By the end of the weekend, everyone was extremely happy with their achievements and what they had learnt through the course. The instructors were fantastic and we will have no hesitation in repeating this course again next year with yet another lot of keen members.

Regards,

Sharyn McGregor
TLCCV

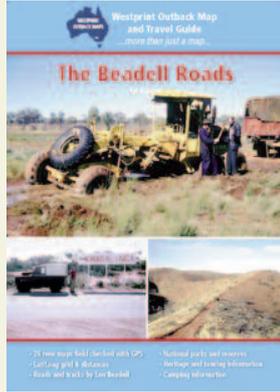


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Idlers 4x4 members join with Blaze Aid to lend a hand at Bunyip fire restoration works

Bunyip Blaze Aid

Bunyip Blaze Aid—20th-24th May

Attendees: Barry Jaquier (Coordinator), Alastair Grigg, Geoff & Maree Pontin, Bob & Wendy Kent, Ian Hughes, Buzz & Coral Bayley, Reg & Thais Venn, Brian Morris.

Blaze Aid is very well run and staffed by volunteers who give up their time and energies to assist local farmers who have had their properties devastated by the recent bush fires. They provide all the equipment required for just about any task and allocate jobs each day depending on numbers. There is no government funding to provide the massive amount of equipment required, so Blaze Aid survives on general public donations and corporate backing from companies and individuals like Dick Smith and Lindsay Fox. One trailer and its equipment costs in the vicinity of \$30,000!

A band of 12 Idlers arrived at the camp area on the Bunyip Recreation Reserve and were pleasantly surprised to have powered sites available, although not all of us needed that option. We had full use of the facilities including hot showers, toilets and the club rooms where we were given breakfast each morning by a fabulous group of ladies working in the kitchen. Nothing was too much trouble and the food included bacon, eggs, cereals, toast, fruit and more. They also

set out all the requirements for our lunch, which each volunteer would make and take out in the field. Fresh rolls, ham, cheese, lettuce and all the good ingredients we needed were available. Each night, we wandered across the train line to the Bunyip Hall and there we were treated to a delightful meal supplied by local groups like the Longwarry Netball Club or Bunyip Rotary, amongst others, who take turns providing the food and working the kitchen. It was great to be able to just wander in after a good day's work and not worry about cooking our own meals, and it's really amazing to see these local communities pitching in to help rebuild what they've lost. It certainly

gives you a sense of what brings a community together.

Its one thing to read about the damage in the papers or hear about it on the news but actually seeing what has been lost is another thing altogether. Even in large open pastures, the fire took hold and burnt homes, sheds, haystacks and livestock. Around the perimeters is where you'll find the gum trees and it's these which reduced the fencing to blackened ash as they literally exploded in flames. An estimated 600km of post and wire fencing needs to be replaced and at this stage, approximately 90km has been completed, so there's a lot more work yet to be done.





Blaze Aid has about a dozen fully equipped trailers on site and each morning, crews of up to 8 would set out to different locations. In the week we were there, they had about 30 volunteers in total but the numbers change as people come and go, giving up 1,2, 3 or more days at a time to help out. Some had even been there for a couple of months and every offer of help is gratefully taken up.

The work can be easy or arduous but everyone is advised to work at their own pace and never do any task which is beyond their ability. Interestingly, most of the workers would blend easily in to an Idlers meeting, being retired or semi retired. Some were even local farmers

whose property had escaped the fires. The work itself involved a variety of tasks like laying out fencing wire, hammering in staples, removing obstructions, digging post holes, ramming new posts and hanging gates. One of the side benefits we got from the trip was learning new skills as we received instruction from the men and women who were our team leaders. I now know how to properly build a post and wire fence for example, which is something I'd had no idea about prior to attending.

In the end, we'd come back to camp each day a little tired and weary, hanging out for a beer at our own happy hour. But the satisfaction of seeing the result of our work really made it all worthwhile. Looking along the straight line of a newly completed fence put a

smile on a few faces as we congratulated ourselves on a job well done.

But the real benefit came in another form. To see the uplifting reaction of the farmers who have no other means of rebuilding their properties is something special. They are so grateful for the help and often bring out cakes for morning tea or even lunch in some cases, just to say thanks. Many aren't insured for fence damage due to the prohibitive premiums, so they rely heavily on organisations like Blaze Aid to get their lives back on track. And I'm glad we as Idlers can do our bit, however small, to assist that cause. As a line on the bottom of the certificates we each were given says, "Not just rebuilding fences, but helping rebuild lives".

Ian Hughes



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A pub with ~~no~~ beer!

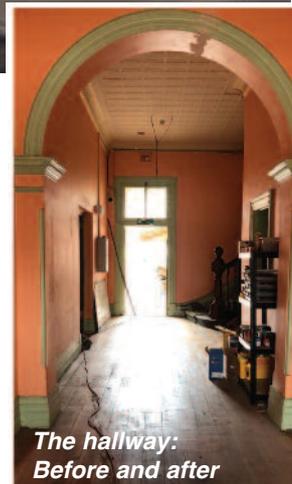
Four Wheel Drive Victoria encourages members to support our struggling regional communities and take a break on our travels in places we would possibly just drive through on our journeys. A Great Place To Stop - The Royal Hotel at Sea Lake

There were works on the hotel that needed to be complied with as soon as possible and the shareholders got on with the job of undertaking what would end up being a major renovation. Over the next 6 months the Royal Hotel transformed from an ugly duckling to a beautiful swan.

On the 7th June 2019 the Royal Hotel was proudly re-opened to the public with a grand opening weekend of celebrations. We are very proud of our business and what it means to the community.

At the end of June 2017 the last operating pub in Sea Lake closed its doors. Sea Lake had no pub! A magnificent building was left idly boarded up in the middle of the main street of the town. Then, word spread in October 2018 that the hotel was going to be auctioned and a group of locals started to have a look around to see what could be done to resurrect the old pub and bring it back to life. Auction was scheduled for November 2018 and the group put their hands in their own pockets to buy back the pub for the community. There was a couple of bidders but it was never known what their intention was for the Royal Hotel. In the end the group of about 20 locals (mainly local farmers) and ex-pats purchased the hotel at the auction and the Sea Lake Hotel Pty Ltd was formed. Over the course of a few months more investors came on board and the company transferred to a co-operative to accommodate the growing interest. At the moment we have 41 shareholders. Most of the shareholders are local community members who are passionate about Sea Lake and ensuring the continued viability of the town. Along with the locals we have some ex-pats who still have a strong connection to the community through family or business connections.

As soon as the ink was dry (within a week) the call went out to the Sea Lake community to join the investors for a working bee to clean it up. Over 80 people turned up with trucks, trailers, tools, brooms and brushes to remove all the rubbish that had built up over the time that it had been left wanting. It was truly an amazing effort. Some people could not afford to contribute financially to the purchase of the pub but their work at working bees was their contribution. The spirit of the Sea Lake community to restore the hotel was inspirational and encouraging.



The hallway: Before and after



The Royal Hotel Sea Lake is the only place in town where you can Drink, Eat and Sleep. We are a beautifully restored hotel in the heart of Victoria's wheat belt region. We are more than just a pub! The main bar and sports bar have beer on tap with pool tables and a juke box for entertainment. Local sporting photos adorn the walls of the sports bar recognizing our links and affiliations with the sporting clubs in town. We have 10 renovated queen size rooms with split systems and ceiling fans in each room. Tastefully decorated with brand new bed and fresh linen for the comfort of our visitors.

The Juke Restaurant services caters to an a-la-carte menu or our customers can sample the bar menu. We offer high quality and great meals which is a bit of a rarity in a small country town.

Outdoor areas include our beer garden and the renovated balcony. It is truly a lovely place now.

Our business has only been opened for a month. We have been busy advertising on social media outlets, Facebook and Instagram and have received a lot of custom from people visiting our pages. We have also advertised in local and area media and developed a website royalhotelsealake.com.au

We have been truly overwhelmed by the support that we have received from the local community but especially passing trade. Over the past weekend for example all of our accommodation was booked out for the three days. We now are averaging 5-6 rooms per night during the week and the weekend is fully booked!

Our restaurant is exceptionally well supported too. The chef has been run off his feet and is rapt with the support received.