

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Mr Graeme Barwick

**Date received:** 30/08/2012

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RECEIVED

30 AUG 2012

GPSC's

GENERAL PURPOSE STANDING COMMITTEE NO. 5

HON. ROBERT BROWN MLC.

DEAR SIR,

I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO FURTHER ADD TO YOUR INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

FROM MY EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN REDGUM FORESTS FOR OVER 30 YEARS I BELIEVE THAT VERY FEW TOURISTS ARE ACTUALLY ATTRACTED TO REDGUM FORESTS BUT MOST ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN THE ACTIVITIES WHICH CAN TAKE PLACE AT THE MURRAY RIVER. THE ONLY PEOPLE SEEN ON A REGULAR BASIS MORE THAN A MILE FROM THE RIVER WERE HUNTERS. I BELIEVE THAT IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE FORESTS COULD BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT HAVING MADE NATIONAL PARKS AND WITHOUT DISADVANTAGING SO MANY PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES.

THE MILLAWA AND BARMAN FORESTS ARE IN REALITY THE SAME FOREST IN WHICH THE MURRAY RIVER, WHICH HAPPENS TO BE THE STATE BORDER, RUNS THROUGH THE CENTRE. LAND STATUS AND MANAGEMENT

OF ONE WILL IN SOME CASES EFFECT THE OTHER. INTRODUCED PLANTS AND NOXIOUS WEEDS CAN SPREAD FROM ONE TO THE OTHER VIA HUMAN ACTIVITY, WIND, BIRDS, AND PARTICULARLY FLOODING. PEST ANIMALS IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES MAY CROSS THE RIVER. BUSHFIRES HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO JUMP THE RIVER ON A NUMBER OF OCCASSIONS.

AFTER EUROPEAN OCCUPATION OF AUSTRALIA DOMESTIC STOCK GRAZING STARTED IN MILLAWA AND BARMAN FORESTS BEFORE BUSHFIRE SUPPRESSION OCCURRED AND BEFORE ABORIGINAL BURNING CEASED. GRAZING THEN CONTINUED IN MOST OF THE FORESTS UNTIL NATIONAL PARKS WERE CREATED. WITHOUT GRAZING OR LARGE SCALE FUEL REDUCTION BURNING AND COLLECTION OR BURNING OF NATURALLY FALLEN ~~limbs~~ LIMBS IT IS LIKELY THAT FUEL LOADS WILL BUILD UP TO BE THE HIGHEST SINCE EUROPEAN OCCUPATION OF AUSTRALIA. AS BARMAN - MILLAWA FORESTS NOW CONTAIN NEARLY AS MANY SPECIES OF INTRODUCED FLORA AS NATIVE FLORA AND THE INTRODUCED FLORA BURN FAR MORE READILY, AND THE TREE COVERAGE IS NOW FAR DENSER THAN IT WAS 100 YEARS AGO THESE FORESTS AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES MAY SOON FACE A FIRE DANGER THAT IS UNPRECEDENTED. BETWEEN 1972 AND 1987, WHEN STATE PARKS WERE MADE, 67 FIRES BURNT A TOTAL AREA OF 1195 HA. IN BARMAN FOREST. THE LARGEST FIRE BURNT ABOUT 200 HA. AND 50 OF



THE FIRES COVERED 10 HA. OR LESS. SINCE THE CREATION OF STATE PARKS IN 1987 WE HAVE SEEN THE DISASTEROUS FIRE IN TOP ISLAND STATE PARK IN 2006 WHICH BURNT AROUND 800 HA. (STRANGELY THIS FIRE OCCURRED DURING THE VEAC INVESTIGATION INTO VICTORIAN REDGUM FORESTS BUT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE VEAC NEVER BOTHERED TO INSPECT THIS FIRE. WELL PERHAPS IGNORANCE IS BLISS AND VEAC DIDN'T WANT TO SEE ANYTHING THAT DIDN'T FIT THEIR PRECONCEIVED PLAN.) IN EARLY 2012 TWO SEPARATE FIRES BURNT 44 HA. AND 56 HA. IN BARMAN NATIONAL PARK THAT FAR EXCEEDED THE PRE-STATE AND NATIONAL PARK NORMAL FIRE SIZE OF 10 HA. OR LESS. THE RECENT FIRES OCCURRED DURING MILD WEATHER CONDITIONS AND IN A YEAR OF SIGNIFICANT FLOODING. THERE SEEMS TO BE A TREND FOR FIRES TO BECOME LARGER AND LESS CONTROLLABLE UNDER STATE AND NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT. TRACK CLOSURES WHICH OFTEN COME WITH NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT AND LOSS OF TRACKS MADE BY THE TIMBER INDUSTRY OFTEN MAKE ACCESSING BOTH FIRES AND WATER SUPPLIES DIFFICULT AND SLOWER.

AS REDGUM TREES ARE EXTREMELY HEAT SENSITIVE FUEL REDUCTION BURNS IN REDGUM FORESTS SEEM TO BE DIFFICULT TO CONDUCT, EXPENSIVE AND TIME CONSUMING IN DENSELY TIMBERED AREAS. HOWEVER COOL BURNING MAY BE USEFUL FOR USE IN SPARSELY TIMBERED AREAS IF LOW INTENSITY FIRE IS USED AS OTHER FLORA MAY



BE SENSITIVE TO HIGHER INTENSITY FIRE. FUEL REDUCTION BURNS OFTEN CAUSE DAMAGE TO TREES, PARTICULARLY OLD HOLLOW TREES, AND WILL SOMETIMES CAUSE REDGUM TREES TO BECOME STRESSED OR DIE. THERE IS ALSO NO WAY OF KNOWING HOW MANY SPECIES OF FLORA AND FAUNA INDIGENOUS AND NATURAL BURNING MAY HAVE MADE EXTINCT. FUEL REDUCTION BURNS GENERALLY SEEM BETTER SUITED TO OTHER FOREST TYPES WHERE TREES ARE LESS HEAT SENSITIVE. WEATHER CONDITIONS INCLUDING REGULAR FLOODING MAKES COOL BURNING ON A LARGE SCALE IMPRACTICAL IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

REDGUM TREES SIMPLY WILL NOT LIVE FOR EVER EVEN IF LOGGING IS STOPPED AND LARGE OLD TREES WILL NEED TO BE REPLACED AT SOME STAGE IN YEARS TO COME. OLD HOLLOW TREES ARE THE FIRST TO BE LOST IN BUSHFIRES AND FUEL REDUCTION BURNING. BECAUSE FORESTRY PRACTICES IN EARLIER TIMES WERE SOLELY CONCERNED WITH TIMBER PRODUCTION MANY HABITAT AND LARGE OLD TREES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED. MANY OF THE REMAINING TREES ARE IN POOR HEALTH AND ARE CONTINUALLY BREAKING OFF AT THE TRUNK AND FALLING OVER. WITH LOGGING STOPPED AND LARGE GROUPS OF SMALLER DIAMETER TREES ~~WILL~~ GROWING IN MANY PLACES IT WOULD BE LIKELY THAT GROUPS OF SMALL DIAMETER TREES WILL EVENTUALLY TAKE OVER THE WHOLE FOREST. LARGE AREAS THAT WERE MOIRA GRASS



PLAINS 40 OR 50 YEARS AGO IN DRY TIMES AND OPEN LALES OF WATER DURING PERIODS OF FLOODING ARE NOW COVERED IN 40 OR 50 FEET HIGH TREES. THIS PROCESS HAS BEEN ONGOING THROUGHTOUT MY LIFETIME AND MOST PROBABLY HAS BEEN HAPPENING FOR 100 YEARS OR MORE. ELDERLY BARMAN CATTLEMEN OFTEN SPEAK OF AND SHOW PHOTOS OF ONE TREE PLAIN WHERE ONLY A SINGLE TREE EXISTED ON A LARGE MOIRA GRASS PLAIN. THAT PLAIN WOULD NOW BE MORE APPROPRIATELY CALLED MILLIONS OF TREES PLAIN. IT IS LIKELY THAT BEFORE RIVER REGULATION A SECOND FLOOD WOULD DROWN MANY SMALL REDGUM SEEDLINGS BEFORE THEY COULD BECOME ESTABLISHED AND ONLY A FEW WOULD SURVIVE. IT IS ALSO LIKELY THAT BEFORE BUSHFIRES WERE SUPRESSED THAT LOW INTENSITY FIRES WOULD REGULARLY BURN ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE BURNING SOME AREAS AND LEAVING OTHERS. IT IS THOUGHT THAT MOST AREAS IN THESE FORESTS WOULD LIKELY HAVE BEEN BURNT ONCE EVERY FIVE YEARS. THIS WOULD ALSO DESTROY MANY SMALL TREES WHILE LEAVING RANDOM TREES ALIVE. IT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO CONDUCT LARGE SCALE LOW INTENSITY BURNING IN THESE FORESTS AS THE FUEL LOADS ARE SO HIGH AND THE TREES TO THICK. MANY STANDS OF SMALLER DIAMETER TREES ARE IN POOR HEALTH AND FEW IF ANY WOULD CONTINUE TO GROW. TREES IN THICK GROUPS ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY TO BE ATTACKED BY



INSECTS. TREES GROWN CLOSE TOGETHER TEND TO GROW LONG TRUNKS AND HAVE VERY FEW LIMBS AND ARE OF LITTLE USE FOR HABITAT TREES. THINNING STANDS OF SMALLER DIAMETER TREES BY MECHANICAL MEANS WOULD MAKE GAPS IN WHICH NEW TREES MORE SUITABLE FOR HABITAT COULD GROW. IT WOULD ALSO ALLOW REMAINING TREES TO GROW TO LARGER DIAMETERS MORE SUITABLE FOR HABITAT OR TIMBER PRODUCTION AS THEY COULD MAKE MORE USE OF AVAILABLE NUTRIENTS AND WATER AND SHOULD GROW FASTER. THINNING OPERATIONS WOULD ALSO PRODUCE SOME MILLABLE TIMBER AND A STEADY AND SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY OF FIREWOOD WHICH IS AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE TO MANY PEOPLE ON LOW INCOMES OR WITHOUT ACCESS TO NATURAL GAS. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT SOME SMALL TOWNS AND MANY FARMERS WILL EVER BE CONNECTED TO NATURAL GAS. MANY PEOPLE PURCHASE FIREWOOD FROM COMMERCIAL CUTTERS AND HAVE NO WAY OF COLLECTING THEIR OWN. FIREWOOD IS SO SHORT IN NORTHERN VICTORIA AND THE RIVERINA THAT PARK MANAGERS ARE COMPLAINING THAT FIREWOOD IS BEING CONSTANTLY STOLEN FROM PUBLIC LAND. REMOVING FIREWOOD ILLEGALLY FROM ALONG CREEK AND RIVER FRONTAGES AND ROADSIDES AS WELL AS FARM PADDOCKS IS NEITHER DESIRABLE OR SUSTAINABLE. TREE FELLING BY INEXPERIENCED PEOPLE CAN ALSO BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS. IT SEEMS HONEST, HARD WORKING PEOPLE



ARE BEING FORCED TO BECOME COMMON CRIMINALS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE WARMTH AND COOK FOOD FOR THEIR FAMILIES BECAUSE GOVERNMENTS HAVE FAILED TO PROVIDE BASIC RESOURCES TO THESE COMMUNITIES BEFORE CREATING NATIONAL PARKS. SOME PEOPLE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SPACE TO STORE ENOUGH FIREWOOD FOR A FULL WINTER OR TO ALLOW GREEN WOOD TO BE ~~SOR~~ STORED UNTIL DRY. THERE IS SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH FIREWOOD AVAILABLE AND SUPPLIES ARE NOT COPING WITH DEMAND.

THINNING HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN REDGUM FORESTS FOR YEARS AND DURING THE 1890-1900 DEPRESSION GANGS OF MEN WERE EMPLOYED TO THIN THE 1870-1880 REGROWTH. BY 1928 MORE THAN 16,800 HA. OF REDGUM FOREST HAD BEEN THINNED OR RINGBARKED. LARGER TREES IN EARLIER TIMES THAT WERE UNSUITABLE FOR SAWMILLING WERE RINGBARKED TO IMPROVE GROWTH OF SAWLOG TREES. SIMILAR WORK AGAIN TOOK PLACE THROUGHOUT THE 1930-1940 DEPRESSION. IT IS LIKELY SOME THINNING WORKS HAS TAKEN PLACE ON A SMALLER SCALE EVER SINCE. DURING THE 30 YEARS I WORKED IN BARMAN FORESTS SOME THINNING WORKS SEEMED TO BE TAKING PLACE EVERY YEAR BY FORESTRY DEPARTMENT STAFF AND TREES USED TO PRODUCE FENCING MATERIALS, LANDSCAPING TIMBER AND EVEN RAILWAY SLEEPERS THINNED SOMEWHAT LARGER TREES FROM DENSE STANDS TO ALLOW THE REMAINING TREES



SPACE TO GROW. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT BARMAN-MILLAWA FORESTS HAVE NEEDED THINNING SINCE AROUND 1890 AND TO SIMPLY LOCK THEM UP AND LEAVE THEM MAY HAVE DISASTEROUS RESULTS.

THE VEAC REPORT INTO REDGUM FORESTS IN VICTORIA PREDICTED THAT CREATING NATIONAL PARKS WOULD CAUSE INTERGENERATIONAL WELFARE DEPENDENCY IN SOME SMALL COMMUNITIES. THEY ALSO PREDICTED THERE WOULD BE MORE TOURISTS BUT UNFORTUNATELY THEY WERE WRONG AND THERE ARE FAR LESS. BANS ON HUNTING, SHOOTING AND DOGS HAVE MADE MANY PEOPLE RELUCTANT TO VISIT REDGUM PARKS. A SURVEY BY PARKS VICTORIA IN THE 1990'S FOUND OVER 50% OF CAMPER'S IN REDGUM PARKS HAD DOGS. A PRIVATE SURVEY IN BARMAN FOREST JUST PRIOR TO THE CREATION OF NATIONAL PARKS FOUND THE NUMBER TO BE NEARER TO 80%.

IT SEEMS FROM A REPORT IN THE WEEKLY TIMES THAT THE DEVASTATION TO THE COMMUNITIES AROUND BALRANALD CAUSED WHEN YANGA STATION WAS BOUGHT BY BOB CARR'S LABOR GOVERNMENT IN 2005 TO ENHANCE ITS GREEN CREDENTIALS MAY BE WORSE THAN FIRST THOUGHT. MORE THAN 100 WORKERS LOST THEIR JOBS AS THEY WERE NOT NEEDED IN THE 76,000 HA NEW NATIONAL PARK. THEN THE REDGUM TIMBER INDUSTRY HAD TO ALSO CLOSE



COSTING ANOTHER 100 JOBS. BOB CARR CLAIMED THE NEW PARK WOULD SOON ATTRACT 50,000 VISITORS A YEAR, WHAT NONSENSE! THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMS THAT THERE ARE NOW 17,000 VISITORS A YEAR BUT LOCALS CLAIM THESE FIGURES ARE NONSENSE AND THERE ARE ONLY AROUND 7,000. CLEARLY THESE REDGUM NATIONAL PARKS ARE FAILING TO ATTRACT VISITORS AND THE MORE PARKS THERE ARE THE WORSE IT WILL LIKELY BECOME. THE COMMUNITIES THAT SURROUND REDGUM PARKS ARE SUFFERING BOTH FINANCIALLY AND SOCIALLY.

INCREASES IN THE AMOUNT OF ENVIRONMENTAL WATER MAY BE WORRYING IF IT IS NOT CORRECTLY MANAGED. FLOODING DURING WARMER MONTHS CAN SERIOUSLY DAMAGE REDGUM ~~TREES~~ TREES AND MAY HAVE HAD AN EQUALLY DAMAGING EFFECT ON TREES IN SOME AREAS AS LACK OF WATER HAS HAD IN OTHERS. AS THE MURRAY RIVER CHANNEL HAS VERY LIMITED CAPACITY THROUGH THE BARMAN - MILLAWA FORESTS ANY ATTEMPTS TO INCREASE ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS WOULD NEED TO BE CAREFULLY PLANNED AND MONITORED. INCREASES IN ENVIRONMENTAL FLOWS MAY ALSO LEAD TO GREAT INCREASES IN THE NUMBERS OF EUROPEAN CARP. WETLANDS NEED TO DRY UP OCCASSIONALLY TO PROPERLY FUNCTION AND FORTUNATELY THIS HELPS CONTROL CARP NUMBERS. RECENT FLOODING OVER



THE LAST 2 OR 3 YEARS HAS SEEN HUGE INCREASES IN CARP NUMBERS AND IF WETLANDS FAIL TO DRY OUT WITH INCREASED FLOWS THEN THE DAMAGE DONE BY EXTRA CARP MAY WELL OUTWEIGH THE BENEFITS OF EXTRA WATER. IN ONE SPAWNING, A FEMALE CARP CAN LAY 30 000 EGGS. IF CONDITIONS ARE SUITABLE, THEY CAN SPAWN A NUMBER OF TIMES IN A SEASON. CARP REACH BREEDING MATURITY IN JUST 2 YEARS AND COULD SOON OUTNUMBER NATIVE FISH WHICH BREED MUCH SLOWER AND IN LESS NUMBERS. IF WETLANDS REMAIN FULL FOR 3 YEARS OR MORE THEN RIVERS FLOOD IT IS LIKELY MILLIONS OF CARP WILL BE RETURNED TO THE RIVER SYSTEMS. IN THE LATE 1970'S AND 1980'S THE HUGE NUMBERS OF EUROPEAN CARP HAD REMOVED MOST OF THE VEGETATION FROM THE WATERWAYS THEY HAD INVADED. EVEN LARGE VEGETATION LIKE CUMBUNGI HAD ALMOST VANISHED FROM STREAMS AND SWAMPS. SOME IMPROVEMENT HAD TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE MID 1990'S AS CARP NUMBERS DECREASED UP UNTIL RECENT FLOODS.

WHEN BLACKWATER KILLED MILLIONS OF NATIVE FISH, CRAYFISH, YABBIES AND SHRIMP DURING THE FIRST FLOOD AFTER THE LONG DROUGHT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES WERE QUICK TO BLAME A BUILD UP OF BARK AND LEAVES IN FLOODED REDGUM FORESTS. HOWEVER THE FOLLOWING YEAR DURING ANOTHER LARGE FLOOD FISH WERE AGAIN KILLED BY BLACKWATER.



AND CLEARLY THIS TIME THERE WAS NO BUILD UP OF BARK AND LEAVES DUE TO YEARS OF DROUGHT. WHILE THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT BARK AND LEAVES CONTRIBUTE TO BLACKWATER EVENTS I SUSPECT THAT FLOODED INTRODUCED GRASSES MAY WELL BE THE CAUSE OF MUCH OF THE BLACKWATER THAT KILLS FISH AND THE SITUATION IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY WORSE AS CATTLE ARE BEING REMOVED FROM MORE FORESTS AND STREAMSIDES. MANY NATIVE PLANTS THAT GREW IN FREQUENTLY FLOODED AREAS WERE NOT KILLED BY FLOODING AND DID NOT CONTRIBUTE TO BLACKWATER BUT THEY ARE SLOWLY BEING REPLACED BY INTRODUCED SPECIES IN MANY PLACES.

THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S 'INDEX OF WETLAND CONDITION 2009-10: STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT OF VICTORIA'S HIGH VALUE WETLANDS' REPORT WAS RELEASED AT THE START OF AUGUST 2012. ALMOST 600 VICTORIAN WETLANDS WERE ASSESSED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT DURING 2009 AND 2010. THE TWO INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNISED RAMSAR-LISTED WETLAND SITES IN THE BARMAN AND GUNBOWER FORESTS WERE FOUND TO BE IN OVERALL 'GOOD' CONDITION. OBVIOUSLY THIS WAS DISPUTE SUFFERING FROM MANY YEARS OF DROUGHT JUST PRIOR TO THESE ASSESSMENTS. THE 'GOOD' CONDITION OF THESE



WETLANDS WAS A FAR CRY FROM THE CLAIMS BEING MADE BY THE VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL AND ENVIRONMENT GROUPS DURING THE VICTORIAN RIVER REDGUM FORESTS INVESTIGATION. YOU MUST WONDER WHY IT HAS TAKEN SO LONG TO RELEASE THIS REPORT. WAS IT SIMPLY TOO EMBARRASSING FOR FORMER VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENT MINISTER GAVIN JENNINGS TO RELEASE THIS REPORT SO SOON AFTER HIS YEAR PANEL HAD CLAIMED NATIONAL PARKS WERE NEEDED TO SAVE THESE WETLANDS AND FORESTS THAT YEAR AND ENVIRONMENT GROUPS CLAIMED WERE ENDANGERED, DEAD OR DYING? WAS IT EVEN MORE EMBARRASSING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTER THAT LOCAL PEOPLE HAD CLAIMED ALL ALONG THAT THESE WETLANDS WERE BEING PROPERLY MANAGED UNDER THE RAMSAR SYSTEM AND HAD A REPORT PREPARED TO SUPPORT THEIR CLAIMS? PERHAPS THE VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENT MINISTER HAD SIMPLY HAD THIS REPORT SUPPRESSED AS A FAVOUR TO FORMER NSW PREMIER NATHAN REES WHO HAD THE NRC REPORT UNDERWAY AND NEEDED TO CREATE NSW REDGUM PARKS TO SECURE GREEN PREFERENCE VOTES. THIS REPORT DID NOT SEEM TO SUIT VEAC'S OR GAVIN JENNINGS AGENDA AND IT CERTAINLY WOULDN'T HAVE FITTED NATHAN REES' PLANS AND IT IS FAR FROM SURPRISING THAT IT HAS REMAINED BURIED



IN SOME DSE EMPLOYEES' DESK UNTIL RECENTLY.

REDGUM FORESTS ARE EXTREMELY COMPLEX SYSTEMS THAT HAVE EXISTED FOR OVER 150 YEARS IN A RADICALLY ALTERED ENVIRONMENT. HUMAN INVOLVEMENT, PARTICULARLY RIVER REGULATION, TIMBER HARVESTING, AND THE SUPPRESSION OF BUSHFIRE, HAS ALTERED THEM ~~BEYOND~~ BEYOND RECOGNITION. TO THINK YOU COULD SUDDENLY LOCK THEM UP AND LEAVE THEM WITHOUT A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF MANAGEMENT AND EXPECT THEM TO RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL STATE OR MANAGE THEMSELVES IS TOTALLY REDICULOUS AND CAN ONLY END IN DISASTER.

I HAVE INCLUDED A LETTER SENT TO THE WEEKLY TIMES IN ~~REP~~ RESPONSE TO AN EARLIER ARTICLE ON THE FAILING YANGA NATIONAL PARK. THIS LETTER ALMOST PERFECTLY POINTS OUT THE PROBLEMS REDGUM NATIONAL PARKS HAVE ATTRACTING TOURISTS. THEY ARE TOO FAR AWAY FROM MAJOR POPULATION CENTRES TO CONSTANTLY ATTRACT DAY VISITORS. THERE ARE VERY FEW PEOPLE INTERESTED IN THE FORESTS THEMSELVES BUT MOST ARE ONLY ATTRACTED TO THE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT THE RIVERS THAT RUN THROUGH THEM. THE ONLY PEOPLE THAT USED THE FORESTS THEMSELVES FOR RECREATION IN LARGE NUMBERS WERE HUNTERS AND SHOOTERS BUT THEY



WERE BANNED FROM THE FORESTS WHEN THEY BECAME NATIONAL PARKS. THERE ARE NO SPECTACULAR WILD FLOWERS TO SEE IN REDGUM FORESTS. THERE ARE NO GREAT FACILITIES. THE BANNING OF DOGS HAS CHASED VISITORS AWAY IN DROVES. THE VICTORIAN REDGUM FOREST INVESTIGATION FOUND CAMPFIRE WERE FOUND TO BE VERY POPULAR WITH CAMPER AND ANY RESTRICTIONS MAY WELL EFFECT VISITORS NUMBERS. THE ROADS ARE OFTEN BARELY PASSABLE TO NORMAL CARS AND THE PARKS OFTEN FLOODED AND CLOSED FOR MONTHS. THERE IS NO DOUBT THESE AREAS HAVE LESS POTENTIAL TO ATTRACT VISITORS AS NATIONAL PARKS THAN THEY DID AS STATE FORESTS. THE MORE REDGUM PARKS THERE ARE THE WORSE THE SITUATION IS LIKELY TO BECOME.

YOURS SINCERELY

GRAEME BARWICK

## Lovely spot passed over

**WE** VISITED beautiful Yanga National Park to do some wildlife photography last month.

We stayed at the immaculate and well-managed Bahrwald Caravan Park for four nights. We visited the Yanga home-see and woolshed and did not see any other visitors, which is a great pity, as they are fantastic. Each afternoon the caravan park filled with new arrivals and the next morning they all departed, obviously not interested in what the area has to offer.

Being on the Sturt Highway, the main Sydney to Adelaide route, nobody was interested in anything but passing through overnight. Despite Yanga being a lovely place to visit, its location being equally distant from Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne is a real disadvantage as far as visitor numbers are concerned. Also it is quite similar to the nearby Willandra and Kinchega national parks. Bahrwald gave us the impression of being a very friendly, clean, tidy country town with great civic pride. Hopefully things will pick up for the town and its residents in the near future.

Keith and Judy  
Humphreys,  
Mornington