

STATEMENT

23 November 2013

MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN INSPECT WONNANGATTA WITH ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

This week a delegation of Mountain Cattlemen gathered overnight at the high country's iconic Wonnangatta Station to meet with and again press the case for a return to high country grazing. They met with Victorian Minister for Environment and Climate Change, the Hon. Ryan Smith MP and Member of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Philip Davis MP.

While at the historic station the two state Members of Parliament took the opportunity to tour the Wonnangatta Valley and inspect the valley's open flats and surrounding dense forest while considering the growing fuel load and potential for bushfire throughout the valley and the high country beyond.

President of the Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV) Charlie Lovick said that it was a huge mistake by the former state government to stop grazing in Wonnangatta. At the time of the decision the MCAV foresaw that the move would be a disaster for the land.

"Since the decision to stop grazing, Wonnangatta has grown into a fire trap. The Valley is now tinder dry with metre high grass and infested with invasive species such as blackberries, briars and St John's Wort which adversely affect native plants and local biodiversity," Mr Lovick said.

"Any mid-summer fire would burn with such intensity that everything in the fire's path would be destroyed.

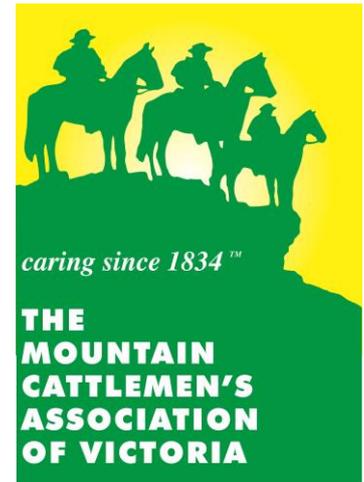
"It is the MCAV's position that the valley, as previously managed during the heyday of Wonnangatta Station, should be managed through a combination of cool burning and grazing. This combination of activities would once again bring the valley back to life.

"This was the state of the valley and surrounding high country under indigenous land management and later when in the care of the cattlemen."

"If this concept was implemented once again, Wonnangatta Valley would gradually become far less prone to intense wildfire and more attractive to visitors," Mr Lovick concluded.

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