

MEDIA RELEASE – 18 March 2015

BANNING CATTLE MAKES NO SENSE - MOUNTAIN CATTLEMEN

At a rational level, banning cattle grazing in national parks in Victoria does not make any sense.

At a political level, it is obvious that the Mountain Cattlemen have been a thorn in Labor's side since the Nunawading by-election in 1985. As a result, the Government has decided to bury them. For more than 30 years the Cattlemen have kept promoting the value of alpine grazing and the value of their culture and heritage to Australia, and yet Labor has been determined to destroy both. It is political payback, writ large.

The Andrews Government is hiding behind "science". However they are misrepresenting what the science actually says, because only a very small amount of scientific work on the relationship between alpine grazing and fuel has been completed. What has been looked at was carried out in a very small area of the huge Alpine National Park, and is far from complete. It has been described in a report as "tricky and misleading" The Wonnangatta grazing trial was cancelled before any results could be obtained.

The downside and long term ramifications of this proposed Legislation are profound.

The bill bans any future science being conducted with cattle in National Parks. How can any Government ban any potential scientific opportunity and what a dangerous precedent this sets?

Throughout the world, cattle grazing are used by authorities in alpine areas and national parks to manage the land. Overseas, low land farmers move their cattle to the higher areas in summer and their culture and heritage is protected by law and strongly celebrated in local villages*

A side issue, but one that will be important to future generations, is that this Legislation will prevent film and documentary makers from creating authentic reconstructions of high country and historic pioneering events involving cattle. The two films "The Man from Snowy River" would not have been able to be made if this legislation existed when they were made.

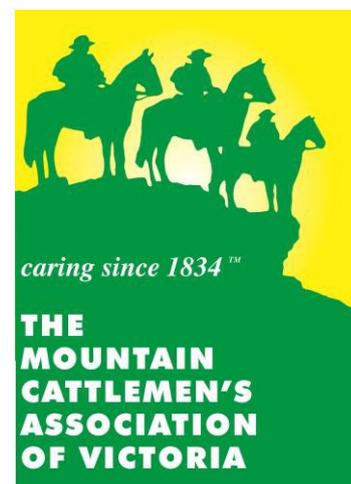
If this legislation is passed in Victoria, a travesty will be finally complete. It is not the cattle that are ruining the alpine environment, it is poor management going back to the demise of the Forest Commission in the 1980's which has seen fuel loads increase dramatically and feral animals and plants run wild. The intimate knowledge of the land possessed by early cattlemen and professional foresters has been ignored and the result is a disaster for the High Country. The cattlemen's families' connection to the land has been trashed.

Alpine cattle grazing has become a political fight that has gone beyond all reasonable sense, while the thousands of deer munch on happily in the Alpine National Park without challenge. What hypocrisy!

More information

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* Transhumance and Biodiversity in European Mountains, Edited by: R.G.H. Bunce, M. Pérez-Soba, R.H.G. Jongman, A. Gómez Sal, F. Herzog and I. Austad



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