

Dear Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board

Thank you for the opportunity to comment about the proposed changes to the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks.

My name is David Kleesh and I have spent 35 plus years enjoying the bush between St Arnaud and Redbank. My main interest has been in mapping much of the mining activity in this region, metal detecting, and generally spending quality time in nature. I love the bush and want to keep enjoying the time I spend there. My prospecting activity improves my health and wellbeing. I first started going to Stuart Mill because my Grand mother lived there. We spent many wonderful times fishing, rabbiting and collecting firewood from peoples property to keep granny warm during winter. I have also done some volunteer work at the Aboriginal Children's Home in Bombaderry NSW.

I am very concerned about the proposed overlay change(1 area) including the Log Gate Rd, Cherry Tree Creek Rd, Victoria Gully Rd and 80 Acres Tk area that is being proposed to restrict prospecting. I am also concerned about the areas north of Stuart Mill where much of the following information also applies.

1. The proposed area south of Stuart Mill will restrict from the prospecting community about half of the prospective zone in this region because, for our metal detecting, we need shallow alluvial deposits. This area is where the majority of this type of ground exists. The other ground that is available to us in this area is often not worth prospecting because there may be very little gold there.
2. In all my time (hundreds of hours) in the bush in this region, both north and south of Stuart Mill, I have never seen an Aboriginal person out in the bush, let alone doing any type of surveying or trying to discover whether or not there are any Aboriginal historic cultural or heritage sites in the area. Parks Vic Inglewood and the St Arnaud visitor information centre do not know of any Aboriginal walking or guided tours that people can go on or any Aboriginal cultural or heritage sites in the area. The Dja Dja Wurrung office themselves know of very few, if any, Aboriginal cultural, heritage, scar trees or middens in this area. I was also told that there have been very few if any studies of Aboriginal sites done in the Kara Kara National Park area. I was also told that they hope in the future some of these studies may be done. If this ever will happen we do not know. It would be logical that before any land is restricted from prospecting, these studies be conducted and on the basis of the evidence found, that (in consultation with other stakeholders) these sites (if any exist) be protected for current and future generations. It is not appropriate to restrict prospecting because at the moment we do not know if these areas contain any significant Aboriginal historic, cultural or heritage sites.
3. As a prospector, I am interested in gold. My understanding about aboriginal sites is limited, but things like scar trees, artifact scatters, shell middens, native ovens or burial sites would not contain metal. I use a metal detector and so my machine would never detect any of these sites. It does not detect wood or crystals or stones. My machine detects metal. I have no interest in disturbing any aboriginal culturally important site. If anything, I would love to see them appropriately preserved so that I could learn more about Aboriginal culture and history.

4. As part of our gold prospecting with metal detectors, we take kilograms of toxic lead out of the bush each year. Are non metal detectorist people aware of this? We help clean up the environment. As part of our hobby we wave the metal detector coil over the ground and when we hear a noise, dig a small hole, retrieve the target and fill the hole back in.

5. My concern is the “ Proposed Overlay Changes(the little blue box) at the bottom of the Map KK2”. It says “ Proposed changes to protect Aboriginal cultural and natural heritage and restrict prospecting.” At the moment there is very little if any “Aboriginal cultural or natural heritage” known to exist in this area. This is what I was told by the Dja Dja Wurrung, and they should know, because they are the mob of this region. So how do we know what we are protecting? There may not even be any “Aboriginal cultural or natural heritage” in the area. Prospecting should not be restricted in the Kara Kara National park because it is people like me, gaining health and wellbeing benefits, respecting the environment and enjoying Australia’s beautiful great out doors that go prospecting, and we do not know if any Aboriginal cultural or heritage sites even exist in the area.

Regards

David Kleesh

Note: Personal Contact details redacted for on-line publishing.