

Country Alliance

RURAL – REGIONAL – RECREATIONAL

D a n n y L e e

Your Candidate for the
Upper House Northern Victoria Region



Web. www.countryalliance.org.au

Media Statement:

CA Candidates Say No To New National Parks On The Murray

Country Alliance Candidates Danny Lee and Fred Goodwin have expressed deep concerns at the suggestions by the Victorian Government that they are conducting a study (VEAC) into the creation of National Parks at Gunbower Island and the Barmah State Forest, claiming it will protect the Red Gum forests of the area from desecration and put a halt to the increasing salinity in the Murray River.

These areas both support sustainable timber industries which have been in operation for over one hundred years. The creation of National Parks in the Red Gum forests will close down the timber industry, which is a major contributor to the regional economy. The flow on effects from this will be multiple job losses and the demise of small rural towns like Koondrook. According to official Government figures on the salinity levels of the Murray River, there has been a steady reduction in salinity levels for the past twenty years, with the result that the Murray now has the lowest levels since the mid nineteenth eighties.

At present both Gunbower Island and Barmah State forest are multiple use areas supporting other industries such as dairy farming, cattle grazing, bee keeping and tourism. Recreational uses like camping, fishing, horse trail riding, hiking, hunting, four wheel driving and motorcycling are activities which are enjoyed by tens of thousands of locals and visitors alike. The collection of firewood from the forest floor by locals has been a recognized practice here since white settlement. Severe restrictions to all of these things will occur if National Parks are created. The impact to the regional economies will be enormous.

There is recognition of the ancient and historical link to these areas by the Yorta Yorta people, who have a significant parcel of the Barmah forest placed under their control, and have had their cultural heritage sites identified and protected. The Yorta Yorta are an integral part of this region and co-exist harmoniously with all other forest users.

There is no evidence to suggest that any of these industries or activities are having a harmful effect on the Red Gum forests. In fact there is overwhelming evidence in the form of historical records and early settlement photographs, to show that these areas have, and are, being very well managed by existing industries and users, and will be sustainable for generations to come.

The main reason for the creation of these parks appears to be a desire to pander to the extreme views of minority groups such as the greens. Country Alliance is worried that as this is an election year, the Government may declare National Parks here without completing their investigations, just to gather Green support to strengthen their election chances.

We do not support the creation of National Parks in this region, but fully support, leaving both Gunbower Island and Barmah State Forest as multiple use areas, incorporating all current industries, recreational uses and cultural heritage recognition, being managed by all of the present stakeholders in cooperation with the existing Government Departments.

Danny Lee
Country Alliance Candidate