

Country Alliance Backs Call for River Red Gum Consultation

Country Alliance today backed the Rivers and Red Gum Environment Alliance call for Environment Minister Gavin Jennings to ensure further public consultations on new data collected by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council [VEAC] in their investigations into Murray River red gum forests.

Spokesman Russell Bate stated that new socio-economic and hydrology data now being collected by VEAC must be subject to the same public consultation and scrutiny as the original VEAC report tabled in July last year.

“The original VEAC report, when subjected to widespread public scrutiny, was found to be seriously flawed in process, data and conclusions” said Mr. Bate. “The subsequent extensions granted to VEAC to address these flaws are ample proof of the inadequacy of the original report and further demonstrates the need to ensure that any further additions or changes to the report are subjected to the same level of scrutiny” he added.

Citing widely reported criticism by leaders of the Latji-Latji and Bangerang communities as proof of the failure of VEAC to ensure proper consultation with the affected indigenous communities and the deficiencies in the draft Paper’s socio-economic data highlighted by the Ernst Young review, Mr. Bate concluded that there was little to guarantee that any further work by VEAC would be free of similar flaws.

“The original report was sufficiently flawed to suggest that it was ideologically driven and written to support a number of pre-determined conclusions” he said. “The affected communities, both indigenous and other are therefore entitled to healthy scepticism and must have an opportunity see what advice VEAC is finally presenting to the Minister”.

“Victorians whose livelihoods, access to public land and recreation are seriously threatened by this report have every right to demand that the Minister ensures proper and open review of any further work completed by the Council”..

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