

# *RRGEA Continued Action*

Dear Members,

As some of you may be aware SSAA (Vic) is part of the Rivers and Red Gum Environmental Alliance (RRGEA).

The RRGEA comprises more than 20 groups and associations and in excess of 100,000 members.

The RRGEA has concerns and arguments against the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) River Red Gum Forest Investigation and Report. The report recommended the establishment of 5 new Parks along the Murray, the extension of many others and the establishment of a plethora of reserves. Cattle grazing will end and timber harvesting will be reduced by 60%.

National Parks, Reserves etc. will all mean a huge reduction in the useability for most sectors of the (real) community. In practice, this means a massive curtailment of hunting, forestry, grazing, horse riding, fishing, four wheel driving, camping, dog walking, etc. and the outlawing of most open fires.

These restrictions will also see the loss of some 23 game reserves (many purchased by hunters). All National Parks and most reserves will exclude hunting. All up, it will amount to the loss of some 1,500kms of water frontage and 1000 sqr kms of hunting area. Estimates are that the cost to the local community (employment, tourism, grazing etc.) could be in the vicinity of \$200 million per annum.

The RRGEA formulated its own assessment and report as an alternative to the VEAC report.

It recommends Ramsar Reserves incorporating general community use. The RRGEA has expended some \$100,000 of its members funds fighting this stupidity to date.

VEAC released their final report in July this year closely followed by the launch of the RRGEA report.

In the interim and to assist the Government in making the right decision for all parties involved, a Ministerial Community Engagement Panel has been formed. The Panel's main task is to make sure that if the VEAC report is accepted, it is implemented with minimal disruption to all communities.

RRGEA has met on several occasions (and will meet again) with the Engagement Panel, which to date has been open to community suggestions on many levels.

At this vital stage of the process our members can and should go all out to have as great an influence as possible.

On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October the RRGEA has organised a Public Land Rights Rally. This will be held in Echuca, meeting at Hopwood Gardens Reserve at 10.45am. Please see the flyer that follows this information.

**The other way to continue the fight against VEAC is to urgently get in contact with your local Member of Parliament. Write to them and tell them to totally reject the VEAC Report. Tell them how the proposals and the outcomes will affect you and your local community. You can find information on this at [www.rrgea.org](http://www.rrgea.org)**