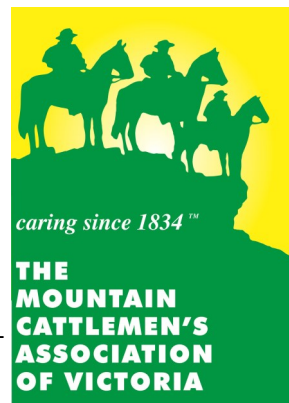


THE YARNER

The official newsletter of the MCAV



In this issue:

- Q & A with Chris Commins
- Children's book update
- We chat to ecological historian, Vic Jurskis
- Details on our planned weekend AGM
- MCAV online photo comp details
- New Next Gen kids t-shirt logo revealed

A word from the president

Normally I start off my Yarners column with some positive news—things we have been doing, stuff going on etc. Unfortunately, this edition that will not be the case.

You will hopefully have heard by now that the October Get Together has been cancelled. This was a really tough call for the MCAV Board to make, but one we know was right. Unless there is a sudden Covid turnaround, and that seems extremely unlikely, the event would not have been allowed to go ahead. This is exactly what we predicted would happen, and is why we made the call—we just wanted to make sure everyone had time to cancel plans made.

Anyway, at this stage the decision will come as no surprise. I don't know of any events that are going to go ahead in October. We have already set a date for 2022—there is a story in the Yarners about this—so please continue to support us and keep the weekend free for next year.

Because of the cancellation we have also had to make a decision on what to do with the 1000 Voice of the Mountains (VOM) books we had printed for the event—quick thank you to Deb Squires for yet again doing a stellar job. VOM's will be posted out as

part of your membership renewals this year—I'm sure you are all looking forward to reading it. Please also support those who chose to support the VOM by advertising.

In other news, you have hopefully noticed the MCAV is really trying to hard to engage the next generation. We love all you long time supporters but the reality is it's the next generation that will take up our cause.

We have tried to do this by increasing our social media presence, doing free Zoom information sessions with schools—I am getting pretty tech savvy on the computer the girls tell me! - and by creating the children's book for primary school kids. We are doing more videos, online forums and trying to encourage 'engagement' with a younger audience.

In line with this we are also going to run a FREE kids horsemanship clinic. It will be held at McCormack Park in Merrijig (where the Get Together was meant to be) and will be a small way we can give back to the next generation. The clinic will be available for those who entered either the Poddies, Cattlekids and Juniors events at the Get Together. We will provide the venue and the food, all you need is to bring your horse.

The clinic will be run by MCAV supporter Matt Maliki, Open Challenge winner and respected dog trainer. The clinic will focus on the kinds of things riders would face in a challenge event—we will have obstacles, pack saddles and will endeavor to have some cattle for a quick cut out. We are unfortunately going to have to do it on a ballot system, as spaces will be limited and we expect the clinic to be popular.

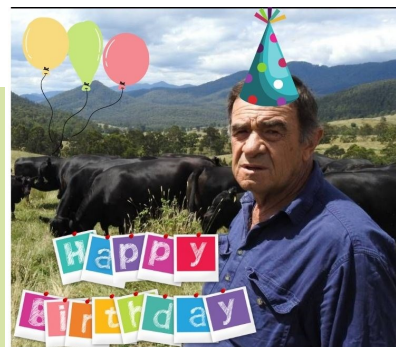
The date of the clinic will be announced when we are clear to go ahead with Covid restrictions. All G2G entrants will be notified with plenty of time to let us know they are keen to be involved.

Thanks again for the support guys—we are only here because of it. -

Bruce

Happy Birthday

The MCAV would like to wish its secretary, Ken Heywood, a HUGE Happy Birthday. Ken has been part of the Board for many, many years and we would be lost without him. **Happy Birthday Ken.**



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New kids logo released

A new logo for our children's t-shirts is the latest line to be released from the Merchandise team.

The logo is a fresh take on our traditional roots, with the original MCAV logo—now more than 40 years old—included in the centre.

The t-shirt is available in sizes 2—16 in pink and navy, with limited stock purchased initially as the team gauges support.

Please remember that the MCAV is a not for profit organisation, so all merchandise purchases go back into helping create a stronger group that cares for the High Country. Email secretary@mca.vic.gov.au if the size you require is not available.



Gippsland water rebate available

If you're a drought-affected farmer living in the East Gippsland and Wellington local government areas, you may be eligible to apply for the On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme.

The \$1.7 million Scheme is funded by the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and Agriculture Victoria, and provides a one-off 25 per cent rebate for the cost of purchase, delivery and/or professional installation of on-farm water infrastructure.

A rebate of up to \$25,000 (GST exclusive) is available per farm business.

The scheme is open until the funds are fully allocated during the 2021–22 financial year.

Apply for the On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme via the [Rural Finance website](#)

AgriFutures Rural Women's Award

The annual AgriFutures Rural Women's Award is now taking applicants, with all female leaders encouraged to apply. The Victorian winner will receive a \$15,000 bursary to bring to life a project that benefits rural industries, businesses or communities, as well as an opportunity to take out the national award and a further \$20,000 in project funding.

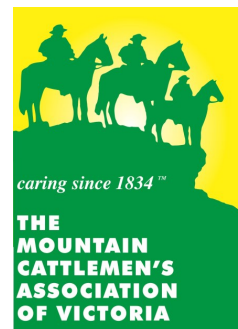
The bursary can be used for activities such as formal education and training courses, establishing business plans or pilot programs, developing or testing new business concepts and publishing books.

Since 2018, the Victorian Rural Women's Network Scholarship Program has supported 44 women from across the state to access leadership development training.

The training program comprises small group sessions over a 12-month period.

Applications for the 2022 AgriFutures Rural Women's Award close on Friday 8 October

For eligibility criteria and info on how to enter visit the Ag Vic website.



MCAV Board & People to contact:

President: Bruce McCormack

Vice President: Ben Treasure

Secretary: Ken Heywood

Past President: Graeme Stoney

Treasurer: John Andrews

Associate Rep: Chris Lewis

Special Projects Officer: Chris Commins

North East Branch reps: Lyric Anderson & Philip Ryder. Emergency: Bruce Treasure

Mansfield Branch reps: Cass & Jack McCormack

Omeo Branch reps: Joe Connley & Darcy Fitzgerald. Emergency: Simon Turner

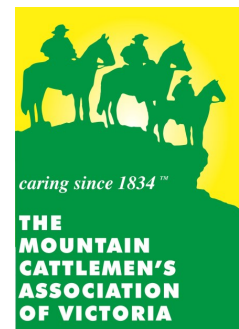
Gippsland Branch reps: Chris Hodge & Rose Faithfull

Office Manager: Rhyl McCormack

Email:

secretary@mca.vic.gov.au

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GET TOGETHER CANCELLED

The 2021 Merrijig Get Together has been cancelled, re-scheduled for October 2022.

"This is not a decision we have come to lightly, but it is one we feel had to be made."

So said Bruce McCormack when announcing the cancellation of the 2021 Merrijig Get Together.

The decision was made at the start of September following a Board meeting, with all in agreement that the then developing Covid outbreak posed too many risks.

"We are absolutely devastated to make this call, but we all felt that it was the best decision. A lot of our ticket holders and supporters come not just from Melbourne but from interstate and we needed to give them plenty of notice," Mr McCormack said.

Now, with 500 plus Covid cases being recorded daily across Victoria, the MCAV Board is confident their call was the right one.

"We debated running the event early next year, because it's been a long time between drinks now. But in the end it was agreed we are best to just stick to our October date and hope that things are better for everyone by then," Mr McCormack said.

The 2022 Get Together will be held at McCormack Park from October 7 to 9. Ticketholders are able to get a full refund on their purchase, but need to notify the office by emailing secretary@mcaav.com.au before the end of October.

"Anyone who decides to not get a refund will automatically have their tickets transferred to the 2022 event," Mr McCormack said.

Weekend AGM for members

In response to the cancellation of the Get Together, the MCAV Board has agreed to hold an 'overnight' AGM in Gippsland.

The plan is to hold the AGM on a Saturday—with a tentative date of November 20 set—with an overnight stay available to those who would like to make a weekend of it.

Although the exact location of the event is yet to be confirmed, the MCAV Board believes a BYO gathering will allow members to enjoy a bit of bush hospitality.

"The plan," Get Together Co-ordinator Cass McCormack explained, "is that this will be our 'non Get Together' Get Together."

"A small, members only weekend where we will bring in a live band and just enjoy a campfire with swags rolled out."

"There won't be toilets or showers provided, and everything will be BYO, so it is completely up to individuals if they would like to make the trip."

The MCAV will make a firm announcement on the AGM weekend closer to the date, pending Covid restrictions easing.

Q & A with Chris Commins

This edition of the Yarner we chat to Chris Commins, who has been the MCAV's Special Projects Officer for more than a decade. Before that he was president, so its fair to say Chris has been involved with the MCAV in one way or another for about as long as the organisation has been around.

What does a Special Projects Officer do?

I follow up on different topics and areas of interest for the MCAV, and I also join a lot of committees and groups where we think the MCAV's voice should be heard. For example, I have a fair bit to do with Firestick programs, so that we as an organisation can both learn and contribute. I also represent the MCAV at Government Inquiries and on different boards etc.

What's it like attending a Government Inquiry and how many have you been to?

I can't remember how many now, but there has been a fair few. The most recent inquiry was on Ecosystem and Biodiversity decline, which the MCAV put forward a submission to. You can read our submission on the website, if anyone is interested.

When I first started attending the inquiries it was a little intimidating, but you get really focused on trying to convey your message and so you forget about the setting and the people present. It can be a very frustrating experience, because you are talking to people about issues they often have no idea about.

Do the people on the Inquiry panel try and trip you up:

Oh yes definitely. There are lots of green supporters and those who don't want to admit fault, either as an individual or as a government. In the Ecosystem Decline Inquiry my focus was the threat of wildfire, and they were very personal, asking about how I personally felt about climate change not as an MCAV member but as an individual. My answer was the climates are changing, they have always changed, but that is not an excuse for bad management. Anytime something major happens its always blamed on climate change. It's a cop out for mismanagement. Their argument is fires burn hotter now than they used to because of climate change – my argument is they can only burn hotter if we give them fuel to burn in the first place.

Does it make a difference?

You can only hope it makes a difference but sometimes you do wonder. There are some presenters (at inquiries) that have no connection to the landscape, but they are polished performers who have their routine down pat and sometimes its hard to go up after them. But then I listen to what they say and just remind myself that the Cattlemen's is one of the only voices of reason and common sense left.

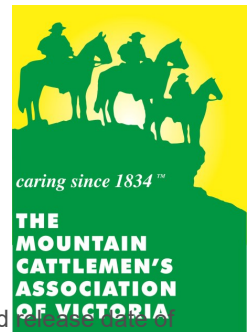
Do you enjoy the role?

It takes up a fair bit of my time, and it does lead to a lot of frustration, but there are a few of us out there working away trying to make a difference – people like John Mulligan for example, beats his head against the brick wall of bureaucracy and at times like that it feels pointless for everyone trying to maintain a line of common sense. But then I remember that if we weren't there no one would represent the logical, sensible approach to fire management and that means we have to be there. So, I guess the long answer is yes, I do enjoy it. Some days more than others.



Chris Commins has been a part of the MCAV Board for decades and is an integral part of our success.

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Children's book update

It is only a matter of weeks before the first ever MCAV children's book will hit the shelves, with an expected November 15.

The book is a realistic look at what Mountain Cattlemen went through during the 2019/200 fires, and is designed to encourage children to talk about bushfire and history.

Last month, the MCAV launched their 'Name this book' competition, sending out packs to 100s of Victorian Primary Schools.

"This has been such an exciting project for us," Office Manager, Rhyll McCormack, said.

"It's the first time we have published a children's book and it has been a learning curve trying to get everything right—making sure the illustrations are eye catching and the text was relatable was just part of the challenge. One of the hardest things has been narrowing down all the title submissions, because we have had some crackers!"

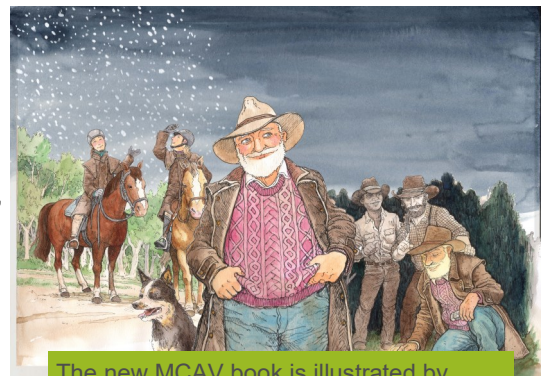
Members have also been encouraged to submit their bushfire photos, with a two page collage to be featured at the back of the book.

"We have some pretty realistic illustrations in the story," Rhyll explained, "Some with dead livestock, for example. But the whole idea is to encourage a conversation with primary school kids about what happens in a bushfire. The photos, which will be at the back, will be part of that."

"We have had 100s of photos submitted and unfortunately can not use them all, so we are running with the images we think will appeal to a young audience—kids hosing down sheds, dogs with fires burning in the background etc."

The book has been funded by a grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs and trade and will be distributed to select primary schools for free.

It will also be available for purchase in the MCAV shop.



The new MCAV book is illustrated by award winning creator, Tim Ide.

**ENTRIES CLOSE
SEPTEMBER 30**

**PHOTO COMP:
\$1000 IN PRIZES**

**CATEGORIES: BATTLING THE ELEMENTS,
COLOURS OF THE BUSH AND HIGH COUNTRY
HISTORY**

MCAV photo comp

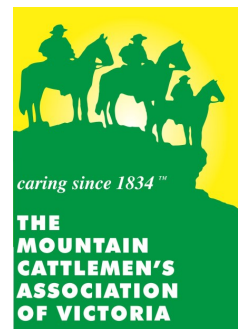
The MCAV is running an online photo comp, striving to give members in Melbourne something to do now the Get Together is cancelled.

There are three categories, with a Senior and Junior Division in each.

Categories are Battling the Elements, Colours of the Bush and High Country History.

All entries can be emailed to secretary@mcaav.com.au.

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Looking to the past

Vic Jurskis believes the secret to our future lies in the past

Vic Jurskis refers to himself as an ecological historian.

There is, of course, much more to him than that – including bush experience, a degree in forestry and scores of scientific papers – but it is his preferred term. He feels that it best encompasses his passion: looking to our past lessons to better manage the future.

Born of Lithuanian parents who escaped Stalin's murderous invasion, Vic is a first generation Australian. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, Vic has passionately embraced the country and its environment. Although he never set out to become a voice for practical bush management, it is nonetheless where Vic has ended up.

Originally, he just wanted to work in forestry – a growth industry in the 1970s, using renewable natural resources. "I came to love the bush as a teenager, when it was mostly grazed and gently burnt and often selectively logged. It was beautiful and clean and safe and diverse. Bushwalking was far more enjoyable than a walk in the park," Vic explained. "Later it was a pleasure to work in the forests and a privilege to make a living from it."



Vic Jurskis an ecological historian, and believes looking to the past is the best way to manage our future.

Mild burning was a routine part of the job. Vic says that everyone carried matches and used them when conditions were right. "We'd often light spots on the way home at the end of the day, just as mountain cattlemen do at the end of the season. We relied on local knowledge and common-sense."

In 1981, when Vic was transferred to Urbenville in northeastern New South Wales, he reckoned he'd found God's country.

But the evolving rise of the green movement was quickly changing the landscape. Academics decided that people didn't belong in the bush. "They portrayed mild burning as a dangerous disturbance that threatens native species - then people came out of the cities looking for a 'tree change' and made it hard for us," Vic said.

"One season, when the first good day arrived for burning I was surveying a track up a long ridge. When I got to the end, I lit spots all the way back to the vehicle and went back to town to tell the boss how nicely the fire was trickling down either side.

"The boss told me I'd have to take a gang out to rake around the fire next day. He showed me an edict from Sydney decreeing that burns had to be surrounded by breaks and finished in a day."

"Admittedly, conditions elsewhere in the state weren't so good. But why should authorities take notice of treechanges rather than local knowledge? Anyway, the fire went out when it reached the creek flats as the sun went down and the humidity went up."

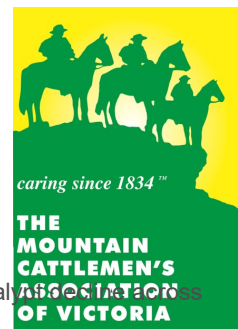
Vic says that was the beginning of the end.

"Burning was easy and safe and fun when we learnt it from our elders in the bush and did it all the time. Now, diverse open country managed by people for tens of thousands of years has turned into dirty, pestilent wilderness choked with homogeneous scrub that explodes into uncontrollable firestorms every time there's a dry season with bad weather. Half the macropods up there at Wallaby Creek are now listed as Threatened Species".

As he continued working in forestry through the decades, Vic documented the changes in the bush.

In 2004 he was awarded a Fellowship by the Joseph William Gottstein Memorial Trust to investigate eucalypt decline, and in 2006 he received an award from Australian Academy of Science to extend his investigations through temperate and tropical

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Australia. In 2010, the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre funded his scientific assessment of eucalyptus in NSW.

"People get the wrong idea about science" Vic said. "They think it's done by academics with computers. But real science starts with observation and thinking - there is no substitute for experience."

"One of my schoolteachers was a graduate of the Sorbonne who worked with Nobel Laureate Marie Curie. She told me that Universities should help you learn how to think for yourself. Nowadays they try to teach kids what to think."

Vic's 'model' is simple; that Australian ecosystems need people. He says palaeology and history show us how Aborigines changed fire regimes and vegetation when they spread across the continent 40,000 years ago. They established a system that depends on gentle burning to recycle nutrients and keep country clean.

A scientific review Vic published together with renowned Western Australian fire experts Roger Underwood AM and Dr. Neil Burrows AFSM, concludes that "people can reinstate resilient, healthy and safe landscapes irrespective of climate change".

It may surprise you to learn that Vic is not a spokesman for the MCAV. He supports grazing because he has observed the benefits - and also the problems where grazing has been removed without reinstating a sustainable fire regime.

"Grazing can substitute for mild burning," he explained. "It can prevent invasion of woody species into grassy ecosystems. Academics see this as a problem because they imagine that invasive scrubs are natural ecosystems. They have wilderness between their ears"

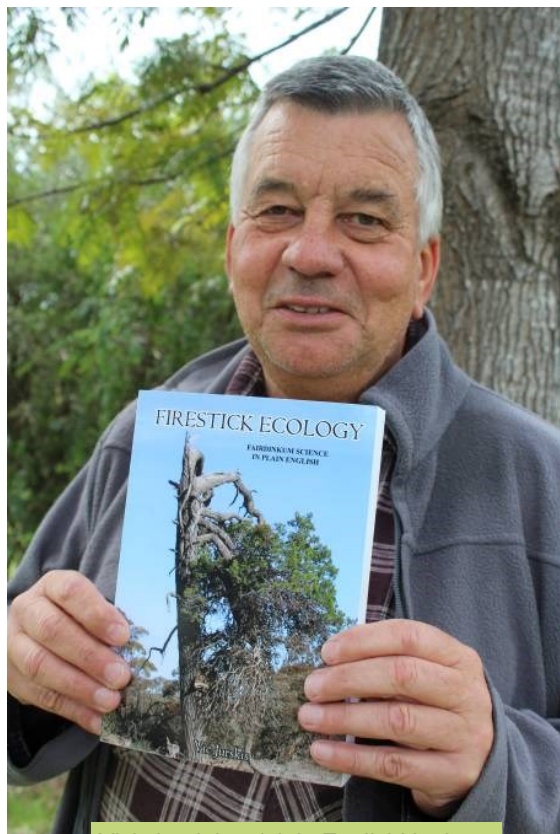
The plains wanderer is a critically endangered bird, which relies on natural grasslands in southeastern Australia. Vic points out that after the NSW Government bought a pastoral holding to conserve this disappearing species they had to continue, in their words, "ecologically sensitive" grazing by sheep to reduce tussocks and maintain the diverse ground layer that the rare bird needs to survive.

Vic's opinion is that fire and grazing are "ecologically analogous". They can both do the same job.

"You can use them together, or in different situations one might be more practicable than the other. But without at least one of the two, things go bad."

Black Saturday and Black Summer showed beyond any doubt that our modern conservation paradigm is fatally flawed. Vic says "Lines on maps and signs in the bush don't protect anything. 'Lock It Up and Let It Burn' is a proven recipe for disaster. We need to make friends with fire."

Vic's books, Firestick Ecology and The Great Koala Scam are available on the MCAV website or by emailing secretary@mcav.com.au.



Vic's book is a 'plain English' look at a complex land management issue

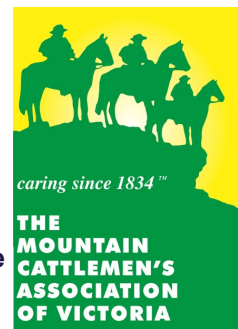
Got a good story to tell ?

We love it when members send in a 'good yarn' for the Yarnar.

If you have something to say, have written a cracker poem or just have a great idea for a story send it to

secretary@mcav.com.au

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Future use and management of Immediate Protection Areas and State forests in eastern Victoria

The MCAV have repeatedly argued that phasing out of Native Timber harvesting is not only irresponsible, but that it will lead to increased fire fuel loads. You can read our original statement on the issue on the MCAV web-site. We encourage all members to sign up to be involved in the consultation process—the more voices of reason the harder it is to ignore. The following is a DELWP press release.

Have your say on the future use and management of State forests in eastern Victoria, including the land status of over 146,000 hectares of Immediate Protection Areas.

Immediate Protection Areas are areas of state forest that were previously available for timber harvesting.

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) will utilise the best available science to identify forest values that need protection.

An Eminent Panel will lead conversations with Traditional Owners and the Victorian community. Karen Cain, current Chief Executive of the Latrobe Valley Authority, will chair the panel.

The panel will provide recommendations and a timeline for the government to reclassify each of the current Immediate Protection Areas, and plan how State forests are managed as native timber harvesting ceases in 2030, with consultation to begin later this year at Mirboo North and Strathbogie.

Engagement for Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland will begin in 2022. This process will also look at the future of all State forests in eastern Victoria.

"We'll be using the outcomes of this consultation process, as well as what you have told us as part of to understand each community's ambitions for Victoria's State forests," Ms Cain said.

Further details of the panel's engagement program are due to be released before consultation begins.



**NEW KIDS
T-SHIRTS \$25**



The Victorian Government has developed the Victorian Forestry Plan to assist the industry as it manages its gradual transition away from native forest harvesting.

The plan established 96,000 hectares of Immediate Protection Areas, now exempt from timber harvesting.

For more information on the Immediate Protection Areas, you can contact DELWP via their website at <https://www.delwp.vic.gov.au/futureforests/working-with-community/contact-us> or email future.forests@delwp.vic.gov.au.

**Our new, Next Gen t-shirts are here.
Head to www.mcav.com.au/shop to
purchase**

