

Chapter 8

Epilogue

Research for this project was largely completed by 1979. Ten years later the Alpine National Park, as we know it today, was created, impacting heavily on the mountain grazing community. In this final chapter I review some key events, and offer some personal thoughts about heritage recognition for snow country grazing.

Creation of the Alpine National Park

Although snow country grazing had been in decline since the 1950s its rate of decay was somewhat slower than the pace of change in public values. That inevitably set up a contest for resources.

When state governments first started to show serious interest in regulating snow country grazing (1930s) their main focus was to protect planned and newly created water storage reservoirs from being clogged up by river-borne sediments. Given enough time all dams will eventually silt up, as soil particles carried in suspension by the rivers and streams feeding them are dropped to the ground when the flows reach still waters – especially behind dam walls. To maximize the operating lifespan of a reservoir the sediment load of the up-stream waters must be minimized, and that means minimizing soil erosion in the catchment. Snow country grazing was seen as a potential threat because livestock eat away the protective vegetative cover of mountain soils, and because graziers were believed to compound this problem with their burning activities. Accordingly, after 1939 burning by graziers was prohibited absolutely, and from the late 1940s maximum stocking limits were introduced for some places. Grazing was also excluded from a handful of highly impacted mountain tops and ridges, and the various ski resorts (for a wider range of reasons). Effectively there was a rebalancing of priorities to accommodate new capital assets (water supply and tourist infrastructure), but no radical change in traditional uses.

The rise of the national parks movement as a political force in the 1970s and 1980s popularised a new vision for the snow country which not everybody could accept: a large area set aside primarily for preserving the natural environment (including all plants & animals indigenous to the region), from which some existing users would be excluded. A huge political divide opened between the park visionaries, and primary industries that were exploiting natural resources of the mountain region – principally timber harvesters, and cattle graziers.

The urgency of the parks movement was sparked by an increasingly rapid expansion of forest logging throughout the mountain region after the second world war. In 1908 when the Forests Department was established, its forest management activities were centred on Crown lands specifically classed as 'reserved forest'. But, as we saw in chapter 5, courtesy of the blanket 'protected forest' proclamation, its domain was extended in a more limited capacity to virtually all the uncommitted (unreserved and not leased) Crown lands throughout the state, and that ultimately put the Department on a collision course with conservationists.

For all practical purposes, the Forests Department had limited capacity to impact the vast uncommitted Crown lands of the alpine region until the late 1960s – but in the 1940s and '50s the foundations for logging across most of the mountain region were laid, and thereafter changes started happening very fast.

The 1939 Royal Commission into forest fires had identified an alarming absence of firefighting responsibility and capacity in the mountain region, particularly in the large expanses of protected forest. To address this lacuna, the state government implemented new firefighting arrangements

that gave the Forests Department clearer and wider responsibilities and obligations.¹ Fire prevention & control in protected forest now unambiguously became its responsibility.

In discharging this responsibility, the Department created a network of fire access jeep tracks throughout the mountain region, which made motor vehicle access possible to much of the snow country. These tracks enabled firefighting personnel and equipment to be quickly deployed to remote areas, should fires break out. They also made it much easier for timber production planning officers to visit the fabulous even-aged stands of tall alpine ash trees, highly valued by the housing construction industry, and assess their harvestable quantity and quality. Naturally occurring stands of alpine ash are located in patches along the edge of the winter snow line. Under a natural regime, they are periodically regenerated, maybe every 100 years or so, by very hot bush fires which destroy the parent stands and leave behind a deep bed of ashes, in which seeds will germinate after being subject to snow cover. In any one patch the trees will be the same age which means they can all be harvested by loggers at the same time; indeed, in order for a harvested stand to re-grow the whole patch of alpine ash must be removed so the site can be appropriately burned. Clear felling of entire stands is highly efficient from a logger's perspective, but creates very ugly scars on the landscape vista, which take years to resolve, and basically exterminates much of the wildlife that was inhabiting the logging coup. It also creates massive soil erosion potential which is difficult to mitigate.

Hence, under the impetus of fire protection the Forests Department acquired, in addition to its longstanding legal right, the practical ability to harvest as much of the mountain forests as it saw fit. That set it on a collision course with nature-loving bushwalkers whose ranks rapidly expanded as the network of fire access tracks and logging roads extended throughout the mountain region, making it increasingly accessible for nature-based recreation. Adventurist walkers and horse riders had been visiting the snow country in small numbers since at least the 1870s, following bridal tracks first used by gold miners and graziers. However, by the late 1960s forestry roads had penetrated the heart of the alpine region, giving loggers access to some of the most remote and pristine alpine ash forests, and simultaneously bringing the same areas within reach of weekend walkers. Many new visitors were uncomfortable with what they found the Forests Department was doing, or planned to do in the region. It quickly became apparent that wherever there was millable timber the loggers would inevitably go, irrespective of other public values. The regrettable clear-felling of alpine ash at Mt Despair, part of a spectacular scenic wilderness at the headwaters of the Wonnangatta River, in the mid 1970s, proved to all who cared that nothing was sacred. It seemed to many that only the creation of a national park in the alpine region could curb extractive forestry over-reach.

There followed a decade of intense investigations and lobbying until eventually, in 1989, the national parks movement got what it wanted: a large and continuous national park extending from Howqua Hills (near Mansfield) to the NSW border where it connects with the Kosciusko National Park.

As it stands today, the Alpine National Park is true to its name: an area of largely alpine and sub-alpine environs, rather than an area that encompasses much of the other characteristic landscapes of the mountain / alpine region. In particular, most of the alpine ash country, so valuable to the timber industry, was excluded from the national park as were vast swathes of lower altitude mixed eucalypt forests which form an integral part of the alpine scenic experience and host different plant and animal communities. Also excluded are three major sub-alpine tablelands: Dargo and Cobungra

¹ Forests Act, 1939

high plains, and Nunniong plateau – all areas with low timber harvesting potential but high water conservation value.

While the national parks movement seemed to be satisfied with the outcome, I often wonder how long it will be before the obvious political compromises, necessary in the 1980s to secure any park at all, become too much for a new generation of conservationists and park enthusiasts to bear. What was delivered in 1989 was a good result given the size and strength of competing land uses at that time, but well short of ideal. The dream of an all-encompassing alpine *region* national park remains unfulfilled but still tantalizingly possible.

Creation of the Alpine National Park did not resolve the issue of cattle grazing in the snow country. For starters, as we have just seen, the park does not include all the tableland snow fields. But beyond that, creation of the park did not automatically terminate grazing activities within the park boundaries. While it was perhaps not seen as logical or desirable, from a nature conservation point of view, to permit grazing to continue there after 1989, there wasn't sufficient political will at that time to end it. An anomalous situation therefore prevailed for the next 16 years in which a large area now dedicated to the management of natural values, including water conservation and protection of native plants and animals, remained subject to an historical land use that was considered inconsistent with those prime values.

Eventually, nature intervened and created circumstances which made it relatively easy for politicians to finally act. Successive wildfires swept through the alpine region in 1998 and 2003 burning most of the licensed grazing areas and making them unsuitable for grazing again for many years. So most graziers were forced to make alternative arrangements for the foreseeable future, and that created an opportunity to make the pause permanent.

In a speech to Parliament in 2005 the Minister for Environment, John Thwaites, outlined the reasons for terminating all grazing in the Alpine National Park, and set out particular transition arrangements – see below.

The 'Alpine National Park [termination of] Grazing' bill, provided that graziers exiting the park would receive an ex-gratia payment to assist them in transitioning to a different mode of business; and for those who wished to continue with bush grazing outside the national park help would be provided to search for alternative opportunities in nearby state forests. But if Parliament voted down the government's proposal, graziers would receive nothing, and because of the fire damage would have no prospect of returning cattle to the park for many years until the snow country vegetation had regenerated, if indeed a future government would permit them to return. Individual graziers were not given the opportunity to accept or reject a financial settlement. Everything hinged on the way Parliament voted – if Parliament voted to end grazing in the park then they would receive compensation; if it didn't they wouldn't.

Parliament did pass the Bill, by a narrow margin and notwithstanding considerable agitation against the deal by the graziers own representative body, the Mountain District Cattlemen's Association. But while their leaders maintained a defiant objection, the money on offer was surely the best bet for many of them in the face of uncertainty to many of their members, and most park graziers inevitably turned their attention to making a living without snow country runs. From that moment snow country grazing was extinguished in a large part of its geographical and spiritual heartland.

But this was not quite the end of the political tussle.² Mountain cattlemen secured support from the state Liberal and National parties which formed government in 2010 and promised to return cattle to the Alpine National Park. However, the new government faced many obstacles, and its attempt to undo the initiatives of 2005 ultimately failed. For a start there was no longer a legal way to issue new grazing tenancies in the National Park, the relevant power having been removed by the 2005 termination of grazing Act. To over-turn this the government needed to have control of the Legislative Council (Upper House of Parliament), which it didn't. Further, in 2008 the Alpine National Park had been added to the Register of the National Estate, a measure which gave the Federal Government's Minister for Environment a role in approving non-compliant land use activities in the Park. So, when the Victorian government attempted to re-introduce small numbers of cattle back into the park via a controversial scientific investigation into the role of cattle in reducing fire risk, that move was promptly struck down by the federal Minister.

Some cattlemen have retained a burning hope of returning livestock to the Alpine National Park, and perhaps one day they will have both the necessary support to over-turn the cessation of grazing Act in the State Parliament, and a sympathetic government in Canberra. But one would have to wonder what the substantive reasons would be for re-introducing cattle to the Park. There are no longer any grazing families who depend on the Park for a livelihood; the activity is often said to have generated less revenue than the costs of its administration, and if reactivated would require significant public funding or implicit subsidies; and it is commonly believed to be detrimental to water conservation and biodiversity values of the snow country within the park. The tenacity of a handful of graziers in not accepting defeat, and their attachment to traditions of a largely by-gone era do not seem enough.

Snow country grazing in State forests

When introducing the bill to end grazing in the park the Minister explained 'we are not banning all alpine grazing, only grazing in the national park'. And indeed, that continues to be the case.

As previously mentioned, three significant sub-alpine tablelands lie outside the current Alpine National Park, as does the high range at the headwaters of the King River across which stockman Bill Bullock guided government botanist Ferdinand Mueller in the early months of 1853. This latter area has probably hosted the longest unbroken chain of annual summer grazing, possibly pre-dating 1850. These four areas collectively contributed around 25 - 30% of livestock grazing the Victorian snow country during the heyday period (1920s – 1940s). The three tablelands were historically amongst the most productive of the snow country rangeland, and so it should be no surprise that they account for almost all the privately owned sub-alpine paddocks (which were sold under the old land settlement legislation).

Some may believe, in a wider context, that termination of grazing in the alpine national park remains something of a job half done. Certainly, the commercial benefits of what remains of the snow country grazing phenomenon (outside the park) accrue to a few direct participants; the costs on the other hand are, by and large, spread out thinly across the wider community in the form of diminished biodiversity, reduced summer stream flows, accumulation of sediments eroded across the catchment, and any implicit government subsidies. One might therefore argue that the intrinsic value for water conservation and biodiversity of sub-alpine tracts outside the national park is little

² <http://theconversation.com/the-alpine-grazing-debate-was-never-about-science-40219>, 'The alpine grazing debate was never about science'

different to that of sub-alpine tracts within the park boundaries, and hence these areas should be afforded equal protection.

However, nature conservation is only part of the picture.

Extract from
Hansard (Victoria), Legislative Assembly, 26 May 2005, p. 1473
NATIONAL PARKS (ALPINE NATIONAL PARK GRAZING) BILL
Second Reading, Mr THWAITES (Minister for Environment)

The National Parks (Alpine National Park Grazing) Bill will amend the National Parks Act 1975 to cease licensed cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park. The bill is an historic one and will make a major contribution to ensuring a sustainable future for what should be one of our finest national parks. ...

The Alpine National Park is Victoria's largest national park. It contains the headwaters of many of our major rivers and streams, diverse natural environments, rare plants and animals, significant wilderness areas, spectacular scenery, interesting historical sites and outstanding recreational opportunities. As part of the Australian Alps, the park is recognised as being of national and international significance and to have world heritage listing potential.

But significant areas of this great park are also currently licensed for cattle grazing. A maximum of 7914 adult-equivalent cattle (where two calves less than 12 months are equivalent to one adult) - or less than half a per cent of Victoria's beef herd - are licensed to graze in the park [both snow country and low country], with the licensed areas covering nearly half the park. There are 59 seven-year licences, most of which expire on 13 August 2005 with 4 expiring on 30 June 2006. There are also 2 annual licences.

Although cattle grazing is currently permitted in the Alpine National Park, it has long been recognised as a damaging activity in Australia's high country ...

The creation of the Alpine National Park in 1989 was a major step in achieving the goal of a world-class national park in the Victorian Alps. Today, more than 15 years on, it is time for us to review the appropriateness of grazing in the park. It is time to acknowledge that cattle grazing is not compatible with the ideals of this great national park, nor is it compatible with the community's desire to better protect our natural environment. If we are serious about giving greater protection to the environment, and to our national parks in particular, cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park cannot continue. We must establish a new direction for the park and afford it the protection that a world-class national park deserves. ...

The decision to cease cattle grazing in the national park has not been taken lightly. The government is very aware of the diverse views on the issue, including the views of those who seek to continue grazing in the park. It respects those views and has taken them into account. However, it would not be in the long-term interests of the park or future generations if, in the face of all the evidence and the government's goal of a sustainable

future for the state, the government did not take this opportunity to cease grazing in the Alpine National Park.

The continuation of grazing in the Alpine National Park does not make environmental or economic sense. Sixty years of research, together with the significant changes seen since removing stock from the higher areas of Kosciuszko National Park and parts of the Victorian Alps decades ago, clearly show that cattle grazing adversely affects water catchment, soil and nature conservation values.

Cattle trample stream banks and fragile moss beds and springs, they threaten the survival of rare plants and animals, and they spread weeds. They reduce what should be magnificent wildflower displays and spoil the amenity of the park for visitors through their cow droppings. This is not what a national park should be. Soil erosion and damage and disturbance in the Alpine regions of Victoria caused by cattle grazing is a potentially threatening process listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. There are at least 25 plant species, 7 animal species and 4 vegetation communities in the park that are considered significantly threatened by cattle grazing. ...

The Alpine National Park is the only high country national park in Australia where livestock grazing is permitted. It ended above the snowline in Kosciuszko National Park nearly 50 years ago and in the whole of that park (except for some stock routes) more than 30 years ago. Furthermore, cattle grazing is currently allowed in five of the Alpine National Park's six wilderness zones. It is incompatible with wilderness objectives, which aim to maximise the extent to which these areas are undisturbed by such activities. Ceasing grazing will give additional protection to these important areas of the park. Importantly, the removal of cattle from the park will allow the rehabilitation of badly damaged moss beds and other sites and will increase the effectiveness of weed and pest animal control without the ongoing threat of cattle damage.

Ongoing grazing does not make economic sense either. The amounts required to be spent on managing the activity, particularly in the aftermath of the 1998 and 2003 fires, can never be recovered from the fees charged. That Parks Victoria has spent some \$2 million over the 5 years 1998-99 to 2003-04 in return for \$88,000 licence fees (excluding GST) highlights the poor economics of this activity and the unacceptable draw on the public purse. These costs do not include the hidden environmental costs to some of our most precious catchments and native flora and fauna.

To continue grazing, but with improved environmental management, would require extensive fencing of streams and moss beds, the provision of alternative watering points and ongoing monitoring of cattle. This would be expensive and would add significantly to the direct costs of managing grazing. It is neither practical nor appropriate in a national park. In addition, the 1998 and 2003 bushfires have affected more than 60 per cent of the park and more than 80 per cent of the area licensed for grazing. Since the 2003 fires there has been very little grazing in the park - last season less than 10 per cent of the maximum allocation (less than 739 adult-equivalent cattle) grazed in the park.

A recent review by [an] independent scientific advisory panel established by Parks Victoria to advise on the issue of grazing following the 2003 fires concluded that grazing should not

return to the burnt areas of the park above 1200 metres, or to severely burnt areas below that level, for at least the next 10 years. The need for change is compelling. Now is the time to establish a new beginning for the Alpine National Park.

Having said that in relation to the park, the government confirms that grazing on public land in the high country will continue in state forest outside the park. There are a considerable number of licences over areas of state forest which allow about 10 000 cattle to graze. These include areas grazed by various park licensees as well as other mountain cattlemen and women. The traditions of high country grazing will continue in these areas.

In making this historic decision, the government is keen to ensure that those affected are supported and that the opportunities that the decision presents for the park and the region are taken up. The government has therefore announced a range of significant initiatives to assist licensees, improve the natural condition of the park, help tourism and local communities, and support high country cultural heritage. I shall now outline these measures.

To assist in the permanent transition from grazing in the park, the government is providing assistance to cattlemen and women to help them adjust their enterprises. There will be a payment calculated at \$100 per adult equivalent (based on the maximum licence allocation) per year for three years, to a maximum total payment of \$100 000 per operation. In this context, an operation is defined as a single licence or set of licences for which there is a common group of licensees with the one nominated contact person. A total of \$1.85 million has been allocated for this purpose over the three years. In addition, some areas of state forest in the general vicinity of the park that are currently unlicensed or may be under allocated may be able to accommodate additional cattle. The Department of Sustainability and Environment will work with licensees to assess areas which licensees may consider to be suitable to their needs.

A recurring issue raised ... was the real concern in the high country communities for better control of weeds and pest animals in the park. It was pointed out that focusing only on cattle overlooked the fact that there are other environmental issues in the park which need tackling. ... The government has listened to those concerns and has allocated \$2.2 million for weed and pest animal control in the national park over the next three years. This will augment the work which has already been occurring as part of the bushfire recovery program. As part of these programs, opportunities may arise for appropriately qualified licensees to participate.

Along with increased weed and pest control programs, there is an urgent need to rehabilitate some of the more damaged sensitive areas of the park, particularly moss beds. Moss beds are some of the most fragile parts of the high country and play a critical role by filtering and regulating the flow of water. A recent study of moss beds on the licensed area of the Bogong High Plains found that most were not in good condition. Their recovery will, in many cases, require active rehabilitation. Works have already commenced in some parts of the high plains as part of the bushfire recovery program. However, as part of post-grazing support measures, an additional \$650,000 will be provided to progress this work over the next three years.

The removal of grazing provides a splendid opportunity for promoting nature-based tourism in the Alpine National Park and boosting regional economies. In conjunction with other tourism features of the region, sustainable nature-based tourism will make a significant and ongoing economic contribution to the region. The removal of cattle will allow the magnificent summer wildflower displays to flourish on the high plains and the park to become more attractive to visitors. Its long-term value to the regional economy will increase.

...

The high country has a varied and interesting history, and cattle grazing in various parts of the Alpine National Park is an important part of that history. To provide a more informative experience for visitors and to complement other tourism initiatives, \$240,000 will be provided for interpretive signage and information at key locations about the history of the high country, including grazing. It is hoped that mountain cattlemen will contribute to this project.

As well, \$60,000 will be made available to help with the maintenance of historic cattlemen's huts by community groups such as the Victorian High Country Huts Association who are actively involved in such activities.

With the cessation of grazing, the government will be working with the New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory governments to seek national heritage listing and then world heritage listing for national parks in the Australian Alps. This has been a long-term goal of the government and, if successful, will make a significant contribution to the long-term economic future of the region.

Heritage Protection?

There is a case for retaining snow country grazing on cultural heritage grounds. Cultural tradition was acknowledged in the Ministers speech in 2005, which heralded the end of grazing in the Alpine National Park, and in the application for National Estate registration. However, what has been offered to date – recognition on National Park information boards, and protection of some of the graziers' refuge huts - hardly seems enough particularly if, in the future, some of the remaining areas of snow country presently classed as state forest were to be incorporated into the park.

Heritage values of snow country grazing include its unique lifestyles, traditions, folk lore, skills, practices, characteristic infrastructure and artifacts, and related historical events and associations. Their relevance to the use and management of nature conservation areas, including national parks, includes: 1/ their contribution to a broader and deeper understanding of the environment and how it is influenced by human activity; and 2/ an additional layer of community interest above and beyond native plants and animals, and scenic landscapes.

Grazing became a targeted negative in the snow country because of its apparent conflicts with water and nature conservation values. However, we must acknowledge the associated environmental impacts, while widespread, were subtle and relatively benign (cf mining, logging, and popular use of off-road recreational vehicles). On the positive side of the ledger, the opportunity the snow country provided in the pre-1940s era for sustaining rural communities in times of economic hardship and drought was vital, and should not be forgotten. Furthermore, the regular cool burning of the bush by graziers, from the late 1850s till the 1920s, arguably mitigated against much hotter and more

destructive wildfires, by significantly reducing fuel load, and it almost certainly tended to maintain the more open forest vista that had been inherited from the indigenous custodians; graziers facilitated, and in fact were often an integral part of early (and later) recreational and tourist activities in the alpine region; and they were, and remain a prime repository of detailed local geographical knowledge. So, while one may not agree with their politics or their ecological perspectives, we do owe them a huge debt of gratitude for their contribution to the wellbeing and popularity of the snow country, and the history and culture of the mountain region. In this regard I think significant, heartfelt heritage recognition is well overdue.

Cultural heritage that can be read about and watched on video is good, but that which can be directly experienced as well adds another layer or dimension of meaning and appreciation. At present the only tangible concessions offered in this regard are protection of some refuge huts built by graziers on land that is now in the national park, and the on-going grazing of snow country outside the park. Neither of these are guaranteed as, for example, continued protection of a hut might be trumped by a higher park management priority; and continued grazing outside the park is contingent on those areas retaining their current designation and management – in other words, if all the snow country presently classed as state forest were to one day be incorporated into an expanded national park, or if graziers decided it is no longer worth their while engaging in bush grazing (as some have done since 1950), that would be the end of it. In my opinion such an outcome would be regrettable, and I look forward to a future heritage program that ensures that snow country grazing continues to be carried out on some scale, in its traditional manner, as a living monument to a pioneering way of life that has contributed so much to the history and culture of the alpine region, the state, and the nation.

The tangible legacy of snow country grazing includes: material artefacts, including refuge huts, homesteads, timber stockyards, bush fences, bridle tracks, and other sites of interest (e.g. burial sites, river crossings, and places where significant structures once stood); and living remains – on-going grazing of cattle, non-indigenous trees and shrubs usually associated with homestead sites, and wild horses descended from escaped saddle stock and herds bred in the mountains for domestic and military service. One can appreciate that national park managers may have some difficulty accepting and accommodating living legacies, but the protection of cultural artefacts which have few, if any, negative implications for flora and fauna should surely be another matter. Whatever the limitations in national parks, the scope for heritage recognition is greatest in state forests and on private land, and it would seem sensible that any future plan for comprehensive heritage recognition cover all three land categories. It would also seem appropriate that graziers (past and present) play a key role in its development and implementation.

In anticipation of a comprehensive heritage initiative, however and whenever that may come about, I offer a few ideas that might go some way towards recognizing in a very real and practical fashion the pioneering efforts and achievements of snow country graziers. Implementing suggestions like these might help cement an enduring understanding of a land-use tradition that has not only impacted our treasured natural ecology, but also add depth and texture to our appreciation of the lives and achievements of our country's pastoral pioneers and the way we understand and value the snow country.

	Suggestions	NP	SF	PP
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1	Protection and regular maintenance of all or most remaining cattlemen's huts, yards and bridle tracks throughout the snow country; reconstructing a selection of those that have been destroyed by fire or need repairing.	X	X	
2	Regular maintenance of all bridle tracks formerly used for movement of livestock to and from the snow country	X		
3	Reconstruction of Wonnangatta station homestead, Mitchell's Creek homestead and possibly other formerly existing buildings of high cultural interest. Most of these sites are already cleared so reconstruction would have minimal impact on existing nature conservation values.	X	X	X
4	Formulation of brumby management strategies which aim to maintain sustainable numbers of wild horses in the mountains, with populations limited by fertility control initiatives and an annual harvest of brumbies, similar to early settler roundups for domestic and earlier army markets	X	X	X
5	Maintain and use traditional trap yards for annual round-ups of Brumbies in excess of agreed sustainable numbers. Support a network of skilled wild horse handlers to look after these brumbies while they are broken-in for the general public and pack horse riding tours to purchase and utilise.			
6	Establish a range of heritage riding and walking tours (with pack horses) to experience bridle paths formerly used by cattle graziers to reach the snow country, and visit historical snow country grazing heritage sites. Ensuring tour guides have a comprehensive range of bush skills and knowledge of how former mountain grazing communities lived.	X	X	X
7	Establishment of a handful of remote access zones, centring on sites of high cultural interest, where access is limited to walkers and horse riders. The aim would be to re-create an authentic sense of the isolation routinely experienced by snow country graziers during the colonial era, before the snow country was accessible by road.	X	X	
8	Encourage and incentivise existing snow country graziers to participate in the planning and provision of tourism services which promote awareness of the history and characteristic life styles and traditions of mountain grazing, and provide opportunities for hands-on experience, including bushcraft and related survival skills	X	X	X
9	Ensure that existing privately owned paddocks in the snow country continue remain in the hands of people who agree to continue using the land for grazing and scientific research to identify a safe level for grazing cattle to continue co-existing with alpine native species and their ecology.			
10	Guarantee the on-going right of graziers to use at least two of the four remaining aforementioned large tracts of winter snow country currently classed as state forest		X	
11	Establishment of an alpine region heritage centre, a place dedicated to the compilation and interpretation of snow country cultural heritage.	?	?	?

NP = National Park, SF = State Forest, PP = Private Property

In 1975 I interviewed Bob Gilder, the last cattleman to own Wonnangatta Station, the remote grazing property which was acquired by the Victorian government for addition to the Alpine National

Park in 1988. He spoke about his dream that access to Wonnangatta be restricted to bushwalkers and cattlemen only. He opposed any improvement of road access to the valley and felt that motorized recreation vehicles blighted what was otherwise a very unique, beautiful and peaceful place. Isolation was a key characteristic of the life of pioneering mountain cattlemen; it forced them to be tough and self-reliant to a degree that is now barely possible to imagine. Today not many places are more than a few hours walk from a road, jeep track or cell phone coverage. Until the 1930s and '40s access to most of the mountains was by bridle track only, and droving cattle there often took two days or more. Re-creating that kind of inaccessibility and isolation for a locality which has deep associations with mountain cattle grazing would be an ideal memorial, and Wonnangatta would be an ideal choice. This need not involve the return of cattle grazing to the area, but it would require road closures and restriction of access to walkers and horse riders so that something approaching an authentic historical degree of isolation was re-created. And it would require the maintenance of historical infrastructure, including the old riding tracks, holding yards, mustering paddocks, huts, gardens, and a faithful reconstruction of the Wonnangatta homestead which was burnt down in the 1950s.



The homestead, Wonnangatta Station, 1935.
Identifier: H2002.51/34, SLV.



Brumbies in a trap yard, near Mt Wellington, c.1913 (Arthur Waugh).
Cattleman Henry Miller on right.



Magnificent in its isolation – Wonnangatta Station, viewed from Mt Darling, (Author, Nov 1977).