

28 July 2015

Lake Boort Development Team
Parks Victoria
PO Box 500
East Melbourne Vic 8002

By email: parkplan@parks.vic.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

LAKE BOORT MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

BWV thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this matter.

Bushwalking Victoria is the peak body for all bushwalkers and bushwalking clubs in Victoria. Founded in 1934, we proactively advocate on behalf of all bushwalkers, contribute to track and conservation activities, provide highly skilled bushwalkers to assist Police with bush search and rescue and support our members.

We aim to deliver *Better Bushwalking for Victoria* and work to inspire more people to walk in natural areas for enjoyment, health, wellbeing and appreciation of the Victorian environment.

Following your call for comment on the Management Plan's development, BWV's Land Management and Environment Consultant, Dr Phil Brotchie, visited Boort and its environs on Saturday 25 July 2015. He inspected both Lake Boort Wildlife Reserve (502ha) and Little Lake Boort (72ha), spoke at considerable length with Paul Haw, co-author, with Margaret Munro, of the impressive *Footprints across the Loddon Plains – A shared history* (Boort Development Incorporated, 2010), and obtained a copy of it for reference purposes. He also collected published material from the Boort Information Centre, and these sources have helped inform this submission.

Dr Brotchie, on the basis of his inspection of the area, his talk with Paul Haw (whose residence, which Dr Brotchie visited, is right beside Lake Boort), and the material he obtained from the Information Centre, has made a number of observations and suggestions about possible development of the Wildlife Reserve.

Dr Brotchie writes:

'Lake Boort, unlike Little Lake Boort, was dry when I visited the area, which is not unusual given that it only fills naturally once in five years, although when it does, it takes two years to dry out. Henry Godfrey settled the Lake Boort area in 1843, and diverted the Loddon River down the Kinypanial Creek into the Lake, drowning the roots of the Lake's Red Gums, so that by the end of the 1850s the flooded trees were dead. The low stumps of these deceased trees remain, and the bed of the dry lake consequently presents a rather unsightly prospect.'

'It occurred to me that as the Red Gums were already dead, and as the Lake is full from time to time anyway, there would be no further environmental damage likely to occur if the Lake bed were permanently flooded, either partially or fully, with both ecological and aesthetic benefits and accordant increased human visitation likely to result from adopting such a course of action, as permanent water in the basin would hide many of the stumps (the Lake floods to a depth of two metres) and attract wading birds and other aquatic wildlife to reinhabit the area.'

'A Coliban Water channel passes between the two lakes, with sluice gates that could be opened to allow water, if pure, to once again flow into the larger lake. If there are arrangements in existence with local farmers for extraction of water for irrigation, it might still be possible within that framework, for environmental water to be channelled into the WR, or for a buyback scheme to be implemented to facilitate that outcome.'

'Flooding of Lake Boort would draw visitors, particularly bird-watchers and photographers, all the year around.'

'There is a well-constructed 3.7km walking track that goes around Little Lake Boort, and it seemed to me that a similar walk around Lake Boort could be constructed, linking into the one encircling Little Lake Boort and providing a combined walk of about 11km, which would pose some challenge for locals and visitors alike. Paul Haw, who we understand, amongst others, is being consulted about Lake Boort's development by Parks Victoria, was attracted to this suggestion. At present there is some track on the western side of the Lake, and, in addition, a vestigial road that appears to go around the rest of the Lake, and these could form the basis for the new track, except that were the Lake to fill, it is likely that significant lengths of the disused road would go under water, so that much new trail may have to be built to obviate that outcome.'

'Given total or partial flooding of Lake Boort's bed - and remember that it was mapped as "swamp" in 1863 (Footprints ..., page 299) - which it patently is not at present, and that it was joined to Little Lake Boort until the early 1920s, it is reasonable to assume that there would be a greater influx of aquatic wildlife than is currently attracted by Little Lake Boort alone. It should be noted that Little Lake Boort hosts yachting, boating, fishing, water-skiing and swimming, not usually considered particularly compatible with nature conservation values. There are also sporting facilities located along the Little Lake's edge, as well as housing on its

northern side. As a consequence, the smaller lake's ability to attract and maintain aquatic fauna, particularly wading birds, has some limitations. The larger lake would be far less affected in that regard.

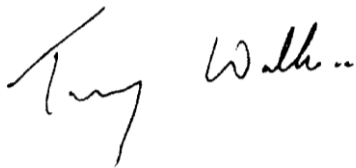
'There is no reason why current pastimes should not continue around Little Lake Boort, but they should not be extended to the larger lake.'

'Lake Boort has an extraordinary concentration of Aboriginal scar trees, as well as other cultural relics, and the preservation of indigenous heritage in the Wildlife Reserve must be a key consideration in whatever development of the larger lake is envisaged. A joint Aboriginal-Parks Victoria management plan is essential if these values are to be properly protected.'

'Associated with Lake Boort developments, I felt that there would need to be very considerable effort put in to publicising its new attractions, both in local and wider media outlets.'

BWV supports Dr Brotchie's suggestions, and hopes that you will give them due consideration in developing the proposed Management Plan for Lake Boort Wildlife Reserve.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tony Walker
President