



Boneseed in the You Yangs in 2004. The situation has only worsened. CSIRO

**SUBMISSION TO**

***Future investment in the  
You Yangs and Serendip  
Sanctuary***

17 April 2025

Contact: Jordan Crook [jordan@vnpa.org.au](mailto:jordan@vnpa.org.au)

**Victorian National Parks Association**

Level 3, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton VIC 3025 • 03 9341 6500 • [vnpa@vnpa.org.au](mailto:vnpa@vnpa.org.au) • [vnpa.org.au](http://vnpa.org.au)

ABN 34 217 717 593

## 1. Executive summary

Thank you for inviting submissions into the Future investment in the You Yangs and Serendip Sanctuary. We only seek to comment on the You Yangs Regional Park.

The Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) is an effective and influential nature conservation organisation.

We work with local communities, scientists and government to advocate for evidence-based policy to safeguard wildlife, habitat and protected areas. We inspire connections with nature through citizen science, activities, action and education for all Victorians.

We've led the creation, oversight and defence of Victoria's natural estate for over 70 years.

The You Yangs Regional Park is an iconic place, loved by millions with its rocky granite boulders meeting the volcanic plains below. The park is vital habitat for local wildlife such as Koala, migratory Swift Parrots and the stunning Brittle Greenhood.

Yet the park has one of the highest densities of weed species Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*) in Australia, which is having a detrimental impact on the biodiversity of the park and reducing bird and plant diversity.

We acknowledge that the park is on the lands of the Wadawurrung people and honour their continuing connection to and caring for Country.

We support Traditional Owner joint-management of parks and public land for conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

### 1.1. Key points

- The You Yangs Regional Park is an iconic place and vital habitat for local wildlife such as Koala, migratory Swift Parrots and the stunning Brittle Greenhood.
- The investment in the You Yangs proposes spending millions of dollars on infrastructure but provides nothing for protecting the environment.
- Boneseed, a devastating weed of national significance, is destroying the You Yangs.
- Parks Victoria is failing to uphold its duty of care to protect our environment.
- The You Yangs Regional Park also needs:
- Interpretive signage throughout
- Wash down facilities at the start of or mountain bike trails to stop spread of *Phytophthora* and weeds
- Plantings to protect key views from the You Yangs that are threatened by big infrastructure projects such as the Barwon Solar Farm

## 2. Discussion

### 2.1. Natural values and obligations neglected in investment

Although funding toward our parks and reserves is welcomed, focus on investing in built infrastructure in preference to the natural environment is leading to the killing of the goose that lays the golden egg.

The You Yangs Regional Park is a special place due to its geological, botanical and biological values, values which have been neglected in the planning of investment into the park.

Visitors from the local region and from abroad visit the park for the chance to see a Koala, beautiful native wild flowers and iconic views.

Instead, they are confronted with walls of invasive species such as Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*), a weed of State and National Significance that is swarming the park and surrounding private land and extinguishing local wildflowers and the plants that wildlife relies on. The population of Boneseed is the one of Australia's densest boneseed infestations.

**No weed management works are planned as part of the \$11 million dollars given to Parks Victoria despite Parks Victoria, as the land manager, having State and Commonwealth obligations to manage Boneseed and other invasive species on their land.**

Parks Victoria must direct funding from the recent investment funds to reducing and removing the impact of invasive species on the park's values. To do otherwise is to neglect not only the many laws and regulations put in place for the protection of our priceless biodiversity but also Parks Victoria's duty as a custodian of this beautiful park.

### 2.2. Natural values galore, funding non-existent

You Yangs Regional Park holds many ecological, botanical and zoological values and is incredibly important biodiversity hotspot.

The park is home to 3 Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) all of which are in decline in the Central Victorian Uplands bioregion.

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (2011)<sup>1</sup> raised the poor condition of native vegetation stating:

*the generally poor condition of remnant native vegetation in the Central Victorian Uplands suggests that there is greater need for extra management effort to arrest further degradation and pro-actively improve condition, particularly in small isolated public land blocks that currently receive little management attention".*

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (2011) Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation Final Report

Table 1:EVCs in the You Yangs Regional Park.

EVC Number	EVC Name	Bioregional Conservation Status
EVC 71	Hills Herb-rich Woodland	Vulnerable
EVC 67	Alluvial Terraces Herb-rich Woodland	Endangered
EVC 72	Granitic Hills Woodland	Depleted

It is unclear why Parks Victoria has not included ecological management of park values into the “revitalisation” of the You Yangs Regional Park and is instead using all the funding on built infrastructure.

Parks Victoria have numerous legislative and regulatory policies that mean it must prioritise ecological management alongside built infrastructure.

### 2.3. Interpretive signage

Increased interpretive signage and park information is needed across the whole park, especially in areas of interest to engage visitors at sites of significance and to maintain visitor behaviours that protect park values.

Interpretive signage will facilitate a deeper visitor experience, deliver an important education experience for visitors, as well as allowing a better understanding of park regulations and the rationale behind them to protect park values, not just in the You Yangs Regional Park but also other areas people may visit in the region.

Interpretive signage should highlight the regional significance of the park, its ecological values such as plants and animals that call the place home, its geological significance, and the mountain biking opportunities. Where safe and appropriate, it should include Traditional Owners connection to the park and their cultural heritage and stories. Signage must be informative and evidence-based, the geological history of the park and

The role of interpretation of park values to visitors is not just important for improving visitor behaviours but also critical to deepening visitors’ appreciation of the park and sparking a greater level of awe and wonder of its values. As Hvenegaard et al. (2009) states “Interpretation provides challenges or opportunities to act on this new sense of respect, benefiting the ecological integrity of national parks and the surrounding environments.”<sup>2</sup>

### 2.4. Biosecurity management in the park

The documents provided by Parks Victoria indicate that a bike wash station will be installed as part of this “revitalisation”, but the provided link does not work or outline what type of washdown station is being provided.

There is a need for wash down stations at trail heads to clean bikes prior to entering the track network to mitigate the risk of the spread of pests and diseases entering the park and spreading.

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<sup>2</sup> Hvenegaard, Glen. Interpretation and Environmental Education.



Mountain bikes have the potential to contribute to the distribution of *Phytophthora cinnamomi*<sup>3</sup> as well as being vectors for the spread of weed seeds and other pathogens. Spores of *Phytophthora* sp. have been detected on mountain bike wheels, with moisture allowing the pathogen to remain alive longer and thus able to spread further into the landscape<sup>4</sup>.

***The spread of Phytophthora is a listed as a Key Threatening Process under the EPBC Act. Dieback caused by the root-rot fungus (Phytophthora cinnamomi)<sup>5</sup>: “The spread of Phytophthora cinnamomi from infected sites into parks and reserves, including roadsides, under the control of a state or local government authority” is a listed Threatening Processes List under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988.***

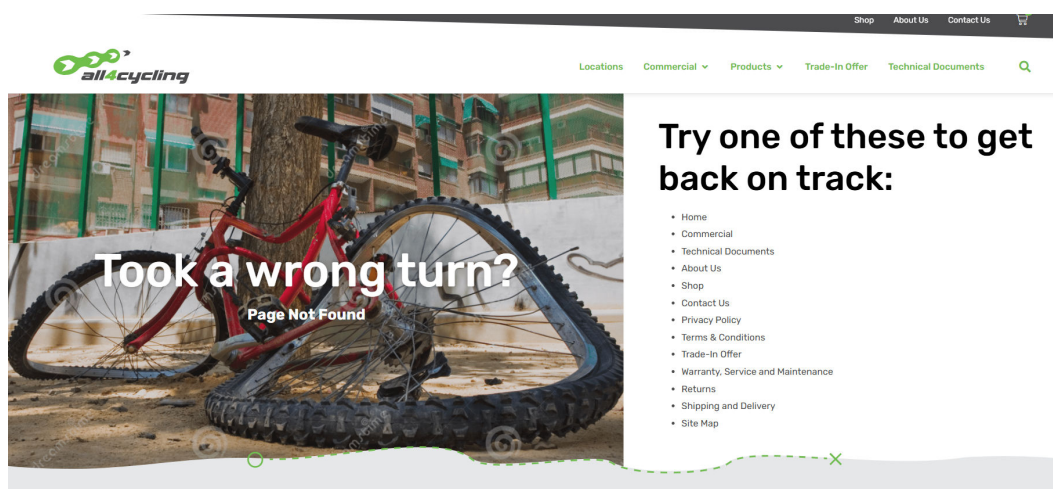


Image from the link in the Parks Victoria documents.

## 2.5. Preserving a significant landscape

The You Yangs regional park is protected by a Significant Landscape Overlay. Any new infrastructure should take regard of its impacts to the visual amenity of the landscape, both from within and from without the park.

Several projects have been recently proposed or approved in the immediate region, for instance BESS and the Barwon Solar Farm, as well as expansion of the Little River Quarry. Parks Victoria should consider plantings to ameliorate the views of these projects from key viewpoints throughout the park.

3 Daniel, R., Wilson, B.A. & Cahill, D.M. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* in native vegetation communities of southern Victoria — morphological variation and parageny among isolates. *Australasian Plant Pathology* 32,403–409 (2003). <https://doi.org/10.1071/AP03041>

4 Davidson, J. M., and Shaw, C. G. 2003. Pathways of movement for *Phytophthora ramorum*, the causal agent of Sudden Oak Death. Sudden Oak Death Online Symposium. [www.apsnet.org/online/SOD](http://www.apsnet.org/online/SOD) (website of The American Phytopathological Society). doi:10.1094/SOD-2003-TS

5 Threat abatement plan for disease in natural ecosystems caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, 2018, Commonwealth of Australia

## 2.6. Parks Victoria failing to stop apparent damage to adjacent public land

Immediately next to the You Yangs is a small reserve managed by Parks Victoria called Wurdi Youang Reserve. From satellite inspection it seems the reserve has been damaged from surrounding land use. VNPA has requested access to the reserve but has not yet received further contact from the land manager following the initial request. Parks Victoria must ensure protection of the habitat and biodiversity on its land.