HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

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To:

4 May 2009

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6, 8 Nicholson St,
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002

Re. Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation

ROCKLANDS AREA – MOORALLA SF & CLAUDE AUSTEN SF

The areas in question are shown in attached DSE map *Rocklands area map*.

The Claude Austen State Forest has been given a DSE designation of SPZ and it abutts similar forest (designated simply as State Forest) that runs into the western side of the Rocklands Reservoir. It is commonly referred to as the Claude Austen Reserve (as in CFA Region 4 Fire Map).

HFNC contends that the entire woodland area should be gazetted as the **Claude Austen Flora and Fauna Reserve**, to reflect the conservation value of the area. Any potential wood-gathering activity in the eastern block requires long distance travel through the Claude Austen section and, in any case, is not an acceptable use for the area. The area contains *E. melliodora, E. camaldulensis, E. baxteri* and *E. leucoxylon*, together with *Allocasuarina verticillata* , *Banksia marginata* and *A. melanoxylon* and a range of other tall and smaller shrubs. It has long been noted for the spring wildflower display and the long list of woodland birds that inhabit the woodland. These include Diamond Firetail, Speckled Warbler, Hooded Robin and Southern Whiteface. The *Antechinus flavipes* and Tuan occur in the woodland. We regard it as the most significant remnant of woodland, grassy woodland and heath in the Dundas Tablelands.

The Mooralla State Forest block lies just to the south of Rocklands Reservoir. It has been designated as an SPZ by DSE. This block contains a wide variety of habitats and species. Along with other designated SPZ blocks, we question the continued use of that classification, and suggest that a more appropriate classification would be **Flora and Fauna Reserve**.

Yours faithfully

Dr PR Bird
Secretary,
Hamilton Field Naturalists Club