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The Hon Tony Burke MP

Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

Victorian Government told to get cattle out of National Park

Media release
18 March 2011

Environment Minister Tony Burke today demanded the reintroduction of cattle in the Alpine National Park undergo a full and public assessment under national environmental law.

Mr Burke said after considering advice from his department, he had determined cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park satisfied the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act requirement that it "may be" a controlled action.

Mr Burke said as outlined under federal law, the Victorian Government now had 15 business days - until April 8 - to refer its current cattle grazing actions for Commonwealth decision or he would force a referral.

Under the EPBC Act, a referral by the Victorian Government following this request or a forced referral by the Minister means cattle will need to be removed from the Alpine National Park until a decision is made by the Minister.

"The Victorian Government was wrong to reintroduce cattle to the Alpine National Park and I have now determined that it needs to be fully scrutinised under national environmental law," Mr Burke said.

"It is extraordinary how little information the Victorian Government has provided.

"The referral will allow me to determine whether the impacts of cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park have a significant impact on matters protected under national environmental law.

"The Victorian Government has 15 business days to refer the actions to the Commonwealth for decision or I will force the referral.

"Until I have made a decision on the referral, the cattle grazing actions must stop and cattle will need to be removed from the Alpine National Park.

"Cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park is setting a dangerous precedent for the management of national parks across Australia. Victoria can't expect us to wait around while cattle are stomping over endangered wetlands."

When the Victorian Government reintroduced cattle to the Alpine National Park, it did not refer the action for consideration under national environmental law.

Since that time, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC) has been meeting with the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment and requesting the information on which the decision to not refer the action was based.

On March 1 the Commonwealth set Victoria a two week deadline to provide all relevant information about the reintroduction of cattle grazing in the Alpine National Park by March 15, 2011.

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