

WESTERN VICTORIAN AXEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

SUBMISSION IN SUPPORT OF COUPES RENEWAL.

Woodchopping is Australia's own & oldest sport, with its first recorded competition being in 1870 – just a little ahead of our other sport VFL in 1896.

While woodchopping may not have the profile of football it is still an important part of our history. It is also an important support and integral part of many community events. Woodchops are a spectacular and much visited event at many of our agricultural shows, school fairs, local football clubs, charity fundraisers and many similar activities.

It is also an inclusive sport taking in both male & female competitors and with a wide range of ages. Competitors can start as young as five and continue as long as they are able to compete safely. Our carnivals see fields including ages from 9 to 85. However Australia has a few competitors who are competing successfully in the 90's and many in 70,s and 80's.

With a starting age of five years it is critical that we ensure adequate and appropriate training and, with one of the best safety records of any sport in the world, we believe we are achieving this. Our insurance premiums reflect this.

Our sport is very much a family sport, often with 4 generations competing at the same carnival. Also brothers & sisters, husband & wives etc. Additionally, all our venues are suitable for the whole family to attend, even if only to support other family members.

We cannot continue to conduct and retain this heritage sport without the supply of suitable logs. We have, presently, been allocated coupes which contain suitable logs for our needs. While this supply is critical for us we also recognise the need to respect this and to ensure that we are careful to access only the numbers and sizes of logs needed. We ensure that our activities and our equipment usage leave a minimum footprint of our presence. Some existing track areas have needed applications of roads material in weather compromised sections and we have done this to maintain the area and minimise chance of further damage. We also ensure our equipment usage is appropriate to weather conditions.

We understand that, while timber is a renewable resource, it isn't renewable without proper management and we are great supporters of this. Woodchoppers make great conservationist – no logs no woodchops.

The logs we use also do not have just one "life" – at some of our carnivals cut logs are taken by service clubs for their "wood for elderly" programmes, scouts & fire brigades collect them and raffle for fundraising, Geelong Show logs are used by the Vintage Steam Association for their steam engine displays and, at some carnivals, we auction the wood to assist in minimising costs to carnival organisers.

Just as a possible matter of interest competition woodchopping, as it is conducted worldwide (in 62 countries), commenced in Australia and we are still world leaders.

Presently being very time poor this recent submission to VicForests covers quite a lot of our thoughts. Just part of being able to use for everyone.

