

NORTH CENTRAL VICTORIA: A GOLDEN ERA, A CHANGED ECOSYSTEM FOREVER?

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ONE of the roles of the Royal Society of Victoria is the promotion of science. In recognition of the importance of regional Victoria, the Society has been organising a series of symposia on different regions of Victoria. The North Central region of Victoria region was selected for the symposium that was held on the 2-3 December 2009 at the Bendigo campus of La Trobe University. The definition of the North Central Region was the same as the boundaries of the North Central Catchment Management Authority (see map next page).

The discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851 had a profound effect on the environmental, economic and social histories in Victoria. It attracted migrants of

different nationalities, and the gold fields played a significant role in the development of the State. The city of Bendigo is the regional headquarters of the North Central region of Victoria. The gold rush and subsequent land use had significant effects on the environment. While gold is still an important industry in the region, there is now a much wider range of land uses, ranging from mining, agriculture, forestry, conservation to recreation. The question is how these different land uses, along with the mining of the nineteenth Century, affect the long term sustainability of the North Central region. The future of the North Central region is not only important to people



The Catchment Management Authorities of Victoria

North Central Catchment Management Authority.



who live within the region, its close proximity to Melbourne means that its future is relevant to a large proportion of Victorians.

Over 30 speakers made presentations over the two days. The topics ranged widely and covered topics that included Aboriginal history, mining history, geology, soil, water, flora and fauna. There was considerable interest in important current and future environmental issues such as fire management, water use, conservation of threatened biota, and the predicted effects of climate change. The issues canvassed over the two days are outlined by Dr Denis Saunders in his summary.

This symposium would not have been possible without the efforts of the staff and Councillors of the Royal Society of Victoria and the presenters would have volunteered their time to attend the symposium, and I wish to thank them for their hard work. The Royal Society of Victoria also wishes to acknowledge the sponsorship from the North Central Catchment Management Authority, La Trobe University, Department of Primary Industries, the Wettenhall Foundation, and the Department of Sustainability and Environment for their support.