

Media Release

Thursday, 18 June 2015 | Media contact: Rachel Dawkins 0407 821 153

Seasonal road closures - respect the gates, no excuses!

Seasonal road closures are now in place across State forests and parks until just prior to the Melbourne Cup Weekend (Thursday 29 October, 2015).

The road closures are primarily for driver safety, to protect the road and track network from damage during the cooler, wetter months and to protect water catchments.

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) Forest Manager, Suzette Fullerton said: "We were disappointed to learn that people are entering seasonally closed roads by breaking open and in some cases destroying the gates."

"The costs of maintaining our road network for fire and recreational purposes is high, and this type of inappropriate behaviour by some people reflects on all users of the forest," Ms Fullerton said.

"The department works closely with our partners in Four Wheel Drive Victoria to identify which roads are the most appropriate to close each year and we have no option but to enforce the full weight of the law when it comes to breaches of seasonal closure gates."

"Under the *Forests Act 1958* the maximum penalties for unlawfully destroying or damaging a barrier or gate in any forest are \$7,380 or 12 months imprisonment or both."

"Drivers and riders in forests and parks should plan their trips and be aware of where the seasonal road closures are, ignorance is no excuse."

"Road users can check the Public Access Map site in the visiting parks and forests section at www.delwp.vic.gov.au; or view maps in the 'safety/closures and conditions' section at www.parks.vic.gov.au

"Our compliance staff will be patrolling our forests over these wet months and we also rely on the eyes and ears of the majority of the visiting public who are enjoying our beautiful forests and parks safely and legally, while still protecting the environment."

If you see something, say something – report environmental crime to DELWP on 136 186, to Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000 or to your local DELWP office or police station.