

# THE BACCHUS MARSH COUNCIL TRENCH, ITS GEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND RECENT CONSERVATION

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## **SUMMARY**

The Council Trench at Bacchus Marsh in central Victoria contains the only known outcropping of Triassic-aged sedimentary rock in Victoria. It is a geologically and historically important site that has been recognised and given State heritage status by the Geological Society of Australia.

From its original gazettal in 1873 as a stone reserve, through the discovery of Triassic plant fossils in its rock late in that century and until 2000, the Trench site remained a public reserve. In 2000, despite its geological heritage significance, the Victorian government offered the site for private sale and development.

From 2000 to 2003 a dedicated group worked to have the sale offer withdrawn and for the site to remain in public ownership. They were successful. The Bacchus Marsh Council Trench Crown Land Reserve was gazetted in 2003 and a Committee of Management was soon formed.

Since 2003 the committee has gained two grants from the State government. These funds have been used to provide a visitor access path to the Trench, to fence the site and to carry

## **INTRODUCTION**

In 2000, the Council Trench reserve at Bacchus Marsh was offered for public sale by the Victorian state government as a housing development site, despite the reserve having State geological heritage significance.

This paper examines the geological history of the Trench that led to its heritage significance classification. A prime facet of the Trench history is that it contains the only known outcropping of Triassic sedimentary rock in Victoria.

The processes undertaken to ensure that a sale did not eventuate are described. Continued public ownership of the site was ultimately guaranteed when the site was nominated as the Bacchus Marsh Council Trench Crown Land Reserve and a committee of management approved.

The paper concludes by discussing initiatives that the committee of management has undertaken to conserve the reserve for the future.

## **THE COUNCIL TRENCH HISTORICAL RECORD**

A notice in the Victorian Government Gazette of 1873 temporarily reserved a "six acres two roods twenty-two perches" (2.1 ha) allotment of land north of Bacchus Marsh township in central Victoria, on the southern slopes of Bald Hill, as a "site whence stone may be procured" (Victorian Government Gazette 1873). Quarrying records are unobtainable, but the allotment's period of use as a stone quarry was probably brief, because its sandstone was not of high quality. The disused quarry site is known today as the Council Trench. Chapman (1927) referred to the site as "a trench in the Council Paddock." Jacobson & Scott