

National Parks Advisory Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024



OFFICIAL

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Steve Dimopoulos MP
Minister for Environment
Level 16, 8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002

Dear Minister

In accordance with the requirements of Section 11 of the *National Parks Act 1975*, the National Parks Advisory Council (NPAC) is pleased to submit to you our Annual Report, covering activities for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Foley', written in a cursive style.

Anna Foley
Convenor
National Parks Advisory
Council

25 September 2024

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September 2024

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Photo acknowledgements

Photos were provided by NPAC staff and members.

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge Victorian Traditional Owners and their Elders past and present as the Original Custodians of Victoria's land and waters and commit to assisting them and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

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Foreword

It is with pleasure that I provide the Annual Report of the National Parks Advisory Council ('the Council') to the responsible Minister Steve Dimopoulos MP, Minister for Environment.

The Council met four times in 2023–24 and formally advised the Minister on six matters for which advice was sought under the *National Parks Act 1975* ('the Act').

These matters were:

- under section 40(3) of the Act, advice on an application made by Lakes Blue Energy NL for consent for an onshore gas exploration project that involves drilling beneath the surface of Port Campbell National Park
- under section 19G and 19K of the Act, advice on a proposed new 5-year lease and associated licence to Lysterfield Sailing Club Incorporated for activities associated with a sailing operation on Lysterfield Lake for recreational purposes including club meeting rooms, boat and equipment storage, race viewing tower, and boat launch and jetty access in Lysterfield Park
- under section 40(3) of the Act, advice on an application made by Beach Energy Limited for consent for a planned 3D Transition Zone Seismic Survey (3DTZSS) within the Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park
- under section 19G of the Act, advice on a proposed new 21-year lease to PMRC Pty Ltd over the Princess Margaret Rose Cave precinct within the Lower Glenelg National Park
- under section 19G of the Act, advice on a proposed new 10-year lease to Indigo Shire Council over part of the Beechworth Historic Park for the operation and maintenance of an existing mountain bike trail
- under sections 31AABB and 31AAB of the Act, advice on a proposed new 40-year lease and associated licence to Belgravia

Outdoor Education Pty Ltd for accommodation, food and beverage offerings, and activities associated with leisure, educational and recreational programs within the Mount Buffalo Chalet precinct and Dingo Dell sites in Mount Buffalo National Park.

In each instance, the Council advised the Minister that they could see no reason under statute to withhold consent. In considering each of these proposals, the Council made various recommendations to the Minister. Such advice is an important function of the Council, formed with careful consideration following briefings on each matter.

Over the year, the Council also received updates on a range of matters to support its work and understanding of park management issues.

During the year, updates were received from Parks Victoria on:

- community engagement for the Wilsons Promontory revitalisation project
- community engagement regarding rock-climbing and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage at Dyurrite
- current Joint Management activities with Traditional Owner Land Management Boards
- their work with Birrarung Council on sections of the Yarra River that implicates National Parks Act Land
- their work with the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority (GORCAPA) to develop a service agreement, due to commence in 2024, which will set out the roles and responsibilities for both entities in managing parks under the Act within the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks
- the National Park Feral Horse Program, in particular the removal of feral horses from the Alpine and Barmah National Parks

- the Warburton Mountain Bike Destination Planning Scheme Amendment

Updates were received from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) on:

- proposed reforms to Victoria's public land legislation
- the Great Ocean Road Action Plan
- Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park, which extends along the coast from San Remo to Inverloch
- progress on agreement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*
- the Sea to Summit trail from Errinundra National Park to the ocean beaches of Cape Conran Coastal Park in East Gippsland.

Council remains deeply concerned about the long-term impacts of climate change on the parks estate, and the resulting transformations in landscape values that may already be underway in some parts of Victoria.

Council maintains its interest in:

- the need to preserve and protect parks in accordance with the Act
- the progress of Joint Management Plans and joint management activities with Traditional Owner groups
- the balancing of tourism and conservation objectives across the parks estate
- conservation strategies and actions including protection of sensitive Aboriginal cultural values, managing biodiversity and activation and interpretation of post-contact heritage sites.

Council continues to see a strong need for an overarching Statewide Mountain Biking Strategy to be developed by the Victorian Government, in partnership with relevant organisations, in the near future. This would provide a framework for strategic assessment

of lease and licence applications within the parks estate and inform the Council's assessments and advice to the Minister.

Council considers that without such a strategy, unauthorised trails will continue to create risks to the state through possible damage to native vegetation and habitat, increased public liability issues, and through enforcement and maintenance costs, as well as wasted resources from a lack of sound coordinated planning for authorised community facilities.

The Council was well supported in its work by the DEECA and Parks Victoria, and it continues to benefit from the participation as observers and contributors at Council meetings of representatives of both organisations. Special thanks to David Sheehan and Cassie Elder of DEECA who provided Executive Officer and secretariat support over the past year.

I particularly acknowledge outgoing member Mariyam Zulfa for her contribution during her time on Council.

My sincere thanks to all members of the Council for approaching their roles with respect and diligence, bringing all of their multidisciplinary knowledge and acumen to the Council's work. Their contributions have significantly benefitted both the Council and Victoria's parks estate.



Anna Foley

Convenor

25 September 2024

The Council

The Council is established under section 10 of *National Parks Act 1975* ('the Act'). In 2023–24 the responsible Ministers were Ingrid Stitt MP and Steve Dimopoulos MP, Ministers for Environment.

Statutory responsibilities

Under section 11 of the Act, the functions of the Council are to:

- advise the Minister generally in relation to the administration of the Act and on particular matters in relation to that administration on which its advice is sought by the Minister
- advise the Minister on any proposed excision from a park referred to it by the Minister
- submit to the Minister within three months after each year ending on 30 June a report on the performance of its functions during that year

In addition to these functions, the Minister is required to seek advice from the Council in relation to the granting of:

- certain leases within parks, under sections 19G, 30AAA, 30AAAC, 31AA, 31AABB, 32CA and 32CC of the Act
- consents in relation to various earth resources tenements and operation within parks, under section 40 of the Act

The Act

The Act governs the protection, use and management of Victoria's parks system. It provides a strong framework for ensuring that the uses and management of the parks are compatible with the long-term maintenance of their natural and cultural values.

The parks system

As at 30 June 2024, there were 139 parks and other areas, with a total area of approximately 3.47 million hectares, managed under various provisions of the Act. These areas comprise 45 national parks, 3 wilderness parks, 26 state

parks, 13 marine national parks, 11 marine sanctuaries, 11 marine and/or coastal parks or reserves, 14 other parks and reserves, 1 landscape conservation area (comprising seven component areas) and 15 non-scheduled areas. In addition, there are 19 wilderness zones and 22 remote and natural areas located within 13 national parks, and 4 designated water supply catchment areas within 3 national parks.

Membership

Council consists of eight members with specific skills and experience, appointed by the Governor in Council:

- two people with skills or experience relating to the preservation and protection of parks
- one who is a professor and teacher of ecology at a university in Victoria
- one with experience in local government who resides in a municipality in which there is a park
- four (at least two of whom reside outside of the metropolitan area) with experience with matters affecting the interests of the community

Anna Foley (Convenor)

Anna is an experienced environmental advisor with a background in ecology, heritage, statutory planning and community engagement.

She is the Strategic Development Manager and former statewide Operations Manager at Trust for Nature, working on strategic initiatives to protect a private land conservation network of more than 100,000 hectares.

Anna was previously the Conservation Manager at the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) advocating for natural and cultural heritage protection and still volunteers her expertise to conservation organisations.

She is a Council Member of the Heritage Council of Victoria, a member of the Reference Areas Advisory Committee and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Associate Professor Ursula de Jong (Member)

Ursula is Honorary Associate Professor in the School of Architecture and Built Environment, at Deakin University, Geelong. She is a Research Associate of HOME, a Deakin University Strategic Research and Innovation Centre, providing evidence-based, community-tailored housing and social inclusion strategies.

She is an Honorary Research Fellow in Deakin's School of Architecture and Built Environment, Architecture Vacancy Lab.

Ursula is an experienced academic, scholar and teacher, with particular expertise in architectural history and as a researcher of place, with numerous publications across both fields. She is the architectural historian Council Member of the Heritage Council of Victoria. She is a founding member of SAHANZ and a full international member of ICOMOS. She is a member of the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Council (NLAAC).

Ursula is an Honorary Member (2023) of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) being a former long-standing Director and Deputy Chair of the Trust. She is President of the Nepean Conservation Group which has cared for the local environment since 1973 and oversees twenty local Friends' Groups on the tip of the Mornington Peninsula, two in the MPNP and one in PNNP.

She is a heritage advocate and environmental activist and brings to Council much experience working with communities. In 2017 she was appointed Chair of the Reference Areas Advisory Committee.

Dr David Jones (Member)

David is an experienced planner, landscape architect and academic. Over a 40-year period he has worked at and for several councils, universities and Aboriginal Corporations in South Australia and Victoria.

With qualifications and expertise in regional planning, urban design, landscape architecture, cultural heritage management, and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, he has taught, researched, published and practiced in these disciplines and has an applied

understanding of evolution and application of Victoria's legislative conservation systems, instruments and planning schemes.

Currently Professor (Research) at the Monash Indigenous Studies Centre, he recently had oversight of all Strategic Planning and Urban Design operations of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation that embraces Geelong (Djilang), Ballarat (Ballaarat) and western Melbourne (Naarm) regions.

Dr Marie Keatley (Member)

Marie holds a PhD in eucalypt flowering ecology from the University of Melbourne. She is a lecturer at RMIT University with research interests in ecology including phenology, vegetation ecology, botany, climate change as well as citizen science.

She also brings to the council many years of experience in park management, having worked for Parks Victoria. Through this work she has extensive knowledge of Victorian flora, plant conservation and landscape ecology.

At the international level, she has contributed to studies on the impacts of climate on plant flowering ecology, particularly of the southern hemisphere.

Marie is a member of the Executive Board of the International Society of Biometeorology and a member of the Editorial Advisory Board for the International Journal of Biometeorology and was one of the founders of ClimateWatch, Australia's citizen science phenological observation network. She lives in regional Victoria.

Dr Michael Looker (Member)

Michael is a scientist by background with over 30 years experience in conservation program development and public open space management. He is currently Chair of the Conservation Coaches Network (CCNet), global board.

He previously held roles with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as Director of TNC's Australia program, where he partnered with local NGOs and Government on large-scale conservation initiatives and established a

Corporate Conservation Council to forge a closer alliance between business and conservation. He also developed close working relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations supporting their aspirations in looking after country; Director of Regional Strategies, Infrastructure, where his main focus was on developments across the Asia Pacific, especially in the extractive industries, and implementation of TNC's "Development by Design" which helps to guide sustainable development decision-making; Director of the Aotearoa New Zealand Program, a two-year assignment to establish one of the Conservancy's newest country programs; and Senior Advisor to the "Conservation in Partnership with Indigenous Peoples & Local Communities" global program with a primary focus on sustainable financing for community led conservation programs.

Prior to joining TNC, Michael served as the Director of Trust for Nature, Victoria. Under Michael's leadership, the Trust acquired Ned's Corner Station—the largest private conservation purchase in Victoria. He was previously a Senior Lecturer in Environmental Horticulture at The University of Melbourne, Burnley Campus, as well as Superintendent of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne.

Dr Mary -Jane Rogers (Member)

Mary-Jane is a rural resident with experience in matters affecting the interests of the community and an active member of the Shepparton/Goulburn Valley community. She is involved in a range of community groups, including in the areas of the environment and community use of parks.

She has a strong scientific background in plant biology and physiology and in science quality and delivery and brings to the council many years of experience in natural resource management issues and their effects on the rural community. This is her third term on the Council and she is also a member of the Reference Areas Advisory Committee.

Mark Reeves (Member)

Mark has a BA (Recreation), Grad. Dip Ed. (Outdoor & Phys. Ed.), Post Grad Dip (Org. Change) and is a member of the Australian Council of Educators, a fellow of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

He is the founding Principal of The School for Student Leadership, also known as The Alpine School. Since 1999 the school has expanded from one to four campuses and has also operated programs in Guangdong Province, China.

He has worked with Catholic, Independent and Government sectors, local government and private industry in his career spanning 35 years.

As well as academic studies at Melbourne University and Phillip Institute of Technology, he has technical training and qualifications including in outdoor pursuits from the National Mountaineering and Water sports School, North Wales, UK.

Mark received a Churchill Fellowship in 2010 and researched the adolescent rite of passage and received a Citation from the Gippsland Chapter of ACE for developing and running programs that enhance physical development, wellbeing and self-esteem.

He has published and contributed to titles including *Surviving, Thriving and Reviving in Adolescence* (Springer pub. 2016) and became a Fellow of the Australian College of Educational Leadership in 2015.

Mark is a local government councillor in East Gippsland Shire having been Mayor from 2013 to 2014 and again from 2021– to 2023. He was elected Chair of One-Gippsland in February 2023.

Dr Mariyam Zulfa (Member)*

Mariyam is a former Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture of the Maldives and a founding member of Maldives Policy Advocacy Caucus . She is a tourism industry expert, with her doctoral thesis based on the competitiveness of small islands tourism.

She is a qualified town-planner with a BA in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of South Australia. Mariyam worked for many years as a town-planner in the Office of Physical Planning and Design and was Director of the Selected Islands Development Unit in the Maldives government.

She has worked on many significant government projects including community relocation and tourism planning and has advised the Maldives National Planning Council on approving tourism and economic development projects. She is passionate about education and issues affecting people and the environment.

She has strong legal research skills and interests in constitutional law, having been admitted to practice as a lawyer by the Supreme Court of Western Australia. After moving to Melbourne Mariyam continued her education in Public and International Law at Melbourne University.

Observers – DEECA and Parks Victoria

Recognising the critical role which Parks Victoria and DEECA play in decisions regarding Victoria’s parks, representatives of these two organisations attend and participate in meetings as observers but do not have any decision-making responsibilities.

Council has benefitted from participation by Matthew Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Parks Victoria and David Sheehan, Manager Land Governance, DEECA.

**** Dr Mariyam Zulfa wrote to the Governor in Council on 15 March 2024 tendering her resignation and it was formally accepted by the Governor in Council on 16 June 2024.***



Members and Parks Victoria Staff at Port Campbell National Park, July 2023.



Members receiving a briefing from Lakes Blue Energy NL at the site for prospective drilling near Port Campbell National Park, July 2023

Council program

Program

The Council structures its work program according to its statutory responsibilities, provides advice required on key government investigations, policies and strategies, and fulfils its corporate governance responsibilities.

The Council continued to take a close interest in on-ground park management issues through regular updates by Parks Victoria and DEECA staff.

Council meetings

Meeting No. 303	10 July 2023
Meeting No. 304	4 October 2023
Meeting No. 305	14 February 2024
Special Meeting	8 May 2024

Meeting attendance

Member	Number of meetings attended
Anna Foley (Convenor)	4 out of 4
Associate Professor Ursula de Jong	4 out of 4
Dr David Jones	4 out of 4
Dr Marie Keatley	3 out of 4
Dr Michael Looker	3 out of 4
Mark Reeves	3 out of 4
Dr Mary-Jane Rogers	4 out of 4
Dr Mariyam Zulfa*	2 out of 2

Advice to Minister

The Council met four times in 2023–24 and formally advised the Minister on six matters for which advice was sought under sections 19G, 31AA, 31AABB and 40(3) of the Act. The matters are in the order in which advice was provided.

A proposal to grant under section 19G of the Act a 5-year lease and associated licence to Lysterfield Sailing Club Incorporated for activities associated with a sailing operation on Lysterfield Lake for recreational purposes including club meeting rooms, boat and equipment storage, race viewing tower, and boat launch and jetty access in Lysterfield Park.

Advice provided to the Minister for Environment on 18 August 2023:

The Council was supportive of Parks Victoria granting the proposed tenures.

A proposal to consent under section 40(3) of the Act to Lakes Blue Energy NL for an onshore gas exploration project that involves drilling beneath the surface of Port Campbell National Park.

Advice provided to the Minister for Environment on 29 October 2023:

Council endorsed the conditions outlined in the draft consent and, in terms of the short term and immediate impact of the works on the national park, can see no reason for [the Minister] to withhold ... consent under section 40 of the National Parks Act 1975.

A proposal to grant under section 19G of the Act a 10-year lease to Indigo Shire Council for the purpose of operation and maintenance of an existing mountain bike trail over part of the Beechworth Historic Park.

Advice provided to the Minister for Environment on 8 February 2024:

The Council was supportive of Parks Victoria granting the proposed tenures.

A proposal to grant under section 19G of the Act a 21-year lease and associated licence to PMRC Pty Ltd for Operation and management of the Princess Margaret Rose Cave Precinct, including campground and cabins, visitor centre including café/kiosk/restaurant, provision of visitor information and park education services, conducting guided cave tours and management of staff residential accommodation over the Princess Margaret Rose cave precinct within the Lower Glenelg National Park.

Advice provided to the Minister for Environment on 18 March 2024:

The Council was supportive of Parks Victoria granting the proposed tenures.

A proposal to consent under section 40(3) of the Act to Beach Energy Limited for a planned 3D Transition Zone Seismic Survey (3DTZSS) within the Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park.

Advice provided to the Minister for Environment on 23 March 2024:

Council supports the conditions outlined in the draft consent and, in terms of the short term and immediate impact of the works on the national park and coastal park, can see no reason for you to withhold your consent under section 40 of the National Parks Act 1975.

A proposal to grant under sections 31AABB and 31AAB of the Act a 40-year lease and associated licence for accommodation and food and beverage offerings, and activities associated with leisure, educational and recreational programs within the Mount Buffalo Chalet precinct and Dingo Dell sites in Mount Buffalo National Park to Belgravia Outdoor Education Pty Ltd.

Advice provided to the Minister for Environment on 14 June 2024:

Council is of the view that the proposed lease is not detrimental to the conservation and protection of the park, including its natural,

Indigenous, historic, cultural, landscape and recreational values.

The Council is supportive of Parks Victoria granting the proposed tenures.

Field Visits

The Council took two field trips in the 2023–24 reporting period.

In July 2023, members visited a site just outside the Port Campbell National Park associated with the Lakes Blue Energy consent application.

Council members sought to understand the local ecology and surrounding geography and asked the Parks Victoria and Lakes Blue Energy staff questions directly on site.

In May 2024, the Council visited Mount Buffalo Chalet and surrounding areas (including Dingo Dell) associated with the Belgravia Outdoor Education Pty Ltd lease and licence application.

Council members sought to understand the site context, Chalet infrastructure and heritage management issues and asked Parks Victoria staff questions directly on site.

On this trip, the Council was also given a tour of the EPIC Bike Trail in the Beechworth Historic Park by Indigo Shire staff and Yacks Tracks volunteers.

The Council places enormous value on the opportunity to visit these sites and thanks all attendees for their information, advice and perspectives.

Presentations and briefings at meetings

Title	Presenter	Date
<i>Briefing on</i> an application made by Lakes Blue Energy NL for consent under section 40(3) of the Act for an onshore gas exploration project that involves drilling beneath the surface of Port Campbell National Park.	Parks Victoria Representatives from Lakes Blue Energy NL	10 July 2023 11 July 2023
<i>Briefing on</i> a proposed new 5-year lease and associated licence to Lysterfield Sailing Club Incorporated under section 19G of the Act for activities associated with a sailing operation on Lysterfield Lake for recreational purposes within the Lysterfield National Park.	Parks Victoria	10 July 2023
<i>Presentation on</i> Traditional Owner Land Management Policy context.	DEECA	4 October 2023
<i>Briefing on</i> an application made by Beach Energy Limited for consent under section 40(3) of the Act for a planned 3D Transition Zone Seismic Survey (3DTZSS) within the Port Campbell National Park and Bay of Islands Coastal Park.	Parks Victoria Representatives from Beach Energy Limited	4 October 2024
<i>Briefing on</i> a proposed new 21-year lease to PMRC Pty Ltd under section 19G of the Act over the Princess Margaret Rose cave precinct within the Lower Glenelg National Park.	Parks Victoria	14 February 2024
<i>Presentation and briefing on</i> Mount Buffalo Chalet concept and current and future status.	Parks Victoria	14 February 2024
<i>Briefing on</i> a proposed new 10-year lease to Indigo Shire Council under section 19G of the Act over part of the Beechworth Historic Park for the operation and maintenance of an existing mountain bike trail.	Parks Victoria	14 February 2024
<i>Briefing on</i> a proposed new 40-year lease and associated licence to Belgravia Outdoor Education Pty Ltd under sections 31AABB and 31AAB of the Act for accommodation and food and beverage offerings, and activities associated with leisure, educational and recreational programs within the Mount Buffalo Chalet precinct and Dingo Dell sites in Mount Buffalo National Park.	Parks Victoria	8 May 2024

Council operations

NPAC is an advisory body and therefore do not have the capacity to employ staff or operate outside of DEECA's Policies and Procedures.

Secretariat staff are DEECA employees and abide by DEECA policies and procedures in relation to Employment, Health, Safety, and all other matters.

Council uses DEECA systems to operate, including finance and procurement, IT, data and records management, HR and other systems, therefore the following Disclosures are reported on in the DEECA Annual Report 2023-24:

- Compliance with the *Building Act 1993*
- Information and Communication technology (ICT) expenditure
- Summary of Environmental Performance
- Public administration and employment conduct principals
- Details of Changes in process, fees, charges and levies charged
- Occupational Health and Safety Policies
- Risk Management Policies
- Compliance with DataVic Access Policies
- Local Jobs First
- Workforce Inclusion Policy
- Environmental reporting
- Industrial Relations reporting
- Procurement, including social, complaints and emergency procurement
- Competitive neutrality
- Compliance under the *Disability Act 2006*
- Asset Maturity Assessment

The table below sets out the expenditure incurred in the operation of the Council

	2022-23	2023-24
Meeting fees	5,549	7,854
Other operating expenses	2,678	11,143*
Total	8,226.97	18,997

**This figure includes ICT expenditure*

Consultancies below and above \$10,000

Nil

Major reviews carried out by Council

Nil

Government advertising

Nil

Overseas travel

Nil

Workforce data

As at 30 June 2024, the Council was supported by two ongoing staff on Secondment from DEECA totaling 0.2 Equivalent Full Time (EFT).

Council Policies

The Council has adopted the following model DEECA policies and procedures:

- Code of conduct
- Conflict of interest
- Meetings and decision-making
- Dispute resolution
- Gifts, benefits and hospitality
- Performance assessment
- Induction and continuing education

Statement of pecuniary Interests

All members of the Council have completed declarations of pecuniary interest for the current reporting period.

Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality attestation

I, Anna Foley, Convenor of the Council, certify that:

- my public entity has policies and procedures in place that are consistent with the minimum requirements and accountabilities outlined in the Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy Framework issued by the Public Sector Standards Commissioner; and
- staff are informed about these gifts, benefits and hospitality policies and procedures.

Performance assessment

The Council conducted an annual performance review in line with their adopted Performance Assessment Policy.

Membership of external committees

Anna Foley and Ursula de Jong are members of the Heritage Council of Victoria.

Conferences and seminars attended

Nil.

Women, Youth and Indigenous Affairs

The Council is committed to involving Victoria's community, including women, youth and Aboriginal Victorians.

Statement of Availability of Other Information

Any information retained by the Council relating to its activities is available on request, subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Freedom of Information Act 1982

The *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) allows the public a right of access to documents held by DEECA. The purpose of the FOI Act is to extend as far as possible the right of the community to access information held by government departments, local councils, Ministers and other bodies subject to the FOI

Act. An applicant has a right to apply for access to documents held by a department. This comprises documents both created by DEECA or supplied to DEECA by an external organisation or individual, and may also include maps, films, microfiche, photographs, computer printouts, computer discs, tape recordings and videotapes. Information about the type of material produced by DEECA is available on the DEECA website under its Part II Information Statement.

The FOI Act allows a department to refuse access, either fully or partially, to certain documents or information. Examples of documents that may not be accessed include cabinet documents; some internal working documents; law enforcement documents; documents covered by legal professional privilege, such as legal advice; personal information about other people; and information provided to a department in confidence and information that is confidential under another Act.

Under the FOI Act, the FOI processing time for requests received is 30 days. However, when external consultation is required under ss29, 29A, 31, 31A, 33, 34 or 35, the processing time is 45 days. Processing time may also be extended by periods of 30 days, in consultation with the applicant. With the applicant's agreement this may occur any number of times. However, obtaining an applicant's agreement for an extension cannot occur after the expiry of the timeframe for deciding a request.

If an applicant is not satisfied by a decision made by the Department, under section 49A of the Act, they have the right to seek a review by the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) within 28 days of receiving a decision letter.

Requests for documents in the possession of the Council should be addressed to:

Freedom of Information Officer
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
GPO Box 500
MELBOURNE VIC 3001
foi.unit@decca.vic.gov.au

The cost of an FOI application is \$32.70; however, access charges may also be payable if the document pool is large, and the search for material, time consuming.

Further information regarding the operation and scope of FOI can be obtained from the Act; regulations made under the Act; and Freedom of Information – Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner:
<https://ovic.vic.gov.au>

Public Interest Disclosures Act 2012

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 2012 (PID Act) enables people to make a disclosure about corrupt or improper conduct by a public officer or a public body.

The Council is a public body for the purposes of the PID Act.

What is a public interest disclosure?

A public interest disclosure is a complaint of corrupt or improper conduct or detrimental action by a public officer or a public body.

‘Improper or corrupt conduct’ involves substantial mismanagement of public resources, risk to public health or safety or the environment, or corruption.

“Detrimental action” is action taken against a person in reprisal for making a public interest disclosure.

How do I make a public interest disclosure?

You can make a public interest disclosure about the Council or its members, officers or employees by contacting IBAC (details below).

DEECA has established procedures for the protection of persons from detrimental action in reprisal for making a public interest disclosure about the Council, its board members, officers or employees.

A secure email disclosure process is available on IBAC’s website.

Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC) Victoria

Address: Level 1, North Tower, 459 Collins Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000.

Mail: IBAC, GPO Box 24234, Melbourne Victoria 3001

Internet: www.ibac.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 735 135

NATIONAL PARKS ADVISORY COUNCIL
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