

Victorian Government Response

to the Victorian Environmental Assessment
Council's Central West Investigation Final Report

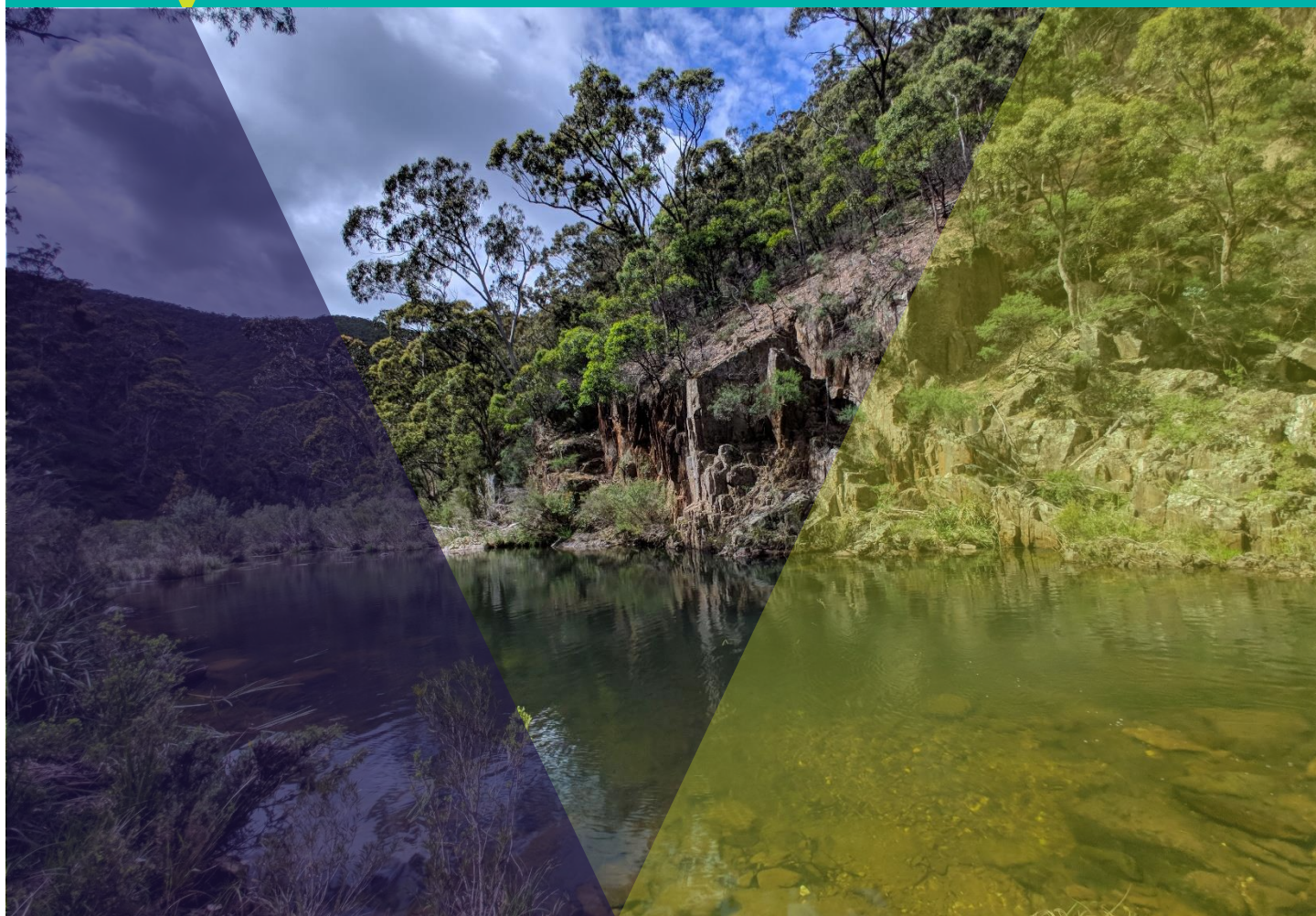


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Lerderderg State Park by Alan Küffer

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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Minister's Foreword



I am pleased to present the *Victorian Government response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) Central West Investigation Final Report* – which, when implemented, will ensure that the parks, reserves and forests of central west Victoria are appropriately protected, managed, and able to support all public land users, now and into the future.

It has been over 30 years since public land use in most of the investigation area was last assessed. In that time there have been many changes to the way we use public land, and the challenges the area faces. I would like to thank VEAC for its timely investigation and comprehensive final report on this highly valued part of Victoria.

Our parks, reserves and forests play a key role in protecting our natural environment, as well as providing Victorians with a wide range of opportunities to enjoy the great outdoors and connect with nature. They support the livelihoods of many in our regional communities and are the foundation of diverse visitor experiences and recreational activities.

The government response aims to balance the wide-ranging demands on public land in central west Victoria to ensure these areas will continue to underpin the region's natural, social and economic prosperity for generations to come.

The government response will see the creation of three new national parks, together with new conservation parks, nature reserves and bushland reserves, to protect important habitat connectivity for rare and threatened species. These new parks and reserves will increase Victoria's system of protected areas by more than 50,000 hectares, sustaining biodiversity and other natural values.

The government response also provides for seasonal, recreational deer hunting (by stalking) in the Pyrenees and Wombat–Lerderderg National Parks, in the areas where it is currently permitted, and with some restrictions. There will continue to be opportunities for prospecting in the three blocks of the investigation area. Additionally, four-wheel driving, trail-bike riding, mountain biking, bushwalking, picnicking and nature observation opportunities are not impacted by the government response to VEAC's recommendations.

Public land in central west Victoria is essential to Traditional Owners' connection to country. The government supports the aspirations of Traditional Owners to manage their country and is committed to partnering with them to implement this government response.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lily D'Ambrosio'.

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

Introduction

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) *Central West Investigation Final Report* was tabled in Parliament on 15 August 2019. This is the government response as required by section 25 of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

Background

VEAC's Central West Investigation commenced in March 2017 and was undertaken over more than two years and involved significant stakeholder consultation. The purpose of the investigation, which only focused on public land, was to:

- identify and evaluate the condition, natural and biodiversity values and cultural, social and economic values and the current uses of public land in the specified area; and
- make recommendations for the balanced use and appropriate management arrangements to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural values.

The investigation examined three distinct blocks of public land: the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block (near Beaufort and Avoca), the Wellsford block (near Bendigo) and the Wombat–Macedon block (near Daylesford and Trentham).

In its final report, VEAC made:

- general recommendations to the Victorian Government to address implementation, resourcing and specific policy and management issues
- general recommendations on the revised public land use categories, which stem from VEAC's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report*
- recommendations specific to the three distinct blocks of the investigation area.

VEAC's investigation and public land management in Victoria

VEAC's Central West Investigation, which focused on three distinct blocks of public land in central west Victoria, occurred within the broader context of Victoria's public land estate and landscape. There are approximately 8 million hectares of public land in Victoria and the investigation covered 161,215 hectares of public land. This equates to approximately two per cent of Victoria's public land estate.

VEAC's investigation found that public land in the Central West Investigation area is "critical for the industries, recreational pursuits and distinctive natural values that rely on these forests". The investigation area contains the headwaters of several of Victoria's major rivers. Native vegetation in the investigation area is important for biodiversity conservation and habitat connectivity, and there is a low level of ecosystem representation in protected areas.

The three blocks of public land, although separated from each other, experience similar pressures and these will likely intensify in coming years. Victoria's population is projected to significantly increase, placing more pressure on public land, particularly those areas on the fringes of Melbourne and around some regional cities and towns. Climate change will impact the public land natural values and the ecosystem services and recreational pursuits they provide.

The government response to VEAC's *Central West Investigation Final Report* recognises the values and uses of public land in the investigation area, while addressing the pressures they face.

The Victorian Government acknowledges the interests and aspirations of Traditional Owners for country and is committed to partnering with them in public land management, including in implementing this government response. In the Central West Investigation area, the Victorian Government has entered into Recognition and Settlement Agreements with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the Taungurung Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and has commenced negotiations with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation. Recognition and Settlement Agreements recognise Traditional Owners' relationship to the land and provide certain rights in relation to public land, including Aboriginal title and joint management of public parks and reserves. Implementing the government response will not impact on future settlement processes under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act (2010)*.

The Victorian Government has several policies and initiatives which have shaped its response to VEAC's recommendations. These include:

- *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*, which is Victoria's plan for the future of Victoria's biodiversity and priority 18 is to "maintain and enhance a world-class system of protected areas"
- the *Victorian Forestry Plan* which will see all native forest timber harvesting cease in Victoria by 2030 at the latest
- the initiative to renew Victoria's Crown land legislation to better support community use of public land, while ensuring public land values are protected for current and future generations
- the *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2016-2020* (a second Sustainable Hunting Action Plan is currently under development), to ensure that game hunting in Victoria is safe, sustainable and responsible and the *Victorian Deer Control Strategy*.

In addition, the government recognises the value that Victorians place on being outdoors and enjoying public land. To this end, the government announced the \$105.6 million Victoria's Great Outdoors package. Through the package, DELWP will progress around five initiatives in the Central West Investigation area to further improve recreational amenities and experiences. Initiatives include developing new and upgraded walking trails and upgrading campgrounds.

In 2019, the government launched the *Victoria – it's in our nature* website to encourage all Victorians to explore, connect with and protect Victoria's natural environment.

Victorian Government response to VEAC's recommendations

The government acknowledges there has been a range of stakeholder and community responses to VEAC's recommendations, including both support for VEAC's recommendations and concerns about future access to public land in the investigation area for certain activities. Since VEAC's *Central West Investigation Final Report* was released, the government announced the Victorian Forestry Plan which will see all native forest timber harvesting cease in Victoria by 2030. This plan and the immediate impacts on jobs and the economy from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have helped frame the government response.

The government **accepts, accepts in principle or accepts in part** 76 of VEAC's 77 recommendations in the *Central West Investigation Final Report*.

The government response will lead to the creation of three new national parks. The national parks, together with new conservation parks, nature reserves and bushland reserves, will protect important habitat connectivity for rare and threatened species. The new parks and reserves will increase Victoria's system of protected areas by approximately 50,000 hectares and be a positive step in safeguarding and sustaining biodiversity and other natural values, particularly as burnt areas in eastern Victoria continue to recover. Several new and expanded regional parks will provide for a further range of recreational opportunities close to townships in the region. Parks and reserves will also be complemented by retaining areas of state forest in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block.

The key variations from VEAC's recommendations are as follows:

- The government does not accept recommendation A3 for the Greater Bendigo National Park (addition), and instead this area will be added to the existing Bendigo Regional Park. This will support a broader range of recreational activities, provide another area for domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) until June 2029, and provide greater flexibility for the North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release.
- In the Wombat–Macedon block, the government response varies from VEAC's recommendation A4 for the Wombat–Lerderderg National Park by committing to create a 4855-hectare Barkstead Regional Park instead of including the area in the recommended national park. This will support a broader range of recreational activities and provide another area for domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) until June 2029.

As noted above, VEAC's *Central West Investigation Final Report* was released before the Victorian Forestry Plan, which commits the government to phasing out native forest timber harvesting in Victoria by 2030. To align the government response with the plan and allow businesses time to transition from the native forest timber industry with support and certainty, implementing the government response will be staged. VicForests will continue to have access to some areas proposed to become national parks for timber harvesting until 2030 at the latest. These areas will remain state forest until timber harvesting ceases, at which time they will be added to the parks. Most regional parks within the Wombat–Macedon block will also be available for commercial thinning and selective harvesting operations until native forest timber harvesting is phased out.

This means that, of the additional protected areas, 82 per cent will be unavailable for timber harvesting on release of the government response, with the remaining areas to be unavailable by 2030 at the latest. Creating the Mount Buangor, Pyrenees and Wombat–Lerderderg national parks will be staged to allow timber harvesting and regeneration (where required) to occur in some areas prior to incorporating those areas in the parks.

While some areas available for domestic firewood collection will be affected by the government response to VEAC's recommendations, there will be no expected impact on supply in the first two years following the release of the government response. The government notes the current challenges in managing supply and demand for domestic firewood while meeting the needs of local communities most reliant on the resource. To support decisions on future resource prioritisation for domestic firewood on public land, DELWP is undertaking statewide research into sustainable supply and into firewood demand.

Of the Crown land licences in the investigation area, more than 94 per cent are unaffected by VEAC's recommendations. For those licences impacted by the change in public land classification, the government will provide licensees with a phase-out period.

The government will manage public land in accordance with the intent of the government response to accepted recommendations, relevant legislation, policies and land management obligations, noting that fully implementing some of the responses will require legislation.

With respect to recreational deer hunting, the government will allow seasonal hunting (by stalking) in the Pyrenees and Wombat–Lerderderg national parks, in the areas where it is currently permitted, and with some restrictions. Given the close proximity of the Wombat–Lerderderg National Park to Melbourne and several townships that are popular with visitors, the season will be limited to the period between May and the start of the spring school holidays.

There will continue to be opportunities for prospecting in the three blocks of the investigation area, including in regional parks, bushland reserves, state forest and historic reserves, where these activities will not impact on environmental and cultural heritage values. The variations to VEAC's recommendations A3 and A4 will further expand the Bendigo Regional Park in the Wellsford block and create an additional regional park in the Wombat–Macedon block, respectively. These regional parks will retain existing opportunities for recreational prospecting along with other recreational activities. These areas will also be available for domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) until June 2029.

Four-wheel driving, trail-bike riding, mountain biking, bushwalking, picnicking and nature observation opportunities are not impacted by the government response to VEAC's recommendations.

While some initial funding for visitor facility upgrades has been provided through Victoria's Great Outdoors package, additional funding for implementing the government response (where required) is subject to budget processes in the context of the government's investment and service delivery priorities.

General recommendations—

Implementation, management and resourcing

Recommendation 1: Aboriginal Place Names

Government collaborates with relevant Traditional Owner groups regarding the naming of recommended new parks and reserves.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government will work with relevant Traditional Owner groups on the naming of new parks and reserves as appropriate. This is consistent with the policies of Geographic Names Victoria, which encourages naming authorities to consider Aboriginal names when assigning new names to public places and infrastructure, and to include Traditional Owners in the naming process.

Implementation

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria, working with Traditional Owners, are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 2: Additional resources

Government allocates:

- a. adequate financial and staff resources for implementation of these recommendations to ensure that the objectives of the report and recommendations are achieved
- b. adequate resourcing of Traditional Owner groups to engage in implementation activities and to collaborate with government in land management
- c. adequate resources for management planning, including fine-scale planning for recreational activities involving consultation with users and other stakeholders.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

The government will explore the most effective and efficient way to implement VEAC's recommendations, including delivering services through a two-way service agreement between DELWP and Parks Victoria.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 3: Assistance for adversely affected individuals and businesses

Government establishes a process to evaluate the impacts on individuals and businesses of implementing recommendations in this report and provides assistance to minimise any effects where required.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The creation of the national parks will be staged to ensure there are no forestry-based business job losses and to align with timing in the Victorian Forestry Plan. This will allow businesses time to transition from the native forest timber industry with support and certainty.

Of the Crown land licences in the investigation area, more than 94 per cent are unaffected by VEAC's recommendations. For those licences impacted by the change in public land classification, the government will provide licensees with a phase-out period.

Implementation

DELWP and the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 4: Interim management and minor boundary adjustments

Upon government acceptance of VEAC's recommendations, relevant land be managed in accordance with those recommendations.

The government accepts this recommendation in part.

The government will manage public land in accordance with the intent of the government response to accepted recommendations, within the constraints of existing legislation, relevant policies and land management obligations, noting that fully implementing some of the responses will require legislation and some particular recreational activities may continue in some parks until the legislation is in place.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 5: Interim management and minor boundary adjustments

Implementation of recommendations allows flexibility for minor boundary adjustments.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government supports the need for flexibility in implementing VEAC's recommendations to allow for minor boundary adjustments or to deal with specific management issues.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 6: Simplifying reservation procedures

Priority be given to minimising field survey where possible and simplifying boundary definition and preparation of gazettal plans to implement government-accepted recommendations, with site survey if required to resolve specific management issues.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government supports the need for simplified boundary definition in the preparation of plans to implement VEAC's recommendations. Field surveys, adopting streamlined procedures and utilising new measurement technologies, will be performed to define boundaries and resolve site specific management issues only where required.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 7: Allowing future changes to Aboriginal title parks and reserves

Government considers legislative amendments to the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* that provide for a process allowing future changes to Aboriginal title land by agreement of the parties. Such amendments should include provisions for additions, boundary adjustments and changes to public land use classification.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

The government supports this proposal in principle, subject to further consultation with Traditional Owner groups, including the three Traditional Owner group entities to whom the State has already made, or committed to make, grants of Aboriginal title under Part 3 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic).

Implementation

The government will work closely with Traditional Owners to ensure there are no adverse impacts on their rights and interests in implementing this recommendation.

The Department of Justice and Community Safety, working with DELWP and Traditional Owners, is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 8: Game sanctuary revocation

To ensure there is no ambiguity, any game sanctuaries in the investigation area declared under the *Game Act 1915* be revoked.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government will revoke the game sanctuary at Mount Cole State Forest.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 9: Landscape connectivity

That small blocks (nature reserves, bushland reserves, stream frontage, bed and banks reserves and road reserves) be managed to maximise their ecological function and value to native species that depend on habitat connectivity, through planning partnerships between Traditional Owners, community groups, government, catchment management authorities, Trust for Nature and private land managers.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government will use several approaches to plan and build partnerships to achieve these objectives including forest and recreational planning processes, Regional Riparian Action Plans and Biodiversity Response Planning (BRP). BRP is a new area-based planning approach to biodiversity conservation in Victoria, enabled under *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*. These approaches are designed to strengthen alignment, collaboration and participation between government agencies, Traditional Owners, non-government agencies and the community. Along with Traditional Owner aspirations, targeted management interventions are prioritised to support the persistence and function of important natural environments.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 10: Catchment management for water production and water quality

Management priorities for national, conservation and regional parks, and heritage river areas include the protection of water quality and yield.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government is committed to improving the health of Victoria's waterways and catchments and supports the addition of these management priorities for national, conservation and regional parks and heritage river areas.

Implementation

Parks Victoria and DELWP are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 11: Domestic firewood access

Government implements processes that prioritise access to domestic firewood on public land in the investigation area to local communities most reliant on this resource.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

The government notes the current challenges in managing supply and demand for domestic firewood while meeting the needs of local communities most reliant on the resource.

DELWP's strategy for domestic firewood prioritises supply and access for local communities or groups with limited or no access to alternative heating and energy. The strategy also outlines the range of options available to DELWP in managing firewood availability and is published on the DELWP website. Following a refresh in 2018, the strategy sets out revised objectives and principles for sustainable firewood management.

To support decisions on future resource prioritisation for domestic firewood on public land, DELWP is undertaking research into sustainable supply and into firewood demand. This statewide research will inform the sustainable management of domestic firewood in Victoria in the medium term.

With respect to the Central West Investigation, some areas currently available for domestic firewood collection will be affected by the government response to VEAC's investigation; however, there will be no expected impact on supply in the first two years following the release of the government response.

In particular, the following will apply:

- The Mount Cole–Pyrenees block retains 11,901 hectares of state forest which will be available for domestic firewood collection (from designated sites).
- In most of the proposed new regional parks in the Wombat–Macedon block and in the Bendigo Regional Park (additions) in the Wellsford block, domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be allowed until June 2029.
- Creating the proposed national parks will be staged to allow for commercial timber harvesting in areas that are currently state forest prior to the areas being included in the parks. In these areas, domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will also be possible until the areas are added to the parks.
- In areas of the proposed national parks that will be unavailable for timber harvesting on release of the government response, domestic firewood collection will not be permitted, except as a last resort to maintain supply to local communities. This provision will only apply for up to two years after the release of the government response.
- Domestic firewood can also be provided as a by-product of forest management activities (e.g. hazardous tree removal for safety purposes and forest health operations).

Further details about domestic firewood supply is provided in [**Appendix 1**](#).

As part of the Victorian Budget 2020/21, the government committed \$335 million over four years to replace old wood, electric or gas fired heaters with new energy-efficient, low cost heating and cooling systems. The program will be open to low-income and vulnerable households across Victoria.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 12: Ecological restoration study

Government establishes an independent research study to determine the most effective restoration treatments for forests whose structure, composition and ecological function have been altered by a history of intensive logging.

Notes:

- The primary objectives would be to achieve Ecological Vegetation Class benchmarks and restore ecological health in regrowth forests.
- Biodiversity conservation outcomes are to be prioritised, while also identifying opportunities for maximising water production and carbon sequestration co-benefits.
- Outputs of the study would include practical guidance for managers of the recommended parks.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

The government acknowledges that VEAC made this recommendation in response to stakeholder feedback about the ecological condition of forests in the Wombat, Mount Cole and/or Wellsford areas.

The government recognises the importance of active forest management to improve the ecological health of the forest.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle subject to resourcing and budget processes.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendation 13: Fire management and research

That:

- a. bushfire risk in parks and reserves continue to be managed as at present, regardless of land tenure, under DELWP's strategic risk-based approach and according to the Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land
- b. research into improved fire management approaches continue on public land in the investigation area.

The government accepts this recommendation.

There will be no reduction in firefighting capacity in Forest Fire Management Victoria because of the government response to this investigation.

The government accepts recommendation 13(a).

With respect to recommendation 13(b), there are long-term research sites in five areas across the Wombat State Forest. The Wombat Fire Effects Study is an experiment designed by the University of Melbourne (School of Forestry) to gain a better understanding of the effects of fire season and frequency with repeated low intensity fire on the ecosystem in mixed eucalypt foothill forest. It commenced in 1984 and studies the effects of different fire regimes on understorey plants, fuels, bats, terrestrial mammals, reptiles, invertebrates, fungi, birds, soils, tree growth, fire behaviour and weather.

These fire effects study areas are located near Spargo Creek (approximately 80 hectares), Barkstead (approximately 25 hectares), Blakeville (approximately 80 hectares), Glenlyon (approximately 130 hectares) and Trentham (approximately 60 hectares). DELWP will ensure that this research continues.

DELWP has also commenced a monitoring program to establish the presence and absence of Greater Gliders within planned burn units in the Wombat State Forest. This will assist DELWP to better understand the effects of planned burning on Greater Glider habitat. In addition, DELWP is planning to expand this approach to a landscape scale study that maps Greater Glider habitat and its condition across the Wombat State Forest. This study will then guide the design and implementation of the future fuel management program in the forest.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

General recommendations –

Public land use categories

VEAC made recommendations for the public land use categories based on Recommendation 1 from VEAC's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report*.

The government response to VEAC's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report* accepted in principle VEAC's recommendation, including that VEAC's public land categories should be incorporated into legislation subject to potential refinement of definitions and further consultation. This position remains unchanged.

The government accepts in principle recommendations A-L, listed below.

The government may refine the legislative purpose of recommendations A-L through the process to develop modernised public land legislation.

A: General recommendations for national parks

That national parks shown on map A (numbered A1 to A4) and described in chapters 3, 4 and 5:

- a. be used to:
 - i. permanently protect the natural environment and natural biodiversity along with underlying ecological structure and supporting environmental processes
 - ii. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - iii. protect historic sites and values
 - iv. provide for ecologically sustainable scientific, educational, inspirational, recreational and visitor opportunities consistent with conserving those values
- b. generally permit the following activities:
 - i. bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation, picnicking
 - ii. camping in designated campgrounds and other areas specified by the land manager
 - iii. car touring, including four wheel driving, on formed roads and tracks that are open to the public
 - iv. trail bike riding on formed roads and tracks that are open to the public
 - v. mountain biking and cycling on formed roads and tracks that are open to the public, and on other tracks and paths specified by the land manager
 - vi. horse riding on roads and tracks specified by the land manager (see note 1)
 - vii. recreational fishing
 - viii. apiculture at licensed sites
 - ix. research, subject to permit
- c. exclude the following activities:
 - i. harvesting of forest products (see note 2)
 - ii. grazing by domestic stock
 - iii. recreational hunting and use of firearms (see note 3)
 - iv. searching for minerals under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority
 - v. exploration and mining, other than continuation of operations within existing permits and licences, as approved
 - vi. dog walking, except as specified by the land manager (see note 4)

- d. include unused road reserves adjoining parks where appropriate
- e. be added to Schedule 2 to the *National Parks Act 1975*.

Notes:

1. Camping with horses, and grazing and feeding of horses is not permitted.
2. Ecological thinning may be carried out where required for ecological or management purposes: for example, subject to clearly defined, transparent and scientifically supported objectives, to restore ecosystems or to return them to a condition more closely resembling their natural condition.
3. Hunting and use of firearms may be authorised by the land manager as part of a pest animal control program.
4. Dogs on lead may be permitted in specified visitor areas and along a limited number of specified tracks, in accordance with management plans.
5. Practical access should continue to be provided to existing private land holdings surrounded by the national parks.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

B: General recommendations for conservation parks

That conservation parks shown on map A (numbered B1 and B2) and described in chapter 5:

- a. be used to:
 - i. permanently protect and restore the natural environment and natural biodiversity
 - ii. protect features of natural, cultural or scientific interest
 - iii. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - iv. enable public recreational and educational use consistent with conserving those values and features above
- b. generally permit the following activities:
 - i. bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation, picnicking
 - ii. camping in designated campgrounds and other areas specified by the land manager
 - iii. car touring, including four wheel driving, on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - iv. trail bike riding on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - v. mountain bike riding and cycling, on formed roads and tracks open to the public, and on other tracks and paths specified by the land manager
 - vi. horse riding on formed roads and tracks specified by the land manager (see note 1)
 - vii. recreational fishing
 - viii. apiculture at licensed sites
 - ix. research, subject to permit
- c. exclude the following activities:
 - i. harvesting of forest products (see note 2)
 - ii. grazing by domestic stock
 - iii. recreational hunting and use of firearms (see note 3)
 - iv. searching for minerals under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority
 - v. dog walking, except as specified by the land manager (see note 4)
- d. include unused road reserves adjoining parks where appropriate
- e. be added to Schedule 3 to the *National Parks Act 1975*.

Notes:

- 1. Camping with horses, and grazing and feeding of horses is not permitted.
- 2. Ecological thinning may be carried out where required for ecological or management purposes, for example, subject to clearly defined, transparent and scientifically supported objectives, to restore ecosystems or to return them to a condition more closely resembling their natural condition.
- 3. Hunting and use of firearms may be authorised by the land manager as part of a pest animal control program.
- 4. Dogs on lead may be permitted in specified visitor areas and along a limited number of specified tracks, in accordance with management plans.
- 5. Practical access should continue to be provided to existing private land holdings surrounded by the conservation parks.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C: General recommendations for regional parks (see note 1)

That regional parks shown on map A (numbered C1 to C7) and described in chapters 3, 4 and 5:

- a. be used to:
 - i. provide opportunities for informal recreation for large numbers of people associated with the enjoyment of natural or semi-natural surroundings or semi-natural open space
 - ii. protect natural and semi-natural landscapes and scenic values
 - iii. protect natural biodiversity to the extent consistent with the above
 - iv. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - v. if specified for individual parks, provide for minor resource extraction not incompatible with all of the above, excluding sawlog and pulpwood harvesting
- b. generally permit the following activities:
 - i. bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation, picnicking
 - ii. camping (see note 2)
 - iii. car touring, including four wheel driving, on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - iv. trail bike riding on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - v. mountain bike riding and cycling on formed roads and tracks open to the public, and on other tracks and paths specified by the land manager
 - vi. dog walking
 - vii. horse riding on formed roads and tracks specified by the land manager (see note 3)
 - viii. recreational fishing
 - ix. searching for minerals under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority
 - x. apiculture at licensed sites
 - xi. research, subject to permit
- c. exclude the following activities:
 - i. harvesting of forest products, except where domestic firewood collection zones are specifically identified
 - ii. grazing by domestic stock
 - iii. recreational hunting and use of firearms (see note 4)
- d. unused road reserves be added to adjoining parks where appropriate
- e. a management plan be prepared for each park
- f. the parks be reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Notes:

1. The general recommendations do not apply to the existing Hepburn Regional Park, over which Aboriginal title has been granted. The Hepburn Regional Park is managed according to the provisions of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act that applied at the time of the grant of Aboriginal title and the Joint Management Plan for the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks; the management framework is similar to these general recommendations for regional parks.
2. While camping is generally allowed in regional parks, it may not be provided in individual parks depending on the characteristics of the land and the patterns of recreation and visitor use.
3. Camping with horses may be permitted in individual parks.
4. Hunting and use of firearms may be authorised by the land manager as part of a pest animal control program.
5. Practical access should continue to be provided to existing private land holdings surrounded by the regional parks.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D: General recommendations for nature reserves

That nature reserves shown on map A (numbered D1 to D18) and described in chapters 3, 4 and 5 according to their specific characteristics:

- a. be used to:
 - i. protect significant natural ecosystems, species and/or geodiversity features
 - ii. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - iii. provide for low levels of recreational use consistent with strict protection and conservation of those values
- b. generally permit the following activities, where compatible with (a):
 - i. bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation, picnicking
 - ii. car touring including four wheel driving, trail bike riding, mountain bike riding and cycling on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - iii. apiculture at licensed sites
 - iv. exploration and mining for minerals and searching for and extraction of stone resources subject to the consent of the Crown land minister under the relevant legislation (see note 2)
- c. exclude the following activities:
 - i. grazing of domestic stock (see note 3)
 - ii. harvesting of forest products
 - iii. recreational hunting and use of firearms (see note 4)
 - iv. searching for minerals under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority
 - v. dog walking (see note 5)
 - vi. horse riding
- d. be permanently reserved for conservation purposes under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Notes:

- 1. These general recommendations generally apply for the land use category. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances.
- 2. Exploration and mining provisions arise from nature reserves being 'restricted Crown land' under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*.
- 3. Grazing may be contracted for ecological or management purposes such as targeted weed control. Off-stream watering can be provided for, where appropriate.
- 4. Hunting and the use of firearms may be authorised by the land manager as part of a pest animal control program.
- 5. On-lead dog walking can continue at D13 Bacchus Marsh Trench Nature Reserve, in accordance with management planning.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

E: General recommendations for bushland reserves

That bushland reserves shown on map A (numbered E1 to E88) and described in chapters 3 and 5 according to their specific characteristics:

- a. be used to:
 - i. protect and restore species and habitats including remnant vegetation and areas with value as habitat linkages
 - ii. protect and maintain scenic features and landscapes
 - iii. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - iv. provide for educational and recreational opportunities and controlled low-intensity exploitation of natural resources not incompatible with the above
- b. generally permit the following activities:
 - i. bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation, picnicking
 - ii. car touring including four wheel driving, trail bike riding, mountain bike riding and cycling on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - iii. searching for minerals under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority
 - iv. apiculture at licensed sites
 - v. exploration for minerals and mining, subject to decisions on particular cases (see note 2)
 - vi. horse riding
 - vii. dog walking as specified by the land manager
- c. exclude the following activities:
 - i. grazing of domestic stock (see note 3)
 - ii. harvesting of forest products
 - iii. recreational hunting and use of firearms (see note 4)
- d. be permanently reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Notes:

- 1. These general recommendations generally apply for the land use category. Exceptions to these may apply to specific reserves in special circumstances.
- 2. Exploration and mining provisions arise from bushland reserves being 'restricted Crown land' under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*.
- 3. Grazing may be contracted for ecological or management purposes such as targeted weed control. Off-stream watering can be provided for, where appropriate.
- 4. Hunting and the use of firearms may be authorised by the land manager as part of a pest animal control program.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

F: General recommendations for historic reserves

That historic reserves shown on map A (numbered F1 to F13) and described in chapters 3 and 5 according to their specific characteristics:

- a. be used to:
 - i. protect places, features and objects of historic cultural interest
 - ii. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - iii. provide for recreation and education associated with appreciation and understanding of the history of the place, feature or object
 - iv. provide for controlled low-intensity exploitation of natural resources not incompatible with all the above and, where relevant (see note 1):
- b. areas with remnant natural vegetation or habitat value be protected
- c. searching for minerals under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority be permitted
- d. apiculture at licensed sites be permitted
- e. low impact exploration for minerals and mining be permitted, subject to consideration of the impact on values in (a) for each application or case
- f. timber harvesting be excluded
- g. grazing be excluded (see note 2)
- h. adjoining unused road reserves be included, where appropriate
- i. if not already appropriately reserved, be permanently reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Notes:

- 1. Not all sites contain values suitable for recreation or other uses described above.
- 2. Grazing may be contracted for ecological or management purposes such as targeted weed control.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

G: General recommendations for state forests

That state forests shown on map A (numbered G1 to G6) and described in chapters 3 and 5:

- a. be used to:
 - i. provide for ecologically sustainable production of hardwood timber and other forest products
 - ii. supply water and protect catchments and streams
 - iii. protect natural biodiversity, scenic and landscape values, and historic cultural values
 - iv. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - v. provide for public recreational and educational uses where this does not conflict with the above
- b. generally permit the following activities:
 - i. harvesting of forest products, including domestic firewood collection where identified by the land manager
 - ii. bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation, picnicking
 - iii. camping including dispersed camping
 - iv. car touring, including four wheel driving, on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - v. trail bike riding on formed roads and tracks open to the public
 - vi. mountain bike riding and cycling on formed roads and tracks open to the public, and on other tracks and paths specified by the land manager
 - vii. horse riding on formed roads and tracks and overnight camping with horses
 - viii. dog walking and overnight camping with dogs
 - ix. recreational hunting and use of firearms
 - x. recreational fishing
 - xi. searching for minerals under a miner's right or tourist fossicking authority
 - xii. apiculture at licensed sites
 - xiii. licensed grazing by domestic stock
 - xiv. mineral exploration and mining
 - xv. extraction of gravel, sand, or road-making materials
 - xvi. research, subject to permit.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

H: General recommendations for water frontage, beds and banks reserves

That water frontage, beds and banks reserves shown on map A:

- a. be used to:
 - i. protect and restore native vegetation and habitat for native fauna
 - ii. protect adjoining land from erosion, and provide for flood passage
 - iii. protect water quality
 - iv. where necessary provide for the passage of artificial flows of water stored within the catchment or transferred from other catchments
 - v. protect scenic and landscape values, and historic cultural values
 - vi. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - vii. provide opportunities for public recreational and educational uses
- b. generally permit the following activities at a level that does not conflict with (a):
 - i. licensed grazing by domestic stock
 - ii. recreational hunting of game species where appropriate
 - iii. where a Riparian Conservation Licence has been issued for a Crown land frontage, recreational use by the public for activities such as walking, nature observation or fishing
 - iv. sand and gravel extraction where this is consistent with (a) above, and where necessary for bed and bank stability
- c. programs to gradually restore frontages on currently grazed, degraded, eroded or salt-affected streambanks, where frontage vegetation is degraded or not regenerating and to protect natural, cultural, recreational and scenic values or water quality be implemented by catchment management authorities, in cooperation with adjoining landholders
- d. water frontage, beds and banks reserves be managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, in conjunction with landholders and community groups (with appropriate management responsibilities assigned through licensing or appointment as committees of management).

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

With respect to H(b)(iii) "Riparian Conservation Licence" should be replaced with "Riparian Management Licence".

Implementation

DELWP and its related agencies are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

I: General recommendations for water production reserves

That water production reserves including storage areas, diversion works and associated facilities shown on map A:

- a. be used to:
 - i. protect water supply and operation of the water supply system
 - ii. protect and restore habitat for native flora and fauna, including their requirements for food, passage/ movement and reproduction
 - iii. protect features of historic interest
 - iv. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - v. provide for appropriate recreational activities and levels of use as determined by the land manager
 - vi. provide for flood passage and drainage requirements of adjacent land and, where necessary provide for the passage of artificial flows of water stored within the catchment or transferred from other catchments
 - vii. maintain streams in a stable condition using environmentally sound techniques
- b. adjoining unused road reserves be included, where appropriate
- c. Crown land which is not already appropriately reserved be permanently reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* for water supply or water distribution and drainage purposes and be managed by the appropriate water authority
- d. public authority freehold land be managed in accordance with the above.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP and relevant water authorities are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

J: General recommendations for community use reserves

That community use reserves shown on map A, according to their specific characteristics:

- a. be used to:
 - i. promote appropriate use of the land by the community
 - ii. provide means of access by the general public where compatible with (i)
 - iii. provide facilities for community use
 - iv. protect the landscape, the natural environment and features of cultural significance where compatible with the above
 - v. protect the rights and interests of Traditional Owners, native title holders and Aboriginal Victorians, and their cultural values
 - vi. provide for a specific use (for example: parkland and garden, recreation, recreation trail, school, public building, environmental education, mineral springs)
- b. features of cultural significance, natural surroundings and the local character and quality of the landscape be maintained or restored where relevant, and where compatible with (a)
- c. harvesting of forest products, hunting, and stone extraction as defined in the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* be excluded
- d. adjoining unused road reserves be included, where appropriate
- e. Crown land which is not already appropriately reserved be reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*
- f. public authority freehold land be managed in accordance with the above.

Note:

1. Where appropriate, a committee of management may be appointed or continue to manage community use reserves in accordance with the general recommendations J.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

K: General recommendations for utilities and government services reserves

That utilities and government services reserves for purposes such as transport, electricity and gas, communications, cemeteries, water, sewerage and earth resources as shown on map A:

- a. be used to:
 - i. provide for the provision of the public utility or government service
 - ii. provide for a specific use (for example: road, railway, port, airport, municipal building, government office or depot, hospital, prison, production of stone, gravel or sand, cemeteries and crematoria)
- b. new services, or utility sites and easements or lines, not be sited in or across national parks, conservation parks or nature reserves
- c. railways, roadsides and other service and utility sites be managed to protect natural values including remnant native vegetation and habitat, Aboriginal cultural heritage values and historic heritage values, as far as practical
- d. road reserves identified as supporting native vegetation of high conservation significance (including for connectivity) be managed to protect, improve and where practical enhance their biodiversity values
- e. complementary community uses be allowed at the discretion of the relevant utility or government agency
- f. should public land used for utilities and government service purposes no longer be required, it be assessed for its natural, recreational and cultural heritage values, and capability for other public uses.

Notes:

- 1. Not all roads and unused road reserves may be distinguishable on map A.
- 2. There are numerous government roads across the investigation area that contain remnant native vegetation. These should be managed to protect this vegetation, as required under relevant legislation, and where it does not interfere with the primary objective of the road for transport.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

L: General recommendations for uncategorised public land

That public land other than that recommended for specific uses in this report, or subject to previous government-accepted specific land use recommendations:

- a. be uncategorised public land
- b. existing legal use and tenure continue for the time being
- c. Crown land be assessed and either:
 - i. retained and assigned to a Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning land manager if it has public land values, or
 - ii. disposed of if assessed as having no public land values and as being surplus to current and future community needs
- d. surplus public authority land be:
 - i. assessed for its potential to meet alternative public uses
 - ii. retained as public land where certain public land values are identified, or
 - iii. disposed of if assessed as having no public land values and as being surplus to current and future community needs.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

M: General recommendations for land leased or licensed for plantations, and plantations

That plantations shown on map A continue under present use and management.

Notes:

- 1. Former VPC land licensed to HVP Plantations with the right to operate a plantation business in perpetuity are beyond the scope of these recommendations.
- 2. Some 139 hectares of leased Macedon plantation land is scheduled to be harvested and returned to the Crown for inclusion in the Macedon Regional Park (see recommendation C7).

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this recommendation.

N: General recommendations for reference areas

That the following areas totalling 1202 hectares shown on map A (numbered N1 to N5) be used as reference areas proclaimed under the *Reference Areas Act 1978*:

N1 Buangor (69 hectares)

N2 Musk Creek (91 hectares)

N3 Ruths Gully (261 hectares)

N4 Ah Kows Gully (475 hectares)

N5 Pyrete Range (306 hectares)

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

Parks Victoria is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

O: General recommendations for heritage rivers

That the areas shown on map A be used as heritage river areas in accordance with the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992*.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

Recommendations – Mount Cole–Pyrenees Block

The Mount Cole–Pyrenees block covers two large areas of public land on the Pyrenees Range near Avoca and the Mount Cole Range near Beaufort, as well as smaller patches of state forest nearby. The block covers 165,790 hectares of which 33 per cent (or 54,760 hectares) is public land.

Through funding in the Victoria's Great Outdoors package, campgrounds in the Mount Cole and Mount Buangor area will be upgraded, including toilet, shelter and signage upgrades, which will enhance the visitor experience in these areas.

A1: Mount Buangor National Park

That the area of 5282 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for national parks on page 29.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government will fully establish the Mount Buangor National Park by 2030 at the latest. However, its creation will be staged to align with timing in the Victorian Forestry Plan (see **Appendix 1**).

Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be permitted in some areas, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in **Appendix 1**.

The park will include opportunities for a range of recreational activities, including horse riding, dog walking on leads and dispersed camping.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

A2: Pyrenees National Park

That:

- a. the area of 15,126 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for national parks on page 29, and
- b. domestic firewood collection cease after the current domestic firewood coupes are completed.

The government accepts this recommendation in part.

The government will fully establish the Pyrenees National Park by 2030 at the latest. However, its creation will be staged to align with timing in the Victorian Forestry Plan (see **Appendix 1**).

Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be permitted in some areas, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in **Appendix 1**.

The park will include opportunities for a range of recreational activities, including horse riding, dog walking on leads and dispersed camping. To provide greater opportunities for deer hunting in the investigation area, the government will allow seasonal recreational deer hunting (by stalking) in the Pyrenees National Park in the areas where it is currently permitted, and with some restrictions.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C1: Pyrenees Regional Park

That:

- a. the area of 2016 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for regional parks on page 33, and
- b. domestic firewood collection cease after the current domestic firewood coupes are completed.

The government accepts this recommendation.

In recommendation C1(b), VEAC recommended domestic firewood collection be allowed in coupes that have been cut but not harvested at the time of park creation and where completion of the coupe (i.e. collection of the wood on the ground), would be allowed for up to two years after park establishment.

The government supports domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) in coupes for up to 2 years from the date the government response is released, or until the supply is exhausted, whichever is earlier.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D1: Lexton Nature Reserve

That the area of 260 hectares shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

Parks Victoria is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D2: Ben Nevis Nature Reserve

That the area of 1088 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D3: Moonambel South Nature Reserve

That the area of 53 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D4: Tanwood South Nature Reserve

That the area of five hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D5: Ben Major Nature Reserve

That the area of 3229 hectares shown on map A including additions totalling 2409 hectares be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

VEAC's *Central West Investigation Final Report* notes there are three current water frontage licences in the southwest corner of the proposed Ben Major Nature Reserve. To reduce the impact on these licence holders, the government will provide a phase out period to allow licensees time to make alternative arrangements.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D6: Waterloo Nature Reserve

That the area of 1696 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria will be responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D7: Rosyth South Nature Reserve

That the area of 13 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

E1 – E30: Bushland reserves

That the areas totalling 572 hectares shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for bushland reserves on page 37.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

E31 – E48: Bushland reserves

That the areas totalling 1081 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for bushland reserves on page 37.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

F1 – F4: Historic reserves

That the areas totalling 1458 hectares shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for historic reserves on page 39.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

G1 – G6: State forest

That:

- a. state forest totalling 11,901 hectares shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for state forests on page 41, and
- b. in accordance with recommendation R8, the Mount Cole Game Sanctuary be revoked and deer hunting be allowed.

The government accepts this recommendation.

With respect to the recommendation concerning the Mount Cole Game Sanctuary, the government accepts this recommendation, noting that the issue of the status of game sanctuaries more generally will be addressed strategically across the state.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation.

H: Water frontage, beds and banks reserves

That the existing water frontage, beds and banks reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for water frontage, beds and banks reserves on page 43.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

I: Water production reserves

That the existing water production reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for water production reserves on page 44.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

J: Community use reserves

That the existing community reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for community use reserves on page 45.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

K: Utilities and government services reserves

That the existing utilities and government services reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for utilities and government services reserves on page 46.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

L: Uncategorized public land

That the existing uncategorised public land shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for uncategorised public land on page 47.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

M: Plantations

That the existing plantations shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for plantations on page 48.

Note: The recommendation does not apply to licensed HVP plantation land (see section 2.2 on page 48).

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

O1: Wimmera River Heritage Area (addition)

That the area of 277 hectares shown on map A be added to the Wimmera River Heritage Area described in Part 6 on Schedule 1 of the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992* and be used as a heritage river area, and a management plan be prepared for the addition in partnership with Traditional Owners.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation. The Victorian Government will work in partnership with Traditional Owners to prepare a management plan for the heritage river area addition.

Recommendations – Wellsford block

The Wellsford block is located east of Bendigo and contains 7,340 hectares of public land, most of which is currently the Wellsford State Forest.

A3: Greater Bendigo National Park (addition)

That the area of 3152 hectares shown on map A, to a depth of 100 metres, be added to the existing Greater Bendigo National Park beyond the investigation area and be used in accordance with the general recommendations for national parks on page 29.

Note: It is intended that the provisions associated with the 100-metre depth limit in much of the existing Greater Bendigo National Park apply to this recommended addition.

The government does not accept this recommendation.

The government does not accept recommendation A3 for the Greater Bendigo National Park (addition), and instead this area will be added to the existing Bendigo Regional Park (to a depth of 100 metres below the surface).

This will support a broader range of recreational activities, provide another area for domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) until June 2029, and provide greater flexibility for the North Central Victorian Goldfields Ground Release. The government supports mining occurring beneath the park addition and acknowledges that some minimally intrusive surface activity may need to occur in the regional park addition to support this.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C2: Bendigo Regional Park (addition)

That

- a. the area of 3950 hectares shown on map A be added to the existing Bendigo Regional Park beyond the investigation area and be used in accordance with the general recommendations for regional parks on page 33 and
- b. up until June 2029, domestic firewood collection be allowed in areas where this will promote the growth of large trees and improve ecological condition, but not be extended to existing parts of the Bendigo Regional Park beyond the Central West Investigation area.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

The government will expand the Bendigo Regional Park to also include the area VEAC recommended for inclusion in the Greater Bendigo National Park (recommendation A3). The additions will be managed according to recommendation C on regional parks on release of the government response and no timber harvesting will be permitted. There are two grazing licences in this area and the licensees will be provided with a phase-out period.

In response to recommendation C2(b), the government supports domestic firewood collection (from designated sites), in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. This will provide continued access to domestic firewood while the government undertakes any ecological restoration study and further research into sustainable supply and firewood demand, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in **Appendix 1**.

In accordance with recommendation C, recreational prospecting, horse riding on formed roads and tracks, and dog walking (including dog sledding) will be permitted in the additions to the regional park.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

K': Utilities and government services reserves

That the utilities and government services reserves shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for utilities and government services reserves on page 46.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

-
1. VEAC advises that the published designation for this recommendation 'M: Utilities and government service reserve' should be 'K: Utilities and government service reserve'. As such, the government response reflects this.

Recommendations – Wombat–Macedon block

The Wombat–Macedon block contains the large area of public land extending from west of Hepburn Springs to Mount Macedon and Long Forest near Melton and includes several smaller forest patches. The block covers 228,770 hectares of which 43 per cent (or 99,110 hectares) is public land.

Through the Victoria's Great Outdoors package, DELWP will progress several initiatives in this block, including upgrading campgrounds and developing new and upgraded walking trails and walking trail facilities.

A4: Wombat–Lerderderg National Park

That the area of 49,553 hectares shown on map A including additions of 29,084 hectares to the existing Lerderderg State Park be used in accordance with the general recommendations for national parks on page 29.

The government accepts this recommendation in part.

The government will create approximately 44,700-hectares of the Wombat–Lerderderg National Park recommended by VEAC. However, approximately 4855-hectares of the recommended park – to the west of Korweinguboorra – will be established as a regional park instead (Barkstead Regional Park²).

Approximately 97 per cent of the proposed national park will be unavailable for timber harvesting on release of the government response (see [Appendix 1](#)). VicForests will be able to continue to access 1,205 hectares of the proposed park, as follows:

- For up to four years after the release of the government response, VicForests will continue to have access to 767 hectares of the proposed park for forest thinning and selective harvesting operations.
- VicForests will continue to be able to access 438 hectares (or 1 per cent) of the approximately 44,700-hectare Wombat–Lerderderg National Park primarily for commercial firewood production and supply of wood-chop logs to commercial licensees. This area will be added to the park by 2030 at the latest to align with the Victorian Forestry Plan.

The park will include opportunities for a range of recreational activities, including horse riding, dog walking on leads and dispersed camping. To provide greater opportunities for recreational deer hunting in the investigation area, recreational deer hunting (by stalking) will be permitted in the national park in the areas where it is currently permitted, and with some restrictions. The season will be limited to the period between May and the start of the spring school holidays.

Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be permitted in some areas, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in [Appendix 1](#).

Barkstead Regional Park

The Barkstead Regional Park will allow recreational prospecting as well as other recreational activities consistent with this public land category (see recommendation C). Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will also continue in this regional park until June 2029, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in [Appendix 1](#).

VicForests will continue to have access to the Barkstead Regional Park primarily for forest thinning and selective harvesting operations until native forest timber harvesting is phased out in accordance with the Victorian Forestry Plan.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

2. Barkstead Regional Park will be a temporary name for this area until an Aboriginal Place Name is confirmed with the relevant Traditional Owner groups, in accordance with recommendation 1.

B1: Hepburn Conservation Park

That the area of 2714 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for conservation parks on page 31.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The park will include opportunities for a range of recreational activities, including horse riding and dog walking on leads.

The government will also consult with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation on potentially granting Aboriginal title to the Hepburn Conservation Park, noting it is contiguous with the Hepburn Regional Park and falls within the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement area.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

B2: Cobaw Conservation Park

That the area of 2532 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for conservation parks on page 31.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The park will include opportunities for a range of recreational activities, including horse riding and dog walking on leads.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C3: Hepburn Regional Park (additions)

That:

- a. the areas totalling 2947 hectares shown on map A be added to the existing Hepburn Regional Park of 3105 hectares and be used in accordance with the general recommendations for regional parks on page 33 and
- b. domestic firewood collection be allowed up to June 2029 in the southern addition to the park where it will promote the growth of large trees and improve ecological condition.

Note: The recommendation does not apply to the existing Hepburn Regional Park over which Aboriginal title has been granted (see recommendation C on page 33).

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

The government notes Hepburn Regional Park is an Aboriginal title/joint managed park with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and will consult with the Corporation on potentially granting Aboriginal title to the Hepburn Regional Park additions.

With respect to recommendation C3(b), the government will allow VicForests commercial licensees access to the southern addition to the Hepburn Regional Park until native forest timber harvesting is phased out in accordance with the Victorian Forestry Plan. There will be no clearfell or seed tree harvesting in this area.

Commercial licensees will be able to undertake forest thinning operations and selective harvesting operations primarily for commercial firewood production. Forest regeneration is not required after forest thinning operations as there is adequate retention of trees.

In the southern addition to the Hepburn Regional Park domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be permitted until June 2029 to benefit local communities, in accordance with relevant legislation and

regulations. This will provide continued access to domestic firewood while the government undertakes any ecological restoration study and further research into sustainable supply and firewood demand, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in **Appendix 1**.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C4: Spargo Creek Regional Park

That:

- a. the area of 1693 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for regional parks on page 33 and
- b. domestic firewood collection be allowed up to June 2029 where it will promote the growth of large trees and improve ecological condition.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

With respect to C4(b), the government will allow VicForests commercial licensees access to this area until native forest timber harvesting is phased out in accordance with the Victorian Forestry Plan. There will be no clearfell or seed tree harvesting in this area.

Commercial licensees will be able to undertake forest thinning operations and selective harvesting operations primarily for commercial firewood production. Forest regeneration is not required after forest thinning operations as there is adequate retention of trees.

Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be permitted until June 2029 to benefit local communities, in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. This will provide continued access to domestic firewood while the government undertakes any ecological restoration study and further research into sustainable supply and firewood demand, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in **Appendix 1**.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C5: Blackwood Regional Park

That:

- a. the area of 3707 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for regional parks on page 33 and
- b. domestic firewood collection be allowed up to June 2029 where it will promote the growth of large trees and improve ecological condition.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

With respect to C5(b), the government will allow VicForests commercial licensees access to this area until native forest timber harvesting is phased out in accordance with the Victorian Forestry Plan. There will be no clearfell or seed tree harvesting in this area.

Commercial licensees will be able to undertake forest thinning operations and selective harvesting operations primarily for commercial firewood production. Forest regeneration is not required after forest thinning operations as there is adequate retention of trees.

Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be permitted until June 2029 to benefit local communities, in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. This will provide continued access to domestic firewood while the government undertakes any ecological restoration study and further research

into sustainable supply and firewood demand, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in **Appendix 1**.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C6: Fingerpost Regional Park

That:

- a. the area of 5442 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for regional parks on page 33 and
- b. domestic firewood collection be allowed up to June 2029 where it will promote the growth of large trees and improve ecological condition.

The government accepts this recommendation in part.

The government notes that Daylesford Spa Pistol Club falls within the proposed Fingerpost Regional Park and the government supports the continued use of this site for a pistol range. The pistol range will be categorised as a community use reserve, with the sub-category of a shooting range.

With respect to C6(b), the government will allow VicForests commercial licensees access to this area until native forest timber harvesting is phased out in accordance with the Victorian Forestry Plan. There will be no clearfell or seed tree harvesting in this area.

Commercial licensees will be able to undertake forest thinning operations and selective harvesting operations primarily for commercial firewood production. Forest regeneration is not required after forest thinning operations as there is adequate retention of trees.

Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites) will be permitted until June 2029 to benefit local communities, in accordance with relevant legislation and regulations. This will provide continued access to domestic firewood while the government undertakes any ecological restoration study and further research into sustainable supply and firewood demand, as set out in the response to recommendation R11 and in **Appendix 1**.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

C7: Macedon Regional Park

That:

- a. the area of 2134 hectares shown on map A including additions of 14 hectares be used in accordance with the general recommendations for regional parks on page 33
- b. 139 hectares of pine plantations be added to the regional park once harvesting has been completed and the lease expires, and
- c. by March 2022, a management plan be prepared in the context of other key sites in the area.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

With respect to recommendation C7(c), the government will prepare a management plan within 24 months of the addition of 139 hectares to the Macedon Regional Park. This may exceed the March 2022 timeframe, as proposed by VEAC.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D8-D13: Existing nature reserves

That the areas totalling 570 hectares shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D14: Tylden Nature Reserve

That the area of 243 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D15: Black Forest Nature Reserve

That the area of 124 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D16: Slaty Creek Nature Reserve

That the area of 138 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation.

The government notes this area includes 85 hectares of Department of Transport (formerly VicRoads) land. The Department of Transport (DOT) supports this site being added to the Slaty Creek Nature Reserve and used as a native vegetation offset.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria, working with DOT, are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D17: Lerderberg River Nature Reserve

That:

- a. the area of 4.7 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35
- b. grazing not be permitted and
- c. infrastructure related to the current water extraction and pumphouse be accommodated.

Note: VEAC supports the development of the recreation trail by Melbourne Water and trail signage highlighting the geological values of this area.

The government accepts this recommendation.

With respect to recommendation D17(b), the government will provide licensees with a phase-out period.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

D18: Long Forest Nature Reserve

That the area of 629 hectares, including the additional area of 20 hectares shown on map A, be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature reserves on page 35.

The government accepts this recommendation in principle.

VEAC has recommended that 20 hectares of Southern Rural Water land that has been identified as surplus to their operational requirements be added to the Long Forest Nature Reserve. The government will work with Southern Rural Water to ensure the boundaries of the land to be declared surplus and included in the reserve consider any needs of Southern Rural Water relating to the reservoir.

The addition of these 20 hectares aligns with the government's *Healthy Waterways Strategy* and provides greater protection for high value upper catchment waterway assets.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

E49-E87: Existing bushland reserves

That the areas totalling 475 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for bushland reserves on page 37.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

E88: Bungal Bushland Reserve

That the area of 679 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for bushland reserves on page 37.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

F5-F13: Historic reserves

That the existing historic reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for historic reserves on page 39.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

H: Water frontage, beds and banks reserves

That the existing water frontage, beds and banks reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for water frontage, beds and banks reserves on page 43.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

I: Water production reserves

That the existing water production reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for water production reserves on page 44.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

J: Community use reserves

That the existing community use reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for community use reserves on page 45.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

K: Utilities and government services reserves

That the existing utilities and government services reserves shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for utilities and government services reserves on page 46.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

L: Uncategorized public land

That the existing uncategorised public land shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for uncategorised public land on page 47.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

L1: Uncategorized public land

That the areas totalling approximately 100 hectares shown on map A be used in accordance with the general recommendations for uncategorised public land on page 47.

The government accepts this recommendation.

VEAC has recommended two areas of land owned by Southern Rural Water that has been identified as surplus to their operational requirements become uncategorised public land. The government accepts this land becoming uncategorised public land and notes that Southern Rural Water intends to sell this land.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

M: Plantations

That the existing plantations shown on map A continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for plantations on page 48.

Note: The recommendation does not apply to licensed HVP plantation land, or to the area recommended for addition to Macedon Regional Park upon completion of harvesting and expiry of the lease (see recommendation C7).

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP is responsible for implementing this recommendation, in consultation with other relevant government departments, agencies and land managers.

O2: Lerderderg River Heritage Area

That the existing Lerderderg River Heritage Area shown on map A and described in Part 15 of the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992* continue to be used in accordance with the general recommendations for heritage rivers on page 49.

The government accepts this recommendation.

Implementation

DELWP and Parks Victoria are responsible for implementing this recommendation.

APPENDIX 1

Victorian Forestry Plan

In November 2019, the Victorian Government released the Victorian Forestry Plan, which will see timber harvesting in all native forests in Victoria cease by 2030. To deliver this plan and allow workers, businesses and communities enough time to transition from the native forest timber industry with support and certainty, the government announced a \$120 million Native Forest Transition Package. The package includes financial assistance, re-employment and re-training support, case management and wellbeing services for any impacted workers.

VEAC's *Central West Investigation Final Report* was released before the Victorian Forestry Plan. To align the government response to VEAC's investigation with the plan, VicForests will continue to have access to some areas of current state forest for timber harvesting prior to their inclusion in proposed new national parks or, in some cases, after their inclusion in regional parks.

This means that of the approximately 50,000 hectares of additional protected areas, 82 per cent (41,518 hectares) will be unavailable for timber harvesting on release of the government response, with the remaining areas to be unavailable by 2030 at the latest. Creating the Mount Buangor, Pyrenees and Wombat–Lerderderg national parks will be staged to allow timber harvesting to occur in some areas, which will remain state forest until harvesting ceases, at which time they will be added to the parks.

VicForests has an ongoing obligation and commitment to support rural industry and communities while achieving the objectives of the Victorian Forestry Plan. VicForests access to these areas will ensure there is no forestry-based business job losses because of the government response to VEAC's Central West Investigation and to meet supply commitments for Licensees (including local timber mills) until 2030.

Timber harvesting in the Central West Investigation area

The following maps identify the areas that VicForests will have access to in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block (Figure 1) and Wombat–Macedon block (Figure 2) until 2030 at the latest, in addition to retained state forest in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block.

This does not mean VicForests will harvest all these areas. Access to these areas will allow flexibility in VicForests' harvesting operations to meet environmental and contractual needs and requirements.

Areas that VicForests will have access to in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees and Wombat–Macedon blocks are all currently state forest and the current forest management zoning will continue to apply in those areas. VicForests will be able to continue to use roads for timber extraction, including to transit through national parks, as per current arrangements. The Timber Utilisation Plan (TUP) will continue to be the tool which VicForests uses to identify areas where it proposes to harvest. VicForests will need to maintain the TUP (i.e. addition of new coupes to and / or amendment of existing coupes on the TUP).

VicForests will be able to access the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block for high-quality appearance grade timber and structural timber to local businesses, as well as posts and firewood. Timber harvesting in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block is a mix of selective harvesting and clearfell / seed tree harvesting. *Armillaria luteobubalina* (a fungus which causes Armillaria root rot) occurs in the Mount Cole area and can lead to tree mortality. Clearfell harvesting is the recommended method to manage the impact of this fungus.

VicForests will be able to access the Wombat–Macedon block primarily for commercial firewood production and the supply of wood-chop logs. Timber harvesting in this block is a mix of forest thinning and selective harvesting operations. Areas available under a Forest Produce Licence will continue to be managed to allow domestic firewood to benefit local communities. There will be no clearfell or seed tree harvesting in this block.

VicForests will not have access to the Wellsford block and, on release of the government response, there will be an immediate moratorium on timber harvesting in that area.

In addition to requirements in the *Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014* and *Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2014* (or as amended), the following additional provisions for timber harvesting and operations in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees and Wombat–Macedon blocks will apply.

Mount Cole–Pyrenees block

Mount Cole

Approximately 3817 hectares of the proposed Mount Buangor National Park will be unavailable for timber harvesting on release of the government response (this includes 2498 hectares of the current Mount Buangor State Park). This also includes a section of the 277-hectare addition to the Wimmera River Heritage Area (recommendation O1).

VicForests will continue to have access to the remaining areas of the proposed park for timber harvesting to ensure it can meet its contractual obligations and to align with timing in the Victorian Forestry Plan. Legislation creating the park will provide for these areas to be progressively added to the park once they have been harvested by VicForests, by 2030 at the latest in accordance with the Victorian Forestry Plan. Regeneration required following harvesting may extend beyond 2030.

Figure 1 identifies the areas VicForests can access until 2030 at the latest.

To protect important values in this area, VicForests will:

- implement an 80-metre buffer from the Beeripmo walk, which will be subject to the same requirements as would apply under 5.6.1.1 of the *Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2014* (or as amended). Where harvesting has previously been completed within this zone, this buffer will not affect VicForests undertaking any required regeneration activities.
- minimise interruption to passage along the Beeripmo walk and impact on associated visitor amenities.
- continue to implement the management prescription for the Mount Cole Grevillea in accordance with the *Management Standards and Procedures for timber harvesting operations in Victoria's State forests 2014* (or as amended).
- not harvest in the proposed 277-hectare addition to the Wimmera River Heritage Area.

Pyrenees

Approximately 8,819 hectares (or nearly 60 per cent) of the proposed national park will be unavailable for timber harvesting on release of the government response. This includes 4,443 hectares of the existing Landsborough Hill Nature Reserve and the Landsborough Nature Reserve.

VicForests will continue to have access to the remaining areas for timber harvesting, to ensure it can meet its contractual obligations and to align with timing in the Victorian Forestry Plan. The legislation creating the park will provide for these areas to be progressively added to the park once they have been harvested by VicForests, by 2030 at the latest in accordance with the Victorian Forestry Plan. Regeneration required following harvesting may extend beyond 2030.

Figure 1 identifies the areas VicForests will be able to access until 2030 at the latest. Access to coupes through areas currently identified as Special Protection Zone (SPZ) may be required. DELWP will work with VicForests to identify these roads while developing the legislation to create the park, and the relevant sections of the SPZ will be excluded from the park to support harvesting outside the SPZs, until such time as they are no longer required by VicForests. Any access through SPZ will be minimised and managed in line with standard SPZ requirements.

Pyrenees Gum is endemic to the area. VicForests will undertake training to enable identification and protection of Pyrenees Gum and exclude it from timber harvesting wherever possible.

Retained state forest

In addition to the areas identified above, VicForests will continue to have access to the retained state forest in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block.

Forest regeneration

For the areas harvested in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block, VicForests will undertake forest regeneration and management in accordance with the *Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014* (or as amended).

Wombat–Macedon block

Figure 2 identifies the areas VicForests can access until 2030. Approximately 97 per cent [or 43,493 hectares] of the proposed national park will be unavailable for timber harvesting on release of the government response (see [Appendix 1](#)).

In the Wombat–Macedon block, the following will apply to the proposed Wombat–Lerderderg National Park and regional park areas:

Proposed regional parks (including Barkstead Regional Park)

- VicForests will have access to the following recommended new regional parks: the southern addition to the Hepburn Regional Park (south-east of Ballan-Daylesford Road), Fingerpost Regional Park, Blackwood Regional Park, Spargo Creek Regional Park and the proposed Barkstead Regional Park.

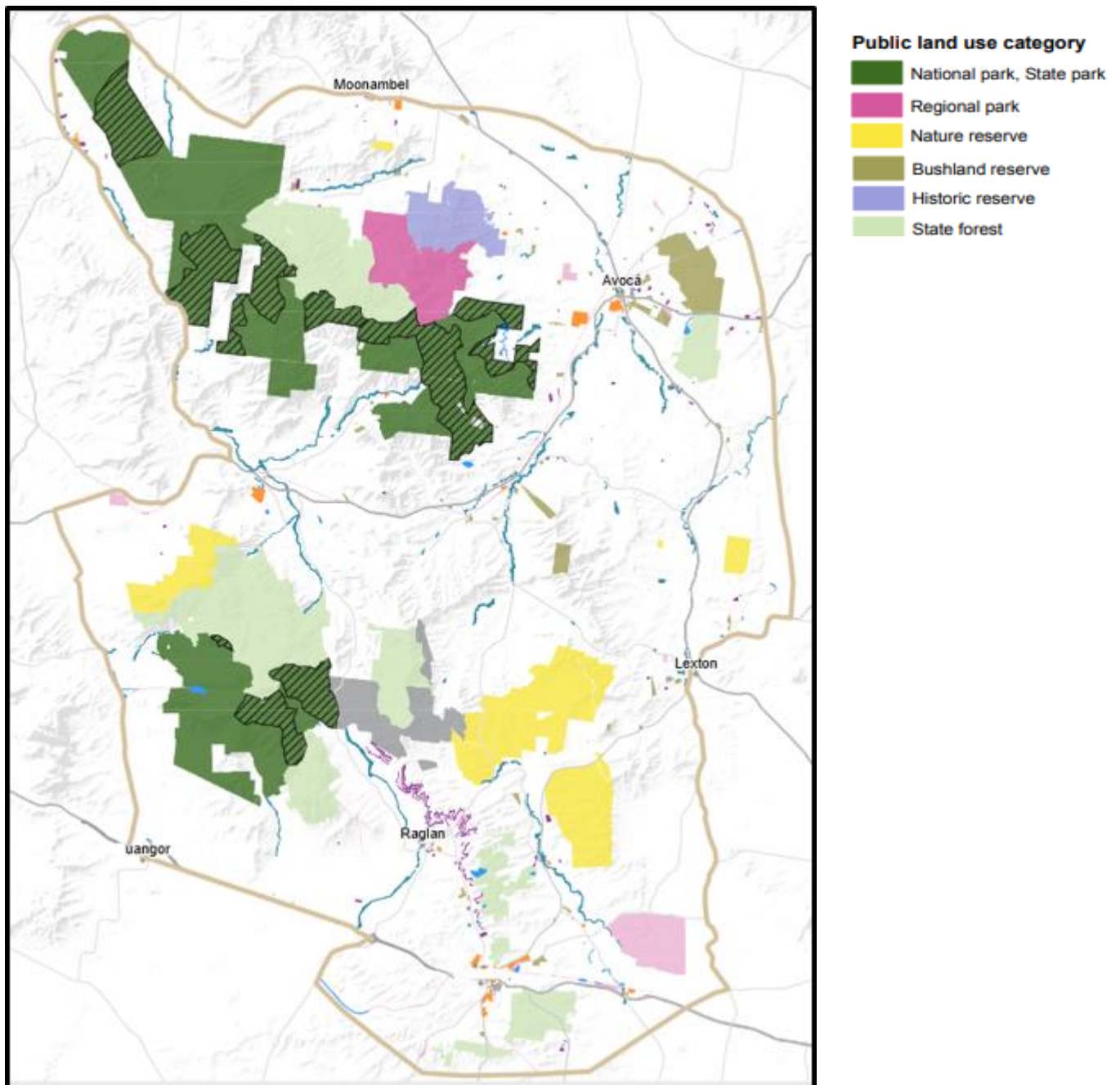
Proposed Wombat–Lerderderg National Park

- VicForests will have access to plantation coupe 209-510-0113 on the December 2019 TUP until 2030 at the latest, with harvesting of this coupe to only be undertaken following VicForests obtaining formal agreement from DELWP.
- VicForests will also have access to the following coupes on the December 2019 TUP until 2030 at the latest:
 - 193-534-0002 (located in the southern addition to the Hepburn Regional Park)
 - 193-535-0007
 - 193-535-0008
 - 193-535-0009
 - 193-535-0106
 - 193-539-0004
 - 195-538-0105
 - 195-538-0106
- VicForests will only have access to the following coupes on the December 2019 TUP (shown as red hatching on the accompanying map) for up to four years after the release of the government response:
 - 208-502-0006
 - 208-502-0007
 - 208-503-0024
 - 208-503-0025
 - 208-503-0026
 - 208-503-0027
 - 208-503-0028
 - 208-503-0029
 - 208-503-0030
- Areas available for VicForests will also be managed to allow domestic firewood to benefit local communities.

Summary of provisions for timber harvesting and domestic firewood

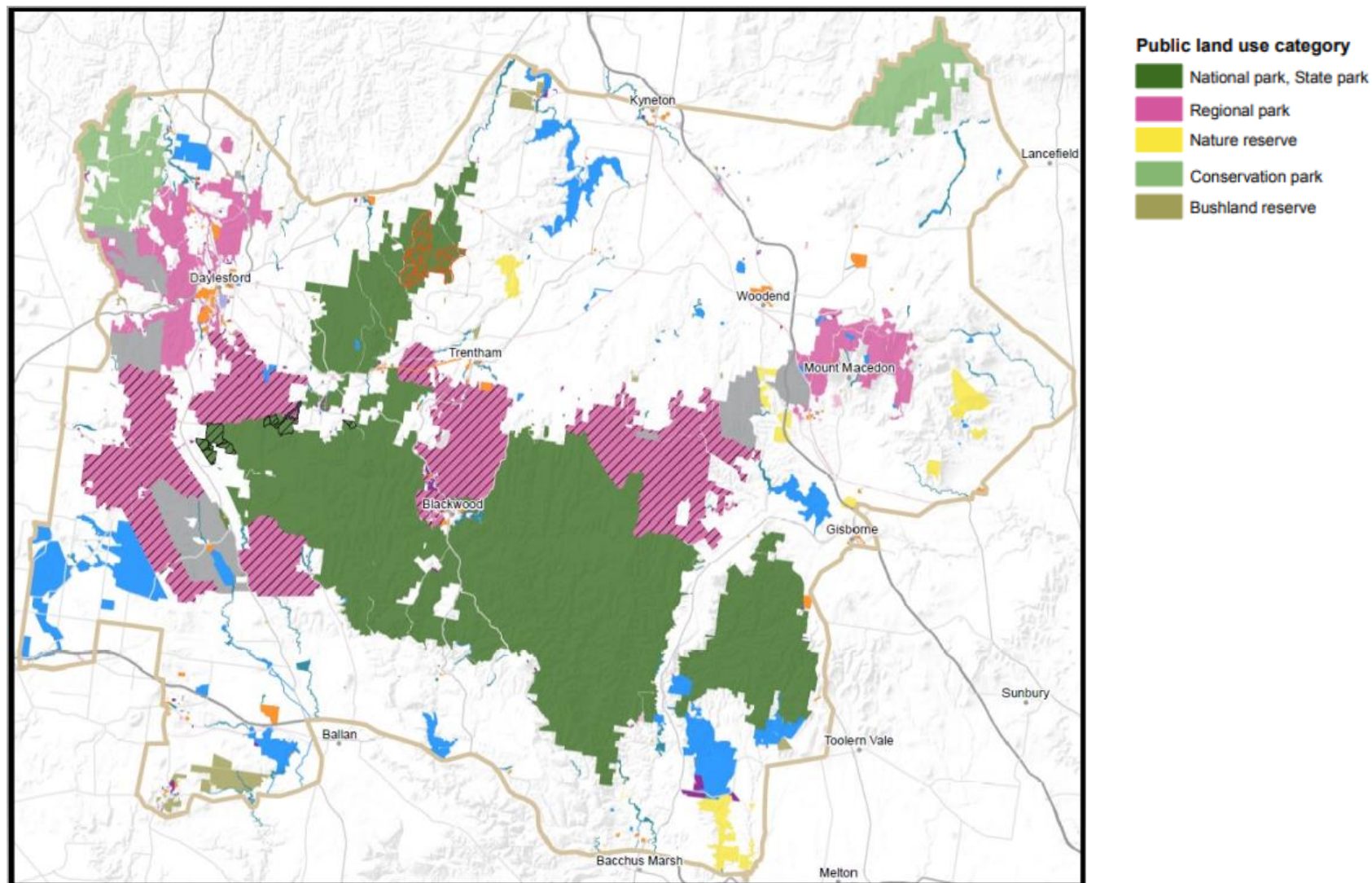
Table 1 provides a summary of the future timber harvesting and domestic firewood collection in national parks, regional parks and state forest in the investigation area.

Figure 1. Map of Mount Cole–Pyrenees block



- Black hatching shows the indicative areas VicForests will be able to access until 2030.
- VicForests will continue to have access to retained state forest in the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block.

Figure 2 – Map of the Wombat–Macedon block



- Black hatching shows the indicative areas VicForests will be able to access until 2030.
- Red hatching shows the areas that VicForests can continue to access for up to four years after the release of the government response.

Table 1 – Summary of future timber harvesting and domestic firewood collection in national parks, regional parks and state forest in the investigation area.

	Mount Cole–Pyrenees block				Wellsford block	Wombat–Macedon block*						
	Mount Buangor National Park	Pyrenees National Park	Pyrenees Regional Park	State forest (retained)	Bendigo Regional Park (additions)	Wombat-Lerderderg National Park	Hepburn Regional Park (southern addition only)	Spargo Creek Regional Park	Blackwood Regional Park	Fingerpost Regional Park	Barkstead Regional Park	Macedon Regional Park additions
Timber harvesting	Permitted in some areas until 2030 at the latest, prior to their inclusion in the parks.		Not permitted on release of the government response.	Permitted.	Not permitted on release of the government response.	VicForests can continue to access 1,206 ha of the proposed park, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 767 ha for up to four years following the release of the government response• 438 ha until 2030 (prior to its inclusion in the park).	Commercial licensees will have access for forest thinning and selective harvesting operations primarily for commercial firewood production until 2030 at the latest.					Not permitted on release of the government response.
Domestic firewood collection (from designated sites)	Permitted in areas available for timber harvesting only, prior to their inclusion in the parks.		Permitted in coupes for up to 2 years from the date the government response is released, or until the supply is exhausted, whichever is earlier.	Permitted.	Permitted until June 2029.	Permitted in areas available for timber harvesting only, prior to their inclusion in the parks.	Permitted until June 2029.					Not permitted on release of the government response.

*There will be no clearfell or seed tree harvesting in this block.