

Victorian Government Response to Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's Yellingbo Investigation Final Report

March 2014



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Print managed by Finsbury Green, Melbourne, March 2014

ISBN 978-1-74326-810-0 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-74326-811-7 (pdf)

Accessibility

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Cover photo: Little Yarra River, Yarra Junction, taken by VEAC

Minister's Foreword

I am pleased to present the Victorian Coalition Government's response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) Yellingbo Investigation.

The Government thanks VEAC for the extensive work undertaken during its investigation and values the important role VEAC plays in providing independent advice to government on matters related to public land.

Through the establishment of the community reference group and during two periods of consultation, VEAC has drawn upon strong scientific and community knowledge to make recommendations to improve the management of public land in the vicinity of Yellingbo, east of Melbourne.

The Victorian Coalition Government supports improved land management to conserve the unique biodiversity and ecological values of public land in the investigation area, particularly Victoria's two faunal emblems, the helmeted honeyeater and the Leadbeater's possum. The establishment of a new area to be called the Yellingbo Conservation Area will enable a more consistent management approach for all public land across this great landscape.

A coordinating body will be established including representatives of the many interested community organisations as well as public land managers, waterway managers and local government. This will provide a more coordinated approach leading to improved management of public land and conservation outcomes in this area.

The Victorian Coalition Government is committed to ensuring Victorians get maximum value, enjoyment and benefit from the State's world class natural assets.



THE HON RYAN SMITH MP

Minister for Environment and Climate Change

Victorian Government Response to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's *Yellingbo Investigation Final Report* July 2013

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council's (VEAC) report on its investigation into public land in the vicinity of the Yellingbo Nature Conservation Area was tabled in Parliament on 5 September 2013.

This Government response addresses each recommendation made by VEAC in its Final Report. Responses should be taken to apply to the whole recommendation where no reference to the specific recommendation number and subsection is provided in brackets (i.e. R1 (a)).

The Government will ensure that appropriate actions are taken to implement the recommendations to the extent that they have been supported, as required under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

Yellingbo investigation area supports a range of significant ecological values including habitat for the threatened iconic species of the helmeted honey eater and lowland Leadbeater's possum. These values are under considerable threat from sources such as pest plants and animals, altered hydrology, potentially inappropriate fire regimes and other consequences of declining native vegetation. Only half of the original vegetation remains in patchy distribution making conservation management complex and difficult.

The Government supports a new approach to reverse habitat fragmentation and improve biodiversity, with a focus on clear coordination arrangements and the protection of high conservation value areas as a priority. The government also recognises the importance of other economic and social values in the investigation area and implementation will be phased to allow communities to adjust to the new arrangements. An extensive network of community organisations and public land management committees have worked hard over many decades to improve the natural values of the area. Community participation and stewardship will continue to play a key role in the new coordinated approach and assist in improving the values of the area.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 – Implementation resources

Government allocates adequate financial and staff resources for implementation of these recommendations and ensures that the objectives of the report and recommendations are achieved.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will ensure that departments and agencies are appropriately resourced to implement supported recommendations as required under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*.

Recommendation 2 – Resources for ongoing land management

Government allocates additional resources to address current and future public land management needs in the investigation area, with priority given to biodiversity conservation, pest plant and animal control, fire management planning and fire preparedness, and on-ground staff presence particularly with a view to improving current levels of compliance with regulations.

The Government supports this recommendation in principle.

The Government will consider requests for additional resourcing for biodiversity conservation, pest plant and animal control and fire management and preparedness where required to implement the objectives of the supported recommendations. Land managers will be responsible for identifying priority areas where funding is needed to support implementation. Resources required to implement supported recommendations, that exceed current funding arrangements, will be subject to normal budgetary processes.

The Government's response to R5 will also assist and reduce the costs of compliance by enabling a uniform set of regulations to apply to the entire Yellingbo Conservation Area.

Recommendation 3 – Interim management and minor boundary adjustments

Upon government acceptance of the recommendations in this report that:

- (a) relevant land be managed in accordance with accepted recommendations
- (b) subsequent implementation of the recommendations allow flexibility for minor boundary adjustments.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government will ensure that land in the investigation area will be managed in accordance with all supported recommendations. Minor boundary adjustments may be made during implementation to provide for sensible and effective management of the public land in the investigation area.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will be responsible for assisting land managers to identify the changes in land they manage.

Recommendation 4 – Boundary identification

Upon government acceptance of the recommendations in this report that priority be given to the identification of public land boundaries by graphical/digital means, especially for reserves along streams, with on-site survey if required to resolve specific management issues.

The Government supports this recommendation in principle.

The Government will prioritise the identification of public land boundaries where they are needed to implement accepted recommendations. Priority will be given to proposed changes in land tenure that require legislative amendments for implementation. The use of graphical/digital means where possible is preferred, however, the Government acknowledges that on ground surveying will likely be required to resolve specific issues.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

STATE EMBLEMS CONSERVATION AREA

Recommendation 5 – State Emblems Conservation Area

That a State Emblems Conservation Area be designated to include the 2940 hectare area shown on figure 3.1 and in table 3.1, and that this area:

- (a) provide for integrated management of the component land for the overall protection or enhancement of biodiversity and ecological values
- (b) be managed in accordance with directions set out in box 3.1 which form a part of this recommendation, and
- (c) be managed under section 19B and 19F of the *National Parks Act 1975* and added to a new Schedule Four A 'Conservation Landscapes' created for the protection of fragmented public land within specified landscapes and for the integrated management of the designated land for nature conservation (also see note 1)

and that:

- (d) the individual public land units listed in table 3.1 be reserved according to the recommendations A, C and E applying specifically or generally to the relevant designated public land use category
- (e) the *National Parks Act 1975* be amended if required to allow for:
 - (i) management agreements with public authorities to manage specified land included on Schedule Four A (recommendation R5(d), above), and
 - (ii) conservation agreements with adjacent landholders, for land on Schedule Four A (recommendation R5(d), above) within 100 metres of both a permanent waterway and the private land boundary
- (f) such agreements be made as appropriate for land specified in recommendations A2, C1 to C8 and E1, and
- (g) the relevant public land managers continue to have direct management responsibility for the respective public land units, including where that relates to broader scale planning responsibilities such as fire management and planning.

Note:

1. Provisions of the *National Parks Act 1975* and the regulations under the Act are to apply

The Government supports this recommendation in principle.

The Government supports VEAC's recommendation to better integrate the management of the public land shown on figure 3.1 of the Final Report in order to improve the protection of its biodiversity and ecological values. The Government will therefore establish an area to be called the Yellingbo Conservation Area under the *National Parks Act 1975*. The appropriate legislative detail will be determined during implementation and may vary from that specified in R5(c).

Parks Victoria, the current land manager of the majority of the area will manage the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area, other than areas managed by public authorities or subject to conservation agreements established in accordance with R5 (e(ii)).

The Government will seek to amend the *National Parks Act 1975* to provide for the management of areas within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area by public authorities. Zoos Victoria will therefore be able to continue to manage the area of the existing Coranderrk Nature Conservation Reserve within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area. This will enable their continued important work on the conservation of threatened species.

The Government also supports amending the *National Parks Act 1975* to provide for the management of Crown frontages within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area by adjacent land owners as recommended in R5 (e(ii)). Conservation agreements may apply to other frontages within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area where appropriate, in addition to those suggested in R5 (f). The agreements will be consistent with and reflect the broader scale planning responsibilities of the relevant public land managers for matters such as fire management and planning. Partnering with adjacent land owners through the establishment of conservation agreements along Crown frontages will help enhance the biodiversity and ecological values of these areas and is consistent with the Government's *Environmental Partnerships* and the *Victorian Waterway Management Strategy*.

The Government also supports the removal of Haining Park from the existing Schedule Three of the *National Parks Act 1975* and its inclusion within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area. The Final Report identifies that there may be further scope for improving educational and conservation opportunities at Haining Farm. As such, Parks Victoria will be responsible for undertaking an assessment of the current uses and future opportunities for this area.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will be responsible for the establishment of the Yellingbo Conservation Area.

STATE EMBLEMS CONSERVATION AREA COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Recommendation 6 – State Emblems Conservation Area Coordinating Committee

That:

(a) State Emblems Conservation Area Coordinating Committee be established to oversee and coordinate land management for nature conservation and biodiversity programs in the State Emblems Conservation Area, set strategic directions and policies, provide guidance for land management, and increase the profile of the biodiversity and ecological values of the area and their protection;

and that

(b) the coordinating committee be established under section 12 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*

(c) the Coordinating Committee be made up of a representative from each of Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Yarra Ranges Council, Cardinia Shire Council, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Zoos Victoria, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, Trust for Nature, and four community representatives: three nominated by Yarra Ranges Council and one nominated by Cardinia Shire Council

(d) a convener, who is not from one of the member organisations, be appointed to act as independent chairperson, and

(e) the role of the committee outlined in box 3.2, which forms part of this recommendation, be the basis for the formal functions of the committee.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government acknowledges the need for improved coordination of the management of the Yellingbo Conservation Area in order to conserve its significant biodiversity and ecological values. Establishing strategic priorities and clear directions for the area will assist land managers, local government and the community to work in partnership to achieve better environmental outcomes in the area.

Improved collaboration between the various agencies and the community will be done through the establishment of the Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee, under section 12 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*.

The coordinating committee will seek to improve coordination and collaboration between land managers and other agencies involved in the management of the Yellingbo Conservation Area.

The coordinating committee will also play a key role in issues that arise at a regional level (e. g planning for bush fire control, tourism, and pest plants and animals). The coordinating committee will be a point of contact for engagement and liaison with stakeholders on matters relating to land management.

An independent convener will be appointed by the Minister to coordinate the actions of the coordinating committee and provide advice on its operation and performance as requested.

To ensure community representation is maintained in the proposed coordinating committee, Government supports the proposal for local government to nominate representatives from their communities as outlined in R6(c). Parks Victoria will work with Yarra Ranges and Cardinia Shire councils to outline the requirements and process for community representation on the coordinating committee.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries is responsible for the implementation of this recommendation, with support from Parks Victoria, departments and agencies on the coordinating committee.

NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVES

Recommendation A – General recommendations for nature conservation reserves

That the nature conservation reserves numbered A1 to A3, as shown on map A:

- (a) be used to:**
 - (i) conserve and protect species, communities or habitats of indigenous flora and fauna**
 - (ii) provide for educational and scientific study, where consistent with (i) above**
 - (iii) provide for recreation by small numbers of people, at the discretion of the land manager and where consistent with (i) above**
 - (iv) identify and protect cultural heritage values, where consistent with (i) above,**
- (b) generally permit the following activities, where compatible with (a):**
 - (i) bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation, picnicking**
 - (ii) for Crown land, 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) hunting and use of firearms (see note 4)**
 - (iv) solid fuel fires at any time of year (see note 5)**
 - (v) dog walking (see note 6)**
 - (vi) horse riding,**
- (d) be permanently reserved for conservation purposes under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and included in a new schedule Four A 'Conservation landscapes' of the *National Parks Act 1975* as part of the State Emblems Conservation Area in accordance with recommendation R5(d).**

Notes:

1. The above management objectives and land use recommendations are those that 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 conservation 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 but current licences in the recommended nature conservation reserves as shown on map A should cease as soon as possible, and grazing (if any) removed from these areas.
4. Hunting and the use of firearms may be authorised by the land manager as part of a pest animal control program.

5. Fire may be utilised as a land management tool, including for public safety, where compatible with ecological values. Existing picnic and barbecue facilities may be retained at Avard Park, at the discretion of the land manager and in accordance with management planning.
6. On-lead dog walking is permitted to continue only along Menzies Creek in recommended A3 Sassafra Creek Nature Conservation Reserve, and in accordance with management planning for that reserve.

The Government supports this recommendation in principle.

Government supports VEAC's recommendation to improve the management consistency across the three nature conservation reserves in the investigation area by including them in the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area. Consolidation under the *National Parks Act 1975* will enable uniform regulations to apply and the area to be managed in a consistent manner. The appropriate legislative detail will be determined during implementation and may vary from that specified in RA(d).

Government supports that the area remains Restricted Crown Land for the purposes of the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* and subject to the provisions of the *National Parks Act 1975* regarding works by public authorities.

To improve the biodiversity values of the riparian land and the health of the waterways, Government will aim for grazing, other than for ecological or other management purposes, to be phased out in accordance with RA ((c) (i)), with the small number of current licences in the nature conservation reserves ending on 30 September 2014. Licence holders will be encouraged to enter into conservation agreements under the *National Parks Act 1975*, as proposed in R5, to continue to manage the biodiversity and ecological values of their frontages. Where licence holders enter into such agreements, grants for fencing, off stream watering, weed control and revegetation may be available where priorities align with Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program. Reduced water licence fees may also apply where licence holders fence their frontages as part of a conservation agreement. The progressive phase out, will protect the highest value conservation areas as a first priority.

To balance the social values of the area with protecting the highest value conservation areas, a phase out timetable for dog walking and horse riding will be developed, with consideration given to allowing on-lead dog walking and horse riding on formed tracks in areas that do not demonstrate high conservation value.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries with advice from the coordinating committee on the phase out timetable for dog walking and horse riding arrangements will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation A1 – State Emblems Nature Conservation Reserve

That:

- (a) **the area of 1662 hectares shown on map A as the State Emblems Nature Conservation Reserve be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature conservation reserves**

and

- (b) **this area be managed in accordance with recommendations R5 and R6 and directions set by the State Emblems Conservation Area Coordinating Committee.**

Notes:

1. To facilitate community education and awareness of nature conservation issues, and to provide for landscape revegetation or restoration, the nursery and education centre at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve may continue to operate within the reserve, at the discretion of the land manager.
2. The fire management plan for the area of the current Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve should be finalised as soon as possible.

The Government supports this recommendation.

Parks Victoria and other relevant land managers will manage this area in accordance with the general recommendations for Nature Conservation Reserves as well as the directions and priorities established by the Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee.

In addition to the existing fire management plan under preparation, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries is currently developing a Strategic Bushfire Management Plan for the East Central Bushfire Risk Landscape in collaboration with managers of public and private land, community and interested stakeholders. The strategic planning is being undertaken at a 'bushfire risk landscape' scale which enables the development of strategies that respond to how bushfires behave. The strategic planning process has identified Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve as an important environmental asset in this landscape, and will therefore be considered in the development of bushfire management strategies for the landscape.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Parks Victoria will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation with assistance from agencies involved in fire management and planning. The fire management plan will be completed as soon as possible.

Recommendation A2 – Coranderrk Nature Conservation Reserve

That:

- (a) the area of 144 hectares shown on map A as the Coranderrk Nature Conservation Reserve be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature conservation reserves, except that**
 - (b) public access and recreation including bushwalking, nature observation, heritage appreciation and picnicking may continue to be limited at the discretion of the land manager;**
- and**
- (c) this area be managed in accordance with recommendations R5 and R6 and directions set by the State Emblems Conservation Area Coordinating Committee.**

Note:

1. Zoos Victoria should continue to manage this nature conservation reserve.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government continues to support Zoos Victoria's management of the existing Coranderrk Nature Conservation Reserve within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area. The area is an important asset for Zoos Victoria's important conservation recovery program for the helmeted honeyeater and is located adjacent to Healesville Sanctuary. A predator exclusion fence around both Coranderrk Nature Conservation Reserve and Healesville Sanctuary has recently been installed to improve threatened species recovery programs undertaken on-site. This action may require a restriction to public access at certain times at the discretion of Zoos Victoria.

Zoos Victoria will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation A3 – Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve

That:

- (a) the area of 243 hectares shown on map A as the Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve be used in accordance with the general recommendations for nature conservation reserves;**
- and**
- (b) this area be managed in accordance with recommendations R5 and R6 and directions set by the State Emblems Conservation Area Coordinating Committee.**

Notes:

1. On-lead dog walking is permitted to continue along Menzies Creek, and in accordance with management planning.
2. Existing barbecue facilities may be retained at Avard Picnic Ground at the land manager's discretion.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Sassafras Creek Nature Conservation Reserve will be managed as part of the Yellingbo Conservation Area by the current land manager, Parks Victoria in accordance with the above recommendation. Arrangements for areas currently managed by committees of management will be determined during implementation.

Parks Victoria will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

TRUST FOR NATURE PROTECTED AREAS

Recommendation B – General recommendations for Trust for Nature protected areas

That the Trust for Nature protected areas as shown on map A, according to their specific values:

- (a) be used to:
 - (i) conserve and protect species, communities or habitats of indigenous flora and fauna
 - (ii) provide for educational and scientific study, where consistent with (i) above
 - (iii) provide for recreation by small numbers of people at the discretion of the land manager, where consistent with (i) above
 - (iv) identify and protect cultural heritage values, where consistent with (i) above;
- (b) continue to be managed by Trust for Nature in accordance with the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972*, and:
 - (i) should these areas no longer be required by Trust For Nature, that the areas be transferred to the Crown or other government agency; and
 - (ii) be permanently reserved for conservation purposes under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* or protected through another appropriate mechanism such as a conservation covenant.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government continues to support the excellent work undertaken by Trust for Nature in managing the significant biodiversity and ecological values of their protected areas. Should these areas no longer be needed by Trust for Nature, Government will consider the appropriate management arrangements at that time.

Trust for Nature will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

NATURAL FEATURES RESERVES

Recommendation C – General recommendations for natural features reserves

That the natural features reserves, as shown on map A, according to their specific characteristics:

- (a) be used to:
 - (i) protect natural features and values
 - (ii) protect and restore areas with remnant vegetation or habitat value and conserve indigenous flora and fauna
 - (iii) protect water quality where appropriate
 - (iv) protect historic and Aboriginal cultural heritage features, values and sites
 - (v) provide opportunities for education and recreation, at levels consistent with (i) to (iv) above
 - (vi) maintain scenic features and the character and quality of the local landscapes
 - (vii) preserve features of geological or geomorphological interest;
 - (b) generally permit the following activities:
 - (i) exploration for minerals and mining, subject to decisions on particular cases
 - (ii) prospecting and apiculture;
 - (c) exclude the following activities:
 - (i) timber harvesting
 - (ii) domestic stock grazing in bushland and streamside reserves and in stream frontages under riparian management or conservation licences or agreements (see notes 1 to 4);
- and
- (d) include adjoining unused road reserves where appropriate ecological or recreational values and minimal impacts on other uses are identified
 - (e) be permanently reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* if not already appropriately reserved; or be managed in accordance with the above, if public authority owned land;
- and that
- (f) any licences permitting grazing that are subject to transfer through sale of nearby private land should not be renewed.

Notes:

1. All water frontage grazing licences are recommended to be phased out by the end of 2018 on streamside reserves (see recommendations C1-C8).
2. Grazing may be contracted for ecological or management purposes such as targeted weed control.
3. Unless previously agreed otherwise under the Melbourne Water Stream Frontage Management Program, all future changes to licences including those recommended here (such as conversion to a landholder conservation agreement) should align with the public-private land boundaries.

4. The removal of licensed grazing does not necessarily compel the removal of stock watering; off-stream watering can be provided for, where appropriate.
5. Emerald Bushland Reserve (Hogan Park) no longer has a BMX track as referred to in the relevant LCC Melbourne District 2 Review recommendations.

The Government supports this recommendation.

Government supports VEAC's recommendation for the management of Natural Features Reserves in the investigation area. Natural Features Reserves provide many opportunities for recreation (such as walking, cycling and on-leash dog walking), education, as well as the protection of remnant vegetation and habitat. Government supports that the area remains Restricted Crown Land for the purposes of the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*. The appropriate legislative detail will be determined during implementation and may vary from that specified in RC (e).

Grazing, other than for ecological or other management purposes, will be progressively phased out in accordance with RC ((c)(ii)) with all water frontage licences being phased out by 30 September 2018. Licence holders will be encouraged to enter into conservation agreements to continue to manage the important biodiversity and ecological values of their frontages. Where licence holders enter into such agreements, grants for fencing, off stream watering, weed control and revegetation may be available where priorities align with Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program. Reduced water licence fees may apply where licence holders fence their frontages as part of a conservation agreement.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Parks Victoria will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation C1-8 – Streamside reserves

That:

- (a) the area of 695 hectares shown on map A as streamside reserves and labelled C1 to C8 be used in accordance with the general recommendations for natural features reserves**

and

- (b) be permanently reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and included in a new Schedule Four A 'Conservation landscapes' of the *National Parks Act 1975* as part of the State Emblems Conservation Area in accordance with recommendation R5(d)**

- (c) be managed in accordance with recommendations R5 and R6 and directions set by the State Emblems Conservation Area Coordinating Committee**

and that

- (d) domestic stock grazing be excluded along the Yarra River upstream of the existing Warramate Hills Nature Conservation Reserve (recommendation C1) and the lower Hoddles and Wet Lead Creeks (recommendation C2) from two years of the date of government acceptance of these recommendations through either conversion to landholder conservation agreement in accordance with recommendation R5(e)(ii) with grazing excluded or surrender of licences, with agreement boundaries to follow cadastral boundaries,**

- (e) domestic stock grazing be excluded along the streamside reserves C3-C8 by the end of 2018 through either conversion to landholder conservation agreement in accordance with recommendation R5(e)(ii) with grazing excluded or surrender of licences, with agreement boundaries to follow cadastral boundaries (see note).**

Note:

1. The term of any licences permitting grazing should be converted to annual until phased out in 2018.

The Government supports this recommendation in principle.

The Government supports VEAC's recommendation for the management of streamside reserves labelled C1 to C8 on map A of the Final Report. These reserves will be included in the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area to be established under the *National Parks Act 1975*. The appropriate legislative detail will be determined during implementation and may vary from that specified in RC1-8(b).

To improve the biodiversity values of the riparian land and the health of the waterways, Government will aim grazing to phase out grazing of areas C1 and C2 by 30 September 2016, and all water frontage licences in the remaining areas (C3 to C8) will be phased out by 30 September 2018. Landholders will be encouraged to take out conservation agreements under the proposed amendment to the *National Parks Act 1975* to continue to contribute to the management of the important biodiversity and ecological values of these streamside reserves. The progressive phase out, will protect the highest value conservation areas as a first priority.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Parks Victoria will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation C9– Wright Forest Bushland Reserve

That:

(a) The area of 126 hectares shown on map A as Wright Forest Bushland Reserve be used in accordance with the general recommendations for natural features reserves;

and

(b) be permanently reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* and included in a new Schedule Four A 'Conservation landscapes' of the *National Parks Act 1975* as part of the State Emblems Conservation Area in accordance with recommendation R5(d)

(c) be managed in accordance with recommendations R5 and R6 and directions set by the State Emblems Conservation Area Coordinating Committee.

Note:

1. On-lead dog walking is allowed to continue as permitted by the land manager.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government supports VEAC's recommendation for the management of Wright Forest Bushland Reserve which provides a wide range of recreational opportunities which are valued and enjoyed by the local community. Wright Forest Bushland Reserve also has a number of important ecological values which will be protected by inclusion within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area under the *National Parks Act 1975*. The appropriate legislative detail will be determined during implementation and may vary from that specified in RC9(b).

The area will be managed in accordance with supported recommendations and the priorities and directions set by the coordinating committee.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Parks Victoria will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

SERVICES AND UTILITIES AREAS

Recommendation D – General recommendations for services and utilities areas

That:

(a) reserves and easements for public services and utilities such as transport, electricity and gas, communications, cemeteries, water and sewerage as shown on map A be used for those purposes;

and that

(b) new services, or utility sites and easements or lines, not be sited in or across nature conservation reserves

(c) railways, roadsides and other service and utility sites be managed to protect natural values including remnant native vegetation and habitat, and Aboriginal cultural 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; and

(e) should public land used for service or utility 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 supports this recommendation.

The Yarra Ranges and Cardinia shire councils will continue to be responsible for the management of roadsides and road reserves in accordance with the above recommendation and with consideration of broader fire management planning for the area.

COMMUNITY USE AREAS

Recommendation E – Recommendations for community use areas

That the community use areas, as shown on map A, according to their specific characteristics:

(a) be used as recreation areas and trails, parklands and gardens or for education and other community purposes; and

(b) provide for a broad range of recreational and leisure activities including organised sport, walking, cycling and picnicking

(c) provide for education and public enjoyment in schools, public halls, kindergartens, libraries, museums and other similar areas

(d) provide for appropriate facilities

(e) maintain or restore features of cultural significance, natural surroundings and the local character and quality of the landscape where relevant, and where compatible with the above

(f) exclude harvesting of forest products, hunting and stone extraction,

and

(g) if Crown land which is not already appropriately reserved, be reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, or

(h) if public authority land, be managed in accordance with the above.

Notes:

1. Where appropriate, a committee of management may be appointed or continue to manage community use areas in accordance with the general recommendation E.
2. Some areas contain significant environmental values which should be protected.
3. Monbulk Scout Hall is recommended to be expanded onto a small section of approximately 0.1 hectares of the adjoining Nathania Springs Creek Bushland Reserve. Public land use shown on map A reflects the small excision for community use area – buildings in public use.

The Government supports this recommendation.

The Government supports VEAC's recommendation to excise part of the Nathania Springs Creek Bushland Reserve, currently managed by Parks Victoria, to enable the expansion of the Monbulk Scout Hall.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries will be responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

Recommendation E1 – Haining Education Area

That:

- (a) the area of 69 hectares shown on map A as Haining Park be used in accordance with the general recommendations for community use areas
- (b) the current use of the area be changed to provide for other forms of land management and educational opportunities with a greater emphasis on sustainability, including improved protection of riparian areas and restoration of habitat for the helmeted honeyeater and lowland Leadbeater's possum,

and that

- (c) this area be removed from Schedule Three of the National Parks Act 1975 and be permanently reserved under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* for the purposes of public education about environmental sustainability and habitat restoration; and
- (d) this area be included in the recommended new schedule Four A of the *National Parks Act 1975* as part of the State Emblems Conservation Area and be managed in accordance with recommendations R5 and R6.

Note:

1. Council notes that part of this area (Lot 1907 Don Road) is a small residential block. This site can be disposed of if no public use is identified.

The Government supports this recommendation.

Government welcomes VEAC's identification of future opportunities for the use of Haining Park, consistent with the intention of environmental education and conservation for which it was gifted to the *Victorian Conservation Trust in 1974*. Parks Victoria, with advice from the Yellingbo Conservation Area Coordinating Committee, will investigate future opportunities for the site such as the restoration of floodplain habitat for the helmeted honeyeater and the lowland Leadbeater's possum as well as opportunities for improved environmental education.

In the interim, Haining Park will be removed from Schedule Three of the *National Parks Act 1975* and the Haining Farm area included within the proposed Yellingbo Conservation Area under the *National Parks Act 1975*. The appropriate legislative detail will be determined during implementation and may vary from that specified in RE1(c).

Lot 1907, Don Road will be excluded from the Yellingbo Conservation Area and will be assessed by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries for its public land value. Should no public land value be identified, the land will be disposed of.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Parks Victoria are responsible for the implementation of this recommendation.

OTHER AREAS

Recommendation F – Recommendations for regional park, state forest, historic and cultural features reserves

That the areas shown as regional park, state forest, historic and cultural features reserves on map A, continue to be used and managed in accordance with the relevant government accepted LCC Melbourne District 2 Review final recommendations for the respective public land use categories.

The Government supports this recommendation.

Land managers will continue to manage these areas in accordance with the previously accepted recommendations of the Land Conservation Council's Melbourne District 2 Review.

UNCATEGORISED PUBLIC LAND

Recommendation G – General recommendations for unclassified public land

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

- (a) be unclassified 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 and Primary Industries 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 supports this recommendation.

Existing land managers will continue to manage the land in accordance with its legal status and tenure.

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