



JAMES MERLINO MP

STATE MEMBER FOR MONBULK



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MEDIA RELEASE

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PROTECTING THE HELMETED HONEYEATER

The Helmeted Honeyeater are big winners in the *Victorian Budget 2016/17* with \$400,000 to help protect and grow populations of Victoria's bird emblem.

The funding will be used to purchase land for new habitat. The Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater Group have explored several suitable land sites that are ideally suited to support and nurture the species' small but growing population.

Helmeted Honeyeaters, endemic to Victoria, have been quietly making a comeback from near-extinction in Melbourne's eastern outskirts through a decades-long program of initiatives to protect habitat and boost population numbers.

Last year the Andrews Labor Government released 18 captive-bred birds into the wild, the largest such release in Victoria's history, and also provided \$175,000 for the *Helmeted Honeyeater Recovery Program* to extend a supplementary feeding program.

The feeding program has been crucial in allowing the birds to fight back from near-extinction and is a major reason for the recent upswing in numbers, which are currently in excess of 150 and represent the biggest known population in decades.

DELWP and Zoos Victoria work closely with other government agencies, the local community and groups such as Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, to help bring Victoria's threatened bird emblem back from the brink of extinction.

The Honeyeater, (*Lichenostomus melanops cassidix*) is listed as threatened species in Victoria under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act.

The funding is part of the *Victorian Budget 2016/17* which provides \$33.3 million over four years to tackle weeds and pests and for targeted on-ground actions to protect Victoria's threatened species.

Quotes attributable to Member for Monbulk James Merlino

"We are helping to protect this iconic species and this investment will help further boost numbers of Victoria's bird emblem, the Helmeted Honeyeater."

"The hard work of volunteers, staff at DELWP and the efforts from organisations like Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater mean this species enjoys a bigger population today than we've seen in decades."

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