



National Parks Act Annual Report 2023–24

Traditional Owner Acknowledgement

Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes, which form the core of Victoria's network of parks and reserves, have been modified over many thousands of years of occupation. They are reflections of how Aboriginal people engaged with their world and experienced their surroundings and are the product of thousands of generations of economic activity, material culture and settlement patterns. The landscapes we see today are influenced by the skills, knowledge, and activities of Aboriginal land managers. Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of these cultural landscapes, recognising their continuing connection to Victoria's parks and reserves and their ongoing role in caring for Country.

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Notes

- The Minister responsible for administering the Act during 2023–24 was the Minister for Environment, the Hon Steve Dimopoulos MP.
- In this report:
 - 'the Act' means the *National Parks Act 1975*
 - 'DEECA' means the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
 - 'the Minister' means the Minister responsible for administering the Act
 - 'the Regulations' means the National Parks Regulations 2013
 - 'the Secretary' means the Secretary to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

Cover Image Wimmera River, Little Desert National Park

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1. FOREWORD

This report on the workings of the National Parks Act 1975 (the Act) for the 2023–24 financial year is presented to the Minister for Environment, the Hon Steve Dimopoulos MP, under section 35 of the Act.

The Act establishes a network of national parks and other protected areas that are representative of Victoria's diverse natural environments and sets out the legal framework for their protection, enjoyment and management. The objects of the Act set out the key objectives for park managers to deliver for the Victorian public.

Parks Victoria manages a system of almost 140 parks and other areas under the Act, totalling approximately 3.47 million hectares, on behalf of the Victorian Government. This work is done in close partnership with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Recovery works continued across Victoria in 2023–24 addressing the cumulative impacts of multiple emergency events that have impacted park areas under the Act. A key focus of our recovery programs has included assessments to manage and protect Victoria's cultural heritage when conducting any on-ground works.

Other highlights this year include:

- completion of the third and last planned translocation of eastern bristlebirds from Jervis Bay, NSW to Wilsons Promontory National Park
- completion of the new lookout replacing the existing viewing platform at the popular Twelve Apostles visitor precinct, Port Campbell National Park
- delivery of the 14th consecutive year of citizen science monitoring of threatened native grasslands and the critically endangered Plains-wanderer at Terrick Terrick National Park
- continuation of the Golden Kelp Restoration Project in Jawbone and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries, which are showing positive signs that many of the baby kelps are surviving and enhancing restoration efforts.

Parks Victoria continues to work closely and collaboratively with Traditional Owners and partner agencies to achieve the objects of the Act. Over the last 12 months, approximately 1,300 activities were submitted through the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment System. Teams of experts used their knowledge and experience of Aboriginal cultural values and legislation to assess, manage and protect Victoria's cultural heritage.

We look forward to building on our achievements in 2024–25 by continuing to encourage more visitors from all backgrounds to get into nature and discover and protect Victoria's diverse natural and cultural landscapes.



John Pandazopoulos
Chair



Matthew Jackson
Chief Executive Officer

2. A REPRESENTATIVE PARKS SYSTEM

2.1 Areas managed under the Act

As at 30 June 2024, there were 139 areas with a total area of approximately 3.47 million hectares managed under various provisions of the Act. Appendix 1 lists the areas and Appendix 2 shows their location.

The 139 areas comprised:

- 124 areas listed on various schedules to the Act
 - 45 national parks (Schedule Two)
 - 3 wilderness parks (Schedule Two A)
 - 26 state parks (Schedule Two B)
 - 5 coastal parks, 3 historic parks, 1 marine and coastal park, 1 nature conservation reserve (flora and fauna reserve) and 8 regional parks (Schedule Three)
 - 3 marine and coastal parks, 1 marine park, 1 marine reserve, 1 national heritage park and 1 nature conservation reserve (Schedule Four)
 - 13 marine national parks (Schedule Seven)
 - 11 marine sanctuaries (Schedule Eight)
 - 1 landscape conservation area (Schedule Nine).
- 15 non-scheduled areas to which particular provisions of the Act apply.

The Act also defines the following areas within particular national parks:

- 19 wilderness zones (Schedule Five) in 7 national parks (see Appendix 1)
- 22 remote and natural areas (Schedule Six) in 12 national parks (see Appendix 1)
- 4 designated water supply catchment areas in the Great Otway, Kinglake and Yarra Ranges national parks.

On 23 September 2023, an area of 0.015 hectares at Kilcunda was added to Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park, following the transfer of the land to the State of Victoria.

2.2 Management planning

Parks Victoria has commenced development of a new management plan for the Wilsons Promontory landscape, which includes the Wilsons Promontory National Park and the Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park. The management plan will feature the terrestrial, coastal and marine aspects of the landscape incorporated into one management plan. This is being undertaken in partnership with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and the Boon Wurrung Land and Sea Council. The commencement of the initial formal community consultation process to test broad principles and directions to inform the development of the plan occurred in the summer of 2023–24. A key aspect of this is assessing the coastal hazards and developing resilience and adaptation strategies; this work has been funded from a DEECA Resilient Coasts grant, is at an advanced stage, and being developed with the partner Traditional Owners.

3 NATURAL VALUES

3.1 Managing natural values

National and other parks under the Act protect the stronghold of Victoria's natural values, including a diverse array of animal and plant species, habitats, ecosystems, landscapes and seascapes. Conservation programs focus on direct action to protect threatened species, communities and habitat; transitioning for and addressing the effects of climate change, addressing threats from invasive species, changed bushfire and water regimes, overabundant native species; and the delivery of research, monitoring and planning for natural values. The programs are led by Parks Victoria in collaboration with key partners including Traditional Owners, DEECA, catchment management authorities, the Commonwealth and the community. Many programs are ongoing and achievements for 2023–24 are provided in the following sections.

3.1.1 Nature Conservation Strategy

Parks Victoria's *Nature Conservation Strategy 2021-2031* recognises the natural riches and a dazzling array of animal and plant species, habitats, ecosystems, landscapes and seascapes occurring in Victoria's parks. The Nature Conservation Strategy has the goal of conserving nature in Victoria's parks in the face of unprecedented threats – including climate change. To address this, Parks Victoria has adopted the Resist-Accept-Direct (RAD) Framework, that offers 3 honest and constructive choices:

- 'resist' where species and their habitats are likely to persist, e.g. through climate-buffered refuges
- 'accept' that for some ecosystems and sites, change is inevitable or irreversible, and feasibility limits responses to alternatives such as managing staged retreats

- 'direct' sites and landscapes to potentially 'novel' nature configurations, particularly for highly impacted or degraded sites, that can still support native species and ecosystem functions.

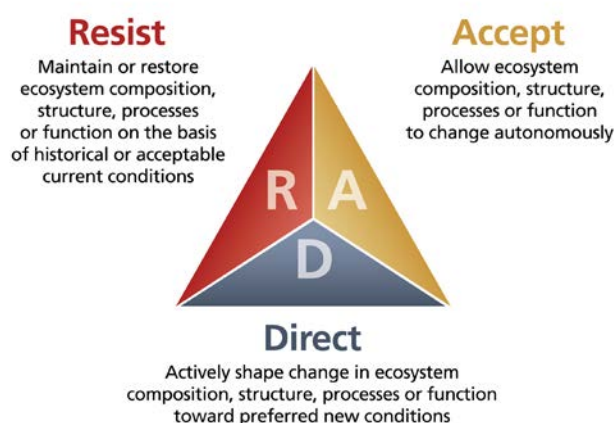
Parks Victoria is integrating the RAD framework into its strategic conservation action plans and programs at differing geographic scales.

3.1.2 Conservation action plans

Conservation actions plans (CAPs) deliver a best practice approach to conservation planning for managing the extensive parks across Victoria. The methodology identifies the strategies that will achieve the greatest improvement in the health of ecosystems and enables a framework for monitoring and evaluation. The CAPs will cover 18 park landscapes when completed and will include all parks under the Act.

The Western Plains and Wetlands Conservation Action Plan addresses the conservation priorities for nationally endangered grasslands and woodlands, internationally significant lakes and wetlands and important coastal and marine communities, and that provide habitat for more than 1,100 native flora and fauna species including 23 that are nationally threatened. In this fragmented landscape there are 155 parks and reserves with a combined area of over 62,700 hectares, but only one, the Merri Marine Sanctuary is reserved under the Act.

Conservation action planning is underway for Northern Plains and Box-Ironbark, and Basalt Plains and Bellarine Peninsula landscapes, and a consultation draft has been developed for a revised Wilsons Promontory CAP. Frameworks for monitoring, evaluation, reporting and costing of CAP implementation have been developed.



3.1.3 Threatened species and communities

Parks Victoria and DEECA continue to work with the community and key partner agencies to manage threatened species and communities. This work includes programs delivered as part of protecting and enhancing habitats (including management of invasive species).

3.1.3.1 Surveys for swamp antechinus on the offshore islands of Wilsons Promontory National Park

Parks Victoria organised a logistically challenging survey of two islands off the coast of Wilsons Promontory National Park. Survey teams consisted of Parks Victoria personnel in partnership with Zoos Victoria. A total of 43 threatened swamp antechinus were detected, and tissue samples were taken for genetic analysis. These results will help inform future plans for potential translocations of this species between the islands and the mainland to help support the Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary program.

3.1.3.2 Translocation of eastern bristlebirds to Wilsons Promontory National Park

The final phase of translocation of eastern bristlebirds from Jervis Bay, New South Wales (NSW) and Croajingolong National Park took place this year. Thirty-two birds were captured and transported for release into Wilsons Promontory National Park with the involvement of Traditional Owners. This brings the total of translocated birds to 60 over the past 3 years and creates an important insurance population for this endangered species. Early results are promising with translocated birds heard calling at the release sites in good numbers. Ongoing monitoring will gauge the long-term success of the program as will continued introduced predator management. Parks Victoria staff were involved in all aspects of the program, including the capture of birds in NSW, transporting the birds to Wilsons Promontory National Park and post-release monitoring.



Image: Swamp antechinus

3.1.3.3 Protection of native grasslands and the plains-wanderer at Terrick Terrick National Park

Parks Victoria delivered the 14th consecutive year of citizen science monitoring of threatened native grasslands and the critically endangered plains-wanderer at Terrick Terrick National Park. The results have revealed that habitat structure is slowly improving following rampant grass growth during the floods and above average rainfall to 2021–22. This improvement has been achieved with the application of ecological grazing. Unfortunately, numbers of plains-wanderers and the threatened fat-tailed dunnart remain very low and may take a number of years to recover. Ongoing habitat management will be vital for this to occur.

3.1.3.4 Protection of eastern barred bandicoot at Woodlands Historic Park

Parks Victoria and Conservation Volunteers Australia have commenced the installation of the replacement predator-proof fence at Woodlands Historic Park that will include more optimal eastern barred bandicoot habitat. Intensive weed and rabbit harbour removal has been done to prepare an area outside the current alignment that will be included in the revised sanctuary area. Ongoing fox incursions through the old fence have been managed but will be reduced with better integrity of the fence, and the ground-level apron to prevent burrowing.

3.1.4 Invasive species

Parks Victoria continues to deliver threat management programs to address invasive species impacts in high priority parks and reserves.

Control programs are targeted to maximise investment and effectiveness by focusing on the protection of specific environmental assets at site or landscape scale. Landscape-scale conservation programs, often cross tenure and involving several partner agencies, are the cornerstones of invasive species management in parks. The major programs for 2023–24 delivered in partnership with DEECA include:

3.1.4.1 Protecting Biodiversity

Funding has been provided for 7 projects under the *Protecting Biodiversity Priority Projects* program to June 2025 and funding under the *Protecting Biodiversity Keystone* program, for 6 projects identified as high-impact projects, to August 2025. These projects are aligned to delivering on the targets of *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*.

3.1.4.2 Weeds and Pests on Public Land

The Eden projects continue to target high priority and emerging weeds in the Glenelg (Cobboboonee, Lower Glenelg and Mount Richmond national parks, Cape Nelson State Park and Discovery Bay Coastal Park) and Otway (Great Otway and Port Campbell national parks) regions.

The Ark programs involve fox control for small mammal protection and include the Barry Mountains fox control project (Alpine National Park) as well as Glenelg Ark (Cobboboonee, Lower Glenelg and Mount Richmond national parks and Discovery Bay Coastal Park), Grampians Ark (Grampians National Park), Otway Ark (Great Otway National Park) and Southern Ark (Alfred, Alpine, Coopracambra, Croajingolong, Errinundra, Lind and Snowy River national parks, Lake Tyers State Park and Cape Conran Coastal Park).

The Weeds and Pests on Public Land program also supports rabbit control to reduce grazing pressure as part of the grazing management plan to restore semi-arid woodland in Wyperfeld and Murray-Sunset national parks. This initiative is supported by a long-standing investment in herbivore control by Parks Victoria.

3.1.4.3 Other pest plant and animal programs

The Alps Intensive Management Program continued to support the management of invasive pest animal and plants in key vulnerable areas of the Alps and expansion to other alpine national parks. Strategic management of horses, pigs and deer continued as well as management of pest plants including willows, hawkweed and English broom.

Parks Victoria continued to implement feral horse management programs consistent with the Alpine National Park: Feral Horse Action Plan (2021) and the Strategic Action Plan: Protection of floodplain marshes in Barmah National Park and Barmah Forest Ramsar site (2020–2023). Feral horses were removed in 2023–24 through targeted ground-shooting by professionals. Close supervision and management of the control program remains in place to ensure the best possible outcomes for animal welfare, safety and effectiveness, including input from external technical experts.

An evaluation of the Barmah Strategic Action Plan has found the plan to have been largely successful in its aim to improve the health of the floodplain marshes within Barmah National Park, by addressing each of the threatening processes impacting them, including reducing the feral horse population, resulting in strong signs of recovery in the extent and cover of moira grass.

The Peri-urban Weed Management Partnership with multiple councils continues to target areas for weed management on Churchill, Dandenong Ranges, and French Island national parks, as well as other parks and reserves.

The Good Neighbour Program continued to invest in controlling invasive species on the public-private land interface across Melbourne and Regional Victoria.

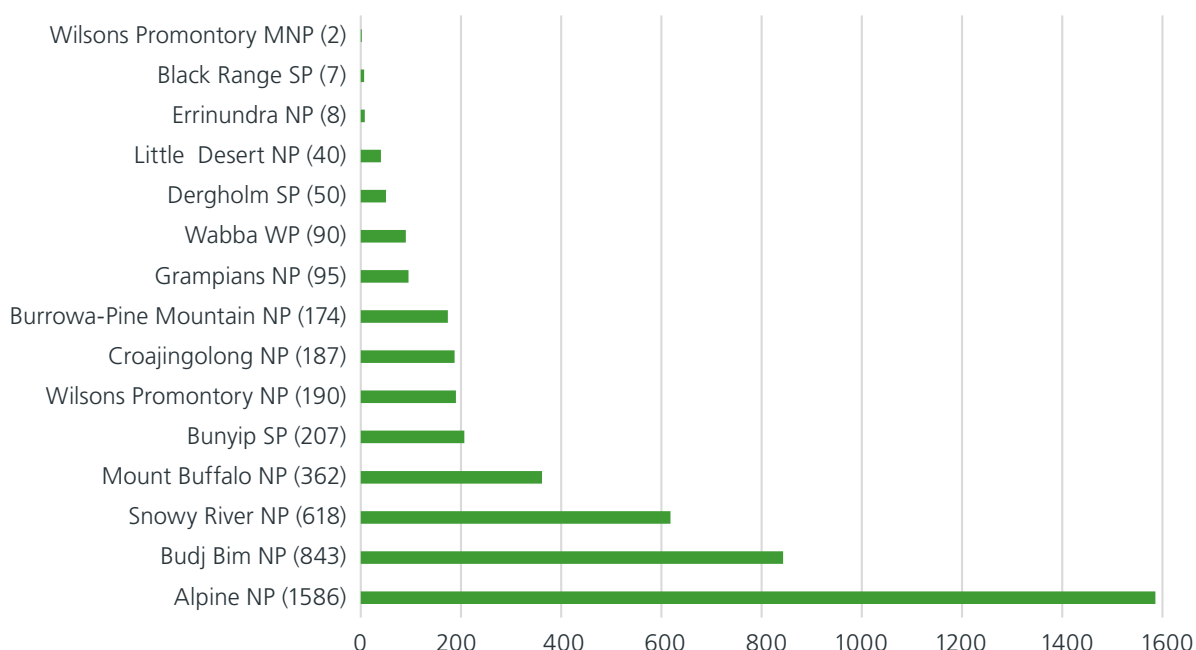
3.1.4.4 Deer Control Program

The Victorian Deer Control Strategy was released on 30 October 2020 to guide the control of deer in Victoria to reduce their impact on biodiversity, agriculture, water quality, Aboriginal cultural heritage and public safety. DEECA has released staged funding to support program delivery and strategy implementation.

Parks Victoria has received grant funding to continue with Phase 1a and 1b works and will deliver Phase 2 for 2023 to 2025 under the Deer Control Program. The purpose of this program is to undertake deer control and other management measures in high value sites across Victoria, consistent with the goals and actions detailed in the Victorian Deer Control Strategy and Regional Deer Control Plans. Projects range from high biodiversity sites, areas to reduce deer incursions (biosecurity approach) and include landscape scale programs with many programs delivering in partnership with park neighbours.

All regions have multiple park areas with control programs. The funding also supports regional program leads and the specialist team to deliver the aerial services team within Parks Victoria.

Deer treatment in areas under the Act



3.1.4.5 Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary Program

The Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary Program continues to progress a 50,000 hectare climate change safe haven in Wilsons Promontory National Park by delivering actions including large scale deer control and targeted fox and cat control to protect newly established populations of threatened species for eastern bristle bird and pookila (also known as New Holland mouse). A total of 153 threatened species have now been recorded in the park, with work delivered to identify priority at the brink species in need of enhanced protection under the program, and those species now missing that may be able to be returned to the park following removal of foxes and cats at a large scale.

3.1.5 Native animals

3.1.5.1 Total grazing management

Red and western grey kangaroos were subject to population management in Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks as part of managing total grazing pressure, involving the continuous and complementary control of rabbits, feral goats and kangaroos. The total grazing management program in the Mallee national parks is a multi-decadal restoration program designed to protect and restore the threatened semi-arid woodlands vegetation community. It is supported by a comprehensive plan, and a cyclical vegetation condition monitoring program to measure change from its historically degraded state. In this harsh environment, positive change in the semi-arid woodlands is slow and hard to detect. However, a recent review shows that herbivore control is enabling plant survival, particularly woody recruits (seedlings and juveniles), and that the native understorey is being maintained. Most woodlands in the Mallee national parks appear to be in a stable state or maintenance mode, and a small number of good condition woodlands can be found throughout the Mallee.

3.1.5.2 Budj Bim and French Island Koala programs

Koala health check and fertility control programs were delivered in spring 2023 and autumn 2024 at Budj Bim National Park, and on French Island, including French Island National Park, roadside reserves and private land.

The long-term koala contraception program has continued at Budj Bim National Park for almost 20 years to manage the health of the manna gum woodland, along with regular surveys of the koala population and tree condition.

3.1.6 Environmental water

In 2023–24, Parks Victoria continued to work in partnership with Catchment Management Authorities and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder to support the environmental watering program by contributing to the planning and approval of proposed activities in Barmah, Grampians, Gunbower, Hattah-Kulkyne, Lower Glenelg and Murray-Sunset national parks. This included the following watering events in those parks.

3.1.6.1 Barmah National Park

Widespread flooding in 2023–24 inundated more of Barmah-Millewa Forest than can be watered by environmental flows under current delivery constraints. Flood plain marshes (moira grass plains) experienced widespread flooding between June to December, mostly driven from two major flood peaks in June to August and October 2023. The release of environmental water in September and November 2023 bridged the flood peaks and prevented premature draining from the forest.

3.1.6.2 Grampians National Park

Total rainfall across the Wimmera system in 2023–24 was below the long-term average, and water for the environment was used to maintain low flows in the MacKenzie River and Burnt Creek from early October 2023, supporting populations of threatened Glenelg spiny crayfish, and platypus, in the upper reaches of the MacKenzie River in the Grampians National Park.

3.1.6.3 Gunbower National Park

Wet conditions in winter and spring 2022 triggered the largest flood in Gunbower Forest since 1993. Smaller floods in July and October 2023 and January 2024, along with environmental water deliveries in July and September through early October 2023, inundated parts of the floodplain and maintained high water levels in permanent and semi-permanent wetlands. The wet conditions have had mixed effects on vegetation communities throughout the forest. Annual monitoring has demonstrated that river red gums and associated understorey vegetation on the floodplain are in the best-reported condition since monitoring began in 2005, but the condition of vegetation communities in some wetlands has declined since the 2022 floods due to extended inundation.

3.1.6.4 Hattah-Kulkyne National Park

Major floods in spring 2022 inundated the entire Hattah Lakes and the surrounding floodplain. Since then, most wetlands in the higher-elevation northern Hattah Lakes and Lake Kramen have been allowed to draw down for 12 to 18 months to allow native plants within lakebed herb land communities to grow on exposed soils and provide foraging habitat for wading shorebirds. Minor flooding in spring 2023 refilled most of the semi-permanent wetlands in the southern Hattah Lakes and eliminated the need for planned environmental watering in autumn 2024.

3.1.6.5 Lower Glenelg

In the Glenelg system, rainfall was below the long-term average for most of winter and spring, with water for the environment from Rocklands Reservoir needed to help maintain continuous flows from late August 2023 to June 2024, benefitting the tidal reaches and Glenelg River estuary in Lower Glenelg National Park and Discovery Bay Coastal Park.

3.1.6.6 Murray-Sunset National Park

Many wetlands and creek lines across the Lindsay, Mulcra and Wallpolla islands had substantial flooding or periods of sustained high flow from winter to spring 2022 to early autumn 2024, which has improved the condition of all floodplain and wetland ecosystem.

3.1.7 Marine values

Parks Victoria continued to work with partners and the community across a range of programs to protect marine values within our marine national park and sanctuary system.

3.1.7.1 Invasive marine pests

Management of marine pests in Victoria's marine protected areas continued to be a major focus in 2023–24. Removal and monitoring of the invasive Japanese kelp (*Undaria pinnatifida*) continues to be a key focus in Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park. There were 9 separate management events involving 28 scuba-divers and 18 support crew were undertaken to remove newly established Japanese kelp and monitor long-term transects. An evaluation of this program has been commissioned to understand the effectiveness of *Undaria pinnatifida* management and inform future management approaches.

This year we have seen a significant increase in the number of Marine Rapid Health Assessments (RHA) in our marine national parks and sanctuaries (see monitoring natural values – below). No new pest incursions or expansions of established pests into areas they have previously not been found were detected by the marine RHA program in 2023–24.

3.1.7.2 Kelp forest restoration in Jawbone and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries

A large-scale program to mitigate significant impacts to marine macroalgal communities from overabundant native urchins commenced in 2023 in partnership with Deakin University, The Nature Conservancy, and University of Melbourne through two projects: the Port Phillip Bay Fund 'Promoting the recovery of lost kelp forest in the Bay's marine sanctuaries' project and the DEECA funded 'Golden Kelp restoration project'. The primary goal of these projects is to reduce the density of overabundant native purple urchins to 2 urchins per square meter over a 2-hectare area. This reduction aims to promote the recovery of healthy and diverse macroalgal forest ecosystems in large sections of Jawbone and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries that have been overgrazed and transformed into extensive 'urchin barrens'.

Over 6 hectares of reef have been successfully targeted for overabundant native urchin control in Jawbone (2.5 hectares) and Ricketts Point (3.5 hectares) marine sanctuaries, significantly exceeding our initial target of 2 hectares. In total, over 258,000 urchins have been culled in these areas. Additionally, Deakin University and The Nature Conservancy have completed 'active restoration' activities in a subset of areas targeted for urchin control, resulting in the planting of approximately 300,000 lab-grown baby golden kelp (*Eckonia radiata*) into 0.3 hectares of active restoration sites. Although it is still early, there are positive signs that many of the baby kelps are surviving, thus enhancing restoration efforts.

Further urchin control, along with comprehensive project monitoring and evaluation, will continue under the DEECA-funded Golden Kelp Restoration project throughout 2024 and into 2025.

3.2 Monitoring natural values

Monitoring is essential for conserving and protecting areas managed under the Act. It enables understanding of the status of assets and threats and how these change in time and space. This in turn supports decision-making based on evidence and promotes continuous improvement in effectiveness of management.

3.2.1 Terrestrial environments

During 2023–24, a wide range of monitoring was undertaken by staff, contractors, researchers, students, community groups and volunteers in areas managed under the Act. This included monitoring of:

- vegetation condition in Alpine, Baw Baw, Mount Buffalo, Warby-Ovens and Yarra Ranges national parks
- threatened flora in Mornington Peninsula, Point Nepean, Wilsons Promontory and Yarra Ranges national parks and Arthurs Seat State Park



Image: Sea urchin, Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary

- native fauna including:
 - small mammals in Cobboboonee, Coopracambra, Croajingolong, Grampians, Great Otway, Lower Glenelg, Mornington Peninsula, Mount Buffalo, Point Nepean, Snowy River, Terrick Terrick and Wilsons Promontory national parks and Holey Plains State Park
 - arboreal mammals in Yarra Ranges National Park and Deep Lead Nature Conservation Reserve
 - birds including hooded plover in Mornington Peninsula and Wilsons Promontory national parks, powerful owl in Dandenong Ranges, Mornington Peninsula and Yarra Ranges national parks and Warrandyte State Park, plains-wanderer in Terrick Terrick National Park, malleefowl in areas including Hattah-Kulkyne, Little Desert, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks and bird communities in Grampians National Park and Deep Lead Nature Conservation Reserve
 - frogs in Mornington Peninsula National Park and Holey Plains State Park
 - reptiles in Mornington Peninsula and Terrick Terrick national parks.
- distribution and abundance of invasive animals including:
 - deer in Alpine, Barmah, Grampians, Mornington Peninsula, Mount Buffalo, Snowy River, Warby-Ovens and Wilsons Promontory national parks
 - feral pigs in Alpine, Barmah, Great Otway, Snowy River and Warby-Ovens national parks and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park
 - rabbits in Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset, and Wyperfeld national parks
 - feral horses in Alpine and Barmah national parks
 - foxes and/or feral cats in Cobboboonee, Coopracambra, Croajingolong, Grampians, Great Otway, Mornington Peninsula, Point Nepean, Snowy River and Wilsons Promontory national parks.
 - weeds in Grampians, Greater Bendigo, Mornington Peninsula and Point Nepean national parks and Warrandyte State Park
 - impact of deer and feral horses in Alpine National Park.
- overabundant kangaroos in Hattah-Kulkyne, Murray-Sunset, Wilsons Promontory and Wyperfeld national parks.

3.2.2 Marine environments

The monitoring of marine natural values in 2023–24 included the completion and establishment of several key monitoring projects for Parks Victoria's Signs of healthy parks marine monitoring program. The program recently completed its evaluation of Discovery Bay Marine National Park in partnership with Deakin University, conducting comprehensive surveys of habitats, fish, and southern rock lobsters. The surveys revealed healthy and diverse fish populations and extensive deep reef habitats within the park. Notably, there were over 3 times as many, and significantly larger, southern rock lobsters inside the park (543 individuals) compared to outside (162). This is a strong demonstration that the park is effectively protecting Victorian marine life.

Over late spring to autumn 18 monitoring dives adopting Reef Life Survey methods were completed in Port Phillip Heads and Point Addis marine national parks by Parks Victoria staff. The monitoring data and information we collect from Reef Life Survey provides comprehensive data that will feed into a broad range of our initiatives, including our conservation actions plans, State of Parks and State of Environment reporting, targeted marine conservation programs and media and communications that allow us to exhibit the excellent nature in our marine parks.

The marine Rapid Health Assessment (RHA) program has also continued to deliver significant and more widespread monitoring of environmental condition across Victoria's marine protected areas in 2023-24. A total of 58 rapid health assessments were completed for subtidal and intertidal habitat in 13 distinct marine national parks and sanctuaries spanning the Surf Coast, Port Phillip Bay and South Gippsland. Overall, the assessments have been finding that these marine protected areas are generally in good condition. They have also identified the presence of invasive species and overabundant native species in a small number of marine protected areas in northern Port Phillip Bay.

3.3 Researching natural values

3.3.1 Research activity access agreements

Parks Victoria provides access agreements for research activities to be undertaken on public land. Access Agreements are issued to organisations and individuals including conservation bodies, councils, naturalists clubs, Traditional Owners, and universities among many others.

In 2023–24, there were 164 access agreements issued in areas managed under the Act, with a total of 371 active access agreements in place. A wide range of research was facilitated and undertaken. Parks Victoria continued to support research on a broad range of issues with a variety of new projects commencing through the year. All of the research done in areas managed under the Act is helping to answer important questions and improve park management, increase environmental understanding, connect people with nature and build partnerships, including the following:

- crucial conservation steps for Australia's most threatened butterfly community including the large and small ant-blue butterflies and the golden sun moth, focusing on habitat restoration and captive breeding programs. Outcomes will include enhanced conservation protocols, community engagement and citizen science opportunities

- investigating the effects of variable fishing pressure and climate on fish size-spectra, by evaluating the role of marine protected areas as a climate and harvest refuge for Victorian reef fish. Findings will contribute to the understanding of marine fish response to warming and inform future management action of the value of marine protected areas.

3.3.2 Research programs

The diversity of ecosystems protected in areas managed under the Act, coupled with the unpredictability of nature and incomplete knowledge, make environmental management complex. On top of this are the challenges of climate change and dealing with a complex array of threats to biodiversity. Now, more than ever, good science is critical for enabling good decisions, and improving park management.

A range of research projects was undertaken in areas managed under the Act to enhance knowledge and understanding and support decision-making. This includes collaborations enabled through Parks Victoria's Research Partners Panel, which contributes to improving management of areas managed under the Act. Work undertaken under this program include continuation of projects established in previous years, as well as new projects established during the year, including:

- evaluating long-term outcomes of ecological restoration in Box-Ironbark forests including Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park and Paddys Ranges State Park
- assessing effectiveness of Japanese kelp removal in Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park
- examining fungal diversity in Wilsons Promontory National Park
- mapping urchin barrens and macroalgal habitat in Jawbone and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries
- assessing animal responses to macroalgal restoration in Jawbone and Ricketts Point marine sanctuaries

- understanding the effectiveness of protected areas for fish, invertebrate and algal diversity in all marine national parks and marine sanctuaries managed under the Act
- using modelling of climate refugia to develop a management framework for the protection of kelp inside Victoria's marine national parks and sanctuaries
- assessing plant recruitment after planned burning in heathlands in the Great Otway National Park
- using environmental DNA to examine feral pig diet and movement, and to assess its utility for examining pig population dynamics in the Alpine National Park
- future proofing Victorian golden kelp populations in Bunurong, Point Addis and Wilsons Promontory marine national parks and Eagle Rock, Marengo Reef, Mushroom Reef and Point Danger marine sanctuaries
- investigating how to optimise laser scanning techniques for measuring vegetation structure in Warrandyte State Park.

4 CULTURAL VALUES

4.1 Aboriginal cultural heritage

Victoria's network of parks and reserves are increasingly recognised as forming part of unique cultural landscapes, created through long-term management by Aboriginal people. Shaped by thousands of years of knowledge and cultural practices, these cultural landscapes contain more biodiversity than the areas surrounding them. They contain significant distinguishing features and material biocultural evidence of their evolution over time. Importantly, they still support the connection of contemporary Traditional owner communities to continue this evolutionary process and form part of our collective identity.

4.1.1 Aboriginal Heritage Assessment System

The Aboriginal Heritage Assessment System (AHAS) is an online portal that has been in use since July 2020. AHAS was developed to assist Parks Victoria staff to manage and protect cultural heritage when conducting any on-ground works. An online form is submitted detailing how and where work is planned. The form is assessed by experts with knowledge and experience with Aboriginal cultural values and legislation, and advice is given on how to meet legislative requirements under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

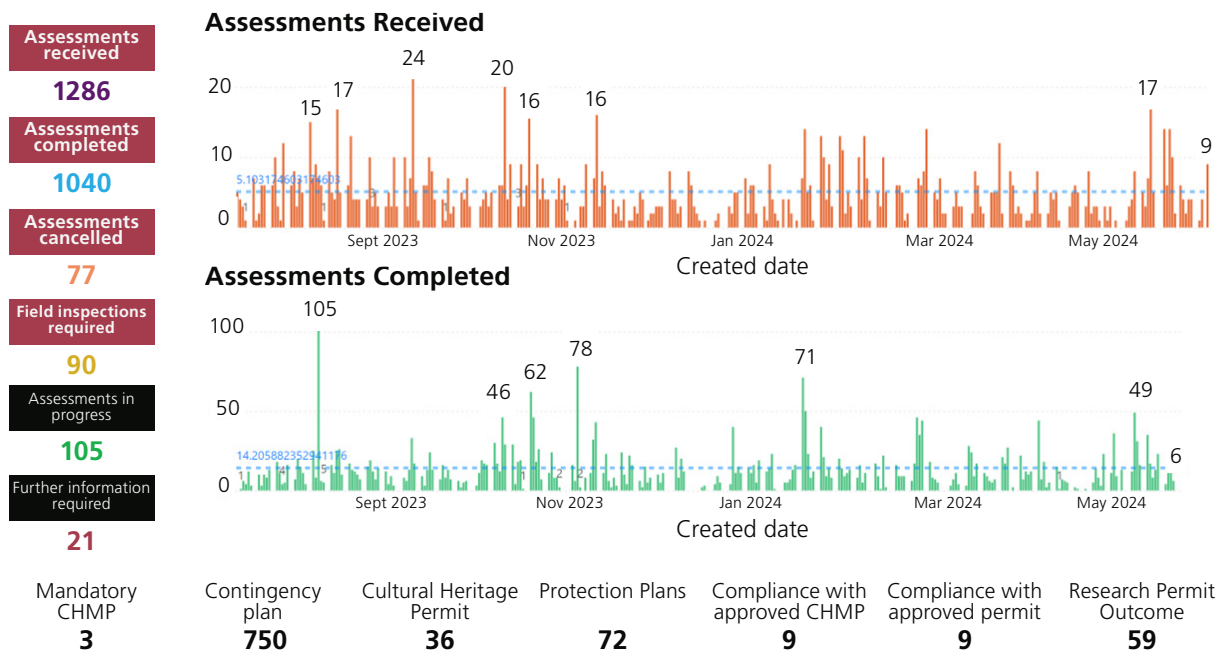
In 2023–24, a total of 1,286 activities on land under the Act have been assessed using AHAS. A summary is provided in the image below (AHAS 2023–24).

4.1.2 Post event heritage evaluations

There have been multiple Post Event Heritage Evaluations (PEHEs) and Aboriginal Heritage Assessments undertaken across national parks due to flood, fire and storms events which activated emergency responses across the state throughout 2022 to 2024. In many cases, significant impacts to cultural heritage, Ancestral Remains and natural values were evident. The PEHEs presented an opportunity to engage with Traditional Owners on impact assessment work and development of recommendations for remedial action. This work has led to various permits being issued to enable ongoing protection and restoration for impacted cultural sites.

A number of PEHEs are being undertaken, including in the Gunbower, Hattah-Kulkyne and Murray-Sunset national parks, Murray-Kulkyne Park and other parks along the Murray River. A high volume of assessments has also been undertaken in these areas by Parks Victoria through its internal Aboriginal Heritage Assessment System to determine if and how land management activities such as road maintenance, hazardous tree removal and other ground disturbing activities can be undertaken without harming Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Aboriginal Heritage Assessment System - applications in 2023–24



4.1.3 Rock art

A key objective of the Parks Victoria Rock Art Action Plan is to work closely with Traditional Owners to improve the knowledge and condition of rock art, while developing the tools, plans and systems to protect and manage it into the future. The successful hosting of the second National Rock Art Forum in 2023 within the Grampians National Park, and the work that has flowed from that event, has consolidated Traditional Owner knowledge and practice and informed projects undertaken in Victoria over the last year. The Forum also resulted in Aboriginal staff in Parks Victoria's Rock Art program being invited by Parks Australia to collaborate with Anangu Traditional Owners at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in a major re-survey of Rock Art sites recorded around the base of Uluru.

The Grampians National Park, which sits within the Gariwerd cultural landscape, was the location of important partnership work with Gariwerd Traditional Owners in 2023–24, including:

- the culturally significant rock art shelter, Cultivation Creek, located on the west side of the park. The site was identified as one of the highest priorities for conservation works due to extensive damage done by rock climbing over a long period of time, particularly fixed protection (approximately 50 bolts across 10 climbs) and significant chalk stains. In partnership with Traditional Owner corporations and through the commissioning of specialist rope technicians from the climbing community, the site was successfully rehabilitated, representing a turning point in efforts to protect this National Heritage listed landscape
- Parks Victoria and Gariwerd Traditional Owners were successful in securing funding from the Federal First Nations Heritage Grants Program to expand rock art conservation work in the park. This project has commenced in June 2024 and will run through to mid-2026
- conducting a cultural values survey over a 3-week period within the park, resulting in the re-discovery of 19 cultural places, including two rock art shelters
- planning between Parks Victoria, Gariwerd Traditional Owners and DEECA to conduct cultural burning as a protection measure around rock art places in the park.

4.1.4 Ancestral Remains

The Parks Victoria Ancestral Remains Program is another important collaboration with Traditional Owners, the Ancestral Remains Unit within First Peoples State Relations (DPC) and the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council. The program focusses on protecting and managing burial places, particularly areas characterised by dune systems along rivers and the coast and supporting repatriations in parks across Victoria and under the Act.

While the demand for technical advice and other support services is increasing across Victoria, the major area of focus for on ground protection works in 2023–24 has been the Murray-Sunset National Park.

Ponnun Pulgi – Healing Country Together is a partnership project between Parks Victoria, First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation and People and Parks Foundation, established in 2019 following the corporation's Registered Aboriginal Party appointment. The aim of the project is to protect the ancient and fragile cultural landscapes of Northwest Victoria. Between April to June 2024, Parks Victoria's cultural ranger team and Traditional Owners spent 7 weeks on Country within the park conducting important restoration works at a number of cemetery dunes. Other work undertaken include:

- following the 2022–23 flood events, support for Traditional Owner participation in post-flood survey work in areas with known burial sites has been undertaken and continues. Site locations include: Hattah-Kulkyne National Park, Nyah-Vinifera Park, and Lindsay and Mulcra islands within the Murray-Sunset National Park
- engagement with Traditional Owners is underway to identify appropriate locations for the repatriation of Ancestral remains in Wilsons Promontory National Park
- engagement with Traditional Owners on protection efforts is continuing in other parts of Victoria such as Far East Gippsland, the Southwest and parts of Western Victoria.

4.1.5 Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park

In partnership with the Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLC), surveys were conducted across Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park, known to Traditional Owners as Dyurrite. Re-discoveries included substantial quarries and associated production areas, a rock art place, scarred trees, shelters and rock wells. The results confirmed that stone has been quarried across the entire escarpment for thousands of years as a cultural practice by Traditional Owners. Work in 2023–24 has focused on registration of cultural values, preparation of archaeological reports and preparation for amending the current park management plan to better direct and manage the activities of park users to ensure these values are protected.

4.1.6 Wilsons Promontory National Park

Parks Victoria and Traditional Owners experience Wilsons Promontory as a rich cultural landscape and share a desire to protect the diverse biocultural values of the area. Despite the area not having formal Traditional Owner recognition yet, the three groups who assert rights, interests and cultural authority are all working with Parks Victoria under a strong governance framework to embed knowledge and community priorities in planning and influence the future directions for management of the park. A number of important projects include:

- Wilsons Promontory Sanctuary Program: to create a safe haven for native species and with a number of components such as construction of a predator proof fence, wildlife circuit all abilities walk, visitor centre upgrades, Telegraph saddle walk and offsite accommodation
- Landscape Management Plan informed by cultural values assessments
- Coastal hazard adaptation and resilience plan: with 12 priority focus areas for hazard assessment including Darby River, Oberon Bay, Tidal River, Chinaman Long Beach, North-East point (the thumb), Refuge Cove, Sealers Cove, Shallow Inlet, Cotters Beach (swamp and black rock), Waterloo Bay, Five Mile Beach and Little Drift

- Victorian Great Outdoors project: including Southern circuit upgrade, campground and toilets
- insurance works at Sealers boardwalk and Norman point track works.

4.2 Non-Aboriginal historic heritage

In 2023–24, management works of non-Aboriginal cultural heritage in parks under the Act include:

- detailed planning and scoping of works at Mount Buffalo Chalet in Mount Buffalo National Park to prepare for a commercial tenancy (funded from various sources)
- the assessment of the impacts on heritage values and specification of recovery activities related to storms across multiple parks under the Act
- the continuation of a larger project with the High Country Huts Association to scan huts in the Alpine National Park in three dimensions
- detailed planning for conservation of heritage values as part of major works projects in parks including the Alpine and Point Nepean national parks.

5 FIRE AND OTHER EMERGENCIES

5.1 Bushfires

The season was characterised by changing weather conditions starting with a dry winter and spring followed by heavy rain and storms in December 2023 causing widespread damage to parks under the Act. This was followed by extremely dry and catastrophic fire conditions from late January and February 2024.

With the unusually dry winter and early spring, the 2023–24 bushfire season started earlier than normal with large fires in Gippsland starting in early October 2023. This included a large fire in The Lakes National Park that burnt around 3,420 hectares.

Catastrophic fire danger was forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology on 13 and 27 February 2024 resulting in all parks in the Wimmera weather forecast district being closed. Major fires started during this period in the Grampians National Park and Mount Buangor State Park.

Some major fires which impacted parks under the Act:

- The Lakes National Park – Loch Sport, Beacon Swamp track: 3,420 hectares
- Mount Buangor State Park – Bayindeen, Rocky Road: 2,500 hectares
- Grampians National Park – Mount Stapylton: 1692.5 hectares
- Grampians National Park – Bellfield: 614.5 hectares. (pictured over page)

In 2023–24 there were 267 bushfires which burnt around 10,440 hectares in parks under the Act.

Unattended campfires continue to be a significant contribution to bushfire cause where visitors have left their campsites without extinguishing their campfire (154). While the area burnt as a result was low (2.2 hectares) the potential for harm caused to other park visitors and damage to park built, natural and cultural values was significant.

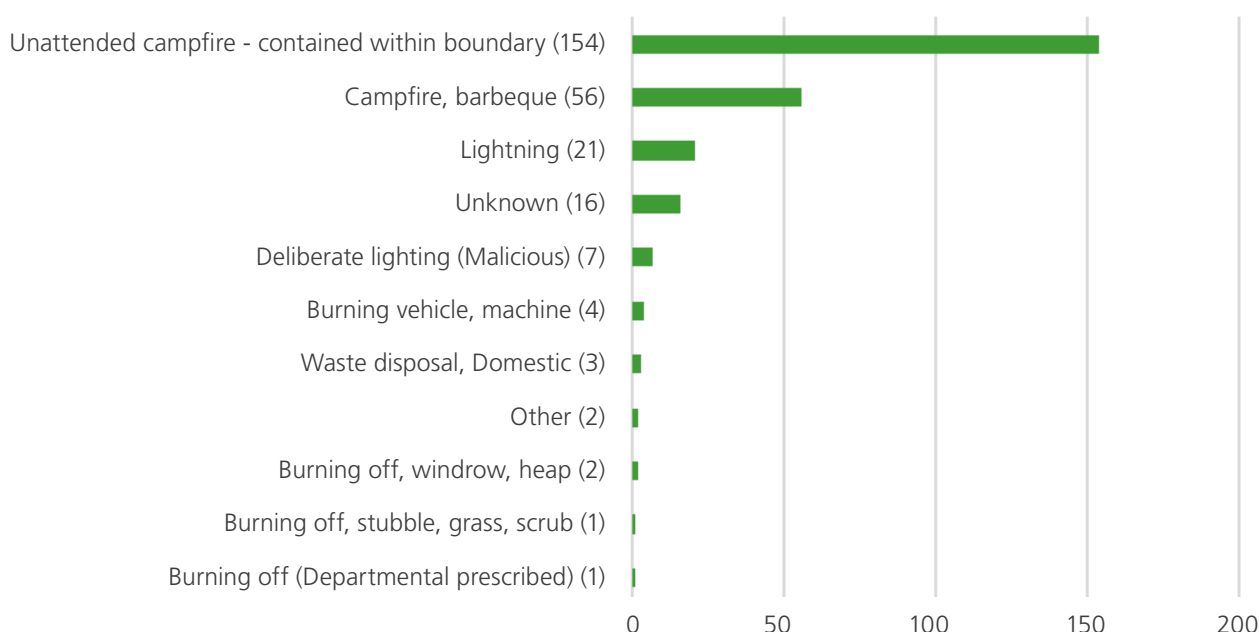
5.2 Planned burning

The first quarter of 2023–24 was dry, with rainfall deficiencies on a similar trajectory to the most severe bushfire seasons. The second quarter saw a significant and rapid shift in weather patterns with heavy rainfall increasing soil moisture across the state. This limited site preparation and burn delivery over the spring and early summer period.

The third quarter was dominated by an extended dry spell through February and March. Significant bushfires in western Victoria during February drew resources away from burn preparation and delivery and delayed the typical late-February start to the autumn planned burn period.

Favourable conditions for burning emerged from late March, with what became the largest burn window for autumn starting 21 March through to 1 April 2024.

Number of fires in areas under the Act by cause



Early April received regular and persistent cool southerly airflows and drizzle, which limited burning opportunities in southern Victoria, although dry conditions in the north supported continued activity. The second half of April 2024 saw planned burn activity increase with two peaks in activity (smaller than the March peak). May, although cool, was drier and warmer than average, creating a long tail to the autumn burn program, with a larger than typical burning and mechanical fuel management program being delivered in this period.

In 2023–24, 138,454 hectares of fuel was treated on public land (including areas under the Act). This comprised 122,291 hectares of planned burns, 16,163 hectares of mechanical treatments, helped to reduce fuel driven bushfire risk on public land in Victoria.

There were 93 burns completed in areas under the Act, treating a total area of 40,899 hectares. These included burns in the Alpine (22,000 hectares), Grampians (7,035 hectares), Great Otway (2,550 hectares), Little Desert (760 hectares), Mount Buffalo (630 hectares) and Wyperfeld (1,209 hectares) national parks.

5.3 Planning, monitoring and research

5.3.1 Planning

There continued to be considerable input from Parks Victoria regional fire ecology planners into DEECA-led strategic and operational bushfire management planning, which covers parks under the Act across Victoria. This includes preparation of fire ecology plans and strategies that support implementation of Parks Victoria's Conservation Action Plans, as well as the following:

- the Wilsons Promontory National Park Fire Management Strategy was finalised and a program of ecological burns were delivered in collaboration with DEECA
- other parks that are implementing fire ecology strategies in collaboration with DEECA include Grampians, Murray-Sunset and Wyperfeld national parks
- some parks under the Act that presently do not have fire ecology strategies are using Conservation Action Plans to guide the use of fire for ecological

Ecological burning in Barmah National Park

Barmah National Park is jointly managed by Parks Victoria and the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation. The River Red Gum Conservation Action Plan (CAP) covers the Barmah National Park including an internationally important wetland that is listed under the Ramsar Convention. The Barmah Forest Ramsar site covers close to 28,515 hectares and is part of the largest complex of tree-dominated floodplain wetlands in southern Australia.

A key ecological attribute listed in the CAP for this important area is wetland vegetation extent and condition. An indicator for improving the condition of the wetland vegetation is the extent of key vegetation communities, particularly significant moira grasslands.

The CAP includes a strategy to use planned burning for ecological outcomes, including using fire as a method to manage encroachment of undesirable species. The spread of giant rush, which out competes with moira grass within the Barmah Forest Ramsar site, can be managed through a combination of fire and flooding.

Steamer Plain in the Barmah National Park is part of the Ramsar listed site and is culturally important to Yorta Yorta Traditional Owners. This year a 60 hectare ecological burn was undertaken by DEECA and Parks Victoria in partnership with Yorta Yorta Traditional Owners to reduce above ground biomass of giant rush by burning prior to potential flooding in winter. Giant rush encroachment is identified as a threatening process to this site and is responsible for restricting the distribution of moira grass populations.

purposes, including River Red Gum Conservation Action Plan (Barmah National Park, to manage encroachment of giant rush), and Great Otway Conservation Action Plan (Great Otway National Park, to maintain and improve condition of heathland vegetation)

- a draft fire ecology Implementation plan is being prepared for the Gippsland Plains and Strzelecki Ranges Conservation Action Plan, that covers parks that are managed under the Act such as Holey Plains State Park.

5.3.2 Monitoring

Monitoring programs continued to support improving fire response knowledge of species in parks under the Act including:

- ongoing pre and post burn monitoring of large arboreal mammals undertaken within Yarra Ranges National Park. The projects were part of DEECA's Port Phillip Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting program, supported by Parks Victoria

- monitoring in Wilsons Promontory National Park continued in partnership with La Trobe University, on the effectiveness of using different ecological fire treatments in limiting the invasion of coastal tea tree into heathlands
- continued monitoring of pookila (New Holland mouse) response to different fire regimes was undertaken at Wilsons Promontory National Park and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park in collaboration with DEECA and Zoos Victoria
- continued small mammal monitoring in Grampians National Park post 2006 fires (with links to predator management), research partners Deakin University
- smoky mouse pre and post planned burning in Yarra Ranges National Park, led by DEECA and supported by Parks Victoria
- small mammal monitoring undertaken in Bunyip State Park of sites burnt in the 2019 bushfire, led by DEECA and supported by Parks Victoria.



Image: Bellfield bushfire, Grampians National Park

5.3.3 Research

A number of research projects established in previous years continued, including the investigation of fire ecology and ecosystem restoration in wet forests and coastal grassy woodlands in Wilsons Promontory National Park, and fire refuges for small mammals in the Grampians National Park. New research established in 2023–24 included an investigation of plant recruitment after planned burning in heathlands in Great Otway National Park. This builds on previous collaborations and helps to inform fire management in the park recovery programs.

5.4 Recovery programs

5.4.1 Storm and flood recovery

An ongoing state-wide recovery program is operational addressing the cumulative impacts of multiple emergency events that have impacted park areas under the Act.

Insurable work continues in multiple sites addressing impacts from the June and October 2021 storms. These include the Dandenong, Mornington Peninsula, Morwell, Point Nepean, Wilsons Promontory (Sealer's Cover Boardwalk), and Yarra Ranges national parks, Macedon Regional Park and Lysterfield Park.

A recovery program to address impacts from the April 2022 storm and floods in East Gippsland has closed. The program faced challenges due to the impacts of subsequent storm and flood events within the impact area of the 2019–20 bushfire event. While this tied-funded project has concluded, a large volume of roads awaiting insurance funded recovery works will continue to be delivered.

The recovery program for the October 2022 state-wide flood event has continued with four insurance claims and additional tranches of funding received for non-insurable activities such as contaminated lands (levees) and other recovery works which will continue to be delivered over the coming years. A key focus of the flood recovery program is cultural heritage assessments in northern Victoria along the Murray River corridor.

There are many components to this program where insurable and non-insurable components are mutually dependent. This is particularly important with repairs to roads. Parks Victoria is working with the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority's loss adjustors to assess what can be claimed and proceed with repairs.

Several other severe weather-related events have occurred in early 2024 which are currently under assessment. Insurable and non-insurable works will continue to repair roads and assets and manage tree hazards and landslips.

5.4.2 Bushfire recovery

The Victorian Government funded 2019–20 bushfire recovery program concluded at the end of 2023–24. This project was instrumental in Parks Victoria's ability to reopen nearly all visitor areas and assets impacted by the Black Summer fires.

Longer-term recovery projects continue at Cape Conran Coastal Park and the Point Hicks area of the Croajingolong National Park.

In February 2024 a fire (Rocky Road-Bayindeen complex) area burnt through Mount Buangor State Park impacting and closing the entire park, including two campgrounds. In 2023–24, make-safe works were focused on and an insurable recovery program will be established in 2024–25.

6 VISITORS, TOURISM & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

6.1 Enhancing visitor enjoyment and tourism

Parks Victoria continued to be a lead driver of visitor and tourist access to and enjoyment of regional areas, while maintaining park values and reducing risks. In 2023–24, the following activities were achieved to enhance visitor enjoyment and increase nature-based tourism opportunities including:

6.1.1 Alpine National Park

Detailed designs for the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing are progressing along with environmental and cultural heritage assessments. The planned works will deliver a 57-km, three-night hiking experience, connecting Falls Creek Alpine Resort and Mount Hotham Alpine Resort, to establish Australia's premier, year-round alpine crossing.

6.1.2 Cape Conran Coastal Park

Plans for new overnight accommodation at Cape Conran are complete and approvals are being sought prior to commencement of works. The project aims to provide modern, self-contained cabins and upgrades to campground facilities following the 2020 bushfires.

Designs were completed and approvals are now being sought for a potable water pipeline between Marlo and the Cape Conran Coastal Park. Water reticulation through the park and wastewater services designs have progressed for submission to approvals agencies. These new and improved services will support increased visitation and demand at the park.

6.1.3 Croajingolong National Park

Reconstruction of Thurra River Bridge, destroyed in the Black Summer fires, is underway.

Designs and investigations are progressing to replace jetties to contemporary standards and upgrade day visitor facilities around Mallacoota Inlet.

A \$7.5 million investment by the Victorian Government in 2022–23 is dedicated to upgrading tourism infrastructure along the Croajingolong Coastal Wilderness Walk. A feasibility assessment has previously been developed, and detailed scoping and planning is underway.

6.1.4 East Gippsland campgrounds

Designs for improvements at Peachtree Creek, Croajingolong National Park are complete and progress is being made for improved camping opportunities in the Alpine, Croajingolong, Mitchell River and Snowy River national parks. Enhanced visitor facilities have been completed at Augusvale camping area in Mitchell River National Park.

6.1.5 Grampians National Park

The designs and award of the construction contract for the Grampians Peaks Trail (GPT) trailheads are complete. Works will include signage, carpark upgrades, landscaping and connecting trails at minor and major trailheads to enhance the visitor experience for hikers, walkers, and campers.

Preliminary works for the MacKenzie Falls precinct boardwalk and rockworks commenced in late 2023–24, with design development for other improvements progressing alongside ongoing stakeholder consultation. Precinct upgrades will include enhanced carparking, arrival spaces, signage and a new viewing platform at the base of the falls to improve access and the visitor experience of the exceptional Grampians (Gariwerd) Parks Landscape.

6.1.6 Mount Buffalo National Park

Construction commenced in early 2024 on a \$5 million upgrade and conservation works to the Mount Buffalo Chalet façade and a café activation project, aimed at preserving the historic charm of the chalet and reopening of the facility with improved amenities and dining options for a new visitor experience offering.

6.1.7 Point Nepean National Park

Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the facilitated camping project were completed, enhancing visitor facilities with new campgrounds, a reception building, and outdoor BBQ areas.

A \$6 million investment by the Victorian Government is underway to protect and stabilise heritage sites at Point Nepean Forts, ensuring they remain safe and enjoyable for visitors.

6.1.8 Port Campbell National Park

The new, architect designed, cantilevered lookout structure at the Twelve Apostles was completed in May 2024 and has created an iconic and dramatic lookout experience at this high-profile visitor location.

The Loch Ard Blowhole Lookout project is part of the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan and features a whale-inspired viewing platform that will span the edge of the blowhole at Loch Ard Gorge. Construction is underway and the lookout is expected to be completed in 2025, creating a new, world-class visitor experience.

6.1.9 Victoria's Great Outdoors

The Victoria's Great Outdoors program is a \$106.6 million investment in better campgrounds, walking trails, 4WD tracks and visitor facilities in Victoria's parks and state forests. Improvements were delivered this year at Erskine Falls, Great Otway National Park, including walking tracks with new stairs and handrails and footbridges were constructed along Lemonade Creek.

The establishment of Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park continued including a comprehensive 12-month flora and fauna survey, and plans for 5 kilometres

of new trails. Work commenced on the detailed designs for 3 new lookouts and carpark upgrades, along with the preparation for environmental and planning approvals.

6.1.10 Wilsons Promontory National Park

The \$23 million Wilsons Promontory Revitalisation Project will provide an enhanced visitor experience in Tidal River with new roofed accommodation, improvements to wilderness retreats, visitor centre improvements, and a predator proof fence to minimise the ecological impact on native animals. Designs and planning are well progressed, and construction of a wildlife trail will commence in 2024, further enriching visitor pathways and experiences.

6.1.11 Yarra Ranges National Park

Detailed designs were completed, and construction will commence for a \$2.6 million uplift of the Warburton Redwoods experience. The Californian redwoods forest area will be upgraded with new visitor facilities, including a public toilet, walking track rationalisation, visitor shelter, safety gate, improved signage, increased car parking, and associated landscaping.



Image: Twelve Apostles lookout, Port Campbell National Park

6.2 Licensed tour operators

Tour operators are licensed to run organised tours and recreational activities for profit on Victorian public land managed by Parks Victoria and DEECA.

After many years of consistent growth, the total number of Licensed Tour Operators has declined over the past 3 years as a direct result of impacts from the pandemic and a challenging economic climate. Victoria's international visitation has been slow to return and is yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. Victoria's largest international market, China, has been particularly slow with visitation, less than 40 per cent of what it was in 2019. Domestically, cost of living challenges and industry staff shortages are adding to challenges for licensed tour operators.

Despite the challenges, there were 331 licensed tour operators that operated in national and state parks in 2023–24. While this is down from previous years, it demonstrates the resilience of tour operators.

6.3 Visitation

6.3.1 Visitor numbers

The most recent Visitor Number Monitor (VNM) was conducted in 2022–23. The VNM is a broad-based telephone survey that aims to estimate annual visitation to national and state parks and Melbourne's metropolitan parks, bays, piers and jetties. The monitor will be repeated in 2024–25 with a new online methodology.

Site based visitor monitoring was conducted in 2023–24 at a number of national parks. The Twelve Apostles (Port Campbell National Park) has traditionally

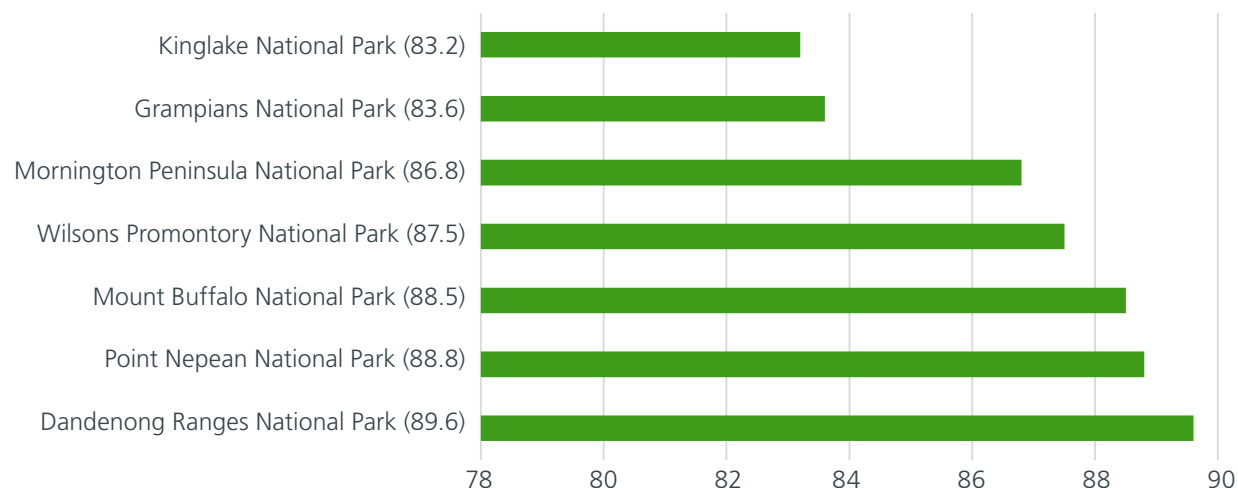
been the most visited site in Victoria. Visitation to the site has been recovering from the significant decline recorded during the COVID lockdowns and border restrictions. In 2023–24, there were an estimated 1,882,204 visits to the Twelve Apostles, a 29 per cent increase compared to 2022–23. Similarly, Point Nepean and Wilsons Promontory national parks both saw increases in visitation (645,277 and 566,292 visits respectively).

6.3.2 Visitor satisfaction

In 2023–24, the Visitor Satisfaction Monitor was conducted at 18 parks across the Parks Victoria estate, including 7 national parks under the Act. Visitor satisfaction is measured on an index out of 100, with an overall satisfaction index across all parks of 85.9 (compared to 86.3 in 2021–22). An index out of 100 was also used for park management and was rated at 80.3 in 2023–24, a statistically significant increase from 78.8 in 2021–22. Using indexed scores for satisfaction, visitors were most satisfied with the park landscape including the natural surroundings, being comfortable and safe in the parks, appreciating the plant, animal and bird life, having places to socialise with friends and family and being able to find peace and solitude. Visitors were least satisfied with access to drinking water, playground maintenance, shelter availability and maintenance, toilet availability and maintenance and interpretative signage that tells visitors what is significant about the park.

The Dandenong Ranges and Wilson Promontory national parks saw significant increases in satisfaction (89.6 and 87.5 respectively), when compared to the 2021–22 results.

Satisfaction index (out of 100) in select national parks



6.3.3 Volunteering in parks

Parks Victoria engaged with 96 groups across a wide range of activities, with volunteers contributing 41,214 volunteer hours across 1,108 planned activities in 58 parks under the Act. Consistent with the broader volunteering sector, volunteering in parks under the Act is still being significantly affected by the COVID pandemic. The introduction of increased governance requirements and a shift in volunteer expectations has also provided challenges for many groups.

A variety of activities was undertaken, with habitat restoration and environmental monitoring, survey and research being the most common. Parks with the greatest volunteer activity are Dandenong Ranges and Great Otway national parks, Warrandyte State Park and Lysterfield Park.

For the first time, one of Parks Victoria's premier volunteering programs, Campground Hosts, was delivered at Wilsons Promontory National Park over the summer 2023–24 school holidays. The volunteer hosts assisted and enhanced the experience of over 13,804 campers. The program returned to other parks including Lake Eildon and Mount Buffalo national parks, Cape Conran Coastal Park and Cathedral Range State Park with 2,294 hours contributed by volunteers.

The Victorian High Country Huts Association, whose aim is to help preserve and conserve the high country huts of Victoria, embarked on a project funded by the Victorian Great Outdoors program to be educated about and undertake scanning of 20 iconic heritage listed huts across the Alpine and Lake Eildon national parks. The group was able to eventually scan an additional 16 huts totalling 36. Over the course of the project the group contributed around 950 volunteering hours.

Campground Host responses

"It's a great location and it's also nice to be a part of maintaining the values of the park."

"If you can solve a problem and that's appreciated, and you know you've made a difference to someone's experience in the park - that's pretty good!"

6.3.4 Learning for nature

Interpretation and education services relating to areas under the Act were provided to encourage learning in, about and for nature, by increasing knowledge and understanding of parks and biodiversity, developing a stronger connection with nature and fostering pro-conservation behaviours.

In 2023–24, ranger-facilitated sessions were delivered to 14,258 adults and children in 45 parks under the Act. This represents nearly double the number of participants in face-to-face interpretation and education activities since 2021–22.

The education community regularly attend ranger-led education sessions to support their learning. This financial year, 379 ranger-led education sessions were delivered to 6,846 teachers and students across 20 parks, almost double the number of sessions, participants, and parks from 2021–22.

School groups also visit parks under the Act for self-guided excursions and field trips. A total of 47,340 teachers and students undertook self-guided learning in 61 parks under the Act this financial year.

The Tertiary Professional Placement program provided ranger-supervised conservation projects in 7 parks under the Act. There were 71 undergraduate students who participated in project-based learning experiences and skill development in conservation and land management and provided 5,394 volunteer hours.

6.3.5 Junior Ranger program

The Junior Ranger booking platform underwent a transition to ParkConnect in late 2023, just prior to the summer season. The transition impacted activity registrations, as families worked through the new process. 450 face-to-face sessions were delivered to 4,249 participants at 37 parks under the Act.

7 PARTNERING WITH TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Government reform processes aimed at enabling Aboriginal self-determination, have advanced further throughout 2023–24, particularly in relation to truth telling at the Yoorrook Justice Commission public hearings and policy work associated with a proposed Public Land Bill. As the commencement of Treaty negotiations also gets closer, evolving land governance models and recognition of rights will frame a new relationship between the state of Victoria and Traditional Owners in the context of how national parks and reserves will be managed into the future.

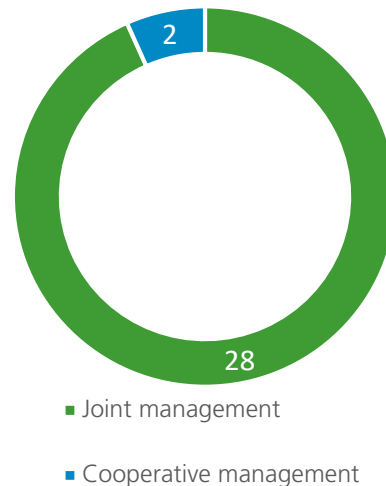
There are 4 Recognition and Settlement Agreements (RSAs) under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (TOS Act) in place now across Victoria, representing a contiguous area from Gippsland to the South Australian border, and with further RSAs anticipated to be newly gazetted or upgraded in 2024–25. Partnerships between the Victorian Government and Traditional Owner groups continue to be strengthened but vary in relation to the recognition status and readiness of groups and the community and landscape context within which they identify and assert connection.

7.1 Joint management

Victoria's joint management framework continues to operate based on a partnership model over Appointed Lands under the TOS Act. The pre-cursor arrangement was a cooperative management model which is enabled by a native title determination under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*. The current trend is for an increasing number of parks and reserves to be handed back and governed under the joint management model, and for parks under existing cooperative management arrangements to be transitioned to joint management where greater Traditional Owner authority can be exercised.

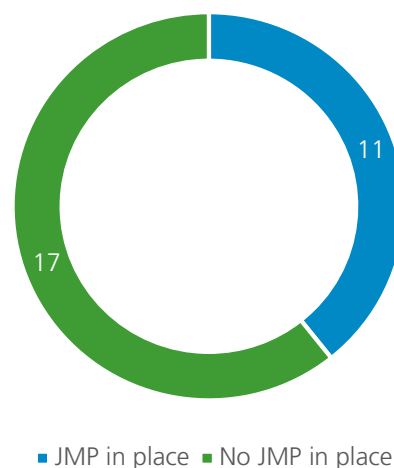
In 2023–24, the total number of parks and reserves across a range of tenures under joint and cooperative management in Victoria is 50 (42 under joint management and 8 under cooperative management). Of this total, the number of jointly managed parks under the Act is 28, and the number of cooperatively managed parks is 2 (Budj Bim and Lower Goulburn national parks). It is anticipated that the number of joint management parks will further increase in 2024–25.

No. of parks under the Act under collaborative management



Of the 28 parks in joint management under the Act, 11 are included in current joint management plans. The 13 parks within Wotjobaluk and Taungurung RSA areas are awaiting establishment of Traditional Owner Land Management Boards before the preparation of joint management plans can commence, and the additional 4 parks within the Gunaikurnai RSA area are subject to a review and update of their existing management plan.

No. of parks under the Act under collaborative management with a joint management plan (JMP)



7.1.1 Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk

The Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk Peoples entered into an RSA with Victoria in 2022 that includes 12 areas designated for handback and joint management, 6 of which are parks under the Act. These are:

- Little Desert National Park
- Wyperfeld National Park
- Black Range State Park
- Mount Arapiles-Tooan State Park
- Big Desert Wilderness Area
- Lake Albacutya Park.

Other areas that are not under the Act, but form part of the RSA include the Barrabool Flora and Fauna Reserve, Horsham Police Paddock Reserve, Lake Hindmarsh Lake Reserve, Red Rock Bushland Reserve, Ararat Regional Park (portion east of the Western Highway) and Wail State Forest (part only).

RSA implementation resources are being put in place and planning has commenced to establish a joint management ranger team.

7.1.2 Yorta Yorta

Barmah National Park is jointly managed by Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) and Parks Victoria. The Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB), which oversees the implementation of the joint management plan, is comprised exclusively of Traditional Owners.

The park was severely impacted by the October 2022 flood event, with reopening only becoming possible after assessments and mitigation works were completed. Over the last year, impacts from the 2022–23 flood response, particularly the animal welfare program in Barmah National Park have been addressed with the clean-up of culturally sensitive sites and finalisation of a rehabilitation plan. Woka Walla contractors and Yorta Yorta rangers have played a key role in this work and will participate in the delivery of revegetation of these sites in the next phase.

YYNAC is leading a grant application to assist with the delivery of projects from the Dharnya Trails Master Plan, which may include upgrading and extension of the Lake Loops and bird hide on Barmah Lakes.

Through the Murray River Adventure Trail project, the partners are also engaged in the delivery of a permanent mooring and all access canoe launch in the day visitor area in Barmah National Park. The installation of a temporary mooring will enable YYNAC to operate its new vessel, the Kingfisher, until the project is complete. Parks Victoria is working with YYNAC to support tourism and access arrangements for the park.

Yorta Yorta rangers are leading the development and delivery of joint management projects and supporting delivery of broader park management operations, including weekend patrols, fire response and planned burning. The rangers inform the nomination of planned burns and support community aspirations for implementing cultural burning regimes. They also manage researchers and their interaction with the landscape in line with access agreements.

7.1.3 Taungurung

Taungurung Traditional Owners entered into an RSA with the State that includes 9 areas designated for handback and joint management, seven of which are parks under the Act. These are:

- Alpine National Park (part)
- Heathcote-Graytown National Park
- Kinglake National Park (part)
- Lake Eildon National Park
- Mount Buffalo National Park
- Cathedral Range State Park
- Mount Samaria State Park.

Other areas that are not under the Act but are also designated for handback and joint management are: Mount Wombat-Garden Range Flora and Fauna Reserve and Wandong Regional Park.

Establishment of the Taungurung Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB) has been delayed due to legal complexities affecting the RSA. Until the establishment of the TOLMB and preparation of a Joint Management Plan over the Appointed Lands, the priority has been to establish the Taungurung Parks Ranger Program, including recruitment of staff and development of work plans.

In 2023–24, Parks Victoria and Taungurung Land and Water Council (TLWC) have concluded a series of workshops and drafted a Partnership Agreement that aims to establish principles and pathways for strategic alignment and operational delivery across the Taungurung footprint. Strategic and operational documents have also been co-produced to support the Taungurung Parks Ranger Program, which has been strengthened by the recruitment and induction of 4 new Taungurung Parks Rangers.

In addition, Biik Cultural Land Management Pty Ltd, on behalf of TLWC, has been active in delivering a range of on-ground works in accordance with the corporation's Cultural Land and Natural Resource Management principles of Reading Country, Healing Country and Caring for Country.

All joint management partners continue to support the development and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress in implementing the overarching Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

7.1.4 Dja Dja Wurrung

A total of 6 areas, 4 of which are in parks under the Act, in north central Victoria have been designated for hand back as Aboriginal title and are being jointly managed by DJAARA and Parks Victoria, with oversight from the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board (DDLMB):

- Greater Bendigo National Park
- Kara Kara National Park (most of the park is included in joint management)
- Kooyoorra State Park (Guyura)
- Paddy's Ranges State Park.

Other areas that are not under the Act but are also designated for hand back as Aboriginal title and joint management are the Wehla Nature Conservation Reserve and Hepburn Regional Park.

Joint management governance and communication is being maintained between the partners with a strong focus on the Appointed Lands. The Joint Management Plan Implementation Team meets monthly and provides quarterly progress reports to the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board. A review and update of the Partnership Agreement between DJAARA and Parks Victoria is also underway, which seeks to clarify and strengthen the authorising environment over the Recognition and Settlement Agreement area and renew shared priorities.

A further new agreement was negotiated between Parks Victoria and DJAARA that continues the direct employment of 3 Dja Dja Wurrung rangers within the agency. The Dja Dja Wurrung Ranger Team implements a collaboratively developed plan of works that includes a range of caring for Country, park management, visitor education, cultural heritage identification and cultural initiatives, which are guided by the Dhelkunya Dja Joint Management strategic plan. They are embedding cultural strengthening in day-to-day activities and are active in reclaiming and sharing knowledge and participating in Wartakas (knowledge sharing groups) with the broader DJAARA community.

In 2023–24, joint management projects gained significant momentum, with DJAARA resources and Parks Victoria budgets being directed towards shared priorities. In Kooyoorra State Park this enabled storm damaged areas to be reopened earlier than anticipated. Uniquely designed signage, furniture, toilets, shelters and landscaping are also serving to celebrate DJAARA culture and identity on Country and create broader awareness of Aboriginal cultural landscapes.

Goods and services are procured from DJAARA, and its subsidiary DJANDAK, to deliver on-ground works in the parks including pest plant control, visitor facility upgrades, project delivery and track maintenance.

7.1.5 Gunaikurnai

The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) entered into an updated RSA with Victoria in 2022 which added 4 parks to the 10 already designated for hand back as Aboriginal title and joint management. Of these 14 parks, the 10 areas under the Act are as follows:

- Alpine National Park (part)
- Baw Baw National Park
- Mitchell River National Park
- Tarra-Bulga National Park
- The Lakes National Park
- Avon Wilderness Park
- Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park
- Lake Tyers State Park
- New Guinea Cave (located within Snowy River National Park)
- Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park.

Other areas that are not under the Act but are also designated for hand back as Aboriginal title and joint management are Buchan Caves, Corringale Foreshore, Gippsland Lakes (Raymond Island) and The Knob reserves.

Gunaikurnai Recognition and Settlement Agreement renegotiations resulted in 4 additional parks coming into joint management with Parks Victoria - Avon Wilderness Park, Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park and areas within the Alpine and Baw Baw national parks. This brings the total number of parks and reserves that are jointly managed with Parks Victoria or DEECA to 14. Joint management planning for the new parks has commenced, informed by a recent 5-year review of current joint management outcomes.

Partnership strengthening remains a key focus area, both at a strategic community and landscape level but also in operational planning and delivery of joint management. A range of activities continue to support this objective, including field trips, workshops, on-ground programs and the negotiation of a renewed Partnership Agreement and Deed for Park Management Services that is awaiting final approval.

The capacity of GLaWAC continues to grow, with increasing procurement opportunities being taken up, including the recent delivery of a major campground at Angusvale. Parks Victoria has also employed an additional officer dedicated to supporting joint management operations and delivery of the Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan.

7.2 Co-operative management

7.2.1 Gunditjmara

Budj Bim National Park is co-operatively managed by Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) and Parks Victoria through the Budj Bim Council. As part of the broader Budj Bim Cultural Landscape UNESCO listed World Heritage site, the park has been recognised as having outstanding cultural significance.

The Budj Bim Council, appointed in 2020, was extended for a 12-month period from 1 July 2023 expiring on 30 June 2024. During this time, the council has worked closely with GMTOAC and DEECA First Peoples' Self Determination Division to commence the process to appoint a new council for a 3-year term, expected to be finalised in mid to late 2024.

The partners have continued to work on feral deer and weed control, and management of koala populations. In November 2023, Parks Victoria appointed a Gunditjmara Traditional Owner as Budj Bim National Park Project Officer to lead delivery of a project funded through the Australian Heritage Grants program. The program objectives include providing an increased ranger presence, increased service level of visitor facilities and improvements to walking tracks. A Junior Ranger program was also initiated for the first time in the park's history during the Easter 2024 school holidays.

Parks Victoria contributed to the DEECA led development of the Budj Bim Emergency Management Principles, designed to guide culturally sensitive emergency responder planning and response activities in the landscape.

7.2.2 Yorta Yorta

The Lower Goulburn National Park is co-operatively managed by the YYNAC and Parks Victoria. Activities in this and other parks in the area were significantly affected by the severe flood event that occurred in October 2022. Assessments of flood damage have been completed, with partners now determining the priority sites repair and rehabilitation works.

7.3 Other Traditional Owner partnerships

Parks Victoria continues to work closely on business and master planning with the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation, Barengi Gadjin Land Council and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation in relation to Brambuk: The National Park and Cultural Centre (Brambuk), which forms part of the Grampians National Park. As members of the Gariwerd Strategic Partnership Committee, the parties are also working together to implement the Greater Gariwerd Landscape Management Plan.

Parks Victoria has established a Leadership Steering Committee with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and the Boon Wurrung Land and Sea Council to focus on a range of strategic initiatives underway at Wilsons Promontory National Park.

8 SUPPORTING PARK MANAGEMENT

8.1 Management arrangements

Parks Victoria is responsible under the Act for ensuring that the parks and other areas to which the Act applies are controlled and managed in accordance with the Act. DEECA and other organisations also contribute to the parks program, and DEECA provides strategic policy advice to the Minister and the Secretary.

Parks Victoria's Business Plan and Budget 2023–24 sets out the management services and strategic priorities to be delivered for the year. Its annual report contains information on the organisation and its operations for the year.

Work was undertaken during the year to prepare for the transfer of the statutory responsibility for various parks under the Act to the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority by 1 November 2025: Great Otway (part) and Port Campbell national parks, Bay of Islands Coastal Park, Point Addis and Twelve Apostles marine national parks and Eagle Rock, Marengo Reefs, Merri, Point Danger and The Arches marine sanctuaries. Responsibility for Glenample Homestead will also transfer from Parks Victoria.

8.2 Legislation

The *Energy and Public Land Legislation Amendment (Enabling Offshore Wind Energy) Act 2024* includes amendments to the National Parks Act to expand the definitions of 'public authority' and 'electricity company' to include an offshore wind energy generation company within the meaning of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* and to clarify the intent of section 27A, which enables agreements to be made with electricity companies. On 8 May 2024, the amending Act corrected references to the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority in the permit power in section 21 of the National Parks Act. The remaining amendments to the Act will commence in 2024–25.

On 12 September 2023, the operation of the National Parks Regulations 2013 was extended until 31 August 2024.

8.3 Authorities under the Act

8.3.1 Leases, licences and other authorities

Parks Victoria manages 292 public land authorisations (consents, leases, licences and permits) under the Act, as shown in the following table. These exclude tour operator licences (see Licensed tour operators - pg 23).

Authority type	No. of authorities	No. of parks
Consent	231	50
Lease	30	15
Licence	18	14
Permit	13	8
Total	292	87

There were 7 authorisations granted under section 45A(4) of the Act to 7 individuals to permit particular commercial fishing vessels to transit Cape Howe Marine National Park.

8.3.2 Consents to public authorities

Section 27 of the Act enables consents to be granted to public authorities (as defined in the Act) to carry out works in parks, subject to conditions.

There were 2 consents issued during 2023–24:

- one to Gippsland Ports Committee of Management to enable the replacement of McLoughlin's Jetty in Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park
- one to South Gippsland Shire Council for the operation and maintenance of a boat launching facility in Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park.

The Governor in Council also determined that Parks Victoria should give consent to Barwon Water for the replacement of sections of a pipeline in the Great Otway National Park supplying water to Colac, subject to conditions aimed at mitigating the impact of the works on the park.

8.3.3 Consents to earth resource activities

There were no consents given or tabled under section 40 during the year in relation to earth resource activities in parks under the Act.

8.4 Enforcement

There were 6 individuals successfully prosecuted during the year for committing offences against the Act (6) or the Regulations (16) ¹. The most numerous offences were in relation to cutting or otherwise interfering with vegetation (11), interfering with animals (4) and recreational fishing in a marine sanctuary (3).

There were 346 infringement notices issued for prescribed offences against the Act (51) or the Regulations (295) ². The most numerous offences related to dogs (132), camping other than in a designated area (70), cutting or taking away fallen or felled trees (42), using a vehicle on a road or track where prohibited or restricted (34) and lighting or maintaining a fire (21).

There were also 51 official warnings and 1 warning issued in relation to offences against the Act (2) or the Regulations (49) ³. The most numerous offences related to dogs (17), camping outside a designated area (12) and driving on a road or track where prohibited or restricted (9).

8.5 Advisory bodies

8.5.1 National Parks Advisory Council

The National Parks Advisory Council is appointed under section 10 of the Act. Its main functions are to advise the Minister generally in relation to the administration of the Act and on particular matters in relation to which its advice is required under the Act or is sought by the Minister.

As at 30 June 2024, the members were:

Convenor:	Ms Anna Foley
Members:	Associate Professor Ursula De Jong
	Dr David Jones
	Dr Marie Keatley
	Dr Michael Looker
	Mr Mark Reeves
	Dr Mary-Jane Rogers.

The council's annual report for 2023–24 provides information on the council and its activities during the year.

8.5.2 Other advisory groups

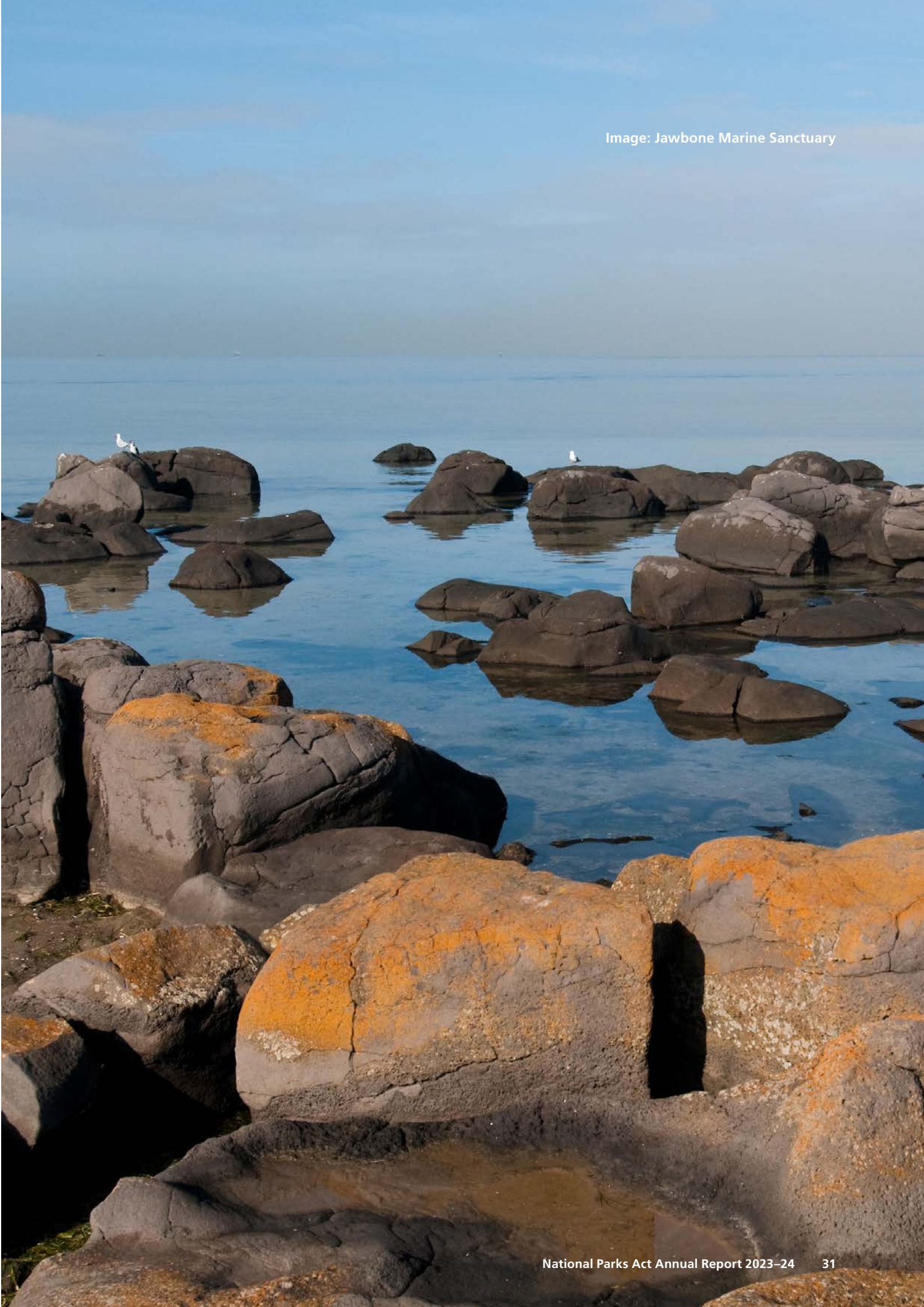
Several advisory groups provided advice to Parks Victoria on the management of various parks.

1. The numbers of prosecutions refer to those for which successful results were obtained during the year regardless of when the offences occurred.

2. The numbers of infringement notices refer to those issued during the year, regardless of when the offences occurred, and include any that may subsequently be withdrawn following an internal review during this or the next financial year.

3. The numbers of official warnings refer to those issued during the year, regardless of when the offences occurred, and include any issued following an internal review of any infringement notices issued during this or the previous financial year.

Image: Jawbone Marine Sanctuary



APPENDIX 1: AREAS MANAGED UNDER THE NATIONAL PARKS ACT

There were no changes to the areas managed under the Act during the year other than a small addition to Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park.

A National parks (schedule two)

National park		Area (ha) 30 June 2024
1	Alfred	3 050
2	Alpine	661 777
3	Barmah	28 505
4	Baw Baw	13 530
5	Brisbane Ranges	8 885
6	Budj Bim	8 565
7	Burrowa-Pine Mountain	18 400
8	Chiltern-Mt Pilot	21 650
9	Churchill	271
10	Cobboboonee	18 510
11	Coopracambra	38 800
12	Croajingolong	*88 525
13	Dandenong Ranges	3 535
14	Errinundra	^43 090
15	French Island	*11 155
16	Grampians	168 235
17	Greater Bendigo	17 586
18	Great Otway	*110 332
19	Gunbower	9 330
20	Hattah-Kulkyne	49 890
21	Heathcote-Graytown	12 700
22	Kara Kara	13 990
23	Kinglake	23 210
24	Lake Eildon	27 750
25	Lind	1 370
26	Little Desert	132 647
27	Lower Glenelg	26 430
28	Lower Goulburn	9 320
29	Mitchell River	14 395
30	Mornington Peninsula	*2 680
31	Morwell	565
32	Mount Buffalo	31 020
33	Mount Richmond	1 733

	National park	Area (ha) 30 June 2024
34	Murray-Sunset	665 400
35	Organ Pipes	153
36	Point Nepean	*578
37	Port Campbell	*1 830
38	Snowy River	114 600
39	Tarra-Bulga	2 015
40	Terrick Terrick	6 390
41	The Lakes	2 390
42	Warby-Ovens	14 750
43	Wilsons Promontory	*49 049
44	Wyperfeld	359 445
45	Yarra Ranges	77 185
Total – National parks		2 915 216

* Area includes the area of the national park located beneath a marine national park.

** Parts of Greater Bendigo NP extend only to 100 metres below the land surface

B Wilderness parks (schedule two A)

	Wilderness park	Area (ha) 30 June 2024
1	Avon	39 650
2	Big Desert	142 300
3	Wabba	20 100
Total – Wilderness parks		202 050

10	Kooyoorra	11 350
11	Lake Tyers	8 680
12	Langi Ghiran	3 040
13	Leaghur	2 050
14	Lerderderg	20 185
15	Moondarra	6 330
16	Mount Arapiles-Tooan	7 470
17	Mount Buangor	2 400
18	Mount Granya	6 140
19	Mount Lawson	13 150
20	Mount Napier	2 800
21	Mount Samaria	7 600
22	Mount Worth	1 040
23	Paddys Ranges	2 010
24	Reef Hills	2 020
25	Warrandyte	689
26	Werribee Gorge	575
Total – State parks		156 825

C State parks (schedule two B)

	State park	Area (ha) 30 June 2024
1	Arthurs Seat	565
2	Black Range	11 700
3	Broken-Boosey	1 010
4	Bunyip	16 655
5	Cape Nelson	210
6	Cathedral Range	3 616
7	Dergholm	10 400
8	Enfield	4 400
9	Holey Plains	10 740

D Other parks (schedule three)

Other park		Area (ha) 30 June 2024
1	Bay of Islands CP	950
2	Beechworth HP	1 090
3	Cape Conran CP	11 700
4	Cape Liptrap CP	4 320
5	Discovery Bay CP	*10 460
6	Gadsen Bend Park	1 620
7	Gippsland Lakes CP	17 688
8	Haining Farm	–
9	Kings Billabong Park	2 195
10	Lake Albacutya Park	8 300
11	Langwarrin FFR	214
12	Lysterfield Park	1 397
13	Murray-Kulkyne Park	4 555
14	Nyah-Vinifera Park	1 370
15	Steiglitz HP	430
16	Tara Range Park	7 620
17	Tyers Park	1 810
18	Woodlands HP	820
19	Yallock-Bulluk MCP	**3 535
Total – Other parks		80 074

CP Coastal Park

FFR Flora and Fauna Reserve

HP Historic Park

MCP Marine and Coastal Park

* Area includes the area of the park located beneath a marine national park.

** Area of 0.015 ha added to the park on 23 September 2023.

E Other parks and reserves (schedule four)

Other park or reserve		Area (ha) 30 June 2024
-	Bunurong MP	–
1	Castlemaine Diggings NHP**	7 590
2	Corner Inlet MCP	*18 000
3	Deep Lead NCR (No. 1)**	1 120
4	Nooramunga MCP	15 000
5	Shallow Inlet MCP	2 000
6	Wilsons Promontory MP	*10 000
7	Wilsons Promontory MR	
Total – Other parks and reserves		53 710

MCP Marine and Coastal Park

NCR Nature Conservation Reserve

MP Marine Park

NHP National Heritage Park

MR Marine Reserve

* Area includes the area of the park or reserve located beneath a marine national park.

** Castlemaine Diggings NHP and Deep Lead NCR (No. 1) extend only to 100 metres below the land surface.

F Wilderness zones (schedule five)

Wilderness Zones are located within several national parks, as set out below. The areas of the Wilderness Zones are included in the areas of the relevant parks in Part A of this appendix.

	National park	Wilderness zone	Area (ha) 30 June 2024
1	Alpine	Mount Darling-Snowy Bluff	40 400
2	Alpine	Razor-Viking	15 700
3	Alpine	Indi	13 800
4	Alpine	Cobberas	10 000
5	Alpine	Buchan Headwaters	30 000
6	Alpine	Tingaringy	7 900
7	Coopracambra	Genoa	19 400
8	Croajingolong	Sandpatch	15 600
9	Croajingolong	Cape Howe	7 100
10	Murray-Sunset	Sunset	126 900
11	Murray-Sunset	Minook	38 700
12	Murray-Sunset	Galpunga	35 700
13	Murray-Sunset	Mount Cowra	23 500
14	Snowy River	Snowy River	27 000
15	Snowy River	Bowen	17 500
16	Wilsons Promontory	Wilsons Promontory	21 800
17	Wyperfeld	North Wyperfeld	97 900
18	Wyperfeld	South Wyperfeld	61 300
19	Wyperfeld	Chinaman Flat	29 800
Total – Wilderness zones			640 000

G Remote and natural areas (schedule six)

Remote and natural areas are located within several national parks, as set out below. The areas of the remote and natural areas are included in the areas of the relevant parks in Part A of this appendix.

National park		Remote and natural area	Area (ha) 30 June 2024
1	Alpine	The Governors	8 100
2	Alpine	Macalister	33 300
3	Alpine	Dandongadale	3 700
4	Alpine	Bundara-Cobungra	13 700
5	Alpine	Bogong	16 300
6	Alpine	Davies Plain	10 500
7	Alpine	Suggan Buggan	17 800
8	Alpine	Upper Snowy	11 800
9	Baw Baw	Baw Baw Plateau	6 500
10	Burrowa-Pine Mountain	Mount Burrowa	6 200
11	Coopracambra	Mount Kaye	8 100
12	Croajingolong	Rame Head	9 800
13	Errinundra	Brodribb	7 700
14	Grampians	Victoria Range	14 000
15	Grampians	Serra Range	11 200
16	Grampians	Major Mitchell Plateau	6 900
17	Little Desert	Little Desert	16 400
18	Mount Buffalo	North Buffalo	6 500
19	Murray-Sunset	South Sunset	24 000
20	Wilsons Promontory	Wilsons Promontory Islands (12)	469
21	Wilsons Promontory	Southern Wilsons Promontory	14 400
22	Wyperfeld	Hopping Mouse Hill	32 100
Total – Remote and natural areas			279 469

H Marine national parks (schedule seven)

		Area (ha) 30 June 2024
	Marine national park*	
1	Bunurong	2 100
2	Cape Howe	4 050
3	Churchill Island	670
4	Corner Inlet	1 550
5	Discovery Bay	2 770
6	French Island	2 800
7	Ninety Mile Beach	2 750
8	Point Addis	4 600
9	Point Hicks	4 000
10	Port Phillip Heads	3 580
11	Twelve Apostles	7 500
12	Wilsons Promontory	15 550
13	Yaringa	980
Total – marine national parks		52 900

I Marine sanctuaries (schedule eight)

		Area (ha) 30 June 2024
	Marine sanctuary	
1	Barwon Bluff	17
2	Beware Reef	220
3	Eagle Rock	17
4	Jawbone	30
5	Marengo Reefs	12
6	Merri	25
7	Mushroom Reef	80
8	Point Cooke	290
9	Point Danger	25
10	Ricketts Point	115
11	The Arches	45
Total – Marine sanctuaries		876

* Marine national parks extend only to 200 metres below the land surface. Some partly overlay parts of other parks under the Act.

J Landscape conservation areas (schedule nine)

		Area (ha) 30 June 2024
	Landscape conservation areas	
1	Yellingbo	1 790
	– Beenak NCA	(125)
	– Hoddles Creek NCA	(283)
	– Sheep Station Creek NCA	(87)
	– Warramate Hills NCA	(499)
	– Yellingbo NCA	(605)
	– Wright Forest BA	(129)
	– Haining Farm	(59)
Total – Landscape conservation areas		1 790

BA Bushland Area
NCA Nature Conservation Area

K Other areas (non-scheduled)*

	Area	Section of Act	Area (ha) 30 June 2024
1	Bald Hills BR	19B	1
2	Collins Settlement Historic Site	19B	1
3	Flinders NCR	19B	1
4	Flinders Natural Interest Reserve	19B	4
5	Long Forest NCR	19B	283
6	Lower Glenelg PPR and SLR	19B	24
7	Main Ridge NCR	19B	64
8	Moreep BR	19B	10
9	Nyerimilang Park	19B	200
10	Wychitella NCR	19B	3 780
11	Mt St Gwinear access road	19C	35
12	Commonwealth land adjacent to Woodlands Historic Park	19D	31
13	Picnic area at McKenzie's Flat (Lerderderg State Park)	19E	0.1
14	Blackwood Ranges Track (Lerderderg State Park)	19E	0.1
15	Glenample Homestead	32AA	8
Total – Other areas			4 442

BR Bushland Reserve

NCR Nature Conservation Reserve

* Only specific sections of the Act apply to these areas

PPR Public Purposes Reserve

SLR Scenic Lookout Reserve

L Summary – areas managed under the Act

Category	No. of Areas 30 June 2024	Area (ha) 30 June 2024
A National Parks (Schedule Two)	45	2 915 216
B Wilderness Parks (Schedule Two A)	3	202 050
C State Parks (Schedule Two B)	26	156 825
D Other Parks (Schedule Three)	18	80 074
E Other Parks and Reserves (Schedule Four)	7	53 710
H Marine National Parks (Schedule Seven)	13	52 900
I Marine Sanctuaries (Schedule Eight)	11	876
J Landscape Conservation Areas (Schedule Nine)	1	1 790
K Other areas (non-scheduled)	15	4 442
Total	139	3 467 883

M Unproclaimed additions

As at 30 June 2024, legislation provides for future additions to several parks as follows.

Park	Act	Provision of Act	Area (ha)
1 Dandenong Ranges National Park	National Parks Act 1975	Schedule One clause 10	*<1
2 Greater Bendigo National Park	National Parks Act 1975	Schedule One clause 12	*31
3 Great Otway National Park (2 areas)	National Parks Act 1975	section 79	*219
4 Moondarra State Park	National Parks (Amendment) Act 1989	section 29(3)	178
Total – Unproclaimed areas			428

* Area will become part of the park when the rights over the land are surrendered to the Crown.

Image: Volunteers removing sea spurge, Norman Beach, Wilsons Promontory National Park



APPENDIX 2: LOCATION OF PARKS AND OTHER AREAS

National and other parks and areas	Map ref				
Alfred NP	102	Hattah-Kulkyne NP	2	Snowy River NP	98
Alpine NP	77	Heathcote-Graytown NP	29	Steiglitz HP	37
Arthurs Seat SP	46	Holey Plains SP	93	Tara Range Park	41
Avon WP	78	Kara Kara NP	23	Tarra-Bulga NP	91
Bald Hills BR	48	Kinglake NP	60	Terrick Terrick NP	27
Barmah NP	68	Kings Billabong Park	105	The Lakes NP	95
Baw Baw NP and Mt St Gwinear access road	79	Kooyoora SP	24	Tyers Park	81
Bay of Islands CP	38	Lake Albacutya Park	6	Wabba WP	75
Beechworth HP	71	Lake Eildon NP	64	Warby-Ovens NP	69
Big Desert WP	4	Lake Tyers SP	110	Warrandyte SP	57
Black Range SP	10	Langi Ghiran SP	20	Werribee Gorge SP	33
Brisbane Ranges NP	36	Langwarrin FFR	52	Wilsons Promontory MP	87
Broken-Boosey SP	67	Leaghur SP	26	Wilsons Promontory MR	88
Budj Bim NP	18	Lerderderg SP		Wilsons Promontory NP	86
Bunurong MP	83	and associated leased areas	31	Woodlands HP and adjacent	
Bunyip SP	55	Lind NP	101	Commonwealth land	59
Burrowa-Pine Mountain NP	74	Little Desert NP	7	Wychitella NCR	25
Cape Conran CP	103	Long Forest NCR	32	Wyperfeld NP	5
Cape Liptrap CP	84	Lower Glenelg NP		Yallock-Bulluk MCP	83
Cape Nelson SP	17	and Cobboboonee NP	13	Yarra Ranges NP	62
Castlemaine Diggings NHP	30	Lower Glenelg PPR and SLR	15	Yellingbo LCA	61
Cathedral Range SP	63	Lower Goulburn NP	109		
Chiltern-Mt Pilot NP	70	Lysterfield Park	54	Marine national parks and marine sanctuaries	Map ref
Churchill NP	53	Main Ridge NCR	47	Barwon Bluff MS	I
Collins Settlement HS	44	Mitchell River NP	96	Beware Reef MS	V
Coopracambra NP	100	Moondarra SP	80	Bunurong MNP	R
Corner Inlet MCP	89	Moreep BR	35	Cape Howe MNP	X
Croajingolong NP	104	Mornington Peninsula NP	45	Churchill Island MNP	Q
Dandenong Ranges NP	56	Morwell NP	92	Corner Inlet MNP	T
Deep Lead NCR (No. 1)	12	Mount Arapiles-Tooan SP	8	Discovery Bay MNP	A
Dergholm SP	9	Mount Buangor SP	21	Eagle Rock MS	F
Discovery Bay CP	14	Mount Buffalo NP	76	French Island MNP	P
Enfield SP	34	Mount Granya SP	72	Jawbone MS	L
Errinundra NP	99	Mount Lawson SP	73	Marengo Reefs MS	E
Flinders NCR	49	Mount Napier SP	19	Merri MS	B
Flinders NIR	50	Mount Richmond NP	16	Mushroom Reef MS	N
French Island NP	51	Mount Samaria SP	65	Ninety Mile Beach MNP	U
Gadsen Bend Park	106	Mount Worth SP	82	Point Addis MNP	G
Gippsland Lakes CP	94	Murray-Kulkyne Park	3	Point Cooke MS	K
Glenample Homestead	40	Murray-Sunset NP	1	Point Danger MS	H
Grampians NP	11	Nooramunga MCP	90	Point Hicks MNP	W
Great Otway NP	42	Nyah-Vinifera Park	107	Port Phillip Heads MNP	J
Greater Bendigo NP	28	Nyerimilang Park	97	Ricketts Point MS	M
Gunbower NP	108	Organ Pipes NP	58	The Arches MS	C
Haining Farm	61	Paddys Ranges SP	22	Twelve Apostles MNP	D
		Point Nepean NP	43	Wilsons Promontory MNP	S
		Port Campbell NP	39	Yaringa MNP	O
		Reef Hills SP	66		
		Shallow Inlet MCP	85		

BR	Bushland Reserve	MNP	Marine National Park	NIR	Natural Interest Reserve
CP	Coastal Park	MP	Marine Park	NP	National Park
FFR	Flora and Fauna Reserve	MR	Marine Reserve	PPR	Public Purposes Reserve
HP	Historic Park	MS	Marine Sanctuary	SLR	Scenic Lookout Reserve
HS	Historic Site	NCR	Nature Conservation Reserve	SP	State Park
MCP	Marine and Coastal Park	NHP	National Heritage Park	WP	Wilderness Park

Areas managed under the National Parks Act 30 June 2024

