

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
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Saturday, 16 May 2020

EASTERN BARRED BANDICOOT BACK FROM BRINK OF EXTINCTION

One of the state's most endangered native animals has been brought back from the brink of extinction thanks to a conservation program backed by the Victorian Government.

The re-establishment of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot on Phillip Island is the first time in Victorian history a species declared extinct in the wild has had its decline successfully reversed.

The *Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery Team* released 67 bandicoots on to Phillip Island in 2017 – that number has now grown to approximately 300 animals.

The success of the program is so significant the findings are now being assessed by scientists and may soon result in a downgrading of the species threat status from critically endangered.

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot was wiped out in Victoria more than 30 years ago by a combination of foxes and habitat loss, and has only existed in sanctuaries on the mainland or in captive breeding programs.

Since the release program began and Phillip island was declared fox free, the bandicoots have not only increased in number but their microchips reveal they have spread at least four kilometres from the original release site.

The *Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery Team*, which includes representatives from Phillip Island Nature Parks, Zoos Victoria, DELWP and Parks Victoria, first released 20 of the marsupials onto Churchill Island back in 2015 – that number has now grown to 130.

A further 55 bandicoots were released onto French Island last year bringing the total number now in the wild to almost 500.

The Bandicoot program is just one of the measures the Government is taking to protect Victoria's wildlife and biodiversity which includes a 20-year, \$80 million biodiversity plan.

A \$17.5 million rescue package is also providing direct and immediate support to give native species a fighting chance in bushfire recovery.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"This is a wonderful achievement and I thank everyone involved for giving this precious little Victorian a fighting chance at long term survival."

"With the devastating bushfires in January, it's been a tough year for our native wildlife but this program is showing how hard work and perseverance can really make a difference."

"This is a huge step forward in securing this species from extinction and another example of the conservation work that continues behind the scenes while our favourite attractions remain closed."