



The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change

Tuesday 24 November 2020

PROTECTING OUR WILDERNESS AND ENSURING MORE PEOPLE ENJOY IT

The Andrews Labor Government is protecting Victoria's beautiful natural environment and ensuring more people can enjoy it, with a major investment in our much-loved parks and Zoos, and funding to protect biodiversity across the state.

The *Victorian Budget 2020/21* invests \$655 million to protect vulnerable wilderness, restore the environment following bushfires, and improve visitor facilities so more people can get out and enjoy our natural wonders.

The Budget invests more than \$80 million in better visitor facilities at iconic locations across Victoria, including the Grampians National Park, Alpine National Park, Cape Conran Coastal Park, the Mallacoota Inlet and at the Point Hicks Lighthouse near the Croajingolong National Park.

This investment includes \$23 million to build a new visitors centre at Wilsons Promontory, and establish a 50,000-hectare biodiversity sanctuary, with a predator proof fence to protect the Park's unique and abundant wildlife, including its threatened species.

More than \$47.5 million will build better visitor infrastructure along the Great Ocean Road, including a signature coastal walking trail along the coastline and hinterland from Fairhaven to Skenes Creek, with up to five new swing suspension bridges providing spectacular views of Victoria's rugged surf coast.

Funding of \$52 million will also go to Parks Victoria to upgrade sites at Albert Park, Braeside Park, Brimbank Park, Dandenong Ranges, Mornington Peninsula, Organ Pipes, Plenty Gorge, Point Cook, and other locations around the state – delivering new walking trails, new picnic tables and new barbecues.

And \$10 million will improve water quality, protect critically endangered species, and boost tourism opportunities at the Yellingbo Conservation Area.

An additional \$29 million will continue the critical work of the Bushfire Biodiversity Response and Recovery program, which is restoring and protecting vast areas of wilderness impacted by the summer's fires – controlling invasive weeds and feral animals, protecting threatened species and creating jobs in fire-affected communities.

The Budget invests \$48 million towards community environmental programs to protect Victorian plants and animals, the ongoing management of Port Philip Bay and the vital work of Landcare.

The Budget will also deliver \$92.3 million to restore land and plant four million trees across more than 6,000 hectares to store carbon in our landscape and help tackle climate change.

To transform Werribee Zoo into Australia's leading open-range zoo, the Budget delivers \$84 million to build a new home for the much-loved Asian elephant herd, currently housed at Melbourne Zoo, and make other vital upgrades – creating new opportunities for families to spend time, and create memories, together.

To keep Victoria safe from bushfires over summer, the Budget provides \$36 million to build and upgrade 1,447 kilometres of fuel breaks, and \$46 million for more firefighters, advance modelling and training, support more mechanical treatment and planned burning and Aboriginal cultural burning practises.

To address Victoria's ongoing feral deer problem, the Labor Government will invest \$18.2 million. More than \$6 million will continue the Wild Dog Control program across Gippsland and north-east Victoria.

The Labor Government will also invest \$16 million to prepare and protect our coast from climate change through research, policy and on the ground action, including local planting and erosion prevention.

The Labor Government will invest a further \$41 million to build new recycling facilities in regional Victoria. These facilities will recover and recycle more materials and create 100 local jobs.

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

"We're protecting our beautiful environment and making it easier for more people to get out and enjoy it."

"These are vital investments in conservation that will not only protect our precious biodiversity – but also take carbon out of our atmosphere, an important step in fighting climate change."