

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



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MOUSE MATCHMAKERS BRING NATIVE BACK FROM THE BRINK

A tiny endangered native mouse has a big future thanks to the Andrews Labor Government's ongoing investment into Victoria's precious biodiversity.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio today announced a new breeding program which pairs Pookila – coupling the native mice to regenerate the wild population.

The Victorian Pookila Captive Breeding and Reintroduction Program will see genetically diverse breeding pairs matched and housed at Melbourne Zoo and Moonlit Sanctuary with the eventual goal of releasing the offspring.

Derived from the Ngarigo word for 'mouse' – bugila – Pookila (pronounced: POO-kee-lah) was adopted by the Federal Government in 1995 as the Indigenous name for the species formally known as the New Holland Mouse.

The small, burrowing rodents, native to south-eastern Australia, are endangered in Victoria. Similar in size to the introduced House Mouse, they can be distinguished by their large eyes, rounded ears, a bi-coloured pink and dusky brown tail, and the absence of 'mousey' odour.

Seven of the known Victorian populations have become extinct in the last decades, with sites shrinking to just five across the Gippsland region, including at Wilson's Promontory National Park.

The population decline is due to habitat loss including from drought and bushfire, feral predators, competition from non-native rodent species and loss of genetic diversity.

To combat this, a team of scientists has 'paired' – specially matched based on where they were collected, their genetic diversity and behaviour – 22 of the 3,000 mice that remain in Victoria.

The Program aims to breed more genetically healthy and resilient mice that can be released into the wild, strengthening existing populations and creating new ones.

The Labor Government has invested more than \$305 million in Zoos Victoria since 2014. Over the same period, the Government has invested more than \$560 million into protecting biodiversity – more than any other in Victorian history. It halts the decline of Victoria's plants and animals through its landmark plan *Biodiversity 2037*.

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

"We're making record investments into biodiversity so our unique native species – big and small – can thrive in the wild for generations to come."

"We're proud to use the Ngarigo name for this adorable native mouse and to be investing in its future."

Quotes attributable to Zoos Victoria Native Rodent Biologist Dr Phoebe Burns

"It's exciting to be able to make a real difference in the long-term conservation of this gorgeous native mouse."

Quotes attributable to Moonlit Sanctuary Founder/Director Michael Johnson

"Moonlit Sanctuary is thrilled to invest in the recovery of another threatened Victorian species."

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