

# Joint Media Release



**Ingrid Stitt MP**

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep  
Minister for Environment



Australian Government

**The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP**

Minister for the Environment and Water

Sunday, 25 June 2023

## REPTILE THOUGHT TO BE EXTINCT REDISCOVERED IN VICTORIA

A small reptile not seen in Victoria for over 50 years and thought to be extinct in the wild has been rediscovered.

The Albanese and Andrews Labor Governments today announced the landmark discovery of a Victorian grassland earless dragon population, which provides renewed hope for the critically endangered species last sighted in 1969.

Once commonly found in native grasslands west of Melbourne, their numbers declined as a result of habitat loss and predators like foxes and feral cats.

To protect the habitat and the species, the location of the rediscovered population cannot be revealed – but surveys are ongoing at the rediscovery site to better understand the population size, with the Andrews Labor Government working alongside the Albanese Government and Zoos Victoria to establish a plan to ensure the species' recovery.

The Albanese and Andrews Government are investing \$188,000 for a new project trialling the use of specially trained detection dogs to sniff out more populations of the dragon to help inform the level of conservation required. A conservation breeding program is also being established by Zoos Victoria to ensure the species is not lost again.

The Victorian grassland earless dragon is listed as critically endangered under the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The Albanese Labor Government is delivering the largest investment in the environment ever including \$1.2 billion for the Great Barrier Reef, \$224.5 million for our Saving Native Species Program, an extra \$262.3 million for national parks, \$200 million to improve our urban rivers and catchments and \$440 million through the Natural Heritage Trust to conserve threatened species and ecosystems.

Through Biodiversity 2037 and a record investment of \$582 million since 2014, the Andrews Labor Government is investing more than ever in Victoria's biodiversity and environment.

This includes the \$77 million BushBank program which will restore natural environments and habitats across Victoria through millions of native plants and trees being planted and more than \$10.6 million to support conservation projects for 22 of Victoria's icon species through the Icon Species and Faunal Emblem Programs.

### Quotes attributable to Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek

*"I want to protect our precious creatures for our kids and grandkids. It's such exciting news that the Victorian grassland earless dragon has been rediscovered. It's a reminder about why it's so important to invest in habitat restoration and the eradication of feral species like cats and foxes."*

*"To best support the recovery of the Victorian grassland earless dragon, we have to know where they are. Detection dogs are an effective and non-invasive way to find this highly cryptic and critically endangered lizard in the wild."*

*"I'm so pleased to announce that the Federal Labor Government is investing \$98,000 for this project to find populations of the rare dragons."*

### Quotes attributable to Victorian Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt

*“This is an amazing discovery and offers an opportunity for us to recover a species once thought lost to our state and the world!”*

*“With the help of our partners we will continue to fight the extinction of this critically endangered species – ensuring future generations can see and learn about this incredibly unique lizard.”*

*“We will continue to work hard at protecting Victoria’s most vulnerable creatures and secure their future for generations to come.”*

**Quote attributable to Zoos Victoria CEO Dr Jenny Gray**

*“The extraordinary rediscovery of this critically endangered and cryptic lizard inspires optimism for the recovery of this Victorian species, and Zoos Victoria is proud to be lending years of expertise honed through the breeding recovery program at Melbourne Zoo for Canberra dragons.”*

**ENDS**

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