

Media Release

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Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep
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EXTINCT PLANT SPECIES REDISCOVERED IN VICTORIA'S MALLEE

A small plant species listed as extinct in Victoria has been re-discovered by botanists assessing recently flooded river land in Victoria's north-west.

Cyperus squarrosus also known as Bearded Flat Sedge had been listed as extinct in Victoria for more than 60 years – with its last verified sighting in 1953.

Botanists from the Andrews Labor Government's *Victorian Forest Monitoring Program* discovered a significant population of the species while inspecting plots of public land close to the Murray River during last year's floods.

Bearded Flat Sedge is a small, tufted plant which can grow to 16-centimetres tall and is suited to wet and muddy environments including disturbed soil in floodplains.

Before confirming the discovery, botanists sent samples of the rediscovered plant population to Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria (RBGV) to compare with the last verified specimen of the plant held in the State Botanical Collection.

Now verified, the sample has been added to the RBGV collection, regarded as one of Australia's most valuable biological research repositories and one of the largest in the southern hemisphere comprising of more than 1.5 million dried plant, algae and fungi specimens.

The Labor Government is currently making arrangements for ongoing management of the plant to ensure its survival for years to come.

Victoria is the only state in Australia to have a dedicated and permanent Forest Monitoring Program.

Information collected by the program across 803 different ground plots is published in the State of the Forests Report and helps to develop policy around fire and flood impacts, habitat protection, forest productivity and biodiversity.

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.

Quote attributable to Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt

"This discovery is a testament to the skills of those involved in the Forest Monitoring Program and offers an opportunity for us to recover a species once thought lost to our state."

Quote attributable to DEECA Chief Biodiversity Officer James Todd

"Many of our native plants particularly grasses and sedges are vulnerable to grazing and weed invasion, yet they are critical to the health of the landscape. This is a heartening discovery and shows the great resilience of the species."

Quote attributable to Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria Director and Chief Executive Tim Entwisle

"We are thrilled to play a role protecting Victoria's at-risk flora and biodiversity and helping to identify this species by comparing it to the irreplaceable specimens held in Victoria's State Botanical Collection."

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