

# Great Outdoors Taskforce Terms of Reference

## Introduction

1. In May 2023, the Victorian Government announced that commercial native forest timber harvesting would end in 2024. The Great Outdoors Taskforce has been established to provide advice and recommendations to Government on the future use and management of forests associated with the May 2023 forestry announcement.
2. Each member of the Panel is required to comply with the Terms of Reference and each member's ongoing participation in the Panel is their implied acceptance of these Terms of Reference.

## Definitions

3. In these Terms of Reference-

**Panel** means the Great Outdoors Taskforce Ministerial advisory committee, established by the Minister by these Terms of Reference.

**Department** means the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action or its successor.

**Member** means a member of the Panel and includes a reference to the Chairperson(s) unless the contrary intention is expressed.

**Minister** means the Minister for Environment.

**Study area** means the area defined in paragraph 13 of these Terms of Reference.

## Establishment of Panel

4. The Minister establishes the Great Outdoors Taskforce as a non-statutory ministerial advisory committee from the date of these Terms of Reference.
5. The Panel operates for 12 months from the date that the Minister signs the Instrument of Appointment .
6. The Panel is classified as a Group D Band 3 organisation (*ad hoc* expert panel) in accordance with the *Appointment and Remuneration Guidelines*.

## Traditional Owner Partnership Approach

7. *The Traditional Owner Partnerships Approach* will be developed with relevant Traditional Owner groups and will be attached to these Terms of Reference, to consider Traditional Owner matters including but not limited to:
  - a. Traditional Owner representation on the Panel providing flexibility for the differing levels of readiness of the groups,
  - b. Panel functions with respect to working with Traditional Owner groups (including formal Panel representation, input from Traditional Owner groups, cultural values or reading country assessments where appropriate, and inclusion of existing policy work being undertaken by Traditional Owner groups),
  - c. configuration of Panel membership when the Panel is considering specific areas of Country (e.g., a smaller subset of Panel members may convene to discuss matters relating to specific areas of Country), and
  - d. identifying relevant forums for the Panel to receive advice and inputs relating to Traditional Owner policy matters and First Nations knowledge and practice, including considering the advice provided by the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations.

## Functions

8. The Panel is required to undertake a prioritisation assessment across the Study area and produce written report(s) 12 months from the date that the Minister signs the Instrument of Appointment that identify:
  - a. priority areas for reservation change where there are clear outcomes, and
  - b. where in-depth, place-based engagement is required to determine outcomes.
9. Each report will provide advice and recommendations to the Minister that:
  - a. Identifies priority areas for reservation change, including state forest areas:
    - i. that could be declared as national park or another park category under the *National Parks Act 1975*,
    - ii. that could be classified as a public land use category where outdoor recreation activities normally not permitted in national parks may be permitted (e.g. forest park), and
    - iii. proposed timing for the advice and recommendations to occur,
  - b. Identifies opportunities for Traditional Owner management,
  - c. Identifies areas important for the protection of biodiversity and threatened species,
  - d. Identifies opportunities to enhance outdoor recreation experiences,
  - e. Identifies opportunities to support enhanced tourism experiences and regional development, and
  - f. Identifies areas where in-depth, place-based engagement is required to determine any changes to reservation status.
10. In providing its advice and recommendations the Panel will:
  - a. Conduct stakeholder and community engagement in accordance with a *Communications and Engagement Plan* to be developed by the Panel and endorsed by the Minister,
  - b. Consider advice from stakeholder reference groups that include experts in environment, outdoor recreation, tourism, and regional development, in accordance with a *Stakeholder Reference Group Approach* that will be developed by the Panel and endorsed by the Minister,
  - c. Consider the findings of separate scientific assessments to be undertaken by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC), including working closely with VEAC to understand forest values and public land categories, and
  - d. Consider contemporary policy drivers including:
    - i. relevant recognition and settlement agreements with Traditional Owners under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* and arrangements under the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*,
    - ii. Victorian Treaty processes and associated outcomes,
    - iii. relevant cultural priorities and matters as advised by Traditional Owner groups,
    - iv. relevant Victorian Government policies and strategies, Ministerial statements, reports by the Victorian Auditor-General,
    - v. Victorian policies relevant to outdoor recreation and tourism,
    - vi. Victoria's obligations and the government's agenda to protect biodiversity and address climate change,
    - vii. the potential for improving connectivity between any proposed and existing parks or conservation reserves,
    - viii. potential land uses that may provide economic value to the state,
    - ix. relevant regional programs, strategies, and plans, and
    - x. relevant national and international agreements, policies, and strategies.

## Study area

11. The study area includes:
  - a. 1.8 million hectares state forest subject to the timber harvest Allocation Order (map at **Appendix 1**),
  - b. relevant adjacent state forest areas where assessment is required to support a Cultural Landscapes approach and/or management continuity, as determined by the Panel, and
  - c. the above areas exclude those being considered by the Eminent Panel for Community Engagement, that include forests within the Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreement region.

## Membership

12. The Panel will consist of members appointed by the Minister.
13. The Panel is to be constituted by-
  - a. A Chairperson,
  - b. Traditional Owner members and / or nominated members will be appointed in line with the *Traditional Owner Partnerships Approach*,
  - c. Up to four other skills-based or expertise members with:
    - i. environment expertise/skills,
    - ii. tourism/regional development expertise/skills (to be appointed in consultation with the Minister for Regional Development), and/or
    - iii. outdoor recreation expertise/skills.

## Decisions, information-sharing, and advice

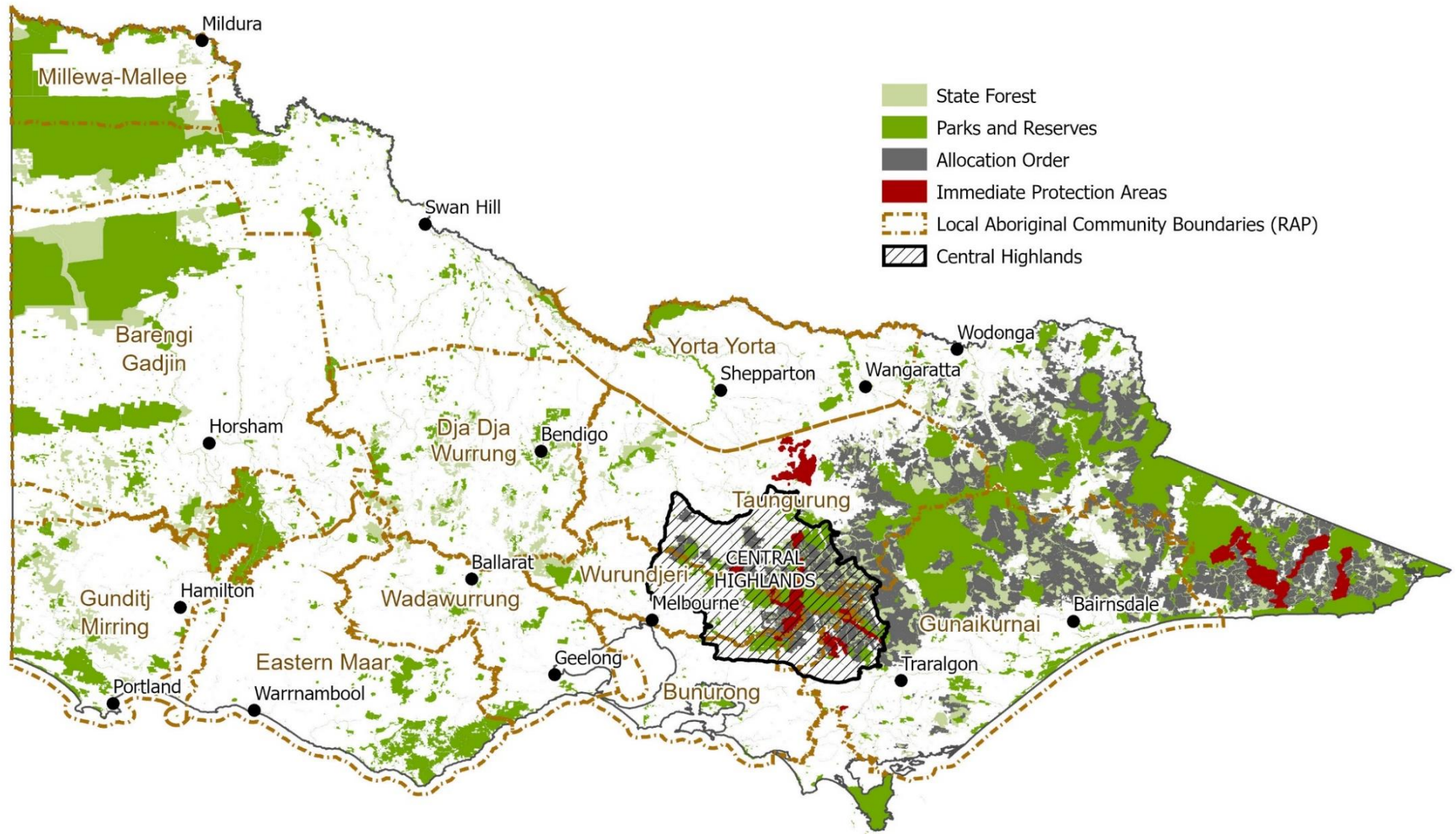
14. The Panel must aim for consensus in its decision making. In the absence of agreement, decisions of the Panel will be made by a majority of the members present and able to vote at that meeting. Dissenting views should be recorded in the minutes.
15. Subject to clause 16, for decisions relating to Traditional Owner matters for specific Country areas, the respective Panel member that represents that Traditional Owner group must be in attendance for the Panel to reach a decision with respect to that member's Country area.
16. If a Registered Aboriginal Party within the study area chooses not to nominate a Traditional Owner member to the Panel, the Chair must seek advice from that group about matters relating to Country and the advice must be considered by the Panel.
17. Traditional Owner and First Nations Panel members can caucus separately from the full Panel membership to support cross-Nation information sharing.
18. Members, through the Chairperson, can request advice from subject matter experts, and to have those experts attend meetings where appropriate.
19. All members are expected to comply with the procedures and additional provisions set out in Attachment 1.

**Steve Dimopoulos MP**

**Minister for Environment**

**Date**

Appendix 1: Map of Victoria's state forest, including areas subject to the Allocation Order, Immediate Protection Areas, and Parks and Reserves



Note – Shaded 'Central Highlands' section of map being considered by Eminent Panel for Community Engagement process and excluded from the Study Area.