

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

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



Saturday, 28 August 2021

PROTECTING FORESTS FOR COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The Victorian Government is starting important work on how best to manage our largest ever environmental protection initiative involving 96,000 hectares of state forests now protected from timber harvesting for recreation and tourism.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio today announced the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) will undertake a scientific assessment of environmental, biodiversity and other values in areas identified as Immediate Protection Areas (IPA).

The IPAs are located in Mirboo North, Strathbogie Ranges, Central Highlands and East Gippsland.

This assessment will be made available to the public and will provide advice on appropriate land tenure for the IPAs.

Community consultation will be undertaken by the newly established Eminent Panel for Community Engagement which will work alongside VEAC. VEAC will also have a formal representation on the Panel.

The panel will be chaired by current Chief Executive of the Latrobe Valley Authority Karen Cain and will engage with Victorians to understand community views and values, including working closely with Traditional Owners who will also have formal membership on the Panel.

The Panel will provide recommendations and a timeline for the government to reclassify each of the IPAs.

The Panel will consult with the community to seek their views on VEAC's final Assessment of the IPAs in Mirboo North and Strathbogie Ranges starting later this year, while consultation on the VEAC's Assessment of the IPAs in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland, will take place over a longer period starting in 2022.

The Panel will present its report and recommendations to the Government on the Mirboo North and Strathbogie Ranges IPAs in early to mid-2022, with the report on remaining IPAs to be received towards the end of 2022.

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

"Immediate Protection Areas contain very special native plants and animals and rich ecosystems, so it's vital to determine how best to protect them for future generations, while ensuring Victorians can enjoy the many experiences our forests provide."

Quote attributable to Chair of the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Mellissa Wood

"VEAC's scientific assessment will guide future decisions on reclassification ensuring Victoria's forest are sites for the protection of flora and fauna and spaces for Victorians to explore."

Quote attributable to Chair of Eminent Panel for Community Engagement Karen Cain

"It is a privilege to be appointed as chair to guide community engagement, we all want Victoria's forests to be protected for the future and managed sustainably as sites for recreation, tourism and employment."