

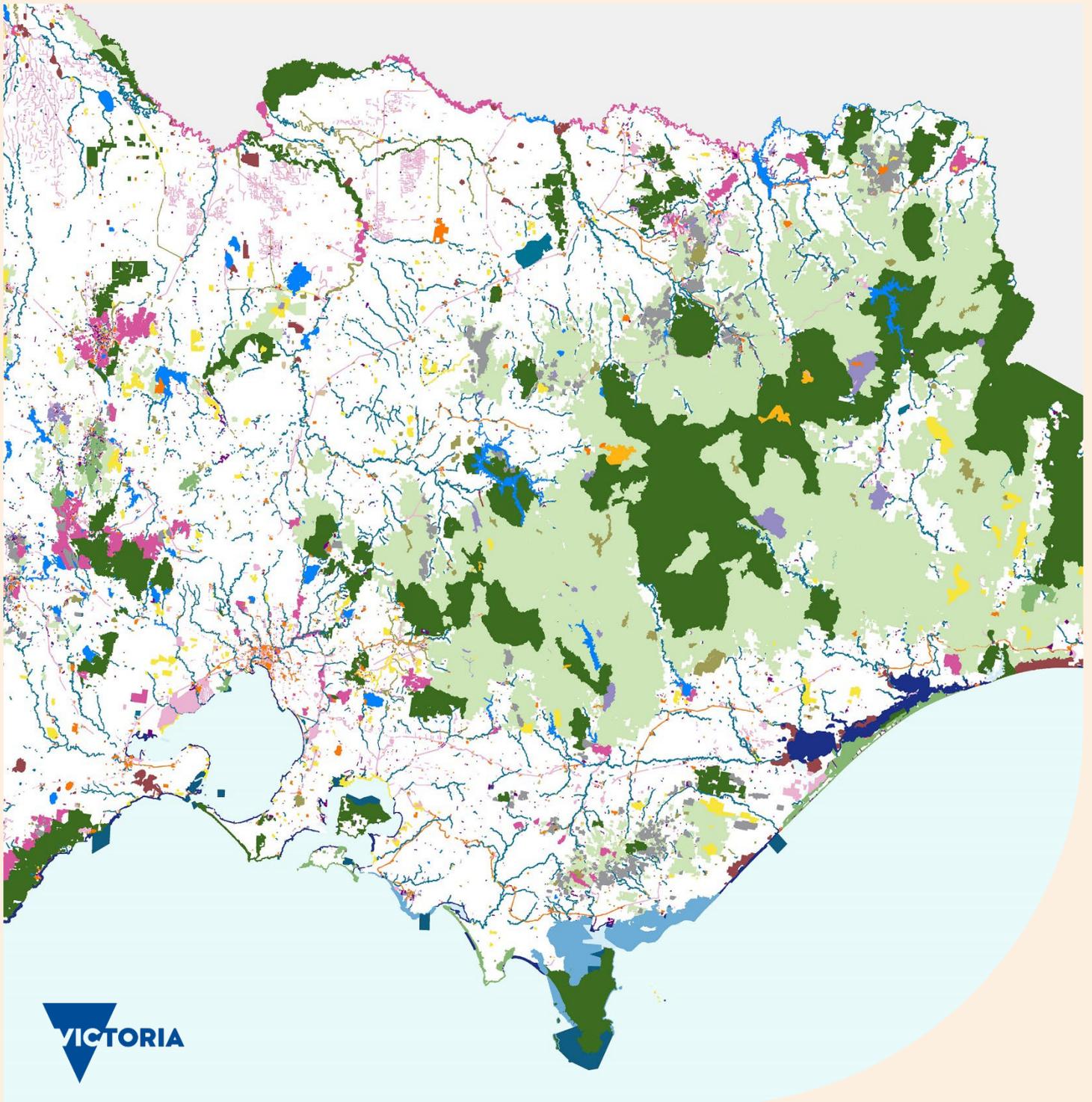


Victorian  
Environmental  
Assessment  
Council

# Advice on Aspects of Public Land Use Information

## Improving the VEACRecs25 dataset

April 2023



### **Victorian Environmental Assessment Council**

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) was established in 2001 under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. It provides the State Government of Victoria with independent advice on protection and management of the environment and natural resources of public land.

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## Acknowledgement

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council acknowledges and respects Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
ECC	Environment Conservation Council
GIS	Geographic Information System
LCC	Land Conservation Council
PLM25	Public Land Management spatial dataset for Victoria
PRIMS	Parks and Reserves Information Management System
VEAC	Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
VEACRecs25	Spatial dataset depicting public land use decisions of the Victorian government
VOTS	Victoria's Online land Titles System
VDSL	Victorian Spatial Data Library

## At a glance

### Key messages

- Public land use categories reflect government decisions about how land can be used
- The VEACRecs25 dataset is an important tool to assist with transition to a new land use category-based legislative framework by providing an up-to-date record of agreed public land use
- There are multiple public land use decision-making procedures and multiple information systems
- Information systems are poorly integrated making it difficult for land managers to be confident that they have identified the most recent formal land use decision
- Manual updates of information lead to errors and discrepancies
- In some government land information systems there is limited capacity to document different land uses for a single Crown parcel leading to discrepancies and errors
- Maintenance of the VEACRecs25 dataset is ongoing and requires technical expertise.

### Recommendations for government

Our key recommendations seek to continue to improve the VEACRecs25 dataset by additional data validation and targeted auditing together with ongoing record management updates. A process is also recommended to better integrate government land information systems and correct errors or discrepancies.

# Summary

## Background

### **The Victorian government has asked VEAC for advice on the dataset it holds about decisions on public land use**

In November 2020, VEAC was requested by the then Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, to provide advice on aspects of public land use information. Part (b) of the terms of reference is to provide advice on issues and gaps in the VEACRecs25 dataset on public land use in Victoria and how this important tool could be improved, including any technical issues that need to be resolved.

### **VEACRecs25 is a dataset maintained by VEAC that provides a spatial representation at 1:25,000 scale of public land use decisions of the Victorian government or Victorian parliament**

Public land use decisions are largely derived from government-accepted recommendations for land use made by VEAC and its predecessors, the Environment Conservation Council (ECC), and the Land Conservation Council (LCC), and any subsequent government decisions. VEACRecs25 is a key tool for land managers and the community to understand the purpose for which public land is to be managed.

### **Public land categories reflect the decisions about how the land can be used**

Public land in Victoria is classified in a way which reflects both the characteristics of the land and decisions successive governments have made about how the land can be used. Community needs and opinions about how public land should be used change over time and governments regularly review their decisions.

Victoria is unique in Australia in using an independent body to review public land and make recommendations to government about its use. The LCC, established in 1971, and its successors (the ECC and VEAC) were established to carry out investigations of public land throughout Victoria and make recommendations to government on the appropriate use of that land.

For more than 50 years this process has been the main method of strategic public land use decision-making in Victoria and has resulted in the allocation of most public land to a category reflecting a specific use or purpose.

### **VEAC considers formal government land use decisions to be those made through or under legislation**

Formal decisions made through or under legislation include acceptance by government of the public land use recommendations of the LCC, ECC or VEAC, creation of a park or other area through amendment to the *National Parks Act 1975* and Orders in Council reserving land under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

This definition is important as a range of land information systems aim to record current public land use, but typically report using an incomplete range of decisions, such as only reporting orders in the government gazette or specific legislation and not including government-accepted public land use recommendations. To determine current public land use, a timeline of formal government decisions is necessary to identify the most recent decision.

### **To address any issues and gaps in the VEACRecs25 dataset it is necessary to look at the ways public land use is recorded in other Victorian government information systems**

There are several Victorian government land information systems each claiming to some extent to be the 'source of truth' for public land information. These include Victoria's property titles administration system Victorian Online Titles System (VOTS); DEECA's Crown land information platform Landfolio; the PLM25 geospatial dataset containing detailed information on public land; and the corporate web mapping platform MapshareVic (external) and VicMatters (internal).

The VEACRecs25 dataset is the most comprehensive of the information systems reporting public land use decisions.

### **Improvements to the VEACRecs25 dataset will support the government's proposed modernisation of Victoria's public land legislation**

The government has committed to modernise Victoria's public land legislation in the *Victorian Government Response to VEAC's Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report*. The VEACRecs25 dataset is an important tool to assist with transition to a new land use category-based legislative framework by providing an up-to-date record of agreed public land use. A consultation paper outlining the proposed legislative reforms was published in 2021 (*Renewing Victoria's public land legislation*).

## **What are the issues and gaps in the VEACRecs25 dataset and other land information systems?**

### **Multiple land information systems provide conflicting or incomplete information on public land use**

In general, linkages between information systems are not automated leading to occurrences of conflicting or incomplete information. Some issues arise because a high level of technical expertise is necessary to find information recorded in multiple systems including some that are not readily accessible. Other issues arise from manual information entry and editing. In summary, the issues and gaps identified are:

- multiple, fragmented, and incomplete public land use information systems mostly requiring manual update
- cross-referencing between systems is difficult as most are not directly linked and there are differences in the ways public land, Crown land or government land are defined and documented
- no single system creates and maintains an accurate record ('single source of truth') because government makes formal land use decisions in several ways, and these are recorded differently across systems; there are capacity issues to keep up with changes
- public land parcels with multiple land uses ('split' parcels) are not supported in most other information systems
- there are information gaps in some systems making it difficult to establish a timeline and identify the most recent formal government land use decision.

### **Technical improvements to information structure and functionality of VEACREcs25 have commenced**

Key improvements to VEACRecs25 to date are:

- new data fields added to provide greater clarity and additional information
- arranging land use information into *land units* (geographically distinct parks or reserves)

- recording exact recommendation terminology or 'legacy' land use category to highlight any translation made to the current public land use classification system
- land ownership included as VEAC's definition of public land includes both Crown land and freehold land owned by state government agencies and departments
- expanding and updating the presentation of information in MapshareVic/ VicMatters accessible to government land managers
- new data fields added to assist in readily identifying parcels that are split i.e. those parcels with more than one government-accepted public land use category or other attribute across the entire cadastral parcel as defined in VicMap Property. Split parcels comprise about 10 per cent of the VEACRecs25 dataset.

### **Validation of the VEACRecs25 dataset and updates is a very large but critical task**

A refresh or validation of the VEACRecs25 dataset is important to ensure accurate information is available for the government's public land legislative reforms.

VEACRecs25 data validation and maintenance is an ongoing task because parcel definitions are continually being updated in VicMap Property and new land use decisions are made by government. The overall priorities for information maintenance include:

- any updates to parks and reserves with certified legal plans: nature reserves, bushland reserves, historic reserves, state game reserves, regional parks, coastal parks, metropolitan parks, forest parks
- detailed checking of areas to be included in the revised National Parks Act outlined in government's public land legislative reforms consultation paper
- adding new or previously unidentified areas of Crown land, and refinements to parcel boundaries to match minor changes to cadastral boundaries in VicMap Property
- investigation and resolution of discrepancies with other public land information systems.

### **Information availability and accuracy is variable and requires attention**

VEAC's website now hosts a digital archive of all the past reports of the LCC and the ECC including the reports containing public land use recommendations. VEAC documents are available on the current website. The archive will be progressively added to and include government responses and information on subsequent changes. This will assist with traceability of information and improve access to the formal decisions of government. VEAC is also undertaking digital preservation of the detailed mapping decisions of the LCC currently stored as paper copy plans.

The website also includes an online interactive map (webmaps) using an ESRI system documenting the government response to VEAC's Central West Investigation. This technology will be investigated to determine if VEACRecs25 can also be made publicly accessible on the VEAC website.

Other government land use and management information systems are compiled as both geospatial/ maps and tabulated text-based formats. The key issues with government information systems and availability are:

- public access at a fine scale is lacking and search capacity is limited by technology and technical knowledge
- many systems show a limited range of decisions and may not provide the timing of government decisions which is critical to identifying the most recent decision
- public land management information is available in a public version of MapshareVic but there are issues with data quality

- Landfolio is the centralised Crown land information source with linkages to spatial information but currently has some difficulty documenting split parcels with more than one land use
- Crown folio documentation in VOTS lacks reference to government-accepted public land use recommendations and there is insufficient detail in references to the reservation or legislation to identify the most recent government decision.

### VEAC has identified the broad types and extent of uncategorised public land

The terms of reference ask VEAC to provide advice on uncategorised public land (UPL), estimated originally to be less than 65,000 hectares. Since the commencement of this project the total area of UPL in the VEACRecs25 dataset has been revised, mostly by exclusion of areas that are no longer public land. The dataset currently has around 35,210 hectares of uncategorised public land comprising:

- areas with specific recommendations for *uncategorised public land* (7320 hectares) that allow for future uses to be determined by other government decision making processes
- legacy categories *revegetation areas* (1220 hectares), and *other reserves and public land* (12,500 hectares); when examined in detail some of this area may either have a specific use or an obsolete or discontinued use
- legacy categories *land not required for public purposes* (1835 hectares), and *agriculture* (12,335 hectares) much of which has been alienated and, after investigation, is likely to be deleted from the dataset
- unassessed areas of public land for which no specific land use has been recommended by VEAC or its predecessors, and the land is unreserved or reserved for non-specific public purposes and cannot be allocated to a specific land use category (1920 hectares included in the totals above).

### What actions are required?

VEAC is providing its advice in response to the terms of reference in the form of discussion, analysis and recommendations on how VEACRecs25 and other information systems can be improved. This work will support public land legislative reforms by establishing an accurate record of public land use.

### There are multiple public land use decision-making procedures and multiple land information systems

Government makes public land use decisions in a variety of ways, and these are reported in different land information systems. There are significant capacity differences between sections of government maintaining land use information systems. Most of the information systems are poorly integrated making it difficult for land managers to be confident that they have identified the most recent formal land use decision.

#### RECOMMENDATION

##### R1 Ensure the record of government's land use decisions is accurate by:

- a. providing adequate training and expertise to ensure updates to land use decisions reflect the most recent formal government land use decision, align with the public land use categorisation developed for the proposed legislative reforms, and improve and maintain data quality
- b. undertaking revisions of Crown parcel boundaries using digital desktop survey for low-risk changes such as for Crown to Crown boundaries and where identifiable on-ground geographic features define the boundary between land uses

- c. structuring land use information systems in a way that accommodates parcels with more than one land use category.

### Maintenance of the VEACRecs25 dataset is ongoing and requires technical expertise

Data maintenance is ongoing and requires resources and technical expertise. There are significant capacity differences between sections of government maintaining land use information systems.

Some information in past LCC public land use investigations is not sufficiently detailed for current use. There are also parts of the VEACRecs25 dataset that would be improved by a targeted work program especially for areas reserved for public purposes or unreserved Crown land. Some dispersed areas and 'small blocks' would benefit from a transparent public process to establish an agreed public land use prior to translating to the new system of public land management categories. Work would focus on specific land use categories and LCC studies with less comprehensive or less detailed information.

#### RECOMMENDATION

##### R2 Ensure the VEACRecs25 dataset supports the public land legislation reforms by providing adequate resources to:

- a. improve information quality and audit key areas of the dataset, and
- b. maintain the relationship to parcel geometry in VicMap Property (the cadastre).

### Correcting errors and resolving discrepancies between land information systems is ongoing

There is a need for an ongoing process or workflow for government to identify and correct discrepancies between information systems i.e. updates to parcel geometry to match legal and certified plan boundary definitions, aligning land use categorisation between information systems.

#### RECOMMENDATION

##### R3 Establish a process to:

- a. identify and correct public land use errors in or discrepancies between government information systems
- b. correct errors in cadastral boundaries for Crown land including those errors identified by VEAC and documented in VEACRecs25, prioritising areas on schedules of the *National Parks Act 1975*.

# 1. Introduction

In November 2020, the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) was requested by the then Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP, to provide advice on aspects of public land use information.

The request is for technical advice on aspects of public land use information and does not extend to recommending changes to public land use.

This report address part (b) of the terms of reference to provide advice on improvements to the VEACRecs25 dataset.

VEACRecs25 is a dataset maintained by VEAC that provides a spatial representation – originally at 1:25,000 scale – of the public land use decisions of the Victorian government or Parliament, including the government-accepted recommendations of VEAC and its predecessors, the Environment Conservation Council (ECC), and the Land Conservation Council (LCC), and subsequent formal government land use decisions (see box 1).

A progress update on the preparation of this advice was published in mid-2021 and is available on VEAC's website.

## 1.1 Terms of reference

On 30 November 2020, the then Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change requested VEAC to provide advice on aspects of public land use information. See appendix 1 for the full terms of reference.

VEAC is requested to provide advice on issues and gaps in the VEACRecs25 dataset and how this important tool could be improved, including:

- any issues that need to be resolved to ensure Victoria has an accurate record of agreed public land use
- any aspects of the current data that need clarification
- the broad types and extent of uncategorised public land
- any improvements to the functionality of VEACRecs25 to assist public land managers and support future legislative reforms
- establishing an online accessible repository of relevant information sources for government decisions represented in VEACRecs25.

## 1.2 About VEAC

VEAC provides the Victorian government with independent and strategic advice on matters related to the protection and management of the environment and natural resources of public land. VEAC was established under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. VEAC is a successor organisation to the Land Conservation Council (LCC), established in 1971, and the Environment Conservation Council (ECC), which replaced the LCC in 1997.

VEAC carries out its investigations and assessments and provides advice at the request of the Minister for Environment. Together, the Act and terms of reference provided by the Minister describe how an investigation or assessment must be conducted, including the number of reports to be prepared, matters to be taken into account, timeframes and public consultation.

Public land is defined in the VEAC Act and includes Crown land and land owned by state government public authorities. It excludes private freehold land, land owned by local councils and Commonwealth land.

The VEAC Act was substantially amended in 2016 to allow the Minister to request the Council to conduct an assessment or to provide advice in relation to a matter that, in the opinion of the Minister, does not require an investigation, having regard to the matter's limited scale or scope or its technical nature. Assessments do not require formal public consultation unless specified by the Minister in the terms of reference.

This advice on aspects of public land use information was requested pursuant to section 26B of the VEAC Act.

The current five members appointed to VEAC are Mellissa Wood (Chairperson), Joanne Duncan, Anna Kilborn, Nicola Ward and Nick Wimbush. A brief biography of each of the current Council members can be found on VEAC's website at [veac.vic.gov.au](http://veac.vic.gov.au). The Council is supported by a small research and policy team and an administrative secretariat.

### 1.3 Classifying public land

The origin of public land use decisions and the classification of public land were described in detail in VEAC's Statewide Assessment of Public Land Investigation (2014–2017) and are summarised here for context.

Public land in Victoria is classified in a way which reflects both the characteristics of the land and decisions successive governments have made about how the land can be used. Community needs and opinions about how public land should be used change over time and governments regularly review their decisions.

Victoria is unique in Australia in using an independent body to review public land and make recommendations to government about its use. The LCC, established in 1971, and its successors (the ECC and VEAC) were established to carry out investigations of public land throughout Victoria and make recommendations to government on the appropriate use of that land. Since the LCC made its first recommendations to government in 1973 for the use of public land in the South-Western Area District 1, these organisations have systematically and comprehensively examined and made recommendations on the use of most public land in Victoria. More than forty separate regional studies, reviews and statewide or special investigations have resulted in thousands of individual land use recommendations, the vast majority of which have been accepted by government. All the recommendations of the former LCC and ECC are available in a digital archive on VEAC's website.

For more than 50 years this process has been the main method of strategic public land use decision-making in Victoria and has resulted in the allocation of most public land to a category reflecting a specific use or purpose. For example, most parks and reserves listed in the schedules to the *National Parks Act 1975* are derived from government-accepted recommendations of the LCC, ECC and VEAC. However, there are many areas that have not yet been formally reserved or legislated for the agreed land use purpose, or the purpose applied is ambiguous (e.g. reservation for 'public purposes').

In 1971, when the LCC began work most public land was classified as unreserved Crown land, national park, wildlife reserve, road reserve and a small number of 'other' reserves. By 1974, the LCC had adopted the approach of assigning public land units to a system of 23 categories, determined by proposed use or purpose. With each regional study however, new categories were proposed and by 1988 the number of categories had grown to 48. Victoria's current system of public land categories has evolved from a set of simplified public land use categories developed by the LCC from 1988 to 1993 (see figure 1.1).

#### LCC and ECC digital archive

The LCC and ECC digital archive on VEAC's website contains all the published reports and associated maps of the Land Conservation Council from 1971 to 1997 and the Environment Conservation Council from 1997 to 2001. There are 35 separate investigations, reviews and special investigations. The final report to government for each study contains the final recommendations for the future use of public land. Government responses to recommendations are also provided in the archive. VEAC reports and associated maps from 2001 to the present are available on the main website.

In the final report for its Statewide Assessment of Public Land Investigation in 2017, VEAC recommended a revised classification of 15 terrestrial and four marine primary categories, and legislation change to incorporate revised public land use categories with their corresponding purposes. No change was proposed to public land use overlays.

## 1.4 The VEACRecs25 dataset

VEAC maintains a record of LCC, ECC and VEAC recommendations on all Victoria's public land, the geographical or spatial boundaries of each public land unit, and the most recent decisions made by government. The VEACRecs25 dataset provides a spatial representation of these public land use decisions.

The dataset is an important tool to ensure Victoria has an accurate record of agreed public land use and helps land managers and the community understand the purpose for which public land is to be managed. It is also important for transparency that this information is accessible and, although technical in nature, presented in an easily understood format.

The VEACRecs25 dataset is especially important for Crown land that is reserved for non-specific or public purposes, retains a historic incorrect or superseded reservation purpose, or is unreserved.

### Box 1: What is VEACRecs25?

VEACRecs25 is a dataset maintained by VEAC that provides a spatial representation of public land use decisions of the Victorian Government or Parliament, largely derived from government-accepted recommendations of VEAC and its predecessors (the ECC and the LCC).

The spatial data is based on VicMap Property, Victoria's cadastral map base that provides information about land parcels and property details. Where agreed public land use does not match the current boundary of Crown land parcels, i.e. one parcel has more than one public land use category, these are described as 'split parcels'.

VEACRecs25 currently comprises some 91,000 records covering around 8 million hectares of public land. All records have an associated public land use categorisation (see table 1.1 and figure 1.1).

State government-owned land held in freehold title is also defined as public land in the VEAC Act and documented in many investigations. Land use for these areas largely aligns with the core responsibilities of the relevant department or agency. For example, land owned in freehold title by water authorities is almost always shown as water production reserve for water reservoirs, or utility and services for water or sewerage delivery. Private freehold land, land owned by local councils and Commonwealth land are specifically excluded in VEAC's definition of public land. These areas may be included in the dataset to provide context only.

VEACRecs25 is a key tool to help land managers and the community understand the purpose for which public land is to be managed. It reflects changes made to recommended parks and reserves at the time of formal implementation and by subsequent formal or legal mechanisms.

The VEACRecs25 dataset is available to government users through the Victorian Spatial Data Library and is an information source for DEECA's PLM25 geospatial dataset published in the publicly accessible interactive web mapping application MapshareVic.

Public land use overlays are not shown in VEAC's dataset. In the past VEAC worked closely with DEECA's predecessor organisation to create a GIS layer of land use overlays comprising reference areas, heritage rivers, wilderness zones and remote and natural areas, and natural catchment areas, at 1:25,000 scale and this information is maintained by the department. Public land use overlays are defined in legislation and have not been altered in many years.

## 1.5 Public land legislation reform

The government committed to modernise Victoria's public land legislation in the *Victorian Government Response to VEAC's Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report (2017)*. A consultation paper was published by DELWP (now DEECA) in April 2021 seeking feedback on a new Public Land Act and a modernised National Parks Act. Public land use classification followed that recommended by VEAC, other than retaining metropolitan park and forest park as categories rather than as sub-categories of regional park. Nature reserves are currently established in several Acts and the category is proposed to be incorporated into the revised National Parks Act.

The VEACRecs25 dataset provides a spatial representation of public land use decisions and is therefore an important tool that can assist with transition to a new category-based legislative framework.

To assist with translation of previously used categories to VEAC's recommended revised classification system a table of detailed past, current and proposed categories is provided in appendix 2. Where relevant, the investigation in which the past category was proposed or established is highlighted.

## 1.6 Structure of this report

This first section introduces the preparation of advice on improving the VEACRecs25 dataset in accordance with the terms of reference. It provides an overview of government decision making on public land use and describes the dataset.

In order to address the issues and gaps it is necessary to look at the ways public land use is recorded in other government information systems and to outline how VEAC identifies formal government land use decisions. This is addressed in sections 2 and 3.

Improvements in data structure and functionality are addressed in response to user feedback and outlined in section 4.

Interim findings on the broad types and extent of uncategorised public land are updated in section 5 (see table 5.1), noting that this part of the dataset would be greatly improved by a targeted work program.

A key goal for this project was to ensure that past LCC-ECC-VEAC land use recommendations and the related government responses were made more accessible to the public. Information availability including the decisions relating to the public land use recommendations of LCC, ECC and VEAC are described in section 6.

Section 7 summarises the findings of this project and makes recommendations on how to ensure VEACRecs25 and other information systems are improved to support the establishment of an accurate record of public land use decisions.

Figure 1.1 Map of public land use in VEACRecs25 for Victoria

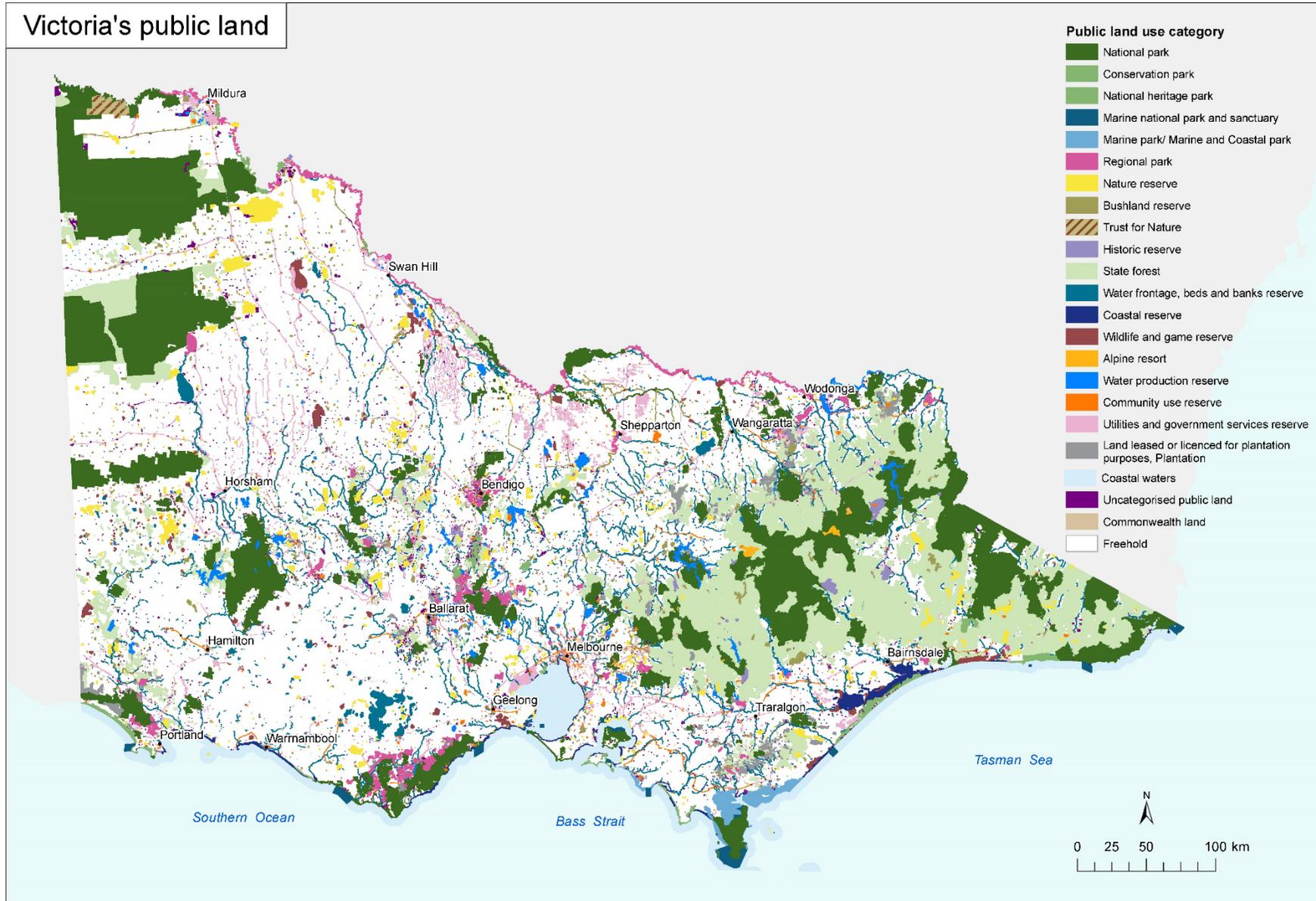


Table 1.1 VEACRecs25 public land use areas (at April 2023)

#	Public land use category <sup>2</sup>	Public land area (hectares) <sup>3</sup>
1	National park	3,311,023
2	Conservation park	70,937
3	National heritage park	7,532
4	Regional park	131,372
4.1	Forest park	50,851
4.2	Metropolitan park	4,101
5	Nature reserve	271,636
5.1	Trust for Nature land	36,148
6	Bushland reserve	92,728
7	Coastal reserve	61,486
8	Historic reserve	38,737
9	Wildlife and game reserve	90,348
10	State forest	3,099,127
11	Water frontage, beds and banks reserve	193,463
12	Water production reserve	106,227
13	Alpine resort	10,151
14	Community use reserves	46,834
15	Utilities and government services reserves <sup>1</sup>	78,586
16	Marine national park	53,119
17	Marine sanctuary	862
18	Marine park/ marine and coastal park	69,801
19	Coastal waters reserve <sup>1</sup>	13,612
20	Uncategorised public land	35,228
21	Land leased or licensed for plantation purposes, Plantation	138,694
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8,012,603</b>

**Notes**

1. Most of Victoria's government road reserve and seabed is not spatially defined as Crown land parcels in the cadastre. VEACRecs25 does not provide an estimate of those areas.
2. Public land use follows VEAC's classification system recommended in *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report* (2017) and incorporates additional information for categories shown differently in the DELWP's consultation paper *Renewing Victoria's public land legislation* (2021).
3. Public land comprises Crown land and land owned in freehold title by state government agencies and departments.

## 2. Source information

This section describes the source information for formal public land use decisions and how the information is stored. Section 3 outlines how public land use decisions are recorded in VEACRecs25. Following recent machinery of government changes, public land information systems are now managed from two departments: DEECA and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP).

### 2.1 Background

As outlined in section 1, government-accepted LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations provide the framework for public land use in Victoria. Unless government makes a subsequent formal decision to change or vary the use of public land, the most recent government-accepted public land use recommendation remains the accepted use and purpose. To identify the most recent decision for each area of public land, a timeline is necessary of government decisions made via a range of formal mechanisms, such as creation or amendment of areas on the *National Parks Act 1975* or reserving land under the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978* by Order in Council, or through amendments to legislation. Section 3 explores government land use decisions in more detail.

For the purposes of this report, VEAC considers formal government land use decisions to be those made through or under legislation.

For some places the agreed recommended use has not been formalised through appropriate Crown land reservation, although the land is managed in accordance with those government-accepted LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations. Several information systems generally only record Crown land reservation purposes without details of formal land use objectives and purposes. The only system that records land use for both Crown land and state government-owned freehold land is VEACRecs25.

Crown land reservation purposes have changed and evolved over time and there are many historic wordings of purposes for existing reserves. Currently, reservation is restricted to a list of available purposes in section 4 of the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act*. The government's proposed public land legislation reforms will align land categorisation and land management.

### 2.2 Definition of public land

The legislation defining public land for the LCC, ECC and VEAC was largely the same and states broadly that public land comprises Crown land and freehold land owned by the Victorian government. The definition does not include local government-owned or Commonwealth-owned land.

Government road reserves are Crown land and, while not systematically recorded in VEACRecs25 or most information systems, are estimated to be around 500,000 hectares statewide. Some areas of government road are included in VEACRecs25 where specific land use recommendations apply. In general, government road reserves are not defined in the form of Crown parcels.

In some information systems Crown land and Victorian government-owned freehold land are together referred to as government land. DEECA estimates that less than 5 per cent of government land is freehold land.

Land held in freehold title by government departments and agencies makes up around one per cent of the area in the VEACRecs25 dataset. Much of the freehold land is classified as water production reservoirs or government services such as schools, railways, or other utilities, services or infrastructure.

Freehold title management systems have greatly improved in recent years with centralised information now available for land owned by state government departments and agencies. Within government, Landata and GovMap systems provide access to this information.

There are several key differences in the public land information held by VEAC and the statewide Crown land data systems maintained by Land Use Victoria (now part of DTP) and Forests, Fire and Regions and Land Management Policy (now DEECA). These information systems are described below and the differences explored.

## 2.3 Government land information systems

This section provides an outline of relevant government land information systems. All claim to some extent to be the 'source of truth' for public land information. A case study illustrating the complexity of information recorded for the Mount Piper Nature Conservation Reserve across these information systems is provided in box 2.

### VOTS (Victorian Online Titles System)

In 2016 Crown land reservation status was transferred from Crown Land Registry to VOTS, the property titles administration system used for freehold property. This information is now directly integrated into DEECA's systems via Landfolio (see below) and available to staff as a Crown Folio Statement. The information displayed in a Crown Folio Statement includes the description of the land (Crown allotment and parish or township), the land manager or administrator, status indicating if the land is reserved, if it is a temporary or permanent reserve, and the reservation purpose. It does not show the reservation date or the method of reservation (gazettal, transfer of title to the Crown, Act of parliament) although this information is mostly available elsewhere. In some instances, multiple reservation purposes are listed, or reservations may apply to part of the parcel.

Currently this information system does not record land use decisions made through government acceptance of LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations, categorisations by the Wildlife Act (nature reserves and state game reserves) and for some Forests Act designations. Information for land transferred to the Crown is incomplete in most instances. The dataset is not spatial and cannot accurately record different land uses or reservations for a single Crown parcel.

### Landfolio

DEECA's Crown Land Information Platform, Landfolio, was launched in May 2020 and replaced several previous systems (Portal, PRIMS). The system is designed to support and record more than 35 administration tasks including the reservation of land, appointment of and managing delegated land managers, issuing and managing leases and licenses, and conducting native title assessments.

The direct integration of the VOTS record of Crown land reservation status and linkages to spatial mapping are significant improvements on past record management approaches.

There are deficiencies in the way public land use is currently recorded in this system, notably the way that split parcels\* are characterised and how information has been imported or integrated from previous systems. The information recorded for public land use recommendations by VEAC and predecessors is not directly linked to VEACRecs25 and requires manual data entry. This system does not show different land uses for a single Crown parcel (i.e. split parcels). Information for these areas is stored in the separate Parks and Reserves GIS layer.

\*Split parcels have more than one land use attribute across the total area.

### PLM25 geospatial dataset (Public Land Management 1:25,000)

PLM25 contains more than 30 fields with detailed information on public land. PLM25 holds information from the previously used non-spatial Parks and Reserves Information Management System (PRIMS) for parks and reserves, VEAC recommendations and the Land Information Management System (LIMS) for other public land.

There are significant discrepancies between the way public land use information is shown in PLM25 and VEACRecs25. As well as location-specific differences, land use categorisation is not the same in these two datasets.

**MapshareVic/VicMatters**

This corporate web mapping platform provides access to a wide variety of interactive maps published by various government businesses. Maps can be restricted to internal users (VicMatters) or made accessible to external users (MapshareVic). This interactive mapping tool provides location-based property information, and uses themes such as Forest, Public Land and Water. PLM25 is published externally on this platform, although it is difficult to locate the link on the DEECA website and there are no user instructions.

**Box 2 Case study: Mount Piper Nature Conservation Reserve illustrating the complexity of land use information required to determine the most recent decision**

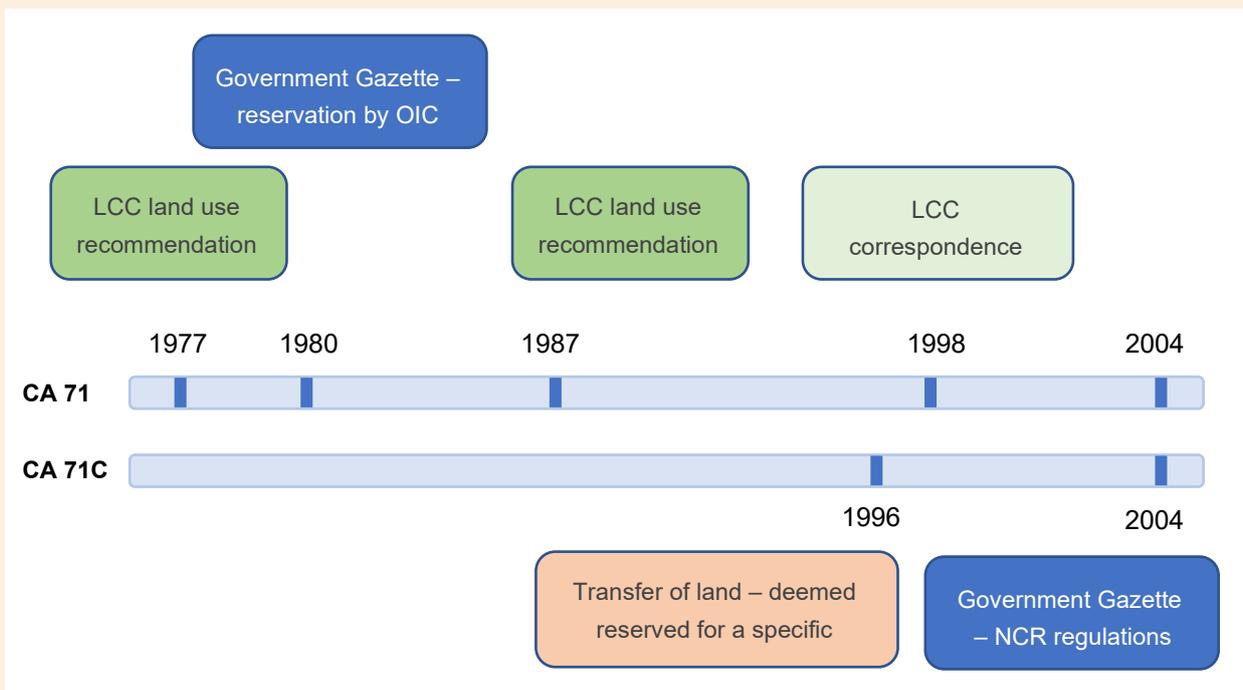
The Mount Piper Nature Conservation Reserve, near Broadford, is a popular visitor location and landscape feature with important natural values. The reserve comprises two Crown parcels in the Parish of Broadford with very different land use decision histories illustrating the complexity of information used to categorise land use. The two parcels are:

- Crown allotment 71 has LCC recommendations from 1977 and 1987 both for education area (a sub-category of community use reserves in the current classification system)
- Crown allotment 71C is land transferred to the Crown in 1996 after the last LCC investigation was completed and has no later public land use recommendations by ECC or VEAC.

A comparison of the depiction of these two Crown land parcels in the key information systems is provided.

The most recent formal government land use decision is to apply Nature Conservation Reserve regulations to both parcels in 2004 (see Victoria Government Gazette S241 Crown Land (Reserves) (Nature Conservation Reserve) Regulations 2004).

**Timeline of formal land use decisions**



Information source	Crown allotment 71	Crown allotment 71C
LCC Melbourne 1977	Recommendation M6 Education area	
LCC Melbourne 1 Review 1987	Recommendation M6 Education area	made public land after the last investigation was completed and has no LCC recommendations
LCC correspondence to the Minister, April 1998	The LCC wrote to the Minister for Conservation and proposed that the recommendation for this area could be amended to nature conservation reserve, to include adjacent purchased land. This amendment was not formalised.	
VEACRecs25 Public Land Use Category	Nature Conservation Reserve	Nature Conservation Reserve
VEACRecs25 Notes		land transferred to Crown after last investigation was completed in 1987
VOTS Crown Folio Statement	temporarily reserved for Area and Facilities for the Study of the Natural Environment	deemed to be temporarily reserved for Area and Facilities for the Study of the Natural Environment
Landfolio - Mt Piper Reserve Manager: Parks Victoria; Nature Conservation Reserve	temporarily reserved for Area and Facilities for the Study of the Natural Environment, part of Mt Piper Reserve	reserved for Education purposes, part of Mt Piper Reserve
PLM25 - Mount Piper Nature Conservation Reserve	Nature Conservation Reserve Study: MELBOURNE 1 REVIEW (1987); recommendation [Blank] PRIMS ID: 2842 State game reserve status: NO Management group: PARKS VICTORIA	
Victoria Government Gazette of 14 May 1980, page 1491	temporarily reserved for Area and Facilities for the Study of the Natural Environment	
Victoria Government Gazette No S 241. 23 Nov 2004 Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978, Crown Land (Reserves) (Nature Conservation Reserve) Regulations 2004	Mount Piper Nature Conservation Reserve Allotment 71, Parish of Broadford, temporarily reserved for Area and Facilities for the Study of the Natural Environment under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 by Order In Council dated 6 May 1980, published in the Government Gazette of 14 May 1980, page 1491; and Allotment 71C, Parish of Broadford, deemed to be temporarily reserved for Area and Facilities for the Study of the Natural Environment under section 5(7) of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 on 11 January 1996.	

## Summary

There is generally poor integration between government land use information systems, or the details provided in records are incomplete. In most instances multiple information sources are required to develop a timeline of government decisions and determine current public land use (see section 3 for discussion of how decisions are made).

In summary, the issues and gaps identified are:

- fragmented and incomplete information sources that mostly require manual updates
- difficulty cross-referencing systems (most are not directly linked) including differences in ways public land, Crown land or government land are documented
- no single system creates and maintains an accurate record of current public land use, because each system selects the types of government decision represented
- a high degree of technical expertise is required to interrogate these systems
- it is difficult to establish a timeline of formal government decisions for public land because there are either information gaps or details are not recorded or readily accessible.

## 3. Identifying and recording public land use decisions made by government

The multiple systems that record public land use are outlined in section 2. This section explores the technical information required to identify the most recent formal government land use decision and assign a public land use category.

The history and specific details of land use classification are provided in VEAC's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report* (2017). See appendix 2 for a table that correlates past categories with the current public land use categories. That report also explores the relationship between reservation purpose and public land use category and readers are referred there for more information.

### 3.1 Decision criteria for assigning a public land use category in VEACRecs25

VEACRecs25 records formal and the most recent or current public land use decisions by government. Determining current land use requires interrogation of various information systems and is a complex task, requiring identification of the most recent government decision from multiple systems with differing information.

Formal government decisions are made through or under legislation including by reservation of Crown land and by formal government response to public land use recommendations through processes specified in the *Land Conservation Act 1970*, the *Environment Conservation Council Act 1997* and the VEAC Act.

Public authority owned freehold land is not reserved but is transferred or purchased by government for a specific use. These uses align with the government department or agency's service delivery objectives and also with VEAC's public land use categories such as water production reserve, utilities and government services reserve, or community use reserve. These areas are included in VEACRecs25, noting however that the proposed public land legislation reforms are focused on Crown land only.

In summary, the three main processes used to categorise public land in VEACRecs25 are:

1. the most recent government-accepted public land use recommendation of the LCC, ECC or VEAC
2. decisions through or under legislation
  - after a recommendation as above, or
  - where there is no recommendation because the area was not part of an investigation, not identified as public land in an investigation, or made public land since the last investigation
3. where there are no recommendations and the land is unreserved Crown land or reserved for general 'public purposes', an ongoing long-term use may inform land use categorisation (e.g. established community uses or government uses and services).

For most public land, categorisation is clear and supported by decisions made by more than one of the processes outlined above. For other areas there are complex relationships between criteria and, in some instances, a lack of detail to support land use categorisation. The following information outlines VEAC's decision-making approach for land use categorisation in the VEACRecs25 dataset.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the workflow for assigning current public land use categorisation in the VEACRecs25 dataset. Where a specific land use cannot be determined, the land is shown as *uncategorised public land*.

#### 3.1.1 Categorisation by public land use recommendations accepted by government

Government-accepted LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations provide the framework for public land use in Victoria. Unless government makes a subsequent formal decision to change or vary the use of public land, the most recent government-accepted public land use recommendation remains in place. In many cases, recommendations more narrowly indicate government's intention for management of the land than does

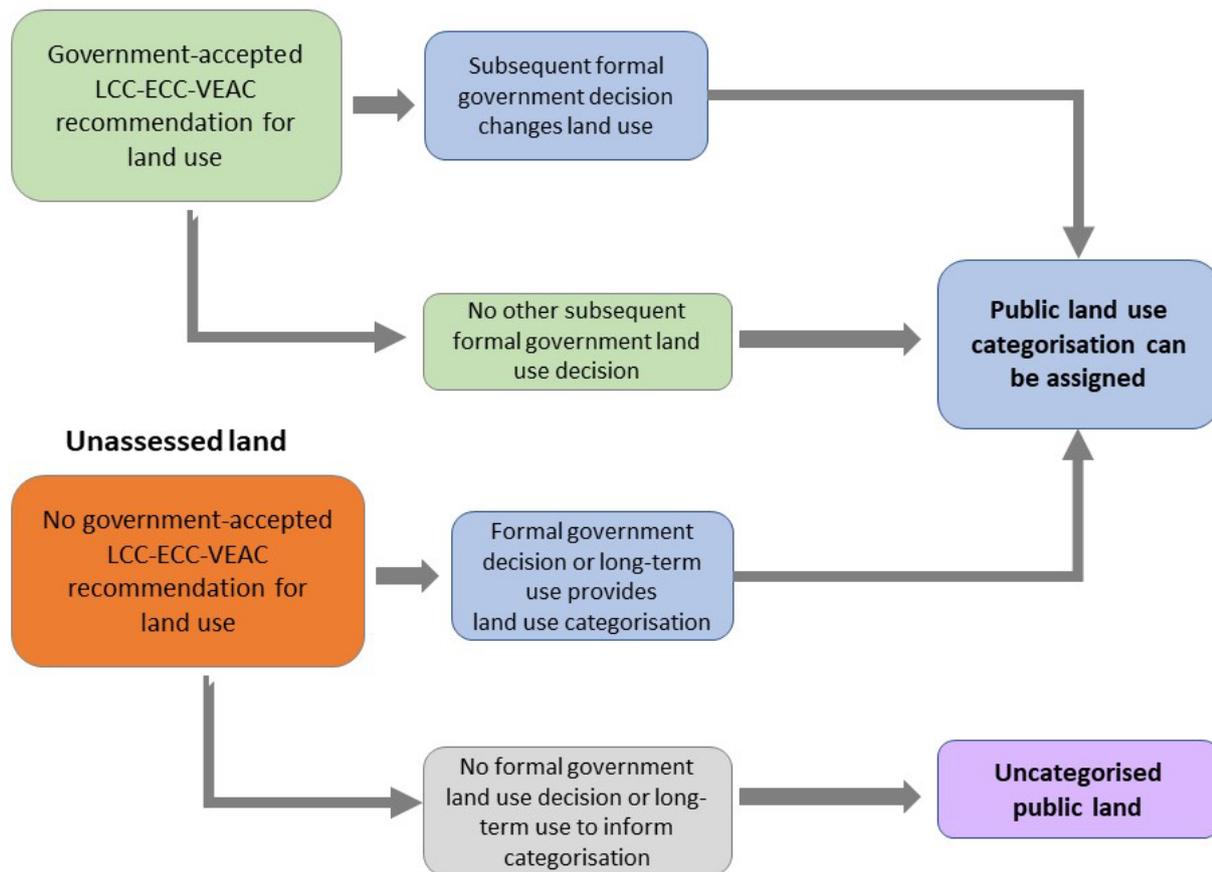
reservation purpose, particularly where the reservation purpose is broad such as ‘public purposes’ along stream frontages and the coastline or foreshore.

The LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations, as accepted, and unless varied by a subsequent decision of government or Parliament, govern how public land in Victoria is used and managed, and may differ from the underlying legal status or pre-existing Crown land reservation purpose. However, to be able to apply and enforce regulations, appropriate reservation through the legislation framework is required.

For older LCC investigations, detailed mapping of public land use was not published. VEAC holds many detailed plans drawn for specific LCC recommendations. However, most small areas of public land, such as recreation areas or services and utilities, were not systematically identified or listed. For these areas some interpretation is required to apply public land use recommendations to the current Crown land parcel base. Even though not shown on the published maps or otherwise identified and listed in the relevant report, a land use recommendation may apply. Modern digital parcel-based mapping of public land use has significantly improved information management and allows more recent studies to provide more detail.

Where public land use recommendations are not accepted or are varied by government, and a new use is not specified, the pre-existing land use is retained. This may be in the form of a prior accepted land use recommendation or a Crown land reservation purpose.

Figure 3.1 Workflow for assigning current public land use categorisation in the VEACRecs25 dataset



### Uncategorised public land

In some investigations, recommendations for uncategorised public land (UPL) were specifically made. In VEACRecs25 UPL also includes some legacy or obsolete land use categories. Broad land use categories such as *other reserves and public land* or *township land* may be assigned to uncategorised public land where land is unreserved or reserved for an obsolete purpose or discontinued use. Uncategorised public land may be specifically identified in recommendations such as:

- Uncategorised public land
- Land not required for public purposes, Agriculture (public land to be made available for private use)
- Revegetation area (land to be restored and a new use determined)
- Township land (small areas not assigned a specific land use)
- Other reserves and public land (small areas not assigned a specific land use).

Uncategorised public land may also apply to some areas for which no specific public land use has been recommended by VEAC or its predecessors (unassessed land).

### Unassessed land

Across the state there are some relatively small areas without government-accepted recommendations. Examples include public land in designated cities, towns or boroughs excluded from LCC studies (e.g. Portland, Port Fairy, Warrnambool, Queenscliffe) and the beds of the Gippsland Lakes. A list of areas, townships, cities and boroughs that have not been assessed or reviewed by LCC-ECC-VEAC comprising some 40,140 hectares of public land is provided at appendix 3 and shown at figure 3.2. Figure 3.3 shows more detail for the Camperdown and Geelong former township areas.

There are no recommendations for public land acquired or identified as public land after the most recent investigation was completed. Land transferred to the Crown is deemed to have a specific purpose, although this information may be difficult to find. These dispersed locations are identified in VEACRecs25 as having no formal public land use recommendation (e.g. 'No\_rec' appears in the recommendation code and a reason such as 'made public land since last investigation' is recorded).

In summary, unassessed public land consists of:

- public land excluded from all past LCC-ECC-VEAC investigations, or
- land not identified during these investigations, or
- land acquired after the most recent investigation.

However, other decision-making processes may identify a formal public land use for unassessed areas. Where there is no clear land use identified by another formal decision process, this area will be listed as unassessed in the VEACRecs25 dataset (No\_rec) and shown as uncategorised public land.

Additional details on both uncategorised and unassessed public land are provided in section 5.

Figure 3.2 Geographic areas that have not been assessed or reviewed by LCC, ECC or VEAC

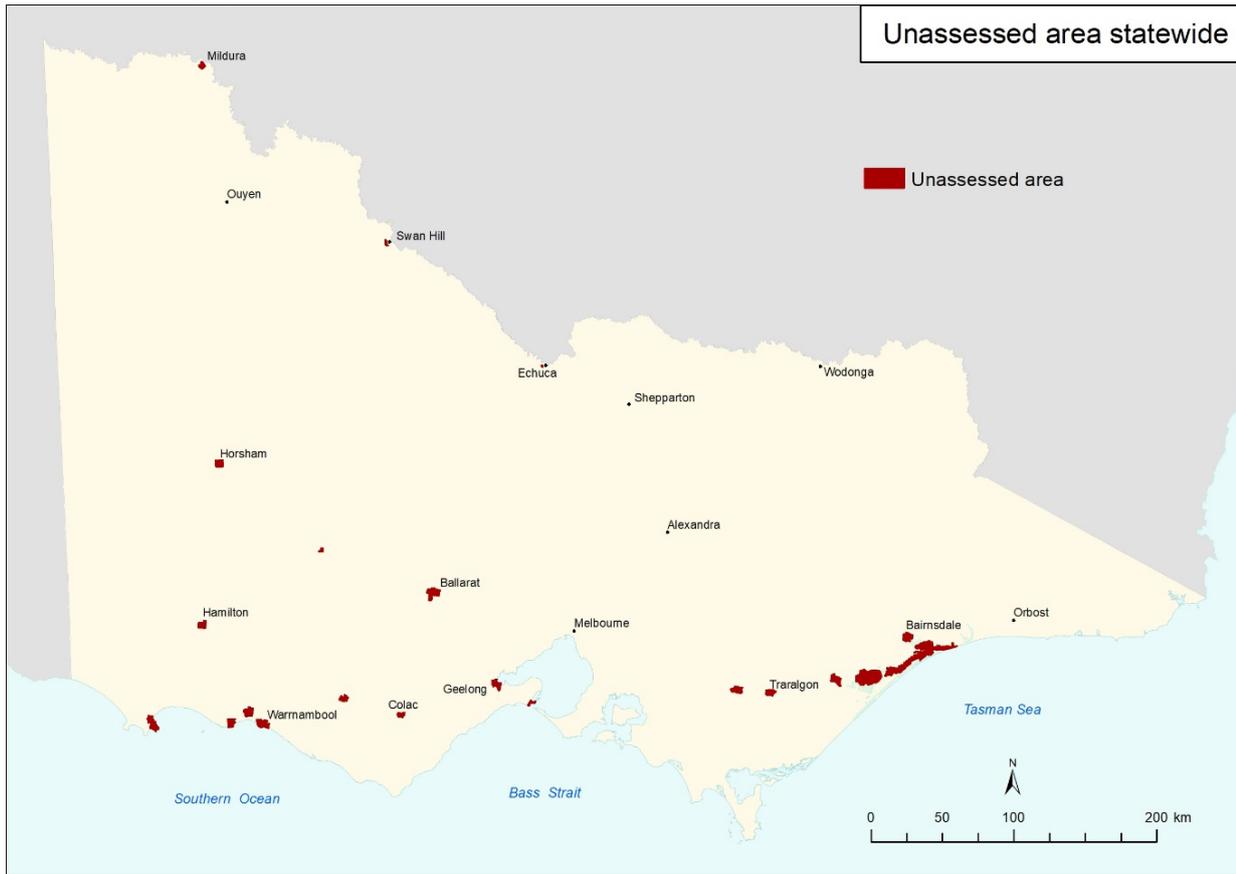
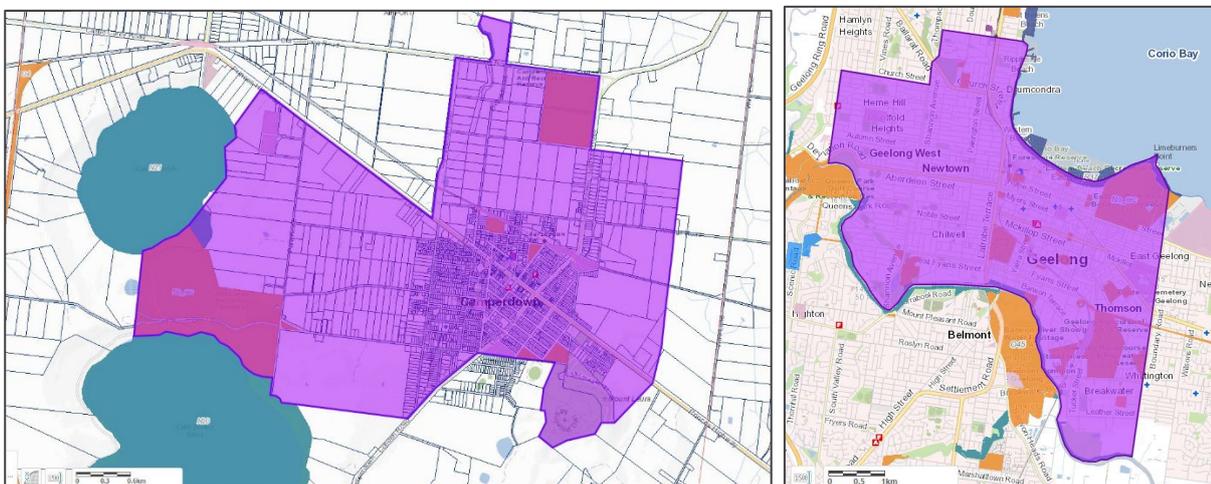


Figure 3.3 Camperdown and Geelong former township areas that have not been assessed by LCC, ECC or VEAC (purple shading)



### 3.1.2 Categorisation by Crown land reservation or legislated purpose

Currently Crown land may be reserved using the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, the *National Parks Act 1975*, and the *Forests Act 1958*. Other acts can provide additional information and further define or specify uses of land or apply regulations. Some parts of the public land estate have been considered in more detail than others; in particular, protected areas (areas set aside for the long-term conservation of nature) have been the subject of extensive discussion and categorisation globally and nationally. Many of these protected areas have been formally reserved. Other public lands have generally received less attention.

Contributing to confusion are more than 1300 different wordings of Crown land reserve purposes, some of which are obsolete, dating back to nineteenth century land reservations.

There are however a range of specific reservation purposes that align well with public land use classification and can be readily used as a criterion for assigning a public land category in VEACRecs25. For example, state game reserves are typically reserved for ‘the protection or management of wildlife’ under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act and scheduled as state game reserves available for hunting under the *Wildlife Act 1975*. The reservation purpose here aligns with past government-accepted public land use recommendations as either *Wildlife Reserve* or *Natural Features Reserve – Wildlife Reserve (hunting)*. The current equivalent classification is the *Wildlife and game reserve* category.

Both unreserved Crown land and instances of broad reservation types such as ‘public purposes’ lack clarity. For these places, LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations are the clearest documentation of agreed use. If reservation purpose alone was adopted, then many places across the state would be shown as uncategorised public land. The case study in box 3 for Victoria’s largest nature reserve, Annuello Nature Conservation Reserve, demonstrates the importance of using both the accepted land use recommendations and reservation purpose in any information system that records current public land use.

There are places where neither specific reservation nor accepted land use recommendations are available. These areas may be assigned a formal use in some circumstances based on other parameters such as long-term use.

### 3.1.3 Categorisation using other parameters

Long-term or ongoing use can be a key decision criterion for land categorisation in areas that have no specific LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations and are unreserved or have an unclear purpose. This approach may apply in townships, or areas that are licensed or leased for community uses and government uses and services, and for the beds of the Gippsland Lakes.

In some places the Crown reservation or purpose may not correspond to the full extent of a Crown parcel, especially in estuaries where parcels may extend some distance upstream and beyond the environmental influence of the sea. Stream bed and lake bed reserves may include intertidal or onshore areas. The geographic complexity of these areas necessitates case-by-case decisions, and highlights the need for a mechanism to readily redefine Crown parcel boundaries to align with agreed land use.

The flow chart shown in figure 3.1 illustrates the process used to determine current public land use in the VEACRecs25 dataset. Areas unassessed by LCC-ECC-VEAC and uncategorised by other formal government or Parliamentary decision-making processes are shown as unassessed and recorded as uncategorised public land category in the VEACRecs25 dataset (see section 5).

### Applying rules and regulations based on land use recommendations or reservation purpose

Several Acts directly reference either LCC-ECC-VEAC public land use recommendations or types of Crown land that broadly align with land use categories.

The *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* defines restricted Crown land status – land where special permission must be obtained for mining and/ or exploration – using public land use recommendation categories as well as certain other land.

The *Forests Act 1958* uses the term ‘state forest’ and outlines the component areas of reserved forest and protected forest for land and fire management requirements. Protected forest is not easily spatially defined and forest management zones are generally not sufficiently detailed to align with cadastral Crown land parcel definitions. The state forest public land use category (and former categories) recommended by LCC-ECC-VEAC depicted in VEACRecs25 is perhaps the most spatially accurate information for this public land use category as it includes areas of unreserved Crown land and land reserved for other or obsolete purposes.

**Box 3 Case study: Annuello Nature Conservation Reserve – illustrating both reservation and accepted recommendations defining land use**

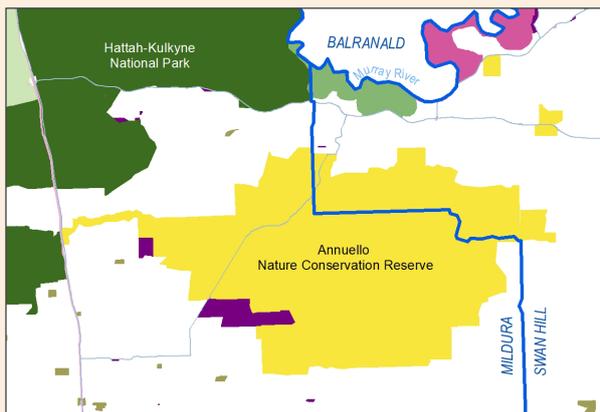
The Annuello Nature Conservation Reserve is the largest nature reserve in Victoria (35,603 hectares). It is more than double the size of the next largest nature reserve (Bronzewing Flora and Fauna Reserve, 12,496 hectares) and consists of 41 Crown land parcels. Nature Conservation Reserve is shown as yellow in the extract from VEACRecs25 below.

The most recent public land use investigation is the LCC’s Mallee Area Review (1989) which recommended this area as a flora and fauna reserve (G48 shown yellow on the extract below). The Order In Council containing the government’s response accepts the recommendations and the land is currently managed by Parks Victoria for this purpose.

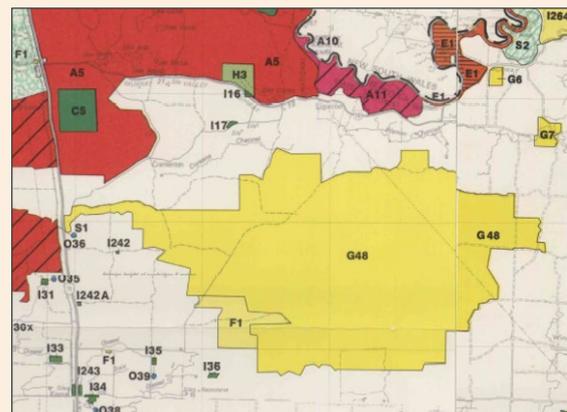
For this recommendation area, VOTS records 38 parcels as unreserved Crown land, two as government road reserve (8.4 hectares) and one parcel is reserved for ‘conservation of an area of natural interest’ (Victoria Government Gazette G19 1988, page 1432 for reservation of Crown Allotment 32A comprising 60.6 hectares).

In land information systems that report reservation only, this area is depicted as largely unreserved Crown land. Regulations for management of nature reserves cannot be applied to unreserved Crown land.

**Extract from VEACRecs25**



**Extract from LCC Mallee Area Review Final Recommendations (1989) Map A and B**



## 4. VEACRecs25 user requirements

VEAC consulted user groups to help identify any additional functionality and useability improvements or updates that will assist public land managers and support future legislative reforms.

The accessibility of LCC-ECC-VEAC land use recommendations is described in section 6.

### 4.1 User feedback

Government staff who access VEACRecs25 information identified additional functionality and useability improvements for both the dataset and the presentation of information in MapshareVic/ VicMatters.

A consistent theme was that users asked for clearer linkages between the information in VEACRecs25 and the published reports containing land use recommendations. This was especially focused on developing a better understanding of the ways in which older or legacy public land use categories that are no longer used are reflected in the current dataset. It was also a way of highlighting where subsequent government decisions have changed past recommendations, and how land use is shown where there are no government-accepted land use recommendations on which to base categorisation.

### 4.2 Updates to data structure

In response to the feedback a work program is underway to improve the dataset. Some of the key elements are ongoing technical tasks of data validation. Improvements to data structure also provide for better integration and comparison with other public land information sources.

#### Accessibility, clarity, and additional information

**Land units** corresponding to a reserve or park of the same public land use category are now the preferred way to group parcels. This change required a restructure and update of information previously grouped by investigation area and land use recommendation. Examples of the issues with the previous approach are that large national parks extending across multiple land use investigations were being shown in different ways. In the revised approach, the whole national park is grouped in one land unit (a park or reserve matching the legal definition in the National Parks Act) and an area can more readily be determined for the park.

VEAC is progressively validating more than 14,000 land units in batches based on the amount of work required for the updates and the likely requirements of users, including for use in VEAC's ongoing work programs.

The **exact category wording** as recommended in the past has been added in a new data field to better illustrate any translation from past or 'legacy' land use categories to the current system depicted in VEACRecs25. For example, areas recommended by the LCC as flora reserve are shown as the current land use category *nature reserve*. The exact recommendation field contains the legacy category of flora reserve. Where the land use has been changed by a government decision after a recommendation of LCC-ECC-VEAC, the public land use reflects the most recent government decision. Examples include Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park established through legislation in 2020. The last government-accepted recommendation – now superseded – is recorded in this new exact recommendation data field. The current land use is shown as *marine park/ marine and coastal park* category showing the legislated use.

Users also wanted improved documentation of **split parcels and reasons** why parcels have more than one category or other attributes. A new data field (P\_Check) has been included that indicates where the recommendation area matches the boundary of the parcel (Match) and where there are multiple uses for one parcel (Split). This data field also identifies the rare cases where a land use recommendation includes an area of Crown land that does not have a cadastral parcel such as government road reserve or seabed. A field has been added to VEACRecs25 to record the reason why the parcel has been split. In some instances there are parcels across different investigation areas, or with different management boundaries or other boundaries that may not have different land use categories but are split for other information management

purposes required. A case study describing a split parcel at Wandong Regional Park is provided in box 4. In some instances, the reason a parcel is split is to reflect a legal plan more accurately than the boundaries in the cadastre. An example for Mount Lawson State Park where a road forms the boundary between the park and state forest is provided in box 5.

Where there are **no recommendations**, additional information has been progressively included in a new data field outlining why this is the case. This provides clarity for areas assigned a public land category by government decision outside the LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations process.

### 4.3 Data validation and updates

A refresh of the VEACRecs25 dataset is a very large but important task which will assist public land legislation reforms. Work for this project has focused on parks and reserves with certified legal plans, particularly those areas listed on schedules of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act or National Parks Act (about 44 per cent of the area of public land), and those areas included in recent VEAC investigations or assessments.

Following the release in June 2021 of the government response to the public land use recommendations in VEAC's *Central West Investigation Final Report (2019)*, the relevant information has been included in the VEACRecs25 dataset. These updates required editing of some 4300 records and inclusion of a revised public land use classification system based on the accepted recommendations from VEAC's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report (2017)*.

The updates have been included in published datasets in the Victorian Spatial Data Library (available to government users). The presentation of information in MapshareVic accessible to government land managers was also updated to include new data fields. A summary of the extent of public land in each public land use category is provided in table 1.1.

In addition to updating land use categorisation decisions, revisions and new Crown land parcels are created and added to VicMap Property regularly. Many revisions are for areas within existing Crown land: for example, separating stream frontage from stream beds and banks, adding Crown parcels for government road and railway intersections that were previously part of the government road and not shown as a Crown parcel. Updating VEACRecs25 and other Crown land datasets to include these revisions is resource intensive and adds little new information.

VEAC is assessing ways to automate some of this time-consuming data maintenance for Crown land parcels with minor geometry updates while maintaining split parcels separately.

VEACRecs25 data validation and maintenance will continue to prioritise:

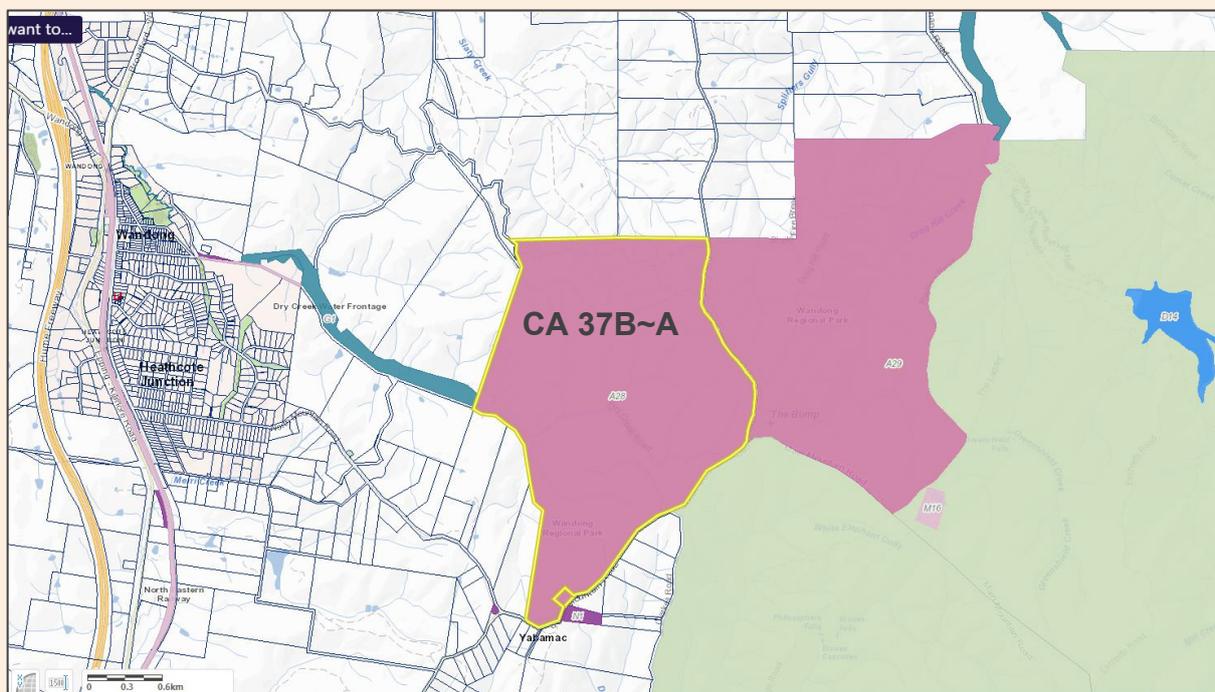
- parks and reserves with certified legal plans: nature reserves, bushland reserves, historic reserves, wildlife and game reserves, regional parks, coastal parks, metropolitan parks, forest parks
- roll-out of land units data structure (using reserve or local name)
- inclusion of new or previously unidentified areas of Crown land
- refinements to parcel boundaries to match the cadastral definition
- investigation of any significant discrepancies with other public land information systems
- population of new data fields that improve functionality and clarity.

#### Box 4 Case study: Wandong Regional Park – illustrating park definition by plans of recommendations

Wandong Regional Park is located north east of Wallan and an area of around 700 hectares was first recommended as a regional park in LCC's *Melbourne Area Final Recommendations* (1977). In the LCC's *Melbourne Area District 2 Review Final Recommendations* (1994) the area was expanded with an addition of areas of state forest to the park (recommendations A28 and A29) to a total area of 890 hectares.

The area is managed as a regional park in accordance with the government-accepted land use recommendations although the land use has not been formalised by reservation. The park area is readily identified on-ground with the boundary following the Crown land – private land edge along the western and northern sides, and along existing roads separating the park from state forest on the eastern side.

The map below is derived from VEACRecs25; Wandong Regional Park is shown as pink and state forest is light green shading.



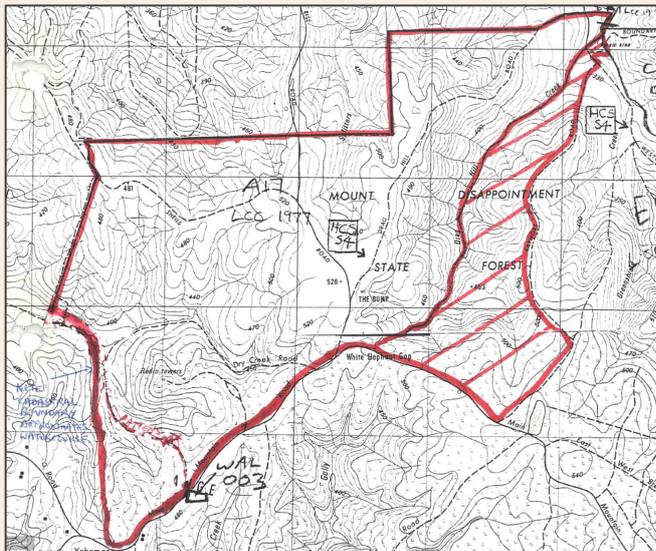
### Split parcels

The current extent of the regional park includes the whole area of Crown allotment 37B~A comprising 435 hectares (part of existing park recommendation A28) including around 1.3 hectares containing a Goulburn Valley water treatment plant. The extensive CA 37~A shown bordered blue in the figure below comprises 272 hectares for recommendation A28 and 180 hectares for recommendation A29, as well as Mt Disappointment State Forest (5902 ha), Comet Sawmill Historic and Cultural Features Reserve (41 ha), Sunday Creek Reservoir (24 ha) and Hollowback Reservoir (5.1 ha). This Crown parcel CA 37~A is split into 5 separate polygons for each of these different land uses and recommendations.

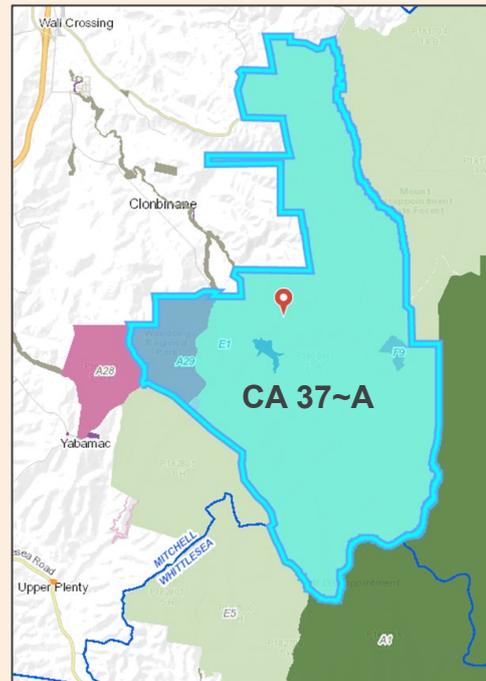
The Crown reservation purpose for CA 37~A is listed as reserved forest (as to part) and public purposes (as to part) in VOTS. The reservation purpose for the western allotment CA 37B~A is listed as reserved forest.

The recent Recognition and Settlement Agreement between the Taungurung People and the State of Victoria under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* states in the Land Agreement that Wandong Regional Park is Aboriginal Title. The description of the park references the area in LCC recommendations A28 and A29 because the current Crown parcel configuration cannot be used as a legal description as it does not reflect government’s formally agreed land use.

**The LCC’s 1994 detailed plan shows the existing park recommendation A28 bordered red, and the addition to the park recommendation A29 indicated by a diagonal stripe**



**Crown Allotment 37~A shown bordered blue**

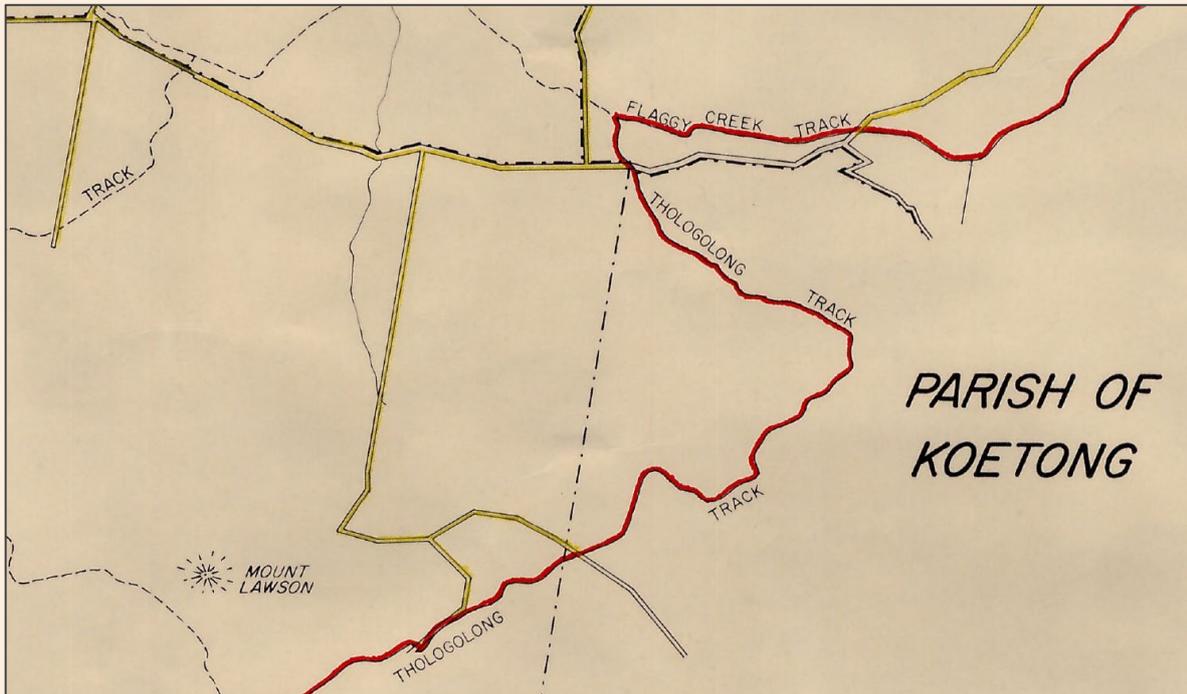


**Box 5 Case study: Mount Lawson State Park – illustrating corrections are required to the cadastre**

Mount Lawson State Park located east of Wodonga was established following the LCC’s North Eastern Area (Benalla-Upper Murray) Review completed in 1986. The recommendations were for a state park comprising Mount Lawson Park – originally recommended as a ‘multi-purpose park’ in the LCC’s report in 1973 – referred to as recommendation A7 (11,860 hectares) and recommendation A8 comprising 460 hectares of state forest.

In the 1986 recommendations, the LCC also recommended 410 hectares of the pre-existing park as state forest. Government accepted the recommendations, and the state park was added to the National Parks Act schedule 2B via Act No. 7 in 1987, with the extent of the park defined by certified plan NP80.

**Extract of part of certified plan NP80 showing Thologolong Track forming the park boundary**



The map below shows Crown allotment 2029 in the Parish of Koetong. The boundary in VicMap Property (the cadastre) is shown as a yellow outline and the public land use colour shading is from VEACRecs25: dark green is to Mount Lawson State Park and light green is state forest. An area of Crown allotment 2029 extends east of Thologolong Track which is visible on the underlying aerial photography. In VEACRecs25 Crown allotment 2029 is a ‘split parcel’ with the boundary between the two land uses following Thologolong Track drawn using the aerial photography to correspond with the boundary on the certified plan.



## 5. Defining uncategorised and unassessed public land

Section 3.1 outlines the broad types of uncategorised public land. Additional detail is provided here on the extent of both uncategorised and unassessed public land (also see appendix 3).

### 5.1 Definition of uncategorised public land

Uncategorised public land is a broad category for which no specific public land use has been recommended by VEAC or its predecessors, and no other formal government land use decision has been made. This includes areas recommended for alienation (sale), and land not required for public purposes. In some instances, land has been specifically recommended as uncategorised because additional work is required to identify any public land values or determine a use.

Some of these areas were simply not identified as public land at the time of the last public land use investigation or have become public land since that time and have no clear identified use. VEAC describes these areas as 'unassessed public land' and designates them as uncategorised public land where no use is formally described through other government decision-making processes.

The following broad types of uncategorised public land have been identified:

- areas specifically recommended by VEAC or its predecessors as uncategorised public land: includes areas recommended in former categories such as *land not required for public purposes*, *agriculture*, *revegetation areas*, *other reserves and public land* and where no land use has been assigned subsequently by formal government decision-making processes
- public land with no formal assessment of use by VEAC or its predecessors (unassessed land) and which is unreserved Crown land or has a broad reservation type such as 'public purposes' and cannot be categorised from other formal government decision-making processes described in section 3.

### Small blocks and township land

Early investigations by the LCC recognised that not all public could be assessed at that time and many small or isolated blocks were not mapped or the land use was not categorised in detail. Land use recommendations such as *other reserves and public land* or *township land* provided a way to recognise small blocks of public land existed but did not assess these in detail. Because of the scale of the mapping undertaken by the LCC, these areas were not identified in any list or mapped systematically. The LCC's strategic planning approach left 'small blocks' to government departments to make specific decisions on, on a case-by-case basis. In townships not examined by the LCC, most public land was already reserved for a specific public purpose, or the use was well known.

As cartographic and digital information systems became more accessible in the 1990s, the need for omnibus categories like *other reserves and public land* and *township land* diminished and they were not used in the last LCC regional land use investigation, Melbourne Area District 2 Review completed in 1994, or by the ECC or VEAC.

There are no areas identified as *township land* public land use category in the VEACRecs25 dataset. As part of the ongoing data validation program, areas identified as *other reserves and public land* will be assessed to determine if a specific land use is applicable using the decision-making criteria described in section 3.1.

### Unassessed land

Areas with no recommendations by LCC, ECC or VEAC have in previous iterations of the VEACRecs25 dataset been classified as *uncategorised public land* because there was no land use category described as 'unassessed'. Recognising that this gave a false impression that no use can be identified, the methodology was altered to show land use also based on other formal government decisions such as reservation purpose. Examples include areas of schools or public buildings reserved for community purposes in townships. Although no LCC recommendation can be assigned, such areas are shown in the VEACRecs25 dataset as category *community use reserves*, rather than *uncategorised public land* (unassessed public land).

While this change in methodology has been in operation for some time, there are some small areas remaining in the dataset that require examination. A targeted review of all land shown as uncategorised and those areas with no land use recommendation would improve data quality.

A list of known geographic areas, former cities, townships and boroughs that have not been reviewed by LCC-ECC-VEAC is provided at appendix 3. For a significant proportion of these areas, public land can be categorised. There are many other dispersed locations that have not been assessed, and some of these are shown as uncategorised public land.

## 5.2 Extent of uncategorised public land

At the start of this project there was an estimated 65,000 hectares or less of uncategorised public land in Victoria (Source: PLM 2020 area statement: UPL=60,285 hectares, Unknown=15,568 hectares, No specific LCC recommendation =153.4 hectares).

At the time data validation commenced in 2021 there was some 42,450 hectares of uncategorised public land in the VEACRecs25 dataset. As a result of the validation process, this is now reduced to around 35,210 hectares of uncategorised public land (table 5.1).

Some of the significant differences between the initial estimate based on PLM25 and VEAC's data are because substantial areas identified in PLM25 as uncategorised public land or 'unknown' are water bodies or land allocated to a specific land use category in VEACRecs25. For example, the lake beds of the Gippsland Lakes and inland or coastal water bodies are shown variably in PLM25; Mallacoota Inlet and most of the bed of the Gippsland Lakes are recorded as uncategorised public land, and Lake Tyers is incorrectly categorised as water production reserve. None of these areas are mapped as uncategorised public land or water production reserve in VEACRecs25.

VEAC has determined that the current geographic extent of unassessed land excluded from past studies by LCC-ECC-VEAC is 118,316 hectares (recommendation code is 'No\_rec' in the dataset). Additional detail is provided in appendix 3. Within this area, much of the land has been able to categorised based on Crown land reservation purpose, long-standing use, or geographic location (e.g. Gippsland Lakes reserve covering some 33,275 hectares of the lake bed).

Other types of unassessed land are more dispersed and include Crown land acquisitions and land identified as public land after the most recent investigation. Most land transferred to the Crown since the last public land use investigation has a clear public purpose and land use classification. For example, land acquired for nature conservation and for additions to national parks or other parks is readily categorised.

The area that is both unassessed and uncategorised public land is estimated to be around 2000 hectares. This part of the VEACRecs25 dataset would be greatly improved by a more targeted work program.

In summary, the dataset currently has around 35,210 hectares of uncategorised public land comprising:

- areas with specific recommendations for *uncategorised public land* (7320 hectares) that allow for future uses to be determined by other government decision making processes
- legacy categories of *revegetation areas* (1220 hectares) and *other reserves and public land* (12,500 hectares), noting that when examined in detail some of this area may either have a specific use or an obsolete or discontinued use
- legacy categories of *land not required for public purposes* (1835 hectares) and *agriculture* (12,335 hectares) some of which has been alienated and after investigation will likely be deleted from the dataset
- unassessed areas of public land for which no specific land use has been recommended by VEAC or its predecessors, and the land is unreserved or reserved for non-specific public purposes and cannot be allocated to a specific land use category (1920 hectares included in the totals above).

Table 5.1 Extent and types of uncategorised public land in VEACRecs25

Public land use category	Sub-category	Area (hectares)	Number of parcels
Land not required for public purposes	Agriculture	12,335	287
Land not required for public purposes	Land not required for public purposes	1835	113
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>14,170</b>	<b>400</b>
Uncategorised public land	Other reserves and public land	12,515	4091
Uncategorised public land	Revegetation area	1221	136
Uncategorised public land	Uncategorised public land	7320	4850
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>21,057</b>	<b>9077</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35,228</b>	<b>9477</b>

## 6. Information availability

### 6.1 LCC-ECC-VEAC land use recommendations

A key goal for this project was to ensure that past LCC-ECC-VEAC public land use recommendations and the related government response, were made more accessible to the public.

#### Digital archive

VEAC established an online accessible repository of all published reports for LCC and ECC investigations and the associated government decisions are represented in VEACRecs25. This digital archive is available on the VEAC website. Launched in October 2022, all reports and maps are presented as published, without amendment or annotation. There are 35 separate investigations, reviews and special investigations covering public land for the whole of Victoria. For most investigations and reviews there are three reports: descriptive report, proposed or draft recommendations and final recommendations. Most LCC final recommendations reports with an annotation of the government decisions are also available on VEAC's main website.

The archive provides a history of public land decision making in Victoria and will help those working on public land, including academics and other researchers, community organisations and the general public who regularly request access to these documents.

#### Interactive mapping

VEAC's website also includes information documenting the government response to VEAC's Central West Investigation via an online interactive map (webmaps) using an ESRI system. The interactive map enables users to view and zoom in on a map. A pop-up window, containing details of each government-accepted public land use or feature, is available by clicking on a specific location. This technology will be investigated to determine if VEACRecs25 can also be made publicly accessible on the VEAC website.

#### Detailed mapping of LCC decisions

VEAC is undertaking to digitally preserve detailed mapping decisions of the LCC currently stored as paper copy plans. Where detailed plans exist, these documents often provide an accurate description of the intentions of the LCC. This is particularly important where public land uses are separated by geographic features. There are many instances where the detailed plans are more accurate descriptions than current Crown land parcel boundaries; these are represented in VEACRecs25 as 'split parcels' (see box 4).

### 6.2 DEECA and DTP land information systems

Victoria's land information systems are in both geospatial / digital mapping and tabulated formats. The key issues with government information systems and availability are as follows:

- Much of the source information for government's land use decisions is difficult for the public to access at fine scale, and hard to search for within repositories such as the online archive of the Victoria Government Gazette, especially where Crown parcel descriptions have changed.
- Government land use decision-making is poorly documented with many systems missing key information on the date that decisions were made.
- PLM25 is available in a public version of MapshareVic – although hard to find – but the information may not reflect recent decisions by government or provide the correct categorisation of public land, reducing confidence in its accuracy.
- Material derived from PRIMIS was accurate at the time it was added to Landfolio and PLM25 but has not been maintained. Landfolio is currently unable to document more than one land use for a Crown parcel.
- VOTS Crown folio documentation lacks reference to public land use recommendations accepted by government and does not provide enough detail in references to the reservation or legislation. The live linkage into Landfolio is a substantial improvement in Crown land information management. For new areas of Crown land, the purpose for which land is transferred is not recorded in current system and is largely only available on paper files in regional departmental offices or may be recorded in Landfolio.

## 7. Findings and recommendations

VEAC has identified several issues that impact on the ability of government to establish an accurate record of agreed public land use. These findings are summarised below followed by recommendations designed to support the establishment of an accurate record of agreed public land use and to support legislative reforms.

### There are multiple public land use decision-making procedures and multiple information systems

The procedures currently used by the Victorian government to make formal public land use decisions are:

- notification of government acceptance or otherwise of public land use recommendations of the LCC, ECC and VEAC
- decisions made through or under legislation such as:
  - reservation of land for a specific use or purpose
  - legislation passed by Parliament applying a land use
  - transfer of land to the Crown for a specified public purpose.

As outlined in section 3, the most recent formal government decision supersedes all previous decisions. The fragmented nature of current information makes it difficult to determine the most recent current land use and requires a high degree of technical knowledge as well as access to multiple information sources. Systems reporting land use decisions are not well integrated or linked.

The Victorian government's proposed public land legislation reforms will address many but not all information management issues relating to public land; in general, improved record-keeping and cross-referencing is also needed. Better integration of the systems will require reference to the full range of government land use decision-making processes and improve information quality. The proposed legislative reforms will greatly reduce the number of ways that land use decisions are formalised and provide a centralised repository of this information.

VEACRecs25 records land use decisions made by government, even if they are yet to be formally implemented by Crown land reservation or addition to the National Parks Act schedules. As discussed in VEAC's *Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report (2017)* there is a significant backlog of recommendations that have not been formally implemented, although the land is managed in accordance with the accepted recommendations. Much of this backlog is due to constraints in resourcing and, more recently, a stricter requirement for survey to amend or change Crown parcel boundaries. In addition to government-accepted LCC-ECC-VEAC recommendations, VEACRecs25 aims to show government land use decisions subsequent to acceptance of recommendations. Some of the finer-scale changes however require significant resources to identify and accurately document. Some land use decisions are not traceable using the current systems available. For example Landfolio provides a manual data entry option for recording details of Crown land acquisitions, but these records are not comprehensive.

Other geospatial land use datasets such as PLM25 do not necessarily show government-accepted recommendations – some reporting is delayed until the land use is formally implemented through legislation – and do not fully integrate information available in VEACRecs25. The main Crown land information platform Landfolio currently poorly documents Crown parcels with multiple land uses (i.e. split parcels). These discrepancies highlight the difficulty of integrating information stored in map-based or geospatial systems and tabulated/ text-based descriptive systems.

Costly on-ground survey for changes to Crown parcel definitions are limiting the ability of land managers to implement government's public land use decisions through existing reservation processes. For example, the legal definition of Wandong Regional Park in the recent *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* Recognition and Settlement Agreement between the State and Taungurung people is described using the detailed plans prepared by the LCC in 1987 rather than Crown parcel descriptions because the park has not been implemented through formal reservation (box 4). Survey requirements slow the implementation of

government-accepted land use decisions and highlights the importance of recording split parcels in land information management systems.

Changes to locality and parks or reserve names are being made by government to address reconciliation goals. Updating place names and documenting Aboriginal Title parks and reserves in VEACRecs25 is an important ongoing task. There are also many reserves and areas of state forest for which a place name is unknown or unclear. Including locality-specific land unit names is part of the improvements to VEACRecs25 identified in section 4.

## RECOMMENDATION

### R1 Ensure the record of government's land use decisions is accurate by:

- a. providing adequate training and expertise to ensure updates to land use decisions reflect the most recent formal government land use decision, align with the public land use categorisation developed for the proposed legislative reforms, and improve and maintain data quality
- b. undertaking revisions of Crown parcel boundaries using digital desktop survey for low-risk changes such as for Crown to Crown boundaries and where identifiable on-ground geographic features define the boundary between land uses
- c. structuring land use information systems in a way that accommodates parcels with more than one land use category.

### Maintenance of the VEACRecs25 dataset is ongoing and requires technical expertise

The VEACRecs25 geospatial dataset was originally established in 2003 as a shared project between VEAC and the then Department of Sustainability and Environment primarily focused on government-accepted land use recommendations for the ECC Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation area. The original scale of mapping was at 1:25,000, hence the dataset name. Funding was provided by both organisations for the project which was subsequently expanded statewide as the value of a geospatial dataset became evident.

With the available resources, it took the team around 10 years to complete land use categorisation of Crown land across the state, and to include new government land use decisions. Although VEACRecs25 was not initially established to be the most authoritative statewide dataset for public land use, it has become so by default because it incorporates the full range of government land use decisions.

The VEACRecs25 dataset is revised when government decisions on VEAC's public land use recommendations are published. For example, the Victorian government's response to the Central West Investigation final recommendations was published in June 2021 and approximately 4600 records covering 160,000 hectares were updated in VEACRecs25 by late 2021.

In addition to updating land use categorisation decisions, revisions and new Crown land parcels are continually being created and added to VicMap Property. Many of these revisions are for areas within existing Crown land by, for example, separating stream frontage from stream beds and banks by creating new parcels, and adding Crown parcels for government road and railway intersections that were previously part of the unparcellised government road 'void'. Updating VEACRecs25 and other Crown land datasets manually to include these revisions is resource intensive and adds little new information. VEAC is considering ways to automate some of these time-consuming minor geometry updates to Crown land parcels.

### Clarity and spatial resolution of information for past land use decisions

Crown parcel mapping became digitised and available in geospatial systems from the early 2000s. Retrofitting historic land use recommendations of the LCC that were defined at larger scales can be problematic, especially for areas reserved for public purposes or unreserved Crown land (e.g. corresponding to recommendations for dispersed areas like *other reserves and public land, stream frontages*). Some of

these dispersed areas and 'small blocks' would benefit from a transparent public process to establish an agreed public land use. For many areas, the land use is readily apparent based on reservation purpose or long-term use.

There are also parts of the VEACRecs25 dataset that would be improved by a targeted work program or audit, specifically for:

- unclassified public land (as described in section 5)
- state forest (including legacy categories of uncommitted land and hardwood production)
- softwood plantations, school plantations
- township land and areas that have not been investigated by LCC, ECC or VEAC (see appendix 3)
- obsolete land use categories and discontinued uses
- clarification of the status of ECC *Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report* (2000) recommendations for areas other than marine protected areas. VEAC's *Assessment of Victoria's Coastal Reserves Final Report* (2019) provides a spatial basis for identification of coastal reserves, but there is ambiguity for remaining areas of recommendations for Gippsland Lakes Reserve, coastal waters reserve and aquaculture zones.

### RECOMMENDATION

#### R2 Ensure the VEACRecs25 dataset supports the public land legislation reforms by providing adequate resources to:

- a. improve information quality and audit key areas of the dataset, and
- b. maintain the relationship to parcel geometry in VicMap Property (the cadastre).

### Correcting errors and resolving discrepancies between land information systems is ongoing

As part of its dataset maintenance VEAC has from time to time identified errors in government information such as VicMap Property. In order to establish a spatially accurate record of public land use, these issues or discrepancies need to be addressed and resolved. This is separate to the process needed to split parcels into different public land uses that has not been progressed because of requirements for on-ground survey.

### RECOMMENDATION

#### R3 Establish a process to:

- a. identify and correct public land use errors in or discrepancies between government information systems
- b. correct errors in cadastral boundaries for Crown land including those errors identified by VEAC and documented in VEACRecs25, prioritising areas on schedules of the *National Parks Act 1975*.

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## Information sources

### VicMap Property (cadastre)

Vicmap is the state's foundational spatial data. Vicmap Property is Victoria's cadastral map base that provides information about land parcels and property details. The database is continuously maintained with information from authoritative sources within local and state governments.

### Public Land Management (PLM25) spatial datasets for Victoria

PLM25 contains 30+ fields with detailed information on public land. PLM25 holds information from Parks and Reserves Information Management System (PRIMS) for parks and reserves, Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) and Land Information Management System (LIMS) for other public land.

### Landfolio

DEECA's Crown Land Information Platform launched in May 2020. The information system is designed to support more than 35 administration tasks including the reservation of land, appointing of and managing delegated land managers, issuing and managing leases and licenses, and conducting native title assessments. The system manages over 110,000 Crown parcels, 13,000 reserves, 1,200 delegate land managers and over 45,000 licences and leases.

### Renewing Victoria's public land legislation

Much of Victoria's current public land legislation is outdated and does not reflect contemporary views and values of public land. It is also complex. The key Acts, the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, *Forests Act 1958* and *Land Act 1958* contain provisions that do not reflect contemporary views and do not recognise the Traditional Owners of Victoria's public land.

The government has committed to developing a new Public Land Act to replace these Acts. The new Public Land Act will operate alongside the *National Parks Act 1975*, which will be retained with some modernisation.

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/renewing-victorias-public-land-legislation>

### MapshareVic

A corporate web mapping platform with access to a wide variety of interactive maps published by various DEECA businesses. Maps can be restricted to internal use or made accessible to external users.

<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/MapShareVic/index.html?viewer=MapShareVic.PublicSite&locale=en-AU>

### VOTS

A land administration system that holds the electronic register for the State of Victoria under the Torrens title system of land administration, including providing functionality for registering transactions affecting freehold land. Victoria's online land titles register (VOTS) has also been utilised to store Crown land information.

### VEACRecs25

VEACRecs25 is a dataset maintained by VEAC that provides a spatial representation of public land use decisions of the Victorian government or Parliament, including a record of the government-accepted recommendations of VEAC and its predecessors (the Environment Conservation Council and the Land Conservation Council). VEACRecs25 is a key tool to help land managers and the community understand the purpose for which public land is to be managed.

## Appendix 1 Terms of reference

### *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*

#### ADVICE ON ASPECTS OF PUBLIC LAND USE INFORMATION

##### TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to section 26B of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change hereby requests the Council to provide advice on:

- (a) data on recreational activities on Victoria's public land and any significant knowledge gaps relating to those activities
- (b) improvements to the VEACRECs25 dataset.

This request is for technical advice on aspects of public land use information and does not extend to recommending changes to public land use.

#### **(a) data on recreational activities on Victoria's public land and any significant knowledge gaps relating to those activities**

A range of data on different recreational activities on Victoria's public land is required to support government planning and evidence-based decision-making.

The advice sought is to compile an inventory of statewide data on the broad range of recreational activities on Victoria's public land and identify any significant knowledge gaps. VEAC is requested to provide advice on:

- data coverage and availability (both geographically and by recreational activity)
- data quality, including any inconsistencies
- data custodianship
- age of the data
- suitability of the data for Victorian Government planning, reporting and decision-making
- knowledge gaps.

#### **(b) Improving the VEACRECs25 dataset**

VEACRECs25 is a dataset maintained by VEAC that provides a spatial representation at 1:25,000 scale of the public land use decisions of the Victorian Government or Parliament, including the government-accepted recommendations of VEAC and its predecessors (the Environment Conservation Council and the Land Conservation Council). VEACRECs25 is a key tool to help land managers and the community understand the purpose for which public land is to be managed.

VEAC is requested to provide advice on issues and gaps in the VEACRECs25 dataset and how this important tool could be improved, including:

- any issues that need to be resolved to ensure Victoria has an accurate record of agreed public land use;
- any aspects of the current data that need clarification;
- the broad types and extent of uncategorised public land<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Uncategorised public land is a broad category for which no specific public land use has been recommended by VEAC or its predecessors. Victoria is estimated to have less than 65,000 hectares of uncategorised public land.

- any improvements to the functionality of VEACRECs25 to assist public land managers and support future legislative reforms; and
- establishing an online accessible repository of relevant information sources for the government decisions represented in VEACRECs25.

The government has committed to modernise Victoria's public land legislation in the *Victorian Government Response to VEAC's Statewide Assessment of Public Land Final Report*. The improved VEACRECs25 dataset will assist in the transition to the new legislative framework.

### **Reporting**

VEAC must provide reports containing its advice within 12 months from the date of the request\*, with separate reports for topics (a) and (b). VEAC must also provide a progress update on its work within 6 months of the request and make this information publicly available.

\*extended to 30 April 2023.

## Appendix 2 Public land use categories – past or legacy categories and new system

Sequence matches the proposed legislation reforms consisting of a revised National Parks Act and a new Public Land Act, and classification and reference numbers reflected in VEAC's Statewide Assessment of Public Land Investigation Final Report (2017) recommendation R1. \* denotes protected area.

Current public land use category	Reference number	Former public land use categories and sub-categories			Notes
VEAC (2017) classification		VEAC/ECC category	Sub-categories system established in LCC's Melbourne Area District 2 Review and Statewide Assessment	older LCC category	
<b>Revised National Parks Act</b>					
<b>National Park</b>	*1	National park	National park	National park	Implemented as additions to <i>National Parks Act 1975</i> schedule Two. Includes areas identified as staged implementation in the government's response to VEAC's Central West Investigation Final Report (2019).
		State park	State park	State park	Implemented as additions to National Parks Act schedule Two B.
		Wilderness park	Wilderness park	Wilderness area	Mallee Area (1977) and Mallee Review (1989) recommendation B1 Big Desert Wilderness Area; Wilderness Special Investigation (1991) recommended 20 wilderness areas. Three were implemented as Wilderness Parks of National Parks Act schedule Two A. The remainder were implemented as Wilderness Zones under schedule 5 of National Parks Act forming land use overlays within national parks.
<b>Conservation park</b>	*2	Coastal park	Coastal park	Coastal park	Recommendations for coastal park implemented as additions to schedule Three of National Parks Act are included (Bay Of Islands, Cape Conran, Cape Liptrap, Discovery Bay, Gippsland Lakes, Point Cook). Coastal parks declared using the <i>Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978</i> are identified as coastal reserves (i.e., Altona Coastal Park, Truganina Coastal Parkland). Marine and coastal parks are scheduled under the National Parks Act and are shown as public land use category Marine park/ marine and coastal park (see reference # 18 below).
		Conservation park			VEAC's Central West Investigation Final Report (2019) used this revised category description for two new parks: Hepburn and Cobaw conservation parks.
		Nature park			LCC's Melbourne Area District 2 Review recommendations for Phillip Island State Park were implemented as Nature Park and gazetted under Crown Land (Reserves) Act.
		Other park (National Parks Act Schedule 3 Park)			VEAC's River Red Gum Forests Investigation recommended four areas be established as Other Park (conservation) on National Parks Act schedule Three. VEAC's Statewide Assessment of Public Land Investigation identifies the public land use category applicable for parks and reserves listed in National Parks Act schedule Three.
<b>National heritage park</b>	*3	National heritage park			National heritage park category was introduced in ECC's Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands Investigation and included in National Parks Act schedule Four. Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park is the only area with this categorisation.
<b>Nature reserve</b>	*5	Nature conservation reserve (NCR)	Nature conservation reserve		Includes areas identified by government decision-making processes such as inclusion of areas on National Parks Act schedule Three Part 9: Langwarrin Flora and Fauna Reserve, and schedule Nine Part 1 Division 1 comprising five Nature Conservation Areas; Crown Land (Reserves) Act schedule 5 Part 1 lists 27 nature conservation reserves.
			NCR - Wildlife reserve (no hunting)	Wildlife reserve	Includes areas recommended as wildlife reserves and later classified as nature conservation reserves under the <i>Wildlife Act 1975</i> and are not available for hunting. Those wildlife reserves where hunting may be permitted are categorised as Wildlife and State Game Reserve (see reference # 9 below).
			NCR - Flora reserve	Flora reserve	
			NCR - Flora and fauna reserve	Flora and fauna reserve	
		Natural features reserve (NFR)	NFR - Geological and Geomorphological Features Area	Geological reserve or monument	Recommendations for Caves, Geological reserves, Natural features reserve – sub-category Geological and geomorphological) reserves were previously classified as subcategories of natural features reserve. LCC recommendations for geological monument were not accepted by government (i.e. Melbourne Study recommendation A28 Organ Pipes and Corangamite Area recommendation A8/ C37 Tower Hill). Subsequently the LCC's Melbourne 1 Review (1987) recommended Organ Pipes National Park be retained (see recommendation A3).

Current public land use category	Reference number	Former public land use categories and sub-categories		Notes	
		NFR - Cave	Cave reserve	LCC's Gippsland Lakes Hinterland Area Final Report (1983) recommended seven cave reserves. Additions have been made to two reserves from land acquisitions.	
		Trust for Nature - nature reserve		Includes freehold land owned by Trust for Nature that is intended to be retaining for nature conservation purposes. These areas are identified in VEAC's Yellingbo Investigation, Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation, River Red Gum Forests Investigation (Neds Corner and several large grassland reserves). This does not include land in the revolving fund operated by Trust For Nature.	
<b>Marine national park</b>	*16	Marine national park		Introduced in the ECC's Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report (2000)	
<b>Marine sanctuary</b>	*17	Marine sanctuary		Introduced in the ECC's Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report (2000)	
<b>Marine park/ marine and coastal park</b>	*18	Marine and coastal park		Some marine park and marine and coastal park areas established prior to ECC's Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation remain in place.	
			Marine reserve	VEAC's Marine Investigation Final Report (2014) recommended Wilsons Promontory Marine Reserve be added to the adjoining marine park. This is the only remaining use of the category.	
			Marine and wildlife reserve	ECC's Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report (2000) recommended these be marine national parks, marine sanctuaries, or marine and coastal parks.	
			Marine park		
<b>New Public Land Act</b>					
<b>Regional Park</b>	4	Regional park		Descriptive reserve names included here are Beechworth Historic Park, Lysterfield Park and Steiglitz Historic Park.	
		Metropolitan park		VEAC's Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation identified area managed for 'Conservation, recreation, leisure and tourism' as metropolitan park and recommended these as a sub-category of regional park. All were established after the last LCC reviews of the two districts of Melbourne Area. The consultation paper on public land legislation reform <i>Realising the value of Victoria's public land 2021</i> (appendix B) has this classification as a full category rather than sub-category of regional park.	
			Multi-purpose park	This is an obsolete category originally recommended by the LCC but not accepted by government. There is currently no public land with this classification. The category allowed for resource use (water production, hardwood timber, stone extraction, grazing and hunting) where compatible with the primary objective of recreation and education in natural surroundings.	
			Geological monument	This is an obsolete category originally recommended by the LCC but not accepted by government. There is no public land with this classification (e.g. Tower Hill, Organ Pipes were assigned to other land use categories).	
		Regional park - Murray River Park		River Murray reserve Areas recommended as River Murray Reserve in LCC studies were mostly recommended as Murray River Park in VEAC's River Red Gum Forests Investigation. About 1100 hectares remains outside River Red Gum Forests Investigation area upstream of Hume Dam and is shown as a sub-category of natural features reserve and requires review.	
		Forest park	Forest park	Forest park category was introduced in VEAC's Angahook-Otway Investigation for the recommended Otway Forest Park. Other locations across the state had used the name as a descriptive term for areas of state forest where timber harvesting was not permitted (e.g. Lake Tyers Forest Park). Cobboboonee Forest Park and Bratualung Forest Park did not result from VEAC recommendations and are reserved under the Crown Land (Reserves) Act schedule 5 part 7, and the Forest Act respectively. The consultation paper on public land legislation reform <i>Realising the value of Victoria's public land 2021</i> (appendix B) has this classification as a full category rather than sub-category of regional park. It is unclear if Bratualung Forest Park should be included in this categorisation.	
<b>Bushland reserve</b>	*6	Natural features reserve (NFR)	NFR - Bushland area	Bushland reserve	Various investigations use the terminology bushland area and bushland reserve.
			NFR - Streamside area	Streamside reserve	
			NFR - Natural and scenic features area	Natural features and scenic reserve	

Current public land use category	Reference number	Former public land use categories and sub-categories			Notes
				Scenic reserve	
					Areas set aside by government process establishing 'natural features reserves' listed in Schedule 5 Part 3 of Crown land (Reserves) Act including Tungamah, Yourang, Black Dog Creek, Nathalia, Numurkah, Wattville, Devilbend and Aireys Inlet natural features reserves.
<b>Coastal reserve</b>	7	Coastal reserve	Coastal reserve	Coastal reserve	Includes public land not subject to public land use recommendations and not reserved for another purpose, that is adjacent to the open coast and the coast of bays, coastal lakes, inlets and estuaries foreshore caravan parks, parklands and lighthouses. The ECC's Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report (2000) broadly classified coastal reserves into coastal recreation and coastal protection zones, with the zoning recommended to be incorporated in the Victorian Coastal Strategy in accordance with government policy at the time. The recommended zoning has not been established as a land management tool. VEAC documented the extent of coastal reserves statewide (including Gippsland Lakes reserve) in the Assessment of Victoria's Coastal Reserves Final Report (2019).
				Gippsland lakes reserve	The LCC's Gippsland Lakes Hinterland Final Recommendations (1983) established the Gippsland Lakes Reserve public land use category in addition to coastal reserve on the open ocean coastline. The contiguous lake beds and shallow water were excluded from the LCC's study and have not been reviewed. The LCC's approach focused on integrated management of public land with proposed zoning directing location specific management objectives within the category of Gippsland Lakes Reserve. Subsequent reservation of Crown land in some places has imposed more specific land uses such as wildlife and game reserves (state game reserve), The Lakes National Park, and Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. VEAC considers the remaining parts of Gippsland Lakes Reserve (largely reserved for 'public purposes') to be a foreshore reserve equivalent to coastal reserve. The water bodies and lake beds comprise approximately 35,245 hectares and are not subject to public land use recommendations. This area is mostly reserved for 'public purposes' and is also classified as coastal reserve.
<b>Historic reserve</b>	8	Historic and cultural features reserve	Historic and cultural features reserve	Historic area, Historic area and reserve	
				Historic reserve	
<b>Wildlife and game reserve</b>	9	Natural features reserve	NFR - Wildlife area	Wildlife reserve	Wildlife areas where hunting may be permitted are categorised as Wildlife and State Game Reserve. Includes wildlife reserves not classified as nature conservations reserves under the Wildlife Act that are available for hunting.
				Wildlife management co-operative areas	This is an obsolete category or overlay included in Wildlife chapters in several early LCC investigations. Recent example of how those are treated is VEAC's River Red Gum Forests Investigation interpretation of Kanyapella Basin WCMA as NFR – Wildlife area.
<b>State forest</b>	10	State forest	State forest		
				Hardwood production	
				Uncommitted land	
				Forest area	
				Eucalyptus oil production	
			State forest – rainforest protection		Zones for protection of specific features within state forest were sometimes also identified in land use mapping.
			State forest – river zones		
<b>Water frontage, bed and banks reserve</b>	11	Natural features reserve	NFR - Stream frontage	Public land water frontage reserve	Generally linear area of land adjacent to a waterway or lake, and bed and banks. Includes natural features reserve sub-categories stream frontage, bed and banks; lake which can be retained as sub-categories. In many instances these areas were reserved in the 19th century for 'public purposes'.

Current public land use category	Reference number	Former public land use categories and sub-categories		Notes	
			NFR- Stream bed and banks	Where a stream forms the boundary between allotments of land, the stream bed comprises a narrow Crown reserve (introduced in the <i>Water Act 1905</i> ). In most places a Crown parcel was not drawn in the cadastre, but there are now more detailed updates that show these areas.	
			NFR - Lake	Lake	
			NFR - Wetlands	A new sub-category added in VEAC's Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation to identify public authority owned land forming wetlands (Seaford, Edithvale, Ryans Swamp at Western Treatment Plant (Werribee). This category has not been used elsewhere and applies to Melbourne Water's wetlands.	
<b>Water production reserve</b>	12	Water production	Water distribution, Drainage and distribution	Water production	Water Production chapters in investigations which used the old classification system were sometimes differently titled, with 'Water supply and regulation' and/or 'Distribution' used. This land use category applies to domestic water towers in townships, where water is transmitted often by channel, and applies where water supply is harvested from a catchment.
			Water supply and regulation		
<b>Alpine resort</b>	13		Alpine resort	Alpine resort	Land in this category has been designated as alpine resort under the <i>Alpine Resorts Act 1983</i>
<b>Community use reserve</b>	14	Community use area	CUA - Education area	Education area	Many early LCC investigations listed these sub-categories of Community use reserve as a category but few comprehensively listed specific locations. More detailed location information for subcategories of community use reserves /areas was provided in the LCC's Melbourne Area District 2 Review and more recent investigations.
			CUA - Recreation area	Recreation reserve	
			CUA - Recreation trail	Recreation trail	
			CUA - Rifle and other shooting range		
			CUA - Parkland and garden		
			CUA - Reservoir park		
			CUA - Building in public use		
			CUA - Highway park	Highway park	
			Other reserves and public Land – mineral spring	Mineral spring	Mineral springs recommendations were initially made in LCC's Melbourne Area District 1 Review for the area west of Melbourne around Daylesford. Most locations that are not included within other areas of public land were recommended as a sub-category of Community use reserve in VEAC's Central West Investigation.
<b>Utilities and government services reserve</b>	15				All investigations included scope for government services and earth resources, some of which were specifically identified on recommendations maps or detailed in text.
		Earth resources	Mining site		
			Stone area	Stone reserves, Gravel reserves	
			Mineral and stone production – stone reserve	Mineral and stone production	
			Coal production		
		Services and utilities area (SUA)		Utilities and survey	
		Services and utilities area (SUA)	SUA - Transport (railway)	Utilities and survey – railway land	
			SUA - Transport (road)	Utilities and survey – road	
			SUA - Roadside conservation	Roadside conservation	

Current public land use category	Reference number	Former public land use categories and sub-categories		Notes	
		SUA - Port		Utilities and survey – port	
		SUA - Electricity and gas		Utilities and survey – energy	
				Hydroelectricity production	
		Utilities and Survey – communications		Communications survey and navigation	
		SUA - Municipal buildings and services		Utilities and survey – municipal services	
		SUA - Hospitals public offices and justice		Utilities and survey – government buildings	
		SUA - Water and sewerage services		Utilities and survey – water services	
		SUA - Cemetery		Utilities and survey – cemeteries	
		SUA - Other utility use		Utilities and survey – other	Agricultural research
<b>Coastal waters reserve</b>	19	Coastal waters reserve		Coastal waters	The ECC's Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Investigation Final Report (2000) defines this area as unreserved Crown land from low water mark to the outer limit of Victoria's coastal waters (mostly 3 nautical miles), often described as the seabed or offshore. Most studies excluded offshore areas below the shoreline for open coasts and major bays and inlets. LCC's Melbourne Area District 1 Review includes recommendations for coastal waters for Port Phillip Bay and the ocean coast from Portsea back beach to Lorne. Most of this area is not defined by Crown land parcels in the cadastre.
<b>Land leased or licenced for plantation, Plantation</b>	20	Plantation	Softwood plantation, Forest plantation	Softwood production	
			School plantation	School plantation	
<b>Uncategorised public land</b>	21	Uncategorised public land		Other reserves and public land	Uncategorised public land (new system) and other reserves and public land (old system) areas may have been subsequently classified, for VEACRecs25 purposes, into specific land use categories where additional information is available on land use.
		Revegetation area		Revegetation area	
				Township land	Township land is not used in VEACRecs25. Township land recommendations are instead categorised into relevant Community use reserves, Utilities and government services reserves, or other categories, as appropriate.
		Land not required for public purposes		Military training	
				Agriculture	

### Appendix 3 Areas, former cities, townships and boroughs that have not been assessed by LCC-ECC-VEAC

Former municipality <sup>1</sup>	Current municipality	Excluded from LCC investigation or review	Total area and extent of public land (hectares)	Any coverage by thematic investigations
<b>Western Victoria</b>				
Portland City	Glenelg	South-Western District 1 and South-Western District 1 Review	3591 (584)	Coastal land (MCE)
Ararat City	Ararat	Ballarat, South-Western District 2	430 (354)	part included in Box Ironbark Forests & Woodlands Investigation
Hamilton City	Southern Grampians	South-Western District 2	2213 (134)	
Horsham City	Horsham	Wimmera, South-Western District 2	2378 (158)	
Port Fairy Borough	Moyne	Corangamite	2350 (167)	Coastal land (MCE)
Koroit Borough	Moyne	Corangamite	2988 (684)	Coastal land (MCE)
Warrnambool City	Warrnambool	Corangamite	3654 (862)	Coastal land (MCE)
Camperdown Town	Corangamite	Corangamite	1632 (279)	
Colac City	Colac-Otway	Corangamite	1100 (34)	
Ballarat City	Ballarat	Ballarat	3541 (1011)	
Sebastopol Borough	Ballarat	Ballarat	831 (165)	
Geelong City	Greater Geelong	Melbourne Area, Melbourne District 1 Review	2469 (370)	Coastal land (MCE)
Queenscliffe Borough	Queenscliffe Borough	Melbourne Area, Melbourne District 1 Review	556 (183)	Coastal land (MCE)
<b>Gippsland</b>				
Moe City	La Trobe	South Gippsland District 2, Latrobe Valley Special Investigation	2507 (264)	
Traralgon City	La Trobe	South Gippsland District 2, Latrobe Valley SI	2028 (89)	
Sale City	Wellington	Gippsland Lakes Hinterland	3012 (688)	
Bairnsdale City	East Gippsland	Gippsland Lakes Hinterland	2964 (604)	
Lake bed of Gippsland Lakes	Wellington, East Gippsland	Gippsland Lakes Hinterland	33,518 (33,518)	

Former municipality <sup>1</sup>	Current municipality	Excluded from LCC investigation or review	Total area and extent of public land (hectares)	Any coverage by thematic investigations
<b>Northern Victoria</b>				
Mildura City	Mildura Rural City	Mallee area, Mallee Review	1264 (8)	part included in River Red Gum Forest Investigation
Swan Hill City	Swan Hill Rural City	Mallee area, Mallee Review	393 (0)	part included in River Red Gum Forest Investigation
Echuca City	Campaspe	Murray Valley	92 (0)	part included in River Red Gum Forest Investigation

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The *Land Conservation Council Act 1970* excluded areas from public land use studies based on municipal status; this criteria was not included in the two subsequent Acts establishing the ECC and VEAC. This column shows the status of former cities, towns and boroughs (outside metropolitan Melbourne area) that were excluded from past studies and have not been subsequently assessed by the ECC or VEAC. Note that several municipal areas were restructured during the interval of past studies and the status of recommendations in areas technically excluded at the time of final recommendations was treated variably (recommendations for the former City of South Barwon were accepted in *Melbourne Study Area Final Recommendations* (1977); recommendations for, City of Cranbourne, City of Seymour in *Melbourne Area District 2 Review Final Recommendations* (1994) were not accepted). A government response to accept any of these recommendations is taken to mean that the LCC's recommendations apply.

All municipalities except Queenscliff were restructured between 1993 and 1995. Municipal boundaries at the time of LCC public land use studies, in most cases, do not reflect the current local government areas across the state.

Thematic land use reviews such as the LCC's Rivers and Streams Special Investigation, Wilderness Special Investigation, Historic Places Special Investigation South-Western Victoria, ECC's Marine, Coastal & Estuarine Investigation covered specific types of public land that was within some of the excluded municipalities.