



Steve Dimopoulos MP

Minister for Environment
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events
Minister for Outdoor Recreation

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Ms Kate Gavens
Chief Conservation Regulator
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
8 Nicholson Street
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Dear Chief Conservation Regulator

I am pleased to provide you with my expectations for the Conservation Regulator, which updates the previous expectations set in 2022.

Legislative framework

As Minister for the Environment, I am responsible for (or jointly responsible for) administering a number of environmental Acts including:

- the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*
- the *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*
- the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
- the *Forests Act 1958*
- the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Repeal Act 2024*
- the *Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021*
- the *Wildlife Act 1975*
- the *Land Conservation (Vehicle Control) Act 1972*
- the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*
- the *Environment Protection Act 2017*
- the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*
- the *Safety on Public Land Act 2004* and
- the *Sustainability Victoria Act 2005*.

This guidance should be read in the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in these Acts as amended. This guidance should also be read in the context of any other legislative and non-legislative obligations on the Conservation Regulator.

As a delegate of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) Secretary's statutory powers for the regulation of wildlife, forests, fire prevention, and public land, the Chief Conservation Regulator is legally free to exercise those delegated powers independently and without having to consult with the Secretary, provided this is done within the scope of the duties of the Chief Conservation Regulator and in compliance with any conditions of the relevant delegations.

Emerging risks and priorities

The Victorian State of the Environment Report 2023 has highlighted the ongoing need to protect the environment and in particular the biodiversity of our flora and fauna. It highlights the critical issues of ongoing biodiversity decline, continuing harms to threatened species, increasing fire danger, the need to protect and restore habitat, and the importance of supporting Aboriginal self-determination.

The Victorian Government has a clear objective to attract more people to the great outdoors and ensure Victoria's public land is healthy, safe, and accessible for the enjoyment of all Victorians and visitors. In this context, the Conservation Regulator plays an important role. To achieve this goal, public land needs to be effectively managed and regulated to reduce threats to environmental values, public safety, and equitable access. Illegal activities on public land continue to contribute to these threats in several forms. Illegal campfires increase the chance of bushfires, illegal take of firewood and

illegal vehicle use cause direct harm to the environment, and illegal treatment of wildlife harms threatened species and biodiversity.

In addition, risks related to the care, control, trade, and broader management of wildlife continue to be present across Victoria. The regulation of these activities, including the management of Victoria's wildlife permissioning system, is critical to reduce harm to wildlife and enhance Victoria's biosecurity protections.

After consideration of the government's priorities and emerging risks, and consultation with DEECA, my expectations for the Conservation Regulator are outlined below.

Expectations

My expectation is that the Conservation Regulator will continue to focus its work on its periodically updated regulatory priorities.

These priorities should address the highest harm and highest risk issues in the regulation of wildlife, public land and biodiversity. These should be addressed through targeted operations and investigations using the powers available to the regulator. They should also be addressed through strategies designed to promote voluntary compliance.

I expect the Conservation Regulator to collaborate with partner agencies when needed to ensure an effective regulatory approach across different public land tenures.

I expect the Conservation Regulator to identify key risks and gaps in relevant legislation, and to bring them to my attention either directly or through the Department. Additionally, I expect the Conservation Regulator to use its experience and insights to contribute to necessary legislative reforms.

I request the Conservation Regulator to incorporate these expectations into its business planning and include milestones for when the Conservation Regulator will meet these expectations. The Conservation Regulator's business plans should also include appropriate milestones to review the content of this letter and to advise me when it needs to be updated or renewed.

Reporting

I expect the Chief Conservation Regulator to continue to communicate with me directly through Quarterly Ministerial Reports, Year in Review Reports, sharing Regulatory Priorities, and regular updates and briefings on emerging and priority issues. This is for information purposes and does not detract from the Chief Conservation Regulator's independence of delegated decision-making authority.

I further request that the Conservation Regulator undertake a review of the expectations in this letter as part of its annual reporting obligations and to advise me if there are any refinements it would recommend.

Yours sincerely



Steve Dimopoulos MP
Member for Oakleigh
Minister for Environment
18/09/2025