



Year in Review

2024–2025

**CONSERVATION
REGULATOR VICTORIA**

Year in Review

2024–2025

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We acknowledge and respect 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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Accessibility

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Chief's message

Welcome to the Conservation Regulator's Year in Review for 2024–2025.

This year, the Conservation Regulator continued to achieve important outcomes – from completing investigations into significant wildlife crimes to launching our Focus Species program.

We launched Taskforce Ironbark with support from Parks Victoria to tackle illegal take of firewood in commercial quantities from public land. Taskforce Ironbark was established to target organised black market operators impacting threatened species and Aboriginal heritage values.

Ensuring safe and sustainable access to State forests for recreation is a key priority of the regulator. In 2024–2025 we continued our focus on engaging with Victorians in the great outdoors to support compliance through education campaigns, on-ground presence and partnering with recreational users and environmental groups.

We continue to look for new ways to protect forests, wildlife and threatened species. This year, the Conservation Regulator entered into an Enforceable Undertaking after investigating damage to threatened native roadside flora. Enforceable Undertakings provide an alternative to prosecution and, in this case, ensure that damage is restored as well as sanctioned.

Cruelty to wildlife investigations continue to be a regulatory priority. This year, the Conservation Regulator successfully prosecuted an individual, guilty of extreme cruelty to eastern grey kangaroos in the state's northeast, who was fined \$80,000. We also concluded a years-long cruelty investigation resulting in an individual being found guilty of poisoning and killing more than 140 native birds, including around 125 wedge-tailed eagles. These results highlight the seriousness of wildlife crime and the importance of our work in protecting our native species.



Kate Gavens
CHIEF CONSERVATION REGULATOR

We continued our joint campaign with Crime Stoppers, Wildlife Crime: It's your call encouraging members of the public to report suspected incidents of wildlife crime. This campaign educates the community on the seriousness of wildlife and environmental crime while also increasing reporting to provide a clearer picture of non-compliance in Victoria.

Year-on-year, our successes would not be possible without the valuable input of community members, stakeholders and partners. As we strive to continuously improve our regulatory approach, support from our networks forms a vital source of information and feedback. I hope you enjoy reading about our achievements in this Year in Review. I look forward to continuing our work and sharing it with you again in 2025–2026.



About us

The Conservation Regulator is responsible for the regulation of public land use, native wildlife, biodiversity and fire prevention. We are a specialist regulator, established within the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Our approach is graduated and proportionate. We encourage compliance with the law through education about the risks and impacts of illegal actions on our forests and wildlife. We monitor compliance with the law and investigate alleged breaches of these laws. When appropriate, we enforce the law to protect Victoria’s public land and biodiversity for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Our work is done in partnership with Victorian communities, Traditional Owners, land managers, co-regulators, and our other stakeholders to achieve better conservation outcomes.

OUR MISSION	To be an effective, trusted, best practice regulator
OUR VISION	To create and maintain liveable, inclusive, sustainable communities and thriving natural environments
OUR REGULATORY OUTCOMES	We regulate to achieve three key outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equitable and safe access to public land and use of natural resources• Protected natural and heritage values• Sustainable communities – social, economic, and environmental

Our regulatory priorities

Each year we undertake a statewide risk assessment to understand the greatest risks to Victoria’s public land, biodiversity and wildlife. We use this information to identify a set of regulatory priorities for the year – the things that we can do to make the most difference in protecting our diverse landscapes and flora and fauna.*

In 2024–2025 our regulatory priorities reflected the trends we were seeing, such as increasing reports about wildlife welfare, changed public land use including increased illegal firewood take and unauthorised occupation, visitation rate increase and biodiversity decline, as well as the end of native timber harvesting on 1 January 2024.

Our regulatory priorities on page 8 outlines what we have achieved in addressing each of these areas.

* From 30 June 2025, regulatory priorities will be assessed and determined for a two-year cycle.

2024–2025 regulatory priorities



Cruelty to wildlife



Illegal campfires



Illegal take of firewood



Protection of threatened species



Illegal vehicle use

Overview of our regulatory approach



OUR COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT APPROACH

The Conservation Regulator focuses effort on the most significant risks to biodiversity, wildlife and public land. We do this by considering:

- The level of risk non-compliance poses to the outcomes we are trying to achieve.
- Our ability to reduce these risks.
- The most effective use of our resources.

This approach recognises that it is not practical or appropriate to take compliance and enforcement action in response to every alleged or suspected breach. Our effort and actions are focused where there is the greatest risk to our regulatory outcomes, and where we can efficiently and effectively reduce that risk.

We consider factors such as whether breaches of the law were intentional, reckless or repeated, and the impact of the breach. This means our response will be different depending on the circumstance, from providing information and advice about how to comply with the law through to imposing fines, cancelling licences and permits, or prosecuting for serious offending.

We monitor compliance with the law to prevent harm to the environment wherever possible. Through monitoring we identify non-compliance and maintain a credible threat of detecting those who are engaging in illegal activities. We also take preventative action through media, stakeholder engagement, and other educational activities, to raise awareness of regulatory requirements and how to comply with the law, as well as encouraging the community to report suspected wildlife and forest crimes.

Our achievements AT A GLANCE

Engagement and education

	5,508	CALLS AND EMAILS CONCERNING WILDLIFE
	11	PRIORITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS ATTENDED
	1	NEW DOCUMENT PUBLISHED TO SUPPORT EDUCATION AND COMPLIANCE
	15,170	LICENCES AND PERMITS ISSUED OR RENEWED
	256,619	VISITS TO OUR WEBSITE
	675	NEWS MENTIONS OF CONSERVATION REGULATOR
	414	PROACTIVE PATROLS ON PUBLIC LAND
	2,983,091	SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS
	315	SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Enforcement

	515	CHARGES LAID
	21	MATTERS BEFORE THE COURTS
	4	OFFENDERS CONVICTED
	5	OPERATIONS TARGETING IDENTIFIED PRIORITY AREAS AND HIGH ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS
	386	INFRINGEMENTS ISSUED
	148	OFFICIAL WARNINGS
	1,071	PEOPLE ENGAGED DURING OPERATION SAVE OUR HOODIES IN PATROLS ON PUBLIC LAND
	1	ENFORCEABLE UNDERTAKING

Understanding impacts

	88%	NEW PERMISSION APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE
	1,836	TREES REMAIN STANDING THANKS TO TASKFORCE IRONBARK
	↓26%	UNATTENDED CAMPFIRE REPORTED
	↑30%	WILDLIFE CRIME COMMUNITY REPORTS
	↑25%	ILLEGAL TAKE OF FIREWOOD COMMUNITY REPORTS
	SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN ENGAGEMENT ACROSS PLATFORMS	
	↑198%	SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS
	↑17%	VISITS TO OUR WEBSITE



Our regulatory priorities

The Conservation Regulator is committed to delivering on our regulatory responsibilities. By focusing on what matters most, we can design more proactive and preventative approaches to ensure that all Victorians can enjoy our State forests and the remarkable biodiversity within them.



REGULATORY PRIORITY

Cruelty to wildlife

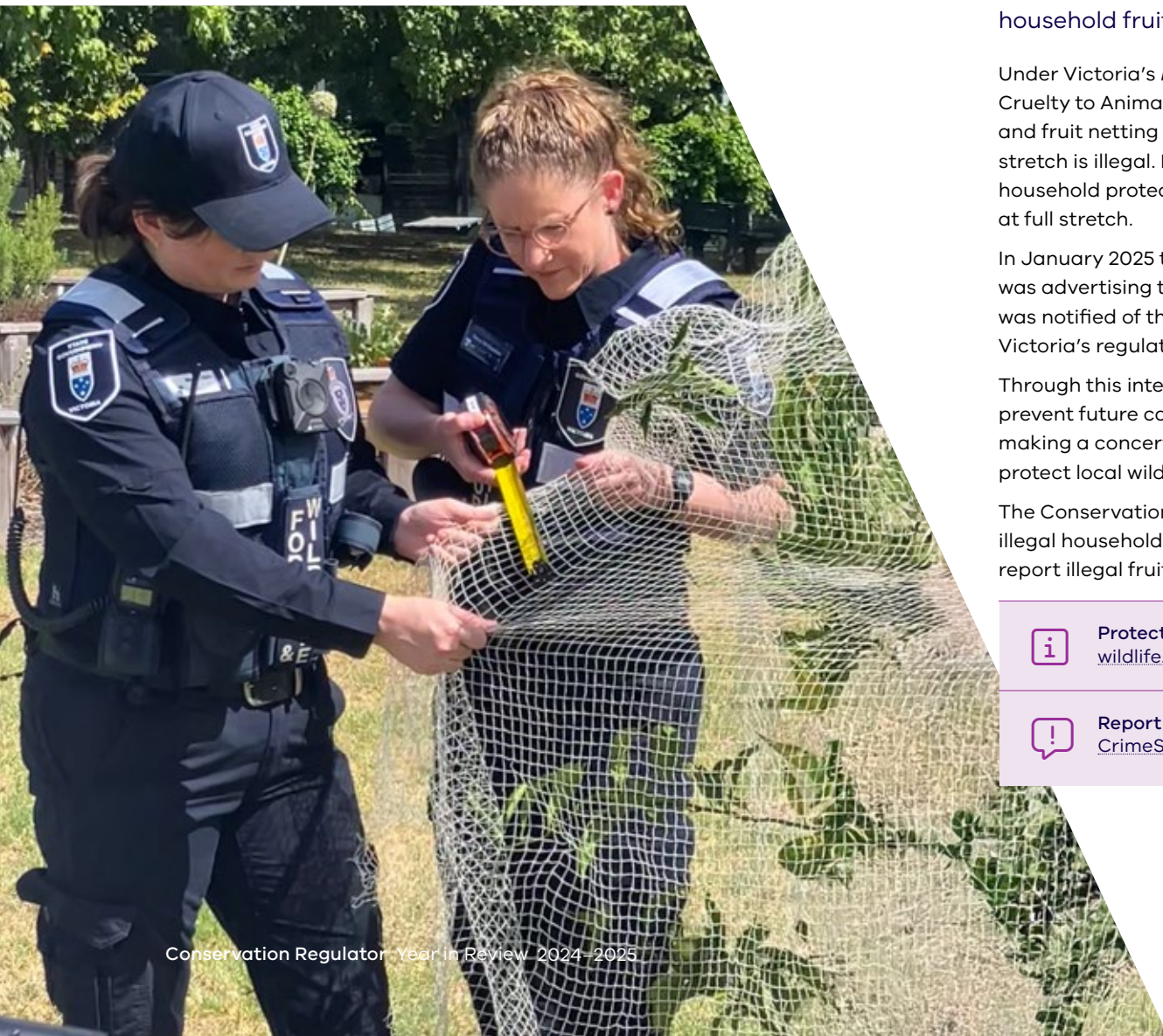
In Victoria, we are incredibly fortunate to share our forests with an array of native animals. Whether wildlife are living in the wild or being cared for in captivity, they all deserve to be treated humanely. The number of reports of illegal and deliberate harm to wildlife has continued to increase, and we have responded by maintaining our focused regulatory efforts on cruelty to wildlife.

Our aim for this regulatory priority is to prevent harm to wildlife and our approach is proactive and preventative as well as responsive. We focus our efforts on instances of significant and intentional cruelty to both wild and captive wildlife. By partnering with Crime Stoppers to raise awareness of wildlife cruelty and providing guidance to Victorians on ensuring welfare of native animals, we can increase awareness and address breaches of the law.

The Conservation Regulator has four key objectives for the prevention of, and our response to, wildlife cruelty:

1 Greater community awareness	Increase understanding of wildlife welfare in the community and by stakeholders and co-regulators
2 Enforcement capability	Ensure our Authorised Officers have the appropriate tools, training and resources to identify, record and respond to instances of animal cruelty
3 Appropriate permissions	Ensure our licences and permits effectively protect animal welfare
4 Prevent harm	Proactively monitor compliance with licences and permits with a higher risk of cruelty





Illegal fruit tree netting and glue traps

In Victoria, all native wildlife is protected by law and the Conservation Regulator is committed to addressing cruelty towards wildlife in Victoria. This includes the inappropriate use of glue traps and certain household fruit tree netting.

Under Victoria's *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* and the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019*, all glue traps capable of trapping an animal, and fruit netting with a mesh size greater than 5 millimetres by 5 millimetres at full stretch is illegal. Furthermore, it is an offence to sell netting for the purposes of household protection if fruit netting mesh exceeds 5 millimetres by 5 millimetres at full stretch.

In January 2025 the Conservation Regulator received reports that a major retailer was advertising the sale of illegal netting available to Victorians. The retailer was notified of the illegal netting on their site and their obligations in relation to Victoria's regulations. This led to the product being withdrawn from online sales.

Through this intervention, the Conservation Regulator continues to proactively prevent future cases of cruelty to, and the unnecessary suffering of, wildlife while making a concerted effort to educate households on the regulations to better protect local wildlife.

The Conservation Regulator assesses all reports relating to the use or sale of illegal household fruit tree netting and traps and encourages the community to report illegal fruit netting.



Protect fruit trees from wildlife

wildlife.vic.gov.au/managing-wildlife/wildlife-and-fruit-trees



Report illegal fruit netting

[CrimeStoppers 1800 333 000](https://www.crimestoppers.vic.gov.au/)

ENFORCEMENT IN ACTION

Violet Town eagles case

In 2024, the Conservation Regulator concluded a multi-year-long wildlife cruelty case.

A Violet Town woman was found guilty of poisoning and killing more than 140 native birds, including around 125 wedge-tailed eagles, and illegally keeping protected wildlife remains at her property in 2019.

In June 2024, presiding Magistrate Faram found the woman guilty of 47 charges under the *Wildlife Act 1975* and the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*, including 35 counts of killing wildlife by poison, seven counts of aggravated cruelty, and five counts of possessing protected wildlife without authorisation.

In Victoria, all native wildlife, including wedge-tailed eagles, are protected under the Wildlife Act and it is illegal to disturb, kill, take, control, or hunt them without authorisation. It is the responsibility of landowners to understand their legal obligations in relation to the use of baits and poisons and the rules for controlling wildlife. This is a cautionary tale for landowners about the illegalities of poisoning practices to native birds and the importance of protecting our precious native wildlife.



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CHARGES SUCCESSFULLY
PROSECUTED



ENFORCEMENT IN ACTION

Operation Pike

In 2024, the Conservation Regulator brought a case against three men and a woman aged in their early twenties for alleged activities of breeding and housing of reptiles as part of an illegal wildlife trading operation.

Operation Pike targeted an illegal wildlife trade syndicate operating in Victoria with links to other states. The investigation into the illegal import, export, and trade of wildlife in Victoria was conducted with assistance from Victoria Police, the federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and other states, uncovering an alarming trend for wildlife.

 **\$33,000** FINES

Four people were charged under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, *Wildlife Regulations 2013* and *Crimes Act 1958*. Charges included falsifying documents to facilitate an illegal reptile trading operation, with one offender claimed his “appreciation” and “fascination” with reptiles led to his involvement with the criminal operation between May 2022 and January 2023. The penalties imposed on the two matters that have concluded included fines of \$33,000 for their early plea of guilt.

The illegal take and trade of wildlife is unacceptable. Not only is it cruel to take wildlife from the wild, but it jeopardises the future health and survival of our native species.

Operation Django

The Conservation Regulator and Biosecurity Victoria collaborated in Operation Django, aimed at dismantling the largest network of breeding, brokering and possession of exotic pest animals ever detected in Victoria.

The introduction of exotic animals into Victorian ecosystems can cause significant harm through the introduction of diseases, reduction in food availability and predation. Wildlife trafficking is the fourth-largest organised crime globally, worth over \$450 billion a year, according to the Wildlife Crime Research Hub.

Operation Django commenced in July 2023 following intelligence reports of the unlawful possession of two African pygmy hedgehogs and has a significant taxonomic scope involving exotic pest animals declared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, native wildlife regulated under the *Wildlife Act 1975* and noxious fish declared under the *Fisheries Act 1995*. Operation Django is a two-year, multi-phased operation involving multiple jurisdictions including the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as well as Western Australian, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian wildlife regulators. The results so far include seven persons of interest prosecuted with the majority receiving convictions and two persons of interest issued with a Catchment and Land Protection infringement notice, totalling \$115,600 in fines, and several matters under active investigation.

CAMPAIGN WITH CRIMESTOPPERS

Wildlife Crime: It's Your Call

In May 2024 the Conservation Regulator and Crime Stoppers Victoria launched the 'Wildlife Crime: It's Your Call' campaign to increase public awareness of the issue and the crucial role that information from the public can play in preventing wildlife crime.



The campaign resulted in a 30 per cent increase in wildlife crime reports to Crime Stoppers compared to the month before the campaign.

The campaign also increased public awareness of wildlife crime and delivered information from the public that helped resolve existing investigations. It encourages people to see wildlife crime as an issue that they can do something about, as well as reminding them that they have a well-known channel in Crime Stoppers that they can use to make reports.

The Wildlife Crime: It's Your Call campaign delivers information through mainstream media, social media, website stories and through collateral like stickers and pens. It helped spread the word about everything from Horsham corella poisoning, rules governing native pet ownership, a kangaroo being killed with a vehicle at Lysterfield, Operation Save Our Hoodies protecting hooded plovers on our beaches and magpies being shot with arrows at Narre Warren and Seaford.

Following the success of the campaign we are working together again on Wildlife Crime: It's Your Call launching in mid-2025. The campaign includes new stories about unsolved cases where information from the public could make a big difference and profiles of Conservation Regulator Authorised Officers sharing stories about their work tackling wildlife crime.

The campaign was seen approximately 2,598,967 times across media coverage, digital coverage, website views and event attendees.

A breakdown of the coverage:

- The campaign appeared 1,747,792 times across social media to 1,436,227 million unique users. This generated 121,000 reactions and shares, and 5,069 clicks to campaign webpages.
- Video content received 990,209 views, leading to 1,914 hours of watch time.
- Crime Stoppers Victoria attended 16 events and leveraged 580 community contacts to distribute key campaign information in target areas.

ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION



2.59m CAMPAIGN IMPRESSIONS



1.43m PEOPLE REACHED BY SOCIAL MEDIA ADS



900k VIDEO VIEWS



5,069 WEBPAGE VISITS



16 COMMUNITY EVENTS ATTENDED



\$80,000 fine for man guilty of extreme animal cruelty

In 2024 the Conservation Regulator finalised an investigation into a case of extreme wildlife cruelty to eastern grey kangaroos in the state's northeast.

In 2021 a report of a man breaking the conditions of an Authority To Control Wildlife (ATCW) permit was brought to our attention through public reporting. Conservation Regulator Authorised Officers inspected the man's property finding large numbers of dead kangaroos, most of which did not appear to have been killed lawfully. In August 2024, in the Shepparton Magistrates Court, a Yielima man was fined \$80,000 with conviction after he plead guilty to four counts of aggravated cruelty charges under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (POCTA). The guilty plea was for his involvement in the unlawful shooting deaths of 71 eastern grey kangaroos, including two joeys on his property near Nathalia in the state's northwest between April and July 2021.

Following the discovery of the animals, a veterinarian assessment concluded that a "high degree of pain and suffering" was caused from the non-fatal shooting of kangaroos on the property. At the time of the unlawful shootings the convicted was holding a valid Authority to Control Wildlife permit.

The strict conditions on the permit exist to ensure animals are controlled humanely and include restrictions on fire-arm type, ammunition and a criterion on 'instantaneous injury.' These conditions are in place to prevent animal cruelty at all costs and prevent unnecessary pain and suffering. Permit holders are responsible for ensuring animal welfare requirements are met and must comply with all their licence conditions.

Following the sentence, the man appealed against his penalty in the Melbourne County Court and the matter was finalised on 30 May 2025. Following submissions, His Honour Judge Tinney warned the appellant that he considered this level of offending as serious which his penalty needed to deter and denounce his conduct to others via general deterrence. His Honour indicated that he was going to impose a penalty higher than the original fine handed down by the Magistrate. As a result, the appellant withdrew his appeal and the matter was closed.





REGULATORY PRIORITY

Illegal campfires

Illegal campfires are the biggest cause of avoidable bushfires in Victoria. Almost 80 per cent of infringements issued in the 2024–2025 financial year for campfire related offences were for unattended campfires.

Visitation to forests for recreation, tourism and general enjoyment is an important use of Victoria's State forests.

This year, we have continued to engage with the Victorian community during peak periods of visitation through targeted campaigns, patrols and messaging aimed at raising awareness of campfire safety and regulations.

425 unattended campfires were detected during the 2024–2025 financial year, 151 less than the previous year. Despite this drop, negative visitor behaviours associated with campfires persist.

Australia Day saw a spike in reports with 48 unattended campfires detected across the state. The following day, total fire bans were declared in five weather districts. All unattended campfires have the potential to cause devastating bushfires, with the risk and potential significantly elevated on high fire danger days. This highlights the importance of increasing community awareness about the potential fire risk of campfires on high fire danger days.

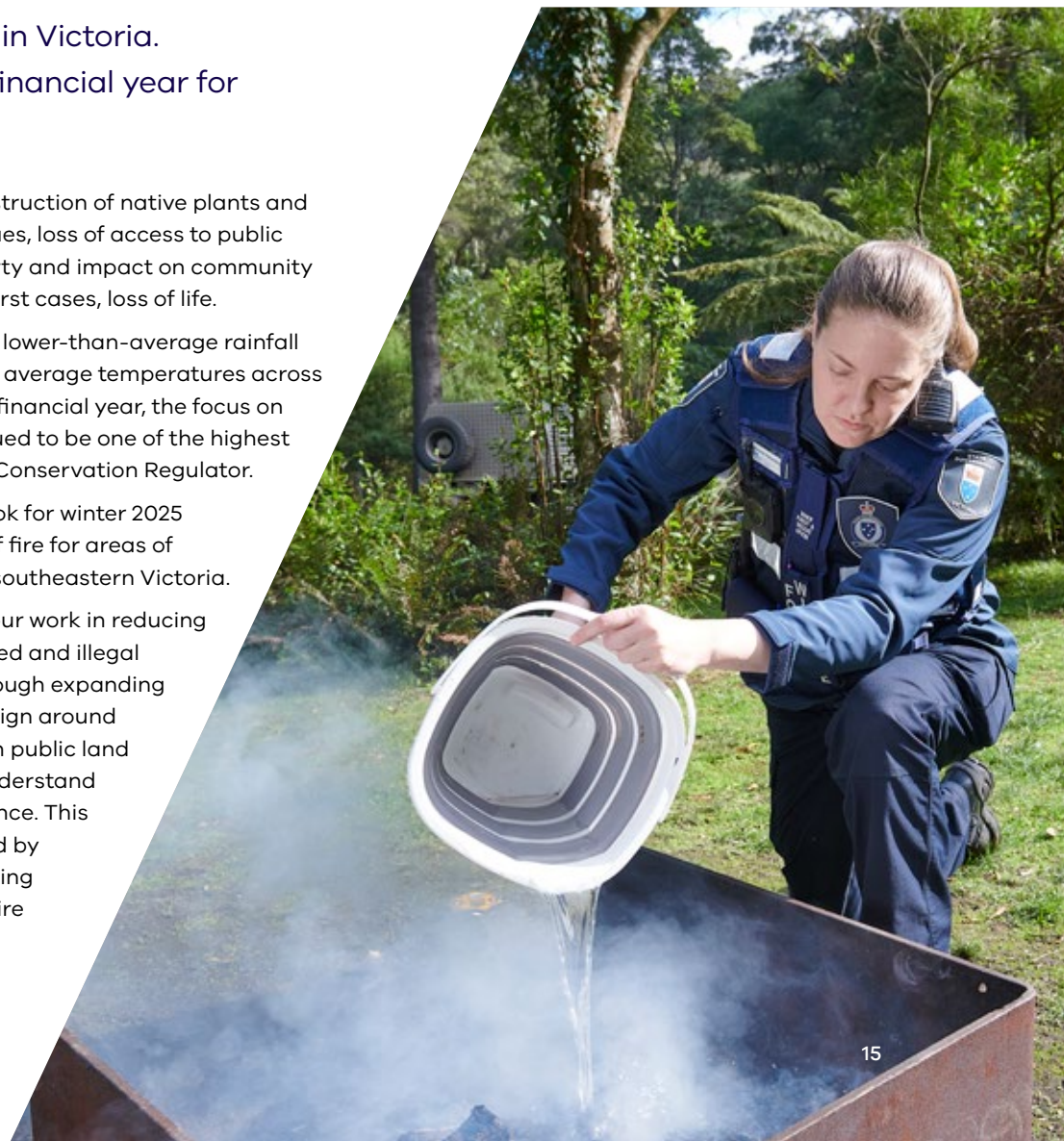
Due to the dry conditions across the state, the focus on illegal campfires this year extended into winter after the elevated risks through the hottest months from December to February.

Illegal campfires risk the destruction of native plants and animals and of heritage values, loss of access to public land, loss of personal property and impact on community infrastructure, and in the worst cases, loss of life.

With the continuing trend of lower-than-average rainfall combined with warmer than average temperatures across the state for the 2024–2025 financial year, the focus on illegal campfires has continued to be one of the highest regulatory priorities for the Conservation Regulator.

The seasonal bushfire outlook for winter 2025 identifies a significant risk of fire for areas of western, southwestern and southeastern Victoria.

We will continue to expand our work in reducing the risks posed by unattended and illegal campfires. This includes through expanding our public education campaign around the impacts of illegal fires on public land to ensure the community understand the impacts of non-compliance. This will continue to be supported by Authorised Officers conducting regular and targeted campfire patrols across Victoria's State forests.





REGULATORY PRIORITY

Illegal take of firewood

TASKFORCE IRONBARK

Fighting the wood fight

To address the escalating illegal firewood take and habitat destruction threatening native wildlife and Aboriginal cultural heritage, this year the Conservation Regulator launched Taskforce Ironbark.

Taskforce Ironbark, a joint state-wide initiative with Parks Victoria, targets illegal commercial firewood removal from public land and encourages Victorian firewood consumers to make choices which help protect our forests and native wildlife. It aims to disrupt the illegal firewood trade and minimise impacts on the health of our parks, forests and reserves, while also promoting responsible firewood consumption.

In 2023 alone, it's estimated that firewood thieves damaged or destroyed more than 9,200 native trees or cleared roughly 462 hectares – approximately 178.5 Melbourne Cricket Grounds (MCGs) – of public land in Victoria, with much of the stolen wood sold on to unsuspecting Victorians by illegal firewood operators.

When Victorians unintentionally buy illegally-sourced firewood, often through online marketplaces and word-of-mouth, they could also be inadvertently supporting the individuals and syndicates destroying native forests and critical wildlife habitat.

Many of the trees targeted by thieves are large, old, slow-growing species such as river red gums, that are unlikely to recover or be replenished in this generation or the next.

The illegal felling and removal directly impacts the survival of some of our most threatened native species, including the red-tailed black cockatoo and the brush-tailed phascogale, that rely on hollows in both standing and fallen trees for habitat.

Victoria is rich in Aboriginal cultural heritage and only a small percentage of historical sites have been recorded. Firewood theft has serious potential to damage Aboriginal scarred trees, and once gone, these important cultural representations and reminders of Aboriginal land use practices are lost forever.

DAMAGED OR DESTROYED 2023



9,200 NATIVE TREES



462 HECTARES



178.5 MCGs EQUIVALENT

TASKFORCE IRONBARK CONTINUED

Authorised Officers have been conducting operational activities across public land including routine and targeted patrols, monitoring using a range of surveillance techniques and responding to community reports, to catch commercial firewood thieves.

To further support operational activities, Taskforce Ironbark has been delivering targeted communication and engagement. This includes social media campaigns to increase awareness of the responsible sourcing of firewood and calls for community to report suspicious activity.

In its first year, Taskforce Ironbark has had an impact on firewood theft in Victoria, with the estimated number of trees felled illegally decreasing from 9,247 in 2023, to 7,411 in 2024.

This is estimated to have prevented 30 MCGs of trees from being illegally removed. In addition to this, the Conservation Regulator and Parks Victoria have:

- Investigated over 130 illegal firewood cases.
- Taken approximately 193 enforcement actions, including around \$79,990 in fines.
- Delivered digital advertising which reached over 1.5 million people across social media.
- Seen an increase of 25 per cent in community reporting.

In Victoria, it is illegal to cut and take timber from public land without authorisation and offenders face maximum penalties of more than \$9,879 and/or 12 months in prison for each charge. Chainsaws, trailers, and vehicles used in the offending can also be seized.

ENFORCEMENT RESULTS



-20% TREES FELLED ILLEGALLY 2023-2024



130 CASES INVESTIGATED



193 ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS



\$79.9k PENALTIES



1.5m PEOPLE REACHED BY SOCIAL MEDIA ADS



+25% COMMUNITY REPORT INCREASE



Ask these questions to recognise reputable firewood sellers and if wood has been legally-sourced

Where does your wood come from? They should be able to detail where their wood was sourced.

Can I get a receipt? They should provide a tax receipt with a business name and Australian Business Number listed.

Why is the wood so cheap? If the firewood seems cheaper than similar nearby, ask them why.



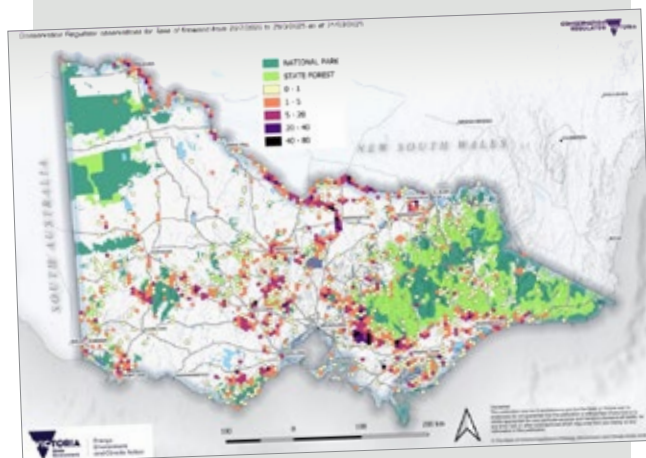
Report suspicious sellers or firewood theft from public land
Call 136 186

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Taskforce Ironbark illegal activity and risk map

The Conservation Regulator through Taskforce Ironbark has developed a geospatial mapping tool that allows the presentation and overlay of critical data sets to support our intelligence and risk-based approach.

This tool is being used operationally and for strategic planning to identify where illegal activity is or has the potential to have the greatest impact on biodiversity in order to focus our resources. It also helps to identify trends in illegal firewood activity, such as where illegal activity is concentrated.



ENFORCEMENT IN ACTION

Illegal take of forest produce – gravel

The Conservation Regulator takes the illegal take of forest produce seriously, falling within this classification is gravel.

In 2023, our Hume regional team received an observation report of alleged gravel removal from the Moyhu Timber Reserve, contravening the *Forests Act 1958*. The persons of interest were taking gravel from public land for pad construction on private land close to the site in question. Conservation Regulator Authorised Officers investigated the case through obtaining details of the persons of interest, undergoing site inspections, obtaining witness statements and interviewing suspects.

The case was heard in the Wodonga Magistrates Court resulting in the individuals being found guilty without conviction, both were placed on a twelve-month good behaviour bond and were each fined \$3,000 and \$2,000 respectively.

This case was an unusual pursuit for the Conservation Regulator with the aim of showing the community that taking any type of forest produce is a crime and the importance of protecting our public land.



\$5,000 FINES





REGULATORY PRIORITY

Illegal vehicle use

Addressing the growing issue of illegal vehicle use on public land is a priority for the Conservation Regulator. Illegal vehicle use is a major issue in State forests due to the impacts it can have on ecosystems, flora and fauna, and public safety. In 2024–2025 we have focused on detecting crime, public engagement, and increasing community awareness.

Through these efforts, we are protecting our environment while promoting responsible and legal recreational use of vehicles on public land.

- Authorised Officers recorded over 420 field-based observations of non-compliance, with over one third relating to four-wheel drive vehicles on public land. These reports are crucial for monitoring, identifying, and documenting illegal vehicle use on public land. By recording these activities, we can identify and target hotspots for a more strategic approach to enforcement and education.
- The top three illegal activities observed are four-wheel drive vehicles accessing illegal areas, vehicles breaching closed gates and trail bikes accessing illegal areas.
- The Conservation Regulator used an array of public education tools, including 18 social media posts, eight media releases, and two radio interviews, aimed at raising awareness about the implications of illegal vehicle use on public land.
- The Conservation Regulator worked with partners including Traffic Accident Commission, Parks Victoria, Ambulance Victoria, Four Wheel Drive Victoria, Victoria Police, Victoria State Emergency Services, Victoria Emergency, and ABC Radio as part of Operation TrailSafe.
- Engagement at flagship trail bike and four-wheel drive sporting events such as four-wheel drive expos and vehicle events on public land.



ENFORCEMENT IN ACTION

Operation TrailSafe

Operation TrailSafe was established in 2024 in response to illegal vehicle use on public land. It aims to address the illegal trail network, prevent the formation of new tracks, alongside reducing the number and severity of injuries occurring on public land.

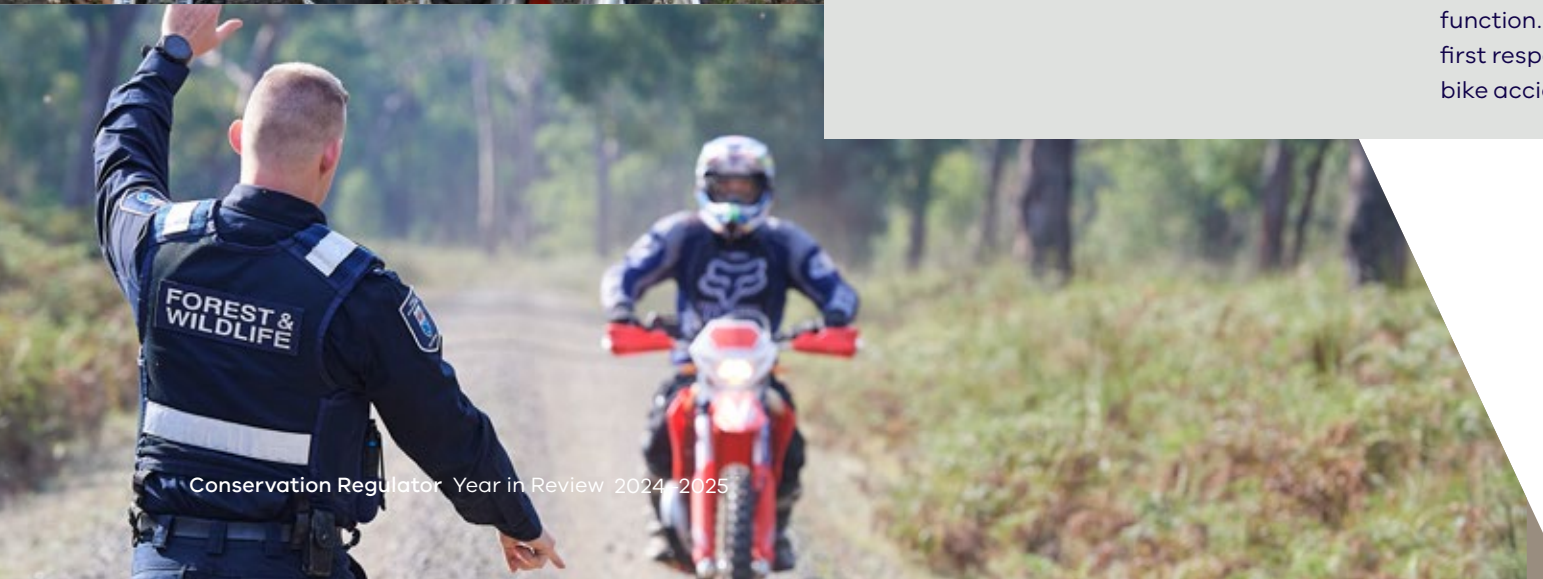
We disrupt illegal vehicle use on public land by addressing non-compliance, this may include issuing infringements, patrolling, and educating the public on rules and regulations through media and communication channels. To bolster compliance with the rules, Operation TrailSafe is increasing strategic field patrols, education efforts, and ensuring strong collaboration with partner agencies.

Attending engagement events enables us to influence behaviour within the trail bike-riding community.

In 2024–2025, we focused on:

- Safe riding practices.
- Legal compliance requirements.
- Socially- and environmentally-sustainable riding.

Operation TrailSafe conducts strategic patrols on Victoria's public land to promote a sustainable riding culture and provide a preventative regulatory presence. By utilising Transport and Accident Commission crash data, we can strategically target locations to have higher levels of interactions. Field operations not only lead to better compliance with the law but can also serve an emergency response function. In 2024–2025, Authorised Officers were first responders in two separate serious trail bike accidents.





REGULATORY PRIORITY

Protection of threatened species

The Conservation Regulator's regulatory priority, protection of threatened species, encompasses our efforts to prevent or deter illegal or inappropriate activities contributing to the decline of plant and animal species listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act).

Our regulatory efforts are targeted at the highest threats to threatened species, including land clearing, illegal firewood collection, wildlife cruelty and habitat destruction. Protecting our threatened species relies on effective partnerships with Traditional Owners and government and non-government agencies.

We have dedicated operations focused on protecting threatened species, supported by our educational resources to raise the public's awareness of why and how we can protect our threatened flora and fauna.

By prioritising key areas where other offences also impact threatened species, such as illegal take of timber, we can target effort towards the greatest benefit. This is shown in Operation Save Our Hoodies, the acceptance of an Enforceable Undertaking under the FFG Act, and also in our Focus Species Program – a new initiative promoting wildlife protection at home and in the wild. The program aims to engage and educate the public on the small actions they can take to help safeguard these animals and all native wildlife.





COMPLIANCE IN ACTION

Powercor Enforceable Undertaking

In May 2025, the Conservation Regulator accepted an Enforceable Undertaking from Powercor Australia after investigating damage to threatened native grasslands and flora at 36 sites in central and western Victoria.

The investigation found that Powercor's 2023–2024 maintenance activities impacted high-value conservation areas, including parts of the Western (Basalt) Plains Grasslands Community, one of Australia's most endangered ecosystems which has been reduced to under two per cent of its original extent since European settlement.

Additionally, Powercor's activities impacted an area in central-west Victoria that supports rare wildflowers and is a known breeding site for the endangered Eltham copper butterfly.

As part of the Enforceable Undertaking, Powercor will improve internal environmental practices, train staff on relevant laws, avoid future harm to protected species, and restore 32 affected sites.

Progress will be reported until the agreement ends in May 2028.

Enforceable undertakings, available under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, offer an alternative to prosecution that can deliver stronger long-term outcomes, such as direct remediation and institutional reform.

This agreement does not affect Powercor's obligations under the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* to manage bushfire risk and maintain infrastructure, but future work must comply with environmental requirements.



Information about Enforceable Undertakings
vic.gov.au/enforceable-undertakings-register

ENFORCEMENT IN ACTION

Glenisla State Forest clearing

In November 2024, the Conservation Regulator successfully finalised a prosecution involving the illegal clearing of native trees and damage to vegetation.

An excavation company and an individual both pleaded guilty in the Hamilton Magistrates' Court on eight charges arising from the damage and removal of trees and protected flora along a fence line adjoining Glenisla State Forest. The individual engaged the excavation company to clear native vegetation in Glenisla State Forest under the company's assumption they were permitted to undertake works.

The court was told that a fence line was cleared without approval, resulting in the removal of one hundred trees, damage to forty-nine trees and damage or destruction of five flora species listed

under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* including black wattle, grass tree, sphagnum moss, common fringe myrtle and flame heath.

The individual received fines totalling \$15,000 and was ordered to pay costs of \$7,500 for breaches of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the *Forests Act 1958*. The excavation company received fines totalling \$10,000 and was ordered to pay costs of \$7,500 for breaches of the same acts.

Magistrate Gerard Lethbridge in sentencing noted the level of damage caused to native vegetation during the offending was not of the highest degree the Court had seen. However, the fact that the offending stretched over two kilometres and involved protected flora and removal or damage to several significant sized trees meant that the sentence needed to be of a level to deter the offences.

 **\$40,000** FINES AND COSTS

PROTECTION IN ACTION

Malleefowl case Little Desert fire

Malleefowl (*Leipoa ocellata*) are a large ground dwelling bird species that live in northwestern Victoria (as well as other parts of southern Australia).

Over summer these birds build large nesting mounds to incubate their eggs at the correct temperature for the development of their chicks. During the 2025 summer a fire in the Little Desert National Park burnt malleefowl habitat. The mounds withstood the fire, however scientists advised the chicks would have little chance of survival should they emerge into the fire-impacted landscape without food, water or protection. A DEECA Rapid Risk Assessment Team responded, with their permit from the Conservation Regulator, to successfully recover three eggs. The eggs were incubated in a safe location producing three healthy chicks, which were successfully released into a suitable habitat!



Operation Save Our Hoodies

Our partnership with Birdlife Australia and Parks Victoria for Operation Save Our Hoodies continued in 2024–2025. This initiative, which has been running for four seasons, educates beach-goers and enforces rules around hooded plover nesting sites during their critical summer breeding season.

Our iconic hooded plovers are a protected species, and environmental factors such as king tides, extreme heat events and erosion threaten the tiny birds, as well as significant threats from humans who risk scaring them off or trampling on their nests, and dogs which often catch and kill chicks.

From September 2024 to April 2025, 320 patrols were conducted along the Victorian coast. Another year of protection efforts under Operation Save Our Hoodies helped enhance survival prospects for approximately 52 fledglings that made it this season. While multiple challenges persist for the species, the program's comprehensive approach offers an effective species conservation model.

Through the Saving Native Species grant led by BirdLife Australia, we were granted a short-term Forest and Wildlife Officer position to help increase stakeholder engagement and patrol numbers during the critical summer breeding season. With this extra position, the Conservation Regulator were able to increase the number of patrols conducted within the Gippsland region, from 36 in the 2023–2024 season to 86 patrols in the 2024–2025 season.

In promising news, authorities also found more beach-goers doing the right thing, issuing only 21 fines – down from 32 in 2023–2024 – to people for various offences, including disturbing birds and dog owners not complying with rules near hooded plover habitat.

PROTECTION IN ACTION



+240% INCREASE IN PATROLS



-34% DECREASE IN FINES ISSUED



Focus Species Program

As the state's population grows, Victorians are interacting with native wildlife more than ever before, and by focusing our efforts on early education and helping Victorian kids develop positive, habitat-protecting habits, we can all prevent environmental harm and preserve native species for future generations.

Our Focus Species Program launched in August 2024 promotes wildlife protection at home and in the wild. The Program aims to engage and educate the public on the actions they can take to help safeguard forests and native wildlife. Each focus species can be impacted when people do not follow environmental regulations, including cruelty to wildlife, campfire safety, firewood collection and illegal vehicle use.

The focus species are:

- Bearded dragon.
- Brush-tailed phascogale.
- Hooded plover.
- Murray Darling carpet python.
- Southeastern red-tailed black cockatoo.
- Southern right whale.

We selected these species because they face serious threats from sharing their habitats with humans and from people illegally sourcing and keeping them as pets. The program aims to educate the community about the regulations that exist to protect these species and all native wildlife.

The Focus Species Program is delivering a range of interactive learning materials tailored to help children develop an early understanding of why Victoria's environmental regulations exist and how following them into adulthood will ensure native species can survive and thrive for generations to come.



Focus Species Program
vic.gov.au/focus-species-program





OUR OPERATING CONTEXT

Biodiversity 2037

The Victorian State of the Environment Report 2023 shows that biodiversity is declining. More frequent bushfires have caused a large area of the Victorian landscape to fall below the tolerable fire interval, meaning plants do not have sufficient time to mature following a fire event.

Other major drivers of biodiversity decline include habitat loss and degradation, human population, land clearing, environmental weeds and invasive herbivores and predators. Our work, focused by our regulatory priorities, is part of a government wide effort to reverse this trend as outlined in Biodiversity 2037.

Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037 is Victoria's plan to stop the decline of our native plants and animals, and improve our natural environment. Launched in 2017, Biodiversity 2037 presents a long-term vision for Victoria's biodiversity supported by two overarching goals:

- Victorians value nature.
- Victoria's natural environment is healthy.

Avoiding harm to the natural environment is foundational to our work; therefore, all our functions are contributing to the achievement of Biodiversity 2037.

The following goals are particularly relevant to the work of the Conservation Regulator:

- Raise the awareness of all Victorians about the importance of the state's natural environment. This is supported by our education and engagement programs including the Focus Species Program and development of lesson plans for primary schools.
- Increase opportunities for all Victorians to have daily connections with nature and act to protect biodiversity. This is supported by our focus on promoting forest use and education on safe and legal practices in our forests and our proactive campaigns including protecting habitat by reducing illegal firewood take.
- Better care for and showcase Victoria's environmental assets as world-class natural and cultural tourism attractions. This is supported by patrols looking to educate and enforce laws and regulations that protect the environment from bushfires and destructive consequences of dumping and illegal vehicle use.



Permissions

The Conservation Regulator is responsible for administering a range of permits and licences under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and the *Forest Act 1958*.

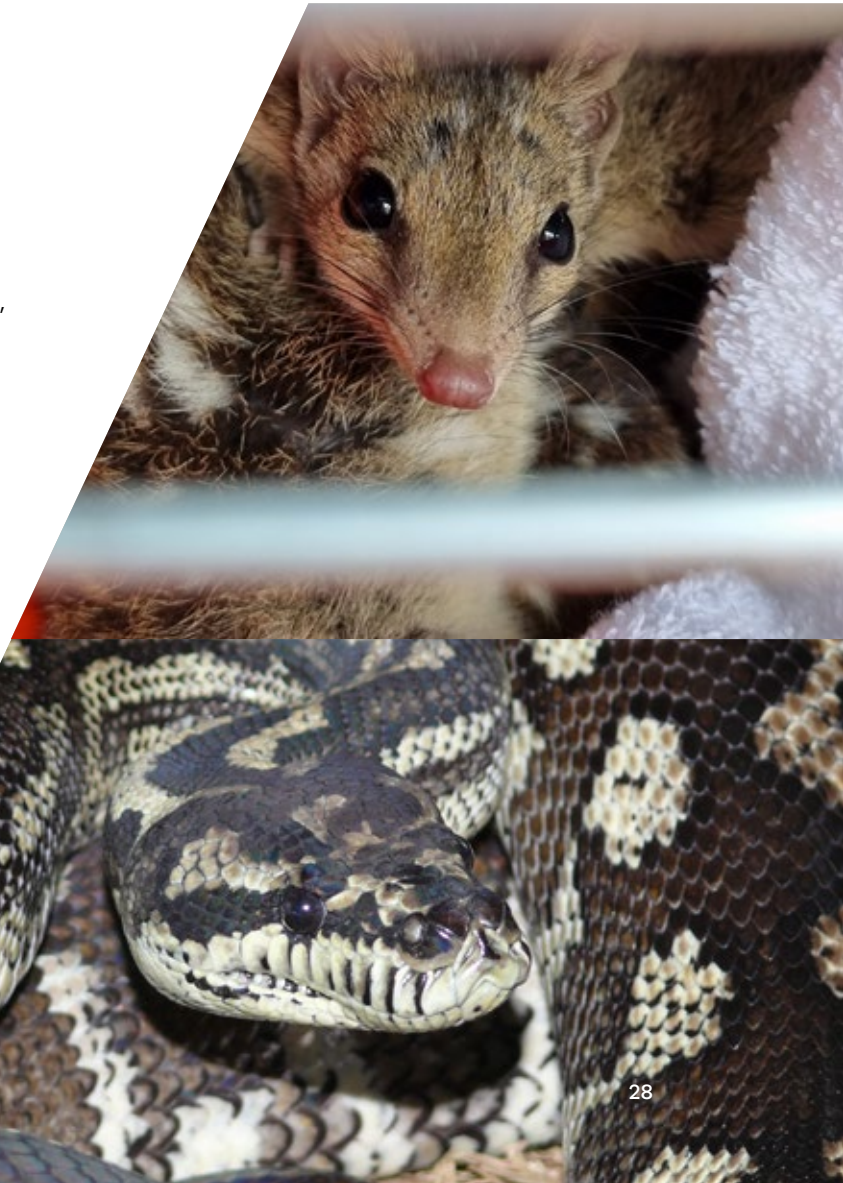
Permits and licences are powerful regulatory tools for preventing harm to wildlife and forest values. We achieve this through effectively assessing applications, applying appropriate conditions, educating permit and licence holders on how to comply, monitoring compliance and taking enforcement action where appropriate.

In 2024–2025 we published guidance for Wildlife Demonstrator Licence holders on how to comply with their conditions. Further information on this guide is below. This continues to build the Conservation Regulator's suite of external guidance for our permissions holders on compliance with the law.

Use of our online forms has continued to increase, streamlining the application experience for users, proving to be a valuable tool to streamline applications, and strengthen our ability to uphold our statutory obligations and prevent harm. In 2024–2025, 88 per cent of applicants applied for licences through our online system, further bolstering the value of the online digital platform.

Each year, licence holders must submit an Annual Return form to the Conservation Regulator which details any changes to their collections, including if animals have been acquired, traded, or have died. This data helps us to understand what wildlife is being held and monitor any trends, such as high death rates or concentrations of dangerous species, such as venomous snakes.

The Conservation Regulator also published new forms in 2024–2025 that make it easier for Commercial Wildlife Licence holders to keep up to date with their employee registration obligations. We also provided Wildlife Dealer Licence holders information to help them educate customers on the responsibility of purchasing wildlife prior to Christmas 2024, to help everyone understand their obligations and how to care for wildlife lawfully. More information on this engagement is below.

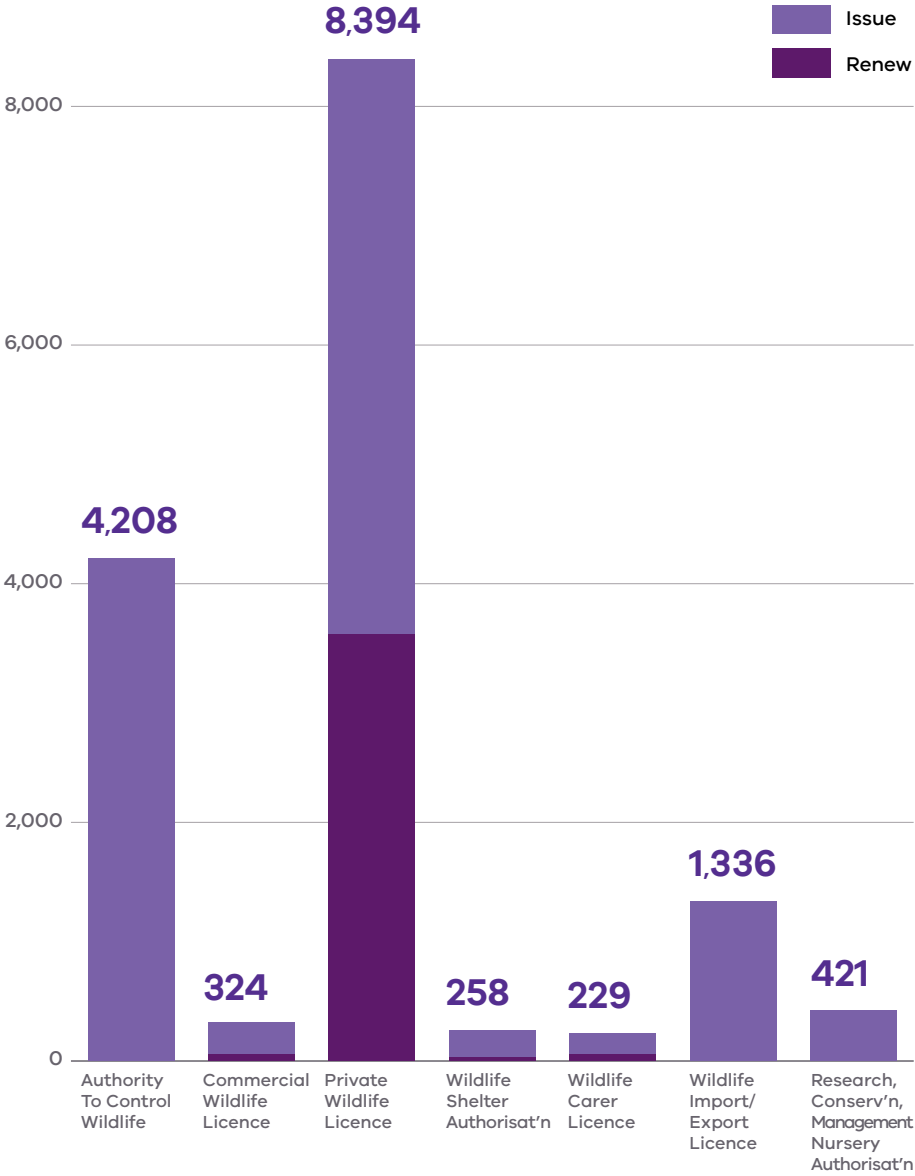


There are many different types of licences and permits issued by the Conservation Regulator, which help ensure safe, legal, and ethical interactions between people and native wildlife.

Permissions we are responsible for include

Authority to Control Wildlife	Allows landholders and land managers who have issues with wildlife causing damage to buildings, pastures, crops, or other property, or which pose risks to human health and safety, to manage these problems. An authority may include permission for lethal and non-lethal control methods.
Commercial Wildlife Licence	Allows for the commercial use of wildlife, including selling wildlife in pet shops, keeping wildlife in zoos, as well as taxidermy and other processing of wildlife products.
Private Wildlife Licence	Allows people to keep wildlife at their private residences.
Wildlife Shelter Authorisation and Wildlife Foster Care Authorisation	Allows people to care for and rehabilitate injured, ill, or orphaned wildlife for release back into the wild.
Research, Conservation, Management and Nursery Authorisation	Allows people to conduct research where activities may be impacting on wildlife, protected flora or fish, but are necessary for improving scientific understanding, such as attaching radio collars to track wildlife.
Wildlife Import/Export Permit	Allows people to bring wildlife into or out of Victoria.
Forest Produce Licence	Allows individuals and private companies to cut, dig, or take away material from State forests for personal or commercial use.

Figure 1 Permits issued in 2024–2025 ISSUE AND RENEW



Cruelty operations

In addition to laying 312 charges this year for wildlife cruelty offences, the Conservation Regulator has achieved several significant court outcomes in 2024–2025.

Summary of enforcement action





	148	OFFICIAL WARNINGS
	386	INFRINGEMENTS ISSUED
	515	CHARGES HEARD BEFORE MAGISTRATE
	21	MATTERS BEFORE THE COURTS
	4	OFFENDERS CONVICTED

Table 1 Performance measures for regulating the protection of wildlife

ACTIVITY		2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	
Permissions Number of wildlife permission by type issued	Total		12,222	13,363	13,183	15,170
	Authority to Control Wildlife		2,148	2,655	2,750	4,208
	Commercial Wildlife Licence	TOTAL	268	264	313	324
		ISSUE	41	61	70	58
		RENEW	227	203	243	266
	Private Wildlife Licence Including Dingo Licence	TOTAL	7,377	8,083	8,074	8,394
		ISSUE	3,436	4,004	3,443	3,576
		RENEW	3,941	4,079	4,631	4,818
	Wildlife Shelter Authorisation	TOTAL	257	316	114	258
		ISSUE	16	25	23	27
		RENEW ¹	241	291	91	231
	Wildlife Carer Licence	TOTAL	246	235	137	229
		ISSUE	68	34	80	52
		RENEW ¹	178	201	57	177
Wildlife Import/Export Permit		1,568	1,422	1,406	1,336	
Research, Conservation, Management, and Nursery Authorisation		358	388	389	421	
Sets standards, inform and educate, supporting compliance	Conservation Regulator publications		See Key publications on page 31			
	Monitoring compliance	Wildlife licence holders that submitted required Annual Return	47%	56%	49%	57%
		Licence, permit and property inspections conduct d to determine compliance with conditions	148	277	211	111
	Collaborate	Number of calls and emails received and assessed by our Customer Contact Centre concerning wildlife	4,645	5,148	4,690	5,508
Enforcement of the law In response to non-compliance, in line with Conservation Regulator Compliance and Enforcement Policy for Wildlife	Infringement Notices issued		28	42	60	35
	Official warnings			8	14	16
	Prosecution charges laid		18	204	694	312

1 Renewals are completed on a two year cycle, which results in a reduction in renewals every two years

Key publications

Wildlife Demonstrator Licence Guide

In October 2024 the Conservation Regulator published guidance for Wildlife Demonstrator Licence holders, providing information about how to comply with their wildlife licence conditions.

This document includes information on:

- Conditions of the licence and the objectives those conditions are trying to achieve
- How Authorised Officers will be enforcing the conditions of the licence
- Penalties that may be imposed if there is a failure to comply with the conditions



Wildlife demonstrator licence guide
vic.gov.au/wildlife-demonstrator-licence-guide



1 Wildlife demonstrator licence conditions

Conditions that are specified in the Wildlife Regulations and apply to all wildlife demonstrator licences

Additional wildlife demonstrator conditions applied by the Conservation Regulator

Minimum period of ownership	Disposal of deceased wildlife
<p>It is a condition of any wildlife demonstrator licence that the licence holder must not sell or dispose of any wildlife within 6 months of the holder buying, acquiring or receiving the wildlife unless the holder has submitted their written approval of the Regulator to do so.</p> <p>REGULATORY APPROVAL FORM 2024-2025</p>	<p>It is a condition of any wildlife demonstrator licence that the licence holder must, if wildlife dies while in the possession of the licence holder:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sell or dispose of the dead wildlife to the holder of a wildlife demonstrator licence or • dispose of the dead wildlife by incineration or burial; or • keep the dead wildlife. <p>WILDLIFE REGULATOR FORM 2024-2025</p>
<p>Objective</p> <p>To ensure acquisition of wildlife is a considered decision, to reduce the risk of wildlife being treated as a commodity, and to ensure that the wildlife can settle into its new surroundings. It also reduces the spread of disease and regulates the trade of wildlife in Victoria.</p> <p>How to comply</p> <p>Do not sell or dispose of wildlife that has been in your possession less than six months.</p> <p>If you are seeking to sell or dispose of wildlife prior to the six months threshold, you must seek your written approval from the Conservation Regulator. You can do this by emailing the Conservation Regulator with details of your request, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The species, age and condition of the wildlife; • Where the wildlife was acquired (including licence number); • Why you need to sell or dispose of the wildlife within six months. <p>Your request will be considered and you will be notified of the outcome in writing. Approval will not be issued retroactively. Sale or disposal of wildlife also leads to a loss of six-months without prior approval in breach of licence conditions and penalties may apply.</p> <p>12 Form wildlifeapprovalform.docx</p>	<p>Objective</p> <p>To prevent secondary poisoning and spread of disease to other animals and people, and regulate the trade of deceased wildlife.</p> <p>How to comply</p> <p>If selling or disposing your dead wildlife to a wildlife demonstrator, ensure their licence is current and document the transaction in your record book for the rise of the same business day.</p> <p>Carcasses of wildlife submitted for incineration should be disposed of as follows or incinerated, to prevent secondary poisoning of scavengers (for example, dogs, cats, possums).</p> <p>The Conservation Regulator recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burial at least 60cm deep to prevent scavenging by other animals; • Handling all animals with care and wearing personal protective equipment to avoid potential zoonotic disease exposure.

Systems, processes, and tools

Case Management System

The Case Management System was built specifically for the Conservation Regulator to support how it manages investigations into non-compliance. It was launched in June 2024 and since then, more than 1,000 cases have been opened. This system brings the entire case management process online, from starting a case and assessing it, to storing evidence and managing it over time. It helps Authorised Officers handle cases more consistently and efficiently, while also making it easier to track workloads and identify patterns in environmental non-compliance. The system also provides valuable data to support long-term planning and decision-making.



Conservation Regulator Year in Review 2024–2025

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENTS IN ACTION

Improving procedural fairness and transparency through internal reviews and complaint processes

The Conservation Regulator has implemented an internal review program that provides the community with a method to make a complaint or request an internal review about the way we conduct our activities or the decisions we make.

Our internal review program provides an impartial assessment of:

- A regulatory decision, such as issuing licences or authorisations.
- An officer's behaviour when conducting regulatory activities, including if they followed policies and procedures, or how they undertook defensive actions.
- Systemic issues or risks that might impact our ability to safely and effectively conduct our regulatory activities.

Each assessment is conducted internally by an independent assessor who considers all aspects of the matter to determine compliance with legislation and approved policies, procedures and training and then will determine whether

remedial activities are required to address decisions, specific risks or whether further investigation is required by a third party.

In 2024–2025, the Conservation Regulator received eight requests for internal review to be conducted.

- Six internal reviews were in relation to regulatory decisions.
 - Five of these decisions were determined to be appropriate regulatory decisions.
 - One regulatory decision was remade.

Two internal reviews were in relation to Authorised Officer conduct. These reviews determined that the actions carried out by the Authorised Officer were justified and they acted appropriately.



Lodge a complaint or request internal review
cr.internalreview@deeca.vic.gov.au



Educating and engaging to improve compliance with the law

The Conservation Regulator recognises that education and engagement is one of the most important ways to promote the safe and respectful use of our State forests.

Education

Lesson plans

In 2024 we developed and released five free lesson plans, aimed at school years one to six. These lesson plans link directly to the Victorian curriculum and explore topics of:

- The importance of looking after the environment.
- The rules that exist to protect our native plants and animals.
- The role that rules play in preserving the cultural and natural heritage of Victoria's landscapes.

In the first year, the programs have been downloaded 370 times by 60 unique Victorian educators, with an estimated reach of 11,160 students.

Based on this success, we expanded our curriculum linked education resources with the inclusion of two additional lesson plans (and associated promotion and reporting) for secondary school students in June 2025.

Pre-Christmas wildlife dealer engagement

In December 2024, the Conservation Regulator reached out to 48 licensed wildlife dealers in Victoria to educate members of the public and build upon our proactive engagement with licence holders. Wildlife dealers were encouraged to ensure their prospective customers consider the rules, commitment and care and equipment required when buying wildlife as a pet for themselves, or as a gift. By engaging directly with wildlife dealers, we were able to educate them about the rules in place for wildlife care while also giving them the tools and resources to communicate these conditions and care requirements to the broader community.

Wildlife crime educational video

This year we developed a video to help educate the wildlife rescue and rehabilitation community in Victoria to better understand wildlife crime.

Developed in consultation with Wildlife Victoria, the video outlines:

- What the Conservation Regulator is and the work we do.
- What wildlife crime is and how we investigate it.
- How we would like members of the community to report wildlife crime and the things we would like them to report.



Resources for teachers
vic.gov.au/resources-for-teachers



Wildlife crime education video
vic.gov.au/wildlife-crime-education-video



Engagement

Grey-headed flying-fox fruit tree netting partnership project

The Conservation Regulator, Zoos Victoria, RSPCA Victoria, Wildlife Victoria, Animal Welfare Victoria and DEECA teams have partnered to address the danger illegal household netting poses to wildlife, especially the threatened grey-headed flying-fox, and remind household growers to use safe, compliant fruit tree netting.

Since 1 September 2021, it has been illegal in Victoria to use or sell household fruit tree netting with a mesh size bigger than 5 millimetres by 5 millimetres, as larger mesh netting is more likely to entangle, distress, and seriously injure or kill animals.

The partnership aims to reduce the risk to wildlife by increasing awareness and reminding households to use safe, compliant fruit tree netting. Activities conducted as part of this project include a media release, and subsequent press coverage, joint social media posts, engagement with local councils and awareness at events with more activities planned over the next two years.

Campfire behaviour social research with RMIT student interns

From March to June, four RMIT University students worked with the Conservation Regulator on a research project aimed at better understanding community behaviour around campfires. As part of their environmental science degree, the subject

Client-based research required the students to conduct social research on behalf of an external organisation, in this case the Conservation Regulator. The students undertook the following activities as part of their research project:

- Conducted interviews with Forest and Wildlife Officers.
- Attended a site visit to a regional campground.
- Undertook campfire awareness training.
- Conducted a general survey to gauge perceptions about campfire safety and understanding of campfire rules.

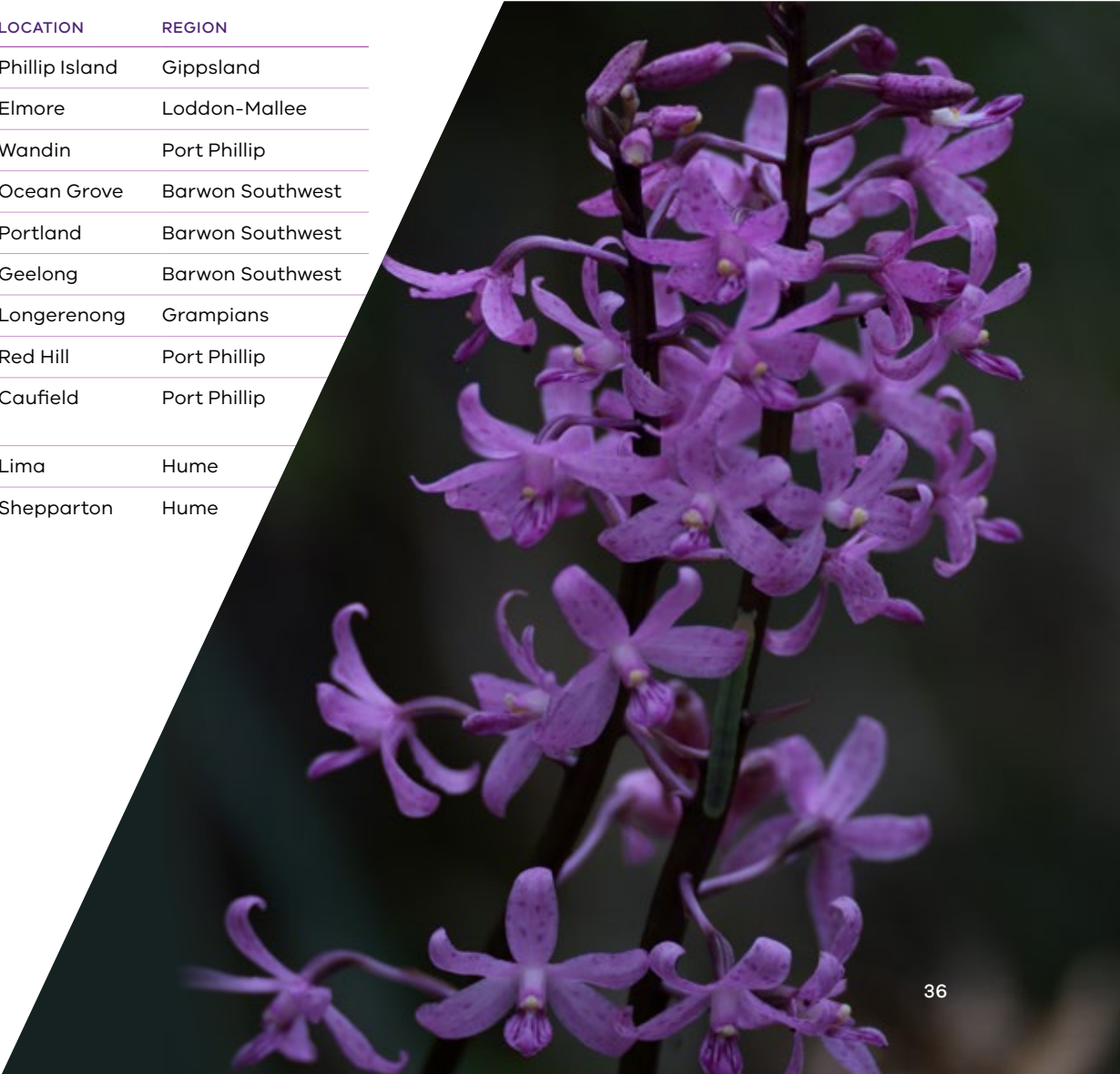
The students presented their findings to the Conservation Regulator Executive team in June 2025 and provided insights regarding possible communications and engagement strategies for the Victorian community moving forward.



Events

The Conservation Regulator attend community events across Victoria. This is an important opportunity to have meaningful face to face engagement with our communities, and to share information about the rules which protect our native environments.

	DATE	LOCATION	REGION
Island Whale Festival	5 – 7 July 2024	Phillip Island	Gippsland
Elmore Field Days	1 – 3 October 2024	Elmore	Loddon-Mallee
Wandin Silvan Field Days	17 – 18 October 2024	Wandin	Port Phillip
A Dog’s Breakfast	30 November 2024	Ocean Grove	Barwon Southwest
Hooked on Portland	17 – 18 January 2025	Portland	Barwon Southwest
Geelong Outdoor Living and Caravan Expo	17 – 19 January 2025	Geelong	Barwon Southwest
Wimmera Machinery Field Days	2 – 6 March 2025	Longerenong	Grampians
Red Hill Show	8 March 2025	Red Hill	Port Phillip
Victorian Herpetological Society Reptile and Amphibian Expo	22 March 2025	Caufield	Port Phillip
Open Roads Rally	28 – 30 March 2025	Lima	Hume
Shepparton Bird Expo and Sale	May 2025	Shepparton	Hume





Our people and governance

The Conservation Regulator considers that our people are our most valuable resource. We aim to support and empower staff to continue to build our regulatory capability and deliver on our regulatory mission. Operational staff conduct patrols for monitoring and educative activities. They include Authorised Officers, who have specialised training and are authorised to enforce relevant laws and regulations.

Our organisational structure

In 2024–2025 the Conservation Regulator underwent a wider operational model review. With the end of native timber harvesting on 1 January 2024, we took the opportunity to update our structure to reflect the impact on our work. The Conservation Regulator is led by the Chief Conservation Regulator and is comprised of three key business areas.

Regulatory Operations

The Regulatory Operations Branch leads and coordinates state-wide regulatory service delivery. Branch staff are responsible for conducting complex risk assessments, harm prevention campaigns, audits, inspections, investigations, and intelligence functions. The branch delivers strategic and effective risk based and intelligence-led approaches to compliance for biodiversity, fire prevention, and use of public land through implementation of best practice frameworks, policies and supporting procedures and guidelines.

The branch builds community confidence in the regulatory practices by implementing an open and transparent approach to information sharing and decision-making, and by engaging with communities to inform how and where regulatory effort is targeted to address the greatest risks of environmental harm.

Regulatory Strategy and Permissions

The Regulatory Strategy and Permissions Branch leads the provision of regulatory strategy, information and guidance, and capability development. It undertakes reform and delivery of regulatory permissions (licences, permits and authorities). The branch works with the Regulatory Operations branch to ensure its work can be effectively implemented and to support efficient, effective, and transparent regulatory service delivery.

Office of the Chief

The Office of the Chief leads and delivers strategic projects, issues management, reporting, media and communications, stakeholder engagement and partnerships, as well as coordinating business planning and culture development functions. The Office of the Chief works with other Conservation Regulator branches, the Office of the Deputy Secretary, DEECA's regional and corporate media and communications units, and co-regulators to support our mission and regulatory obligations.

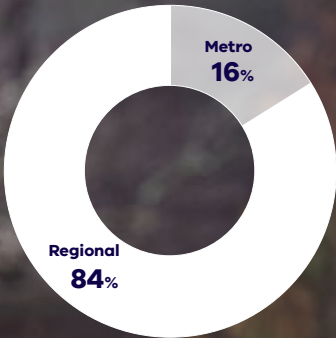
Our organisational structure



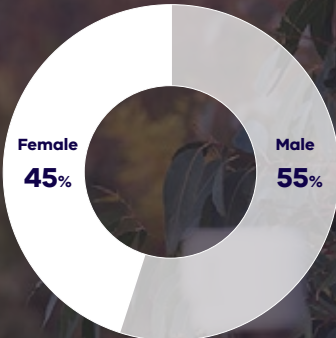


Our people

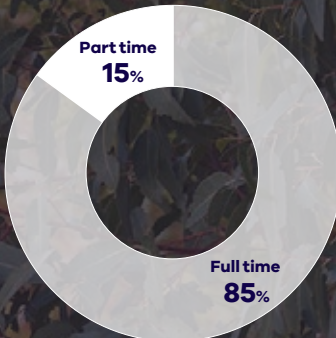
Location



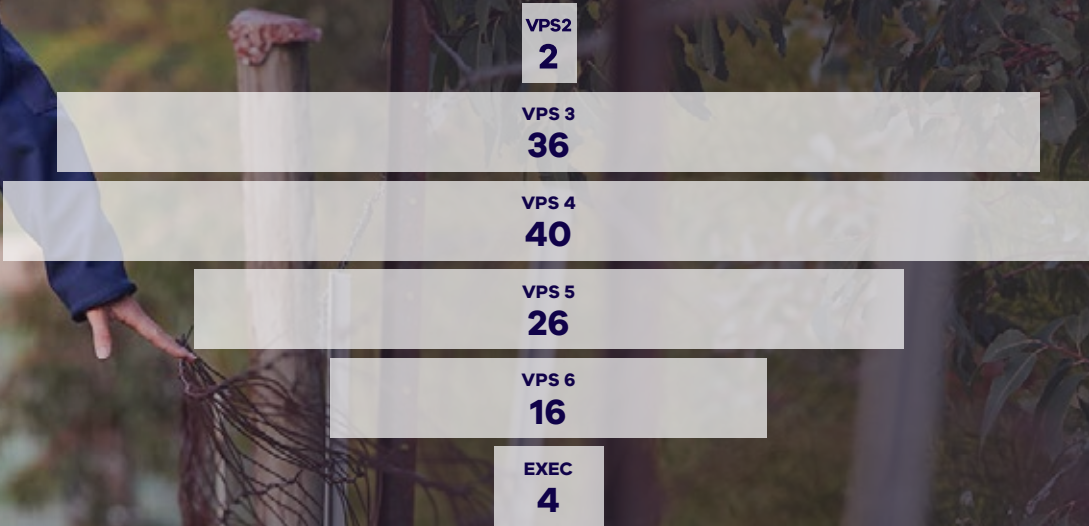
Gender*



Employment status



VPS grade



* To protect individual privacy, figures for staff with declared gender of *Self-described* are not reported separately

Advisory groups

Independent Regulation Advisory Panel

The Conservation Regulator's Independent Regulation Advisory Panel is chaired by the Chief Conservation Regulator, supported by three experts in the field of environmental regulation who work together to provide the Conservation Regulator with independent advice on best practice approaches to regulation. In 2024–2025, they met three times and provided advice on:

- Emerging changes to best practice regulation.
- Conservation Regulator's settings for regulatory policy and governance, and operational oversight.
- Biodiversity assurance and Conservation Regulator internal assurance.
- Avian influenza preparedness.

Stakeholder Reference Group

The Conservation Regulator's Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) provides advice and support to the Conservation Regulator to assist our mission of being an effective, trusted, best practice regulator for the Victorian community and environment. The members are representatives from environmental non-government organisations, industry, local government and community organisations. During 2024–2025, they met as a group three times, in addition to individual meetings held with members to engage on issues of interest.

In the past year, they have provided feedback and advice on:

- Development of targeted regulatory operations.
- Development of accessible resources and guidance to help the public comply with legislation.
- Opportunities to engage with different audiences using member's networks.
- Development of the Conservation Regulator's education and engagement approach.
- Case studies of regulatory operations.





Budget and reporting

Detailed financial reporting is included in the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action Annual Report 2024–2025.

Operational budget 2024–2025	\$22,604,140
Operational expenses	\$6,169,612
Staffing costs	\$16,434,528
Capital expenditure For 75 body-worn cameras	\$59,615

Ministerial Statement of Expectations

The Conservation Regulator operates in accordance with the Ministerial Statement of Expectations 2022: regulation of timber harvesting, use of public land, fire prevention, wildlife and biodiversity. We are expected to report on progress in delivering the Statement of Expectations. You can read about our progress in the DEECA Annual Report.

Table 2 Department Performance Measures

BUDGET PAPER 3 MEASURE	TARGET	ACTUAL	COMMENT
Wildlife licence renewals processed by target dates	85%	98%	TARGET MET
The exceedance of the target reflects the results of business process improvements implemented over the last two years to identify and quickly address any anomalies in the efficient processing of licence renewals. This includes additional monitoring of the performance of third-party contractors to ensure they do not adversely impact delivery.			
Strategic compliance operations implemented by the Conservation Regulator	5	5	TARGET MET



Conservation Regulator Statement of Expectations
vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-07/Conservation-Regulations-Statement-of-Expectations-2022.pdf



DEECA Annual Report
deeca.vic.gov.au/our-department/annual-report



conservationregulator.vic.gov.au