

- 2026 ELECTION PRIORITY -

Public land management to support tourism, farmers and the environment

Public land that is well managed with a local workforce can deliver environmental benefits, reduce pest plant and animal challenges for adjoining landholders, and provide enhanced tourism and economic outcomes.

Why public land must be better managed

Aging infrastructure, pest species, accelerating climate impacts, and maintenance of public land is having a negative impact on agriculture, tourism, and the environment. With East Gippsland Shire 83% public land, the challenges created by public land that is not managed well are amplified.

Pest animal populations are escalating across eastern Victoria, placing mounting pressure on agricultural productivity, regional livelihoods and community wellbeing.

Increasing ongoing funding for basic land management - tracks, toilets, signage, pest and weed control, and visitor infrastructure - so public land is safe, accessible and fit-for-purpose for growing visitor numbers. Long-term under-investment has reduced both environmental health and visitor experience, limiting tourism growth in nature-based destinations.

Greater transparency and a localised delivery focus will ensure public investment translates into measurable on-ground outcomes, local employment and community benefit.

Our community is asking for

- Clear public reporting from DEECA on outcomes, job creation and environmental performance from public land management programs.
- A localised implementation plan for East Gippsland, including the Healthy Forest pilot program (Orbost and Noojee), with timelines, partners and expected outcomes.
- Improved coordination with councils and landowners on priority interface issues such as weed and pest management.
- Investment in pest species, tracks and trails and other infrastructure, with a localised delivery focus to support small communities.

Targeted funding through the Great Outdoors program, to ensure better access and experiences at campgrounds and across walking trails, 4WD tracks and visitor facilities across East Gippsland parks and state forests to support the visitor economy and increased local spend, including:



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- Enabling and streamlining sustainable tourism investment on public land
- Targeted tourism
- Reinvesting in the condition, access and visitor readiness of public land assets
- Partnering with regions and Traditional Owners to activate place-based tourism opportunities

Locally-led pest animal management, including:

- Maintenance of the dingo unprotection order and eastern buffer zone.
- Reinstatement or replacement of effective wild dog bounty program.
- Investment in consistent population monitoring and shared data systems.
- Assessment and consideration of economic and social impacts in policy and investment decisions.
- A coordinated, cross-border and cross-tenure management framework.
- Strategic, long-term state and national funding for pest animal control.
- Recognition of mental health impacts and support services for affected communities.
- Improved regulatory pathways to enable venison to enter the red meat supply chain.
- Alignment of pest animal management with national food security objectives.

Background

To support access and experiences on public land, there are opportunities to simplify planning, leasing and approval pathways for low-impact, high-value tourism uses, with clear and transparent guidelines.

Targeted tourism can unlock private and community investment, create eco-tourism hubs, and generate revenue that can be reinvested into managing and maintaining the wider public estate.

Support for locally driven, place-based activation of public land - particularly First Peoples-led, nature-based and cultural tourism – through coordinated planning, funding and governance.

This includes backing master-planned destinations, improving cross-agency coordination, and supporting local jobs, skills and stewardship tied directly to public land tourism outcomes.

The Victorian Government has committed \$30 million to implement the Great Outdoors Taskforce recommendations, including \$4 million for a Healthy Forest pilot in Orbost and Noojee. There is limited visibility at a local level on how this funding is being deployed, what outcomes are being achieved, and how communities are benefiting.

A \$2.75 million investment in feral pig control activities on public land was announced in March 2026 and is a welcome investment in pest animal species. Council's Pest Animal position, developed by the Agriculture Advisory Committee, informs the significant



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challenges of pest species such as deer, wild dogs and feral pigs.

Transparency and delivery of public land management programs, ensuring investment translates into real on-the-ground outcomes in East Gippsland.

More information

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