

# 5. What is Aboriginal Title and Joint Management?

## Information about the Taungurung *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* agreement

### What is Aboriginal Title?

Aboriginal Title is the grant of public land (grant) to a Traditional Owner corporation for the purpose of joint management with the Victorian State Government (the state).

A grant is conditional upon the Traditional Owner group agreeing that the state continues to occupy and manage the land as public land reserved for a certain purpose (e.g. a National Park) in partnership with the Traditional Owner group under joint management arrangements.

Holders of Aboriginal Title cannot sell or transfer the land, grant interests such as leases or licences, or claim exclusive possession. Activities that occur on Aboriginal Title land must be consistent with the public land reservation. Existing access and use rights (including licences, leases, or permits) are not affected by the grant of Aboriginal Title.

### What is joint management?

Joint management means the state and Taungurung Traditional Owner group share the management of Aboriginal Title land. This partnership arrangement includes establishing a Traditional Owner Land Management Board, which will include a majority of member nominated by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council Aboriginal Corporation and state and community members, all of which are appointed by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

The Traditional Owner Land Management Board will set the strategic priorities for the Aboriginal Title land through a management plan prepared in conjunction with the Secretary of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning. The plan will be subject to public consultation and final approval from the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. It must be consistent with legislation and policies applicable to that of public land reservation (i.e. plans for national parks must be consistent with the *National Parks Act 1975* and associated regulations and relevant policies).

Under joint management, the state will continue to be responsible for operational management of the jointly managed lands, and dedicated Taungurung rangers will be employed to work on the jointly managed lands. The state retains core land management functions, including fire management, management of water supply catchment areas under the National Parks Act, and compliance.

## Which parks and reserves will be granted as Aboriginal Title to the Taungurung for joint management?

The following areas will be granted as Aboriginal Title in recognition of their cultural and spiritual significance to the Taungurung, and jointly managed with the state.

- Alpine National Park (to the extent that the Park is situated within the Taungurung Agreement Area)
- Heathcote-Graytown National Park
- Kinglake National Park (to the extent that the Park is situated within the Taungurung Agreement Area)
- Lake Eildon National Park
- Mt Buffalo National Park
- Mt Samaria State Park
- Cathedral Range State Park
- Wandong Regional Park
- Mount Wombat-Garden Range Flora and Fauna Reserve

## Will public access and use of jointly managed areas change?

Jointly managed areas will continue to be managed under the relevant public land acts. As such the protections around existing use and access contained in these acts and regulations will continue to apply. Any changes to access and use will be dealt with through the joint management plan, which will include a public consultation process and must be consistent with state-wide policy. The plan must be approved by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change.

In particular:

- Existing licences or leases within the joint management area will be protected. Joint management will not impact on rights of existing lease and licence holders.
- Friends groups can continue to operate consistent with the joint management plan and the directions of the Traditional Owner Land Management Board and respective operational land managers such as Parks Victoria.
- Recreational fishing and hunting will be able to continue to the extent currently occurring. Any changes regarding access to hunting and recreational fishing would be subject to a consultation process and approval by the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change as part of the development of a joint management plan.

## What are the objectives of joint management?

Joint management is intended to recognise and incorporate Traditional Owner knowledge, culture and practices into land management. In doing so, it aims to:

- achieve better conservation and protection of natural and cultural values
- provide new tourism experiences and promote public appreciation of the cultural values of parks
- provide opportunities for Traditional Owners to be involved in the protection of their cultural sites and heritage
- provide employment opportunities for Traditional Owners to work on Country.