

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001

**Assessment of the values of the Immediate Protection Areas
in the Central Highlands and East Gippsland**

Terms of Reference

Pursuant to section 26B of the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*, the Minister for Environment hereby requests the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (the Council) to carry out an assessment of the values of the Immediate Protection Areas¹ in the Central Highlands and in adjacent state forests in eastern Victoria² as determined by the Council. The Immediate Protection Areas and state forest in eastern Victoria are shown on the accompanying map.

The assessment will inform the work of an Eminent Panel for Community Engagement (the Panel) in its provision of advice and recommendations to the Minister for Environment on the future uses of the Immediate Protection Areas and adjacent state forest in eastern Victoria.

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- (a) identify the biodiversity, ecological and geological and geomorphological values of the specified area
- (b) identify the cultural heritage, social and economic values of the specified area
- (c) identify the current and likely future threats to those values, including climate change
- (d) identify the typical land use categories commensurate with the identified values
- (e) assess the potential economic implications of proposed land use changes recommended by the Panel and provided to the Council.

This assessment will build upon the Council's *Conservation values of state forests - Assessment report* (2017) by providing a more localised assessment of the values of these areas.

The Council is required to consider the values referred to above at the relevant state, regional and local levels, including their occurrence in existing protected areas and on other public land.

This request is for an assessment and report on the above values. Public consultation and recommendations are not required.

The Council will engage with the Panel regarding the content of the Council's assessment.

The Council must publish its assessment of the matters specified in paragraphs (a) to (d) above by 15 December 2023 and submit a report on the completed assessment by 31 July 2024.

¹ For the purposes of this assessment, Immediate Protection Areas are defined as the areas announced as part of the Victorian Forestry Plan in November 2019 and updated on 21 November 2019.

² For the purposes of this assessment, state forest in eastern Victoria is defined as state forest areas east of the Hume Highway. State forest is defined as the areas of public land depicted as General Management Zone, Special Management Zone and Special Protection Zone in the maps accompanying the Regional Forest Agreements as updated from time to time and expressed in the DEECA forest zoning data set (FMZ 100) as at the time of commencement of the assessment. State forest also includes state forest that is a natural catchment area under the *Heritage Rivers Act 1992*, an 'Other area with remote and natural attributes' recommended by the former Land Conservation Council in its *Wilderness Special Investigation Final Recommendations* (1991) and a reference area under the *Reference Areas Act 1978*.

Attachment 1: State forest in eastern Victoria (grey shading) and Immediate Protection Areas in the Central Highlands Immediate Protection Area (red shading)

