



## HUNTING COMMUNITY UNITED ON PUBLIC LAND ACCESS

May 2024

Victoria's recreational hunting organisations stand united in their opposition to any loss of access to public land. Victoria's hunters urge the Victorian Government to strategically grow access and ensure that an increasingly urbanised population has opportunities to participate in active outdoor recreation, including recreational hunting.

Together, our organisations represent a membership of over seventy thousand Victorians. We represent the interests of a quarter of a million recreational shooters and hunters.

Our members and constituents value opportunities to participate actively in the natural environment, sustainably harvest wild food for the table, and protect important environmental and cultural assets.

Recreational hunting contributes hundreds of millions of dollars annually to the Victorian economy and directly supports thousands of full-time jobs.

Of immediate concern to our organisations is a proposal that would turn approximately 360,000ha of State Forest in the Central Highlands into a National Park. Such a change would inevitably exclude access for thousands of deer hunters who work with scent-trailing hounds and companion dogs and hunters who pursue pest species. It would also significantly restrict access for tens of thousands of deer stalkers.

The hunting community has engaged openly with the eminent panel considering this proposal and has stressed the importance of maintaining and improving recreational hunting access. The unprecedented level of engagement at local forums and online from concerned local communities and active recreational users is testament to the disconnect between the inner urban activists agitating for this park and the ordinary Victorians who would be negatively impacted by it.

Our organisations believe that the Government committing to any changes to land tenure in the Central Highlands (or elsewhere in the Victorian public land estate) would be premature. Notably, the Government has recently established a "Great Outdoors Taskforce" to take a more holistic, considered, and strategic approach to how Victorians protect, conserve and use public land in a post timber harvesting environment.

Our organisations are committed to engaging productively with the new "Great Outdoors Taskforce" to ensure that Victoria's future land management arrangements meet the dual and largely compatible needs of preserving our precious natural environment and providing active outdoor recreation opportunities for the growing population.