

Native Vegetation Regulations Newsletter 8

Transition to updated Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon HIM – January 2026

Newsletter 8 provides an update on the Victorian Grassland Earless Dragon (VGED) Habitat Importance Map (HIM) used in the native vegetation removal regulations. The HIM has recently been revised to reflect updated habitat modelling.

Background

HIMs are used in the Native vegetation removal regulations to identify suitable habitat for threatened species. HIMs are used to assess impacts when native vegetation is to be removed and to determine biodiversity value when native vegetation is protected at offset sites.

VGED is listed as critically endangered under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and until recently was considered likely extinct. The rediscovery of the species in the west of Melbourne has led to a reassessment of its habitat. As a result of this reassessment, the VGED HIM has been updated in NVR Map for use in the native vegetation removal regulations.

Previous VGED HIM

The previous VGED HIM ([Appendix A](#)) had a distribution of ~142,000 hectares. Its habitat was mainly modelled in the north and west of Melbourne, but it was also modelled:

- in concentrated locations from Gippsland to the New South Wales border, and
- sporadically throughout western Victoria to the South Australian border.

Updated VGED HIM

The updated VGED HIM ([Appendix B](#)) has a distribution of ~69,000 hectares. It was introduced into NVR Map on 6 January. It is solely distributed to the north and west of Melbourne within the following local government areas:

- Brimbank
- City of Greater Geelong
- Golden Plains
- Moonee Valley
- Moorabool
- Nillumbik

- Hume City
- Macedon Ranges
- Melton
- Mitchell
- Surf Coast
- Whittlesea
- Wyndham City

Identifying impact to VGED habitat

NVR Map is used to generate reports for native vegetation removal or offset site establishment.

A *Native vegetation removal report (NVR)* identifies if a proposed development will impact on threatened species habitat (including VGED habitat).

- Appendix 2 of the NVR informs if threatened species habitat is impacted and whether that impact is considered significant.
- Page 2 of the NVR informs if a species offset is required to compensate for significant impact to its habitat.

A *Native vegetation offset report (NVO)* identifies the amount of biodiversity gain at a proposed offset site for threatened species (including VGED).

NOTE - For proposed offset sites, offset site assessors must confirm whether the habitat present is consistent with the habitat modelling. Consistency between habitat present and modelling is also checked during the offset site quality assurance checks by DEECA's offset management team. If the HIM is not consistent with the habitat requirements for the species, Species Habitat Units for that species cannot be generated.

NVR Newsletters

All native vegetation regulations newsletters can be viewed on the [Native vegetation regulation webpage](#).

Transition to new VGED HIM

Applicants can apply the following transition policy for the updated VGED HIM. This approach applies to applicants who have a Native Vegetation Removal Report (NVR), Scenario test report or a Native Vegetation Offset Report generated from the previous HIM and are currently:

- 1) preparing applications to remove native vegetation, or
- 2) preparing information to secure a new offset site based on the previous VGED HIM.

Applicants may need to discuss their use of this transition policy with the applicable responsible authority and if agreed can act in accordance with the relevant scenarios below.

1) Application to remove native vegetation

a) Statutory planning decision already made

No action is required where a statutory planning decision has already been made by the responsible authority.

b) Application submitted for a planning decision

No action is required where an application is under consideration by the responsible authority. However, an applicant can elect to withdraw their application and submit a revised application based on a new NVR report that uses the updated VGED HIM.

c) Preparing a planning application

If an NVR (or Scenario test) has already been generated in preparation for an application using the previous VGED HIM:

- The assessment of the application may proceed based on the previous VGED HIM, or

- The assessment of the application may proceed using the updated VGED HIM.

NOTE - For Scenarios 1(b) and 1(c) it is expected that applicants have already made avoid, minimise and offset decisions based on the NVR or Scenario test generated prior to the update. Applicants are given the opportunity to continue using the previous VGED HIM.

d) Future planning applications

Applicants who have not already generated a NVR or Scenario test using the previous VGED HIM must use the updated VGED HIM.

2) Preparing information to establish a new offset site

A Native Vegetation Offset Report (NVOR) using the updated VGED HIM should be used. In establishing an offset site, the presence of threatened species habitat which generates habitat units of gain must be confirmed for all threatened species, including VGED regardless of which HIM version is used.

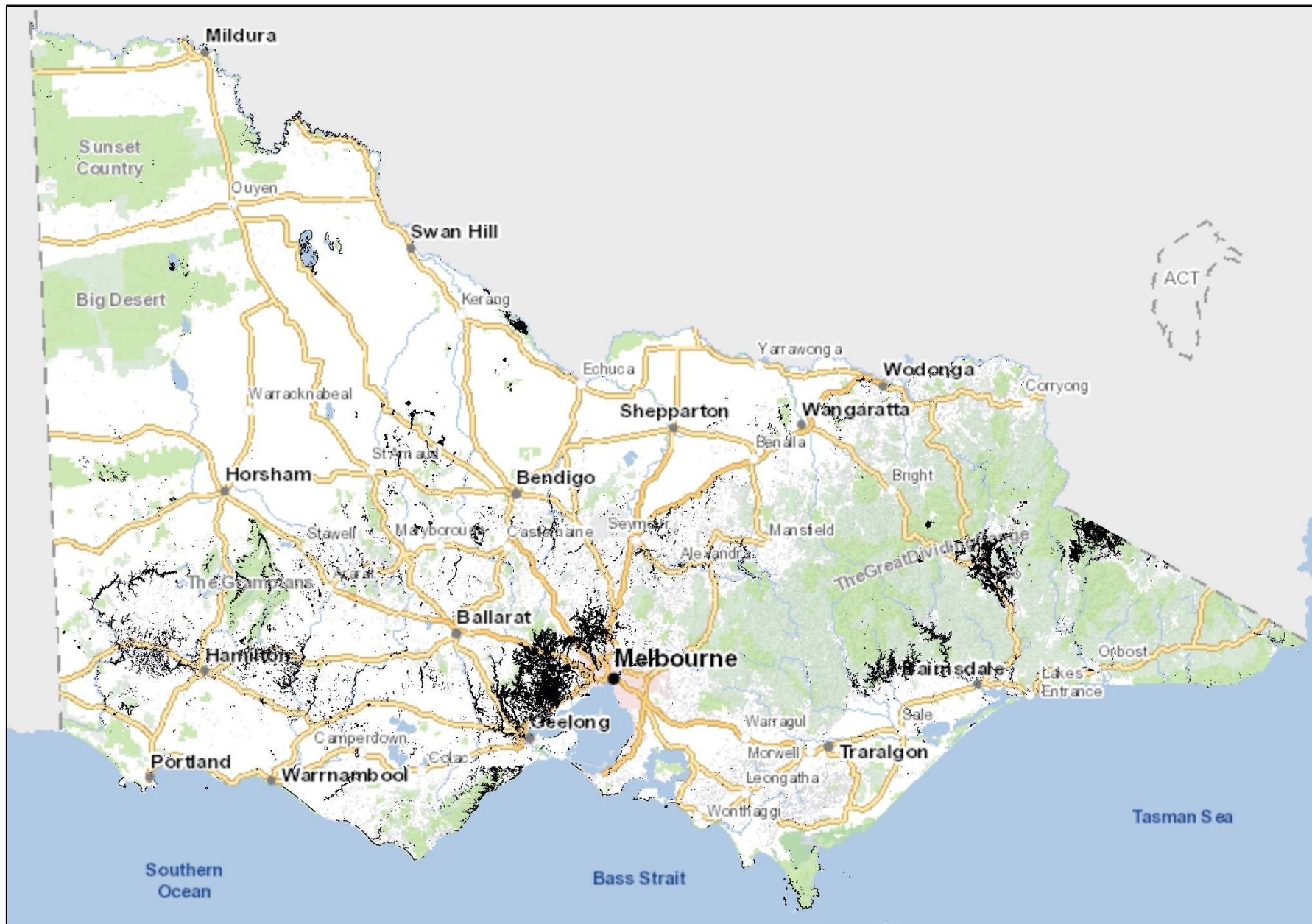
As with all HIMs, landowners must provide evidence that confirms suitable VGED habitat identified in:

- a NVOR generated from the previous HIM, or
- other areas not mapped for VGED habitat but deemed suitable.

The scientific understanding of suitable habitat for VGED is currently evolving and may not strictly align with past understanding. Evidence to use an area outside of the updated VGED HIM should include support from VGED experts currently investigating key habitat characteristics the species requires.



Appendix A – Previous VGED HIM



Appendix B – Updated VGED HIM

