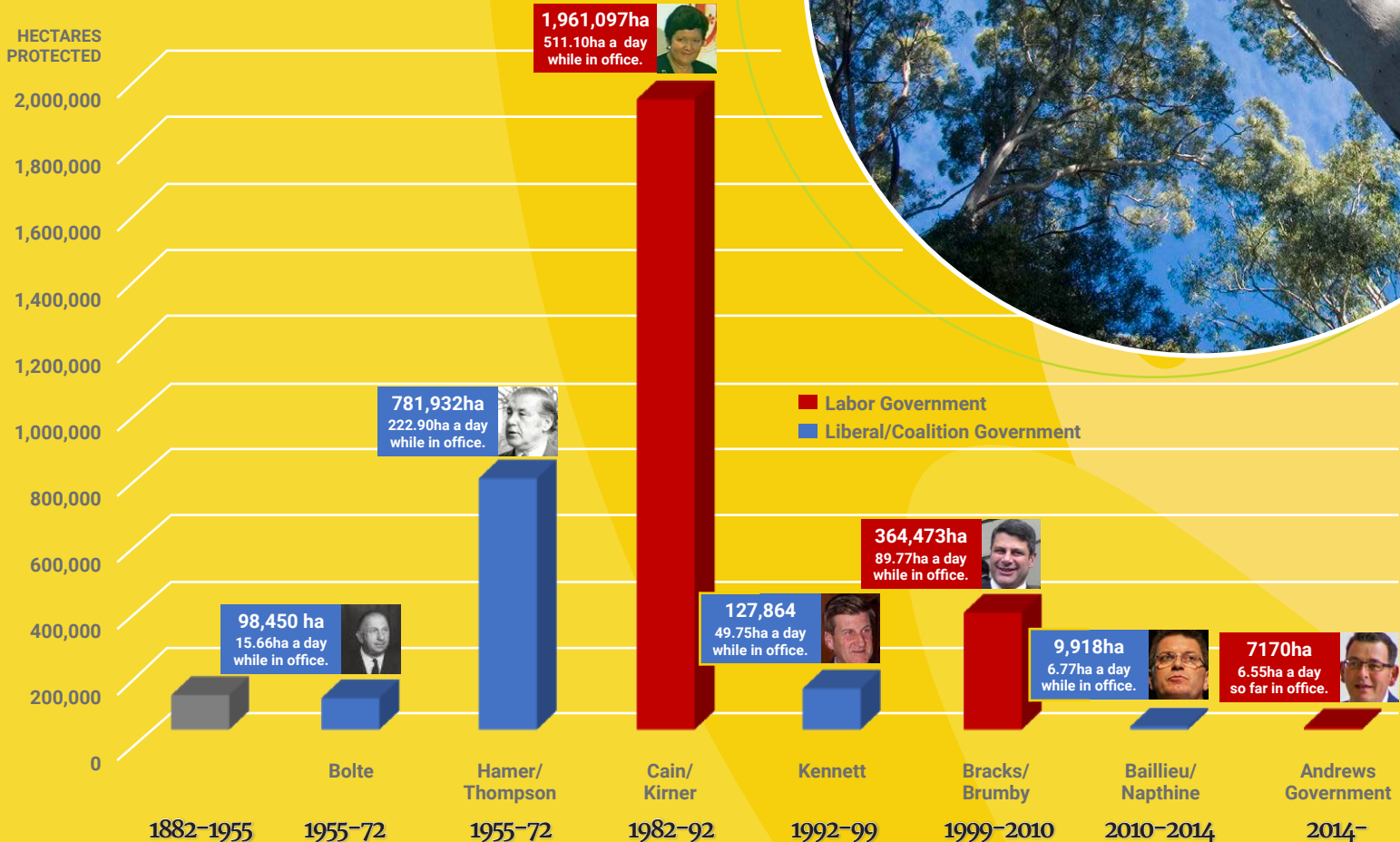


# Victorian National Parks by Premier

## National parks creation stalls under Andrews Labor

Parks created under the National Parks Act or equivalent:



# National parks creation stalled under Labor

Victoria's Andrews Government has created the smallest amount of new parks under the National Parks Act of any government in the past 60 years.

The progress of creating new national parks on public lands in Victoria is now at its slowest pace in the past 60 years.

The Andrews Government's election policy 'Our Environment, Our Future 2014', claims Labor "has a long history of extending our national parks and reserves". While this is true for the Cain/Kirner Government and the Bracks/Brumby Government, there is a lot of work to do before the Andrews Government can claim to be anything remotely like a leader in this area.

Permanently protected habitats on public and private land form the backbone of our society's efforts to conserve our natural heritage and its rich biodiversity. Victoria's national parks and conservation estate is also a key community asset. Tourists spend \$1.4 billion a year associated with their visits to parks, generating \$1 billion gross value added to the economy, and adding 14,000 jobs to the state economy. National parks also provide a raft of environmental services (pollination, clean water and fresh air, as well as protection from flood and coastal inundation) worth many hundreds of millions of dollars every year.<sup>1</sup>

Over the past 150 years (particularly the last 60) Victoria has developed an extensive network of national parks and conservation reserves across land and sea, covering roughly 18% of the state, but there are still significant gaps to be filled on both public and private land.

The 2010 VNPA Nature Conservation Review<sup>2</sup> identified the need to secure permanent protection of around

3.1 million hectares on both public (1.5 million ha) and private land (1.7 million ha) to complete a minimally comprehensive reserve system – one that gives the necessary protection to all habitat types. The state environment department acknowledged, in its recent statewide biodiversity strategy, that the additional protected areas required to meet Australia's criteria for a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system is 2.1 million hectares.<sup>3</sup> That is without taking into account the needs of specific threatened species, the implications of climate change, or other management factors such as fire impacts. Less than 5% of state waters are protected in marine national parks and sanctuaries, well below international benchmarks.

The leading Victorian government for creation of parks was the Cain/Kirner Government, which created almost two million hectares of new areas protected under the National Parks Act (or 511 ha per day in office). The second highest was the Hamer Government, which created 780,000 ha (222 ha per day in office). The Bracks/Brumby Government created 364,473 ha (approx. 90 ha per day in office).

Currently the Andrews Government (only 6.55 ha per day in office) is tracking as the worst performer in terms of park creation in the last 60+ years, even taking account of additions currently before parliament. With a year in office to go, they are still behind the Baillieu/Napthine Government, which was previously the worst performing government (6.77 ha of parks per day).

National parks and reserves can take time to establish, often years, which can favour multi-term governments. However the Bracks/Brumby ALP government created the Box Ironbark parks and new marine National Parks & Sanctuaries within 3 years of winning office in 1999 and created

Period	Parks created under the National Parks Act or equivalent (hectares)	Days in office	Ratio: New parks Ha per day in office
1882-1955	108,036		
1955-1972 (Bolte)	98,450	6,288	15.66
1972-1982 (Hamer/Thompson)	781,932	3,508	222.90
1982-1992 (Cain/Kirner)	1,961,097	3,837	511.10
1992-1999 (Kennett)	127,864	2,570	49.75
1999-2010 (Bracks/Brumby)	364,473	4,060	89.77
2010-2014 (Baillieu/ Naphtine)	9,918	1,464	6.77
2014 - (Andrews Govt) *	7170	1,095	6.55

the Greater Otway National Park with three years of winning the 2005 election.

Importantly, significant areas of high conservation value native forest on public land in the east of the state, in the central highlands and east Gippsland are in need of protection to ensure the survival of a significant number (up to 75 species) of forest dependent threatened species. These include the critically endangered Leadbeaters possum, the remarkable greater glider and several forest owls, as well as ensuring the healthy functioning of the forest ecosystems they depend on. The ash forests of the central highlands have been listed globally as critically endangered and are threatened by the cumulative impacts of logging, fire and fragmentation, and particularly by the loss of mature hollow-bearing trees.

As well as the need to protect the central highlands in a Great Forest National Park, and areas of East Gippsland, there are significant protection gaps on public land in south western Victoria, central western Victoria and the Gippsland Plains. Securing these will require protecting public land remnants as well as some private land purchases or additional formal protection of habitat on private land.

A Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) investigation has recently commenced for our central western forests (Wombat, Wellsford, Mt Cole and Pyrenees Ranges state forests), but it will not report until 2019 after the next state election.

The Andrews government's 2014 election policy committed to establishing processes, such as the Forest Industry

### How Daniel Andrews rates on parks establishment



- 🗨️ Created less parks than the Baillieu/Naphtine Government
- 🗨️ 15 times lower than the Bracks/ Brumby Government
- 🗨️ 8 times lower than the Kennett Government
- 🗨️ 86 times lower than Cain/Kirner Government
- 🗨️ 37 times lower than Hamer/ Thompson Government
- 🗨️ 2.6 times lower than the Bolte Government

Taskforce, to try and establish a consensus approach to new parks. After two years of intensive meetings between conservationists, forestry unions and industry, the taskforce failed to reach agreement, and has not met in 2017.

The government has used taxpayers' funds to bail out and buy a native timber sawmill in Heyfield, but not started any substantive process to establish a Great Forest National Park or new national parks in East Gippsland. There is no indication they have a plan to ensure the survival of a raft of wet forest dependent threatened species including the critically endangered Leadbeaters possum.

**It's time for new national parks – and a commitment to establish a Great Forest National Park, would be great place to start.**

\* Assumes days in office to 2017 anniversary of state election. Historical days in office were obtained from VEC <https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/Results/results-historical-vicpremiers.html>.

Calculation of ratio assumes Anglesea Heathlands addition to Great Otway National Park, which is currently before parliament and the addition of the 650 ha Woowookarung Regional Park (Canadian Regional Park), near Ballarat, which is not reserved under the National Parks Act, though some of the provisions of the national park act apply and it is managed by Parks Victoria.

This table includes only reserves created under the National Park Act 1975 and its predecessors and does not include other types of conservation reserves. The data for this analysis largely uses the creation of parks data from Park Victoria plus recent additions [http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/639857/Creation-of-Parks.pdf](http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/639857/Creation-of-Parks.pdf)

1. [http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/666350/Valuing-Victorias-parks.pdf](http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/666350/Valuing-Victorias-parks.pdf)
2. <https://vnpa.org.au/publications/nature-conservation-review-2014/>
3. <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-plan>

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