



# Sustainable Hunting Action Plan

2021-2024



# Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in this century and beyond.

Front cover: River red gum at Tang Tang Swamp Wildlife Reserve

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# Minister's foreword

Victoria abounds with recreational hunting opportunities and with more than 60,000 licensed game hunters, renewed investment in supporting programs, growing interest in wild foods and increasing recognition of the benefits of outdoor pursuits, hunting is on the up in Victoria.

This government continues to support safe, responsible and sustainable hunting. We recognise the social and economic benefits that it brings to our rural communities. To ensure the long-term future of game hunting in Victoria, it is vital that the hunting community ensures sustainability and responsible behaviour are the hallmarks of this increasingly popular pursuit. Government will share the science that underpins decisions and we must all support the Game Management Authority to ensure hunting is well regulated.

The *Sustainable Hunting Action Plan 2021-2024* (the plan) builds on the success of the *2016 – 2020 Sustainable Hunting Action Plan* (2016-2020 Plan) through another \$5.3 million commitment to safe, responsible and sustainable hunting.

The vision remains the same: to grow the economic, environmental and social benefits of responsible, sustainable and safe hunting.

The plan continues to have sustainability at its core, ensuring hunting opportunities for future generations, with a stronger focus on collaboration and building partnerships to maximise the economic, environmental and social benefits of hunting in Victoria. An exciting feature will be an inaugural grant program to support innovative new projects that promote safe, responsible and sustainable hunting. Further details about the grant program will be released in early 2022.

I am really excited about the new ideas, innovation and projects that can be supported through the grant program such as habit restoration, tourism opportunities as well as education and research.

I cannot overstate the importance of our partnership with Traditional Owners. This ensures game management in Victoria reflects Traditional Owner led knowledge and practice. It can provide employment and economic opportunities as well as promote recognition and respect for a Traditional Owner led management of Country. While the Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy is a real achievement of the 2016-2020 Plan, this plan will continue delivering the tangible outcomes of that strategy.

The plan continues to support our transition to adaptive harvest management for game ducks in Victoria, enabling more scientific and sustainable duck hunting seasonal arrangements. This is something we have previously committed to and progress is well underway. There will also be actions that seek to reduce the wounding of waterfowl through hunter education and monitoring.

I am looking forward to working with key partners to implement this plan, continuing to strengthen and build on the 2016 - 2020 Plan to ensure safe, sustainable and responsible hunting into the future.



**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**  
Minister for Agriculture



## Our vision

Victorians will gain from growing the economic, environmental and social benefits of responsible, sustainable and safe hunting.

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## Our approach

The Victorian Government continues to recognise that hunting is an important and popular activity in Victoria through the development of this plan.

We know that hunting makes a significant economic contribution to the state and delivers social benefits by encouraging people to participate in an active, healthy outdoor lifestyle.

This plan maintains the focus on sustainability as its core value, to ensure that the environmental, economic and social benefits of hunting are maximised.

The partnership approach that was built under the 2016 - 2020 Plan will be strengthened.

## Our focus

The Victorian Government will continue to deliver:

- safe, responsible and sustainable game management based on the best available science and evidence
- healthy and productive habitats
- a growing hunting industry contributing to thriving regional communities
- more people enjoying Victoria's natural environment.

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The plan aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of hunting actions that will maximise benefits for the environment, the economy, the community and hunters.





**Vision Sustainable Hunting**

Victorians will gain from growing the economic, environmental and social benefits of responsible, sustainable and safe hunting.

<b>Outcomes</b>	Hunting is safe, responsible and humane	Inclusive regional growth	Secure the future of hunting
<b>Objectives</b>	Informing and educating hunters	Collaborating and partnering	Monitoring and research
<b>Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide better access to information</li> <li>• Educate and train new hunters</li> <li>• Enhance hunter education</li> <li>• Improve animal welfare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with the community to promote safe, responsible and sustainable hunting</li> <li>• Partner with Traditional Owners</li> <li>• Monitor social and economic benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake research, monitoring and evaluation</li> <li>• Develop a game duck adaptive harvest management framework and strategy</li> </ul>



# Objective 1

## Informing and educating hunters

Safe and responsible hunting that minimises adverse animal welfare outcomes is practised and promoted by the majority of hunters, hunting organisations and the hunting industry.

A more informed and knowledgeable hunting community ensures the future sustainability of hunting and the benefits generated from it. The plan has a range of actions aimed at ensuring hunters have access to accurate information, education and training programs to achieve safe, responsible and humane hunting.

Central to responsible hunting is the humane treatment of animals hunted and used for hunting. Wounding can be an unfortunate unintended consequence of hunting. Factors that can contribute to this include poor shooting skills and lack of knowledge about correct equipment, animal anatomy and shot placement.

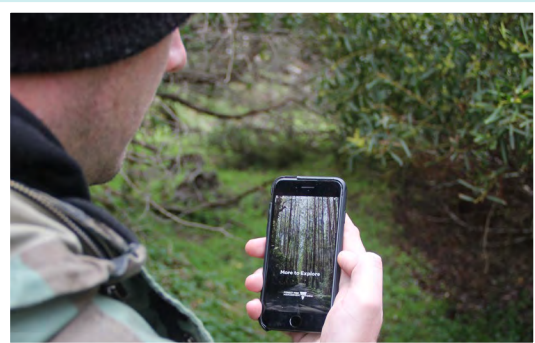
The plan commits to developing and implementing wounding reduction action plans for waterfowl, quail and deer in consultation with all key stakeholders. It will allow the development of online hunter learning modules, providing an accessible option for hunters wanting to increase their knowledge of laws, responsible hunting methods and firearm safety. It will also develop introductory education sessions for new or aspiring game hunters and enhance the existing **More to Explore** phone app to ensure better access to information about where, when and what can be hunted.

### New hunting maps and improved signage

It is now easier for Victorian hunters to find out where they can hunt across the state thanks to new electronic hunting maps and improved signage delivered under the 2016-2020 Plan.

The hunting maps are available in the **More to Explore** app which also provides comprehensive information about camping sites and other recreational activities. The maps can be downloaded for use offline when out of mobile range. Online hunting maps are also available via **MapShareVic**. The new plan will deliver further hunting map enhancements.

The 2016 -2020 Plan also delivered significant signage upgrades at State Game Reserves and State Forest locations, including 360 new signs at 130 State Game Reserves and at 50 State Forest locations.





## Objective 2

### Collaborating and partnering

The plan will strengthen collaboration and partnerships to continue to grow sustainable and responsible hunting.

A partnership approach between government, agencies, Traditional Owners, hunters and the community will shape the plan through a new grant program which aims to promote innovative new projects. The types of projects that will be supported through the new grants program include habitat restoration, hunting promotion and tourism opportunities as well as education and research. Further details about the grant program will be released in early 2022 with the intention that the projects be delivered over the life of the plan.

Partnering with Traditional Owners to meet their aspirations relating to game hunting, land management, conservation and the application of traditional knowledge will be further strengthened as the Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy is delivered. The commitment to partner with Traditional Owners will be considered across all the actions in the plan.

The plan commits to conduct another economic study on the contribution of game hunting to the economy in 2024. These studies offer insights in the economic benefits of hunting and the health and wellbeing of hunters over time.

#### Partnering with Traditional Owners through the Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy

The 2016 -2020 Plan delivered the Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy which sets clear actions for how the government will partner with Traditional Owners on:

- collaborative management
- employment and economic opportunities, and
- recognition and respect.

The plan commits to implementation of the strategy through Co-Governance arrangements between Traditional Owners and Government partners.



# Objective 3

## Monitoring and research

Sustainable hunting relies on good science and research based on sound game, conservation and land management principles.

Monitoring programs will be established to support and inform wounding reduction action plans. These will provide better information to understand the impact of hunting on game species populations and the success of initiatives introduced under these plans.

Stubble Quail research is a recognised knowledge gap. The plan commits to undertaking quail abundance monitoring to understand population trends and help ensure that quail hunting can occur in a sustainable manner.

In recent years the popularity of deer hunting has been steadily growing. For example in 2019 the total estimated number of deer harvested by hunters was 173,800. The plan includes a study that will determine the contribution of different types of recreational hunting as a deer control tool.

The government has committed to implementing Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) to set harvest objectives, improve the way in which game duck numbers are assessed and to inform duck season arrangement decisions. The plan will continue to support AHM through the development of a game duck harvest framework and strategy in consultation with all key stakeholders.

### Victoria's game licensing system goes digital

In 2021 the Game Management Authority launched **MyGL**, a new online game licensing system for game hunters in Victoria delivered under the 2016-2020 Plan.

Compatible with mobile devices, MyGL is a one stop shop for hunters to apply for or renew their Game Licence online, update their personal information, book hound hunting and waterfowl identification tests, apply for Hog Deer tags, transfer hound ownership and more.

The new online system is helping to ensure game hunting occurs safely, responsibly and sustainably. It provides educational materials for hunters and is used to communicate information to licensed hunters about changes to game hunting laws, regulations and hunting season arrangements.







## Implementation

This work will be delivered through a partnership approach with government departments and agencies working together with Traditional Owners, the hunting community and all key stakeholders to ensure each action gets delivered during the life of the plan.

# Objective 1

## Informing and educating hunters

Hunters will have better access to information, education and training programs to promote safe, responsible and sustainable hunting.

### Actions

**1.1 Provide better access to information** – by delivering practical enhancements to the More to Explore app to help improve knowledge about hunting locations.

**1.2 Educate and train new hunters** – by:

- developing a new online firearm safety education module
- starting introductory education sessions for new or aspiring game hunters.

**1.3 Enhance hunter education** – by developing online video learning modules for game hunters wanting to increase their knowledge of hunting laws, responsible hunting methods and firearm safety.

**1.4 Improved animal welfare** – by:

- establishing a working group responsible for developing and implementing a wounding reduction action plan for waterfowl and quail in Victoria
- developing a wounding reduction action plan for deer.



## Objective 2

### Collaborating and partnering

The social and economic benefits of hunting will be maximised through collaboration and partnerships that promote safe, responsible and sustainable hunting.

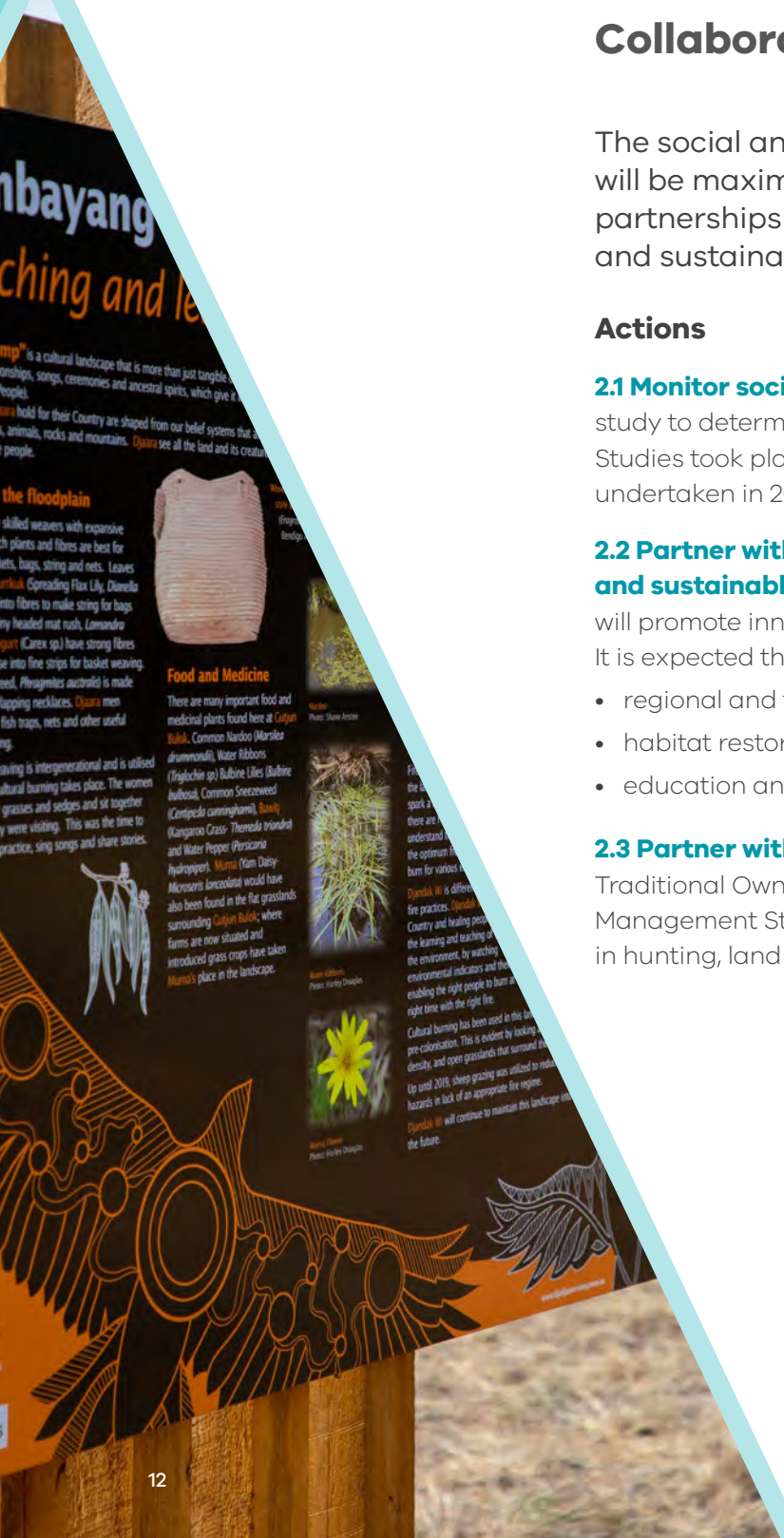
#### Actions

**2.1 Monitor social and economic benefits** – by continuing a study to determine the contribution of hunting to the economy. Studies took place in 2013, 2019 and a further study will be undertaken in 2024.

**2.2 Partner with the community to promote safe, responsible and sustainable hunting** through a new grant program which will promote innovative new projects that align with the plan. It is expected that the grant program will include opportunities for:

- regional and tourism events
- habitat restoration and conservation projects
- education and research.

**2.3 Partner with Traditional Owners** – by working with Traditional Owners to deliver the Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy that will build their participation in hunting, land management and conservation.





# Objective 3

## Monitoring and research

A strong focus on research and monitoring will continue to support evidence-based decision-making.

### Actions

#### 3.1 Undertake research, monitoring and evaluation – by:

- monitoring to measure the success of the *Waterfowl Wounding Reduction Action Plan*
- ongoing quail abundance surveying to monitor population trends and ensure the sustainability of quail hunting
- repeating the hog deer abundance and distribution study
- conducting deer research that determines the contribution of different types of recreational hunting as a deer control tool both for initial and ongoing deer reduction programs.

#### 3.2 Develop a game duck adaptive harvest management framework and strategy – continue this important work by

engaging technical experts to provide guidance on the identification of sustainable levels of harvest for reference during development of the harvest framework and strategy in consultation with key stakeholders.





## Future direction

In early 2022 the government will release a Game Regulatory Reform Roadmap (the Roadmap) for consultation. The Roadmap will sit alongside the plan and be released at the same time as the draft Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2022 (the Game Regulations) for public consultation. The Roadmap will explore future regulatory and legislative reforms and opportunities for game processing, stakeholder engagement and representation and more.



## Photo credits

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4	Pacific Black Ducks at Reedy Lake – Connewarre State Game Reserve	Daryl Snowdon
6	Hunter with binoculars	GMA
7	More to Explore app on hand held device	GMA
	Hunter aiming at target	GMA
	Lake Goldsmith State Game Reserve	GMA
8	GMA Officer and man looking at phone	GMA
	Image of Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy	Artwork: Drew Berick Graphic Design: Mazart Communications
9	Duck being measured	GMA
	Image of MyGL on phone	GMA
10	Pacific Black Duck	John Byers
11	Hunters participating in Shotgunning Education Program	John Byers
13	Stubble Quail	GMA
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