

# Media Release

**Ingrid Stitt MP**

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep  
Minister for Environment



Wednesday, 9 August 2023

## INVESTING IN MARINE ECOSYSTEMS AND BLUE CARBON CAPTURE

As Victoria transitions towards net zero emissions, the Andrews Labor Government is supporting the UNESCO listed Western Port Biosphere Reserve to improve its marine ecosystem and its growing potential as a major site for blue carbon capture.

Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt today announced grants totalling \$1.2 million to be shared between the Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation and Bunurong Land Council for planning and restoration projects at the reserve.

The funding will not only help future proof Western Port's unique coastal biodiversity but will work towards optimising the blue carbon storage capacity the reserve provides through its extensive mangroves and wetlands.

Mangroves, saltmarsh and seagrass ecosystems capture carbon at between 30-50 times of equivalent areas of forests, making protection and enhancement of coastal habitat central to the Labor Government's climate action strategy and zero carbon commitment.

The funding will initially be used to conduct detailed site specific analysis and planning to identify options for both protecting and enhancing mangrove, seagrass and saltmarsh habitats.

The investment will allow further research into how to protect and restore the region's extensive wetland areas, while delivering on-ground works including planting, fencing and pest and weed control.

The grants will also ensure the reserves ecosystems are preserved so that the region's biodiversity continues to thrive, including the thousands of trans-continental bird migrations that take place each year.

The Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation is formally recognised by the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's Biosphere Program*, which promotes community involvement in conserving biological diversity and maintaining cultural values.

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Environment Ingrid Stitt**

*"Investing in the health of the UNESCO Western Port Biosphere Reserve is crucial to maintaining Victoria's precious biodiversity for years to come."*

*"This investment will allow the Western Port Biosphere Reserve Foundation and the Bunurong Land Council to work with the community to restore Western Port's extensive wetland areas and help realise the reserve's potential to absorb carbon."*

*"Victoria has cut emissions by more than any other state since 2014 and these grants will ensure further work is done to decarbonise the state."*