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Parks Must be Managed for All Victorians

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Mr MORRIS (Mornington) — A disturbing trend has developed in recent years as first the Bracks government and more recently the Brumby government have sought subsidies for the costs of national parks, state parks and other nature reserves.

That trend is the complete and utter abrogation of the duty the government has of proper stewardship of public land: to protect and enhance that land and the flora and fauna it contains for the benefit of future generations of Victorians.

The government, it seems, is not content merely to keep expanding the urban growth boundaries and to consume ever greater quantities of prime agricultural land in the south-east; it is also determined to surrender even public land to 'highest and best use'.

Nowhere is this more evident than on the Mornington Peninsula, an area already under stress from the pressures of the adjacent urban growth precincts.

It has become clear that the government intends not to manage the Point Nepean National Park for all Victorians, but for the relatively few who can afford to pay for the privilege. The government has been working not on a management plan but on a plan to develop this public asset into an exclusive and restricted enclave.

Over at Devilbend Reserve — or what remains of it after the Bracks government sold off 42 hectares — the future of the natural features reserve is also in limbo. Little or nothing has been done except for the development of a seemingly secret management plan, only released by the government after the Devilbend Foundation lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman.

It is time the government started managing public lands in the interests of all Victorians.