

## Public Submission to the Extinction Inquiry

To whom it may concern

Thank you for this inquiry. It is well placed to learn from the far-reaching social and economic changes brought to us in 2020. I submit that the government adopt a long-term vision that is bipartisan and focused on the health of future generations of humans and other species.

During the last two months, while practicing COVID 19 isolation care, I have been doing my best to manage a small acreage on Djargurd Wurrong Country that I hope to revegetate next autumn. It is very hard work as the beef cattle that were there have made the ground ideal for blackberries, variegated thistles and wild plum trees. These weeds are endemic in the area commonly known as the Stony Rises. The weeds are very hard, physically, for me to remove on my own. However, so long as they are there, creatures local to this area cannot thrive.

The spotted quoll has been sighted in this area, which has been considered for world heritage listing despite suffering extractive industries such as beef and dairy farming and quarrying. I worry for this creature's future, alongside all the other creatures that are struggling to survive, including the wallabies and koalas local to this area who are also rarely sighted. I submit government support should protect existing habitat such as this, and expand habitat potential. I have not seen a spotted quoll in the time I lived in this area, as a child living here, and as an adult, living between this place and Naarm/Melbourne. It need not be so for my children.

The story of this highly endangered creature, in desperate need of safe habitat, is a story being told all over this land we gather under the name 'Australia'. Flourishing species diversity, including the spotted quoll that could thrive, given more care, is possible. But this possibility required the avoidance of catastrophic fires, a clear ramification of the rapidly escalating climate change of our times. I ask that substantial funding be directed towards helping creatures like the spotted quoll. I ask for long-term thinking that is not restricted by party lines, a thinking that listens to the leaders of the Indigenous nations of this country, so that any social, environmental and economic stimulus offers regenerative life to all creatures, not just a few well-to-do humans.

Most Australians are now aware that rural and remote land could be far better managed by 'cool' fires. I am not qualified to manage these fires but have listened to the emerging Indigenous leaders who work in the area of fire management and understand these fire elders have the capacity to train emerging Indigenous leaders to take on this work, given sufficient funding. The scale of this preventative funding would be small, compared to the cost of wildfire recovery. Without such an intervention, I fear for the few remaining old manna gums that I have loved all my life and that I see as future habitat for spotted quolls.

Serious long term funding is needed, if Indigenous people are to do this work and this must include rematriation. As a starting point, council owned roadside land and crown land in this area should be given back. Such far reaching changes, vital for the Stony Rises in the immediate short term, and no doubt, for many other parts of this state, require a conservation strategy that includes the knowledges and needs of the First Peoples of this country. This will be of long term benefit for all.

Yours faithfully

Susan Pyke