



**From:** POV eSubmission Form <ecosystems@parliament.vic.gov.au>  
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**To:** ecosystems  
**Subject:** New Submission to Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Sarah Branton



**SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

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The extent of the decline of Victoria's biodiversity:

The existing efforts to protect endangered eco-systems, animals, and plants haven't been working, as evinced by the complete failure to protect the Victorian Volcanic Grasslands. I've worked on grasslands for 5 years, and I've watched piles of money be wasted on low-quality grasslands while high-quality grasslands are destroyed for construction.

The adequacy of the legislative framework protecting our environment:

The current systems don't work to protect the grassland ecosystems we have, it trades high-quality remnant grassland (that takes hundreds of years to form) for highly disturbed, low-quality fields that completely lack the biodiversity and habitat of the high-quality sites. They are traded with no understanding of trading high for low quality. A hectare of old sheep paddocks is NOT a fair trade for a hectare of kangaroo grass, wildflowers, and Striped Legless Lizards.

The adequacy and effectiveness of government programs:

Local governments and Friends groups are managing their sites really well, I've watched sites improve under their management. This relies on people who care running the programs, and giving stable funding. Parks Vic and Melbourne Water are completely ineffective, prioritising cheap labour and short cuts over knowledgeable and considered programs. Programs are measured by how many trees are planted for how much money, instead of measuring any long term outcomes, so the cheapest work is produced, leading to rubbish results. See the Million Trees project, where councils got funding to plant tight clusters of trees on Grassland EVC's. A program's success shouldn't be measured by how cheap it is, ecosystems take a long time to build, so programs should be over 5 years, not "spend all this money in a year".

Opportunities to restore the environment while upholding First Peoples' connection to country.

First Peoples groups like the Wurrundjeri want to share their knowledge, and we in the industry want to learn from them. But there's no funding for it. Create programs that encourage collaboration between bush regenerators and indigenous groups, with stable funding. Have designated First People consultants who are knowledgeable on the boards, and pay them properly.