

Environment and Planning Committee
Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

11 Aug 2020

Dear members of the Committee,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria.

My name is Miranda and I live in Melbourne on Wurundjeri Country. I'm 21 years old and have recently completed a Bachelor of Environmental Science (Wildlife and Conservation Biology) at Deakin University, and am working casually as an ecologist for a small ecological consultancy.

Trees and mountains are where I feel most at ease, the solitude and peace perhaps arising from the fact I know I'm surrounded by features that have long come before me. The grounded-ness these natural landscapes provides is always a welcome relief from my usually hectic city life. For the past 15 years I've camped with family and friends along the East Kiewa River up in the Victorian High Country. My first overnight hike was along the razorback trail from Mt Hotham to Mt Feathertop, a hike I've come back to again and again for its sheer beauty. The spring and summer wildflowers are better than any man-made landscaped garden I've ever seen!

Seeing the footage of the high country and Aus Alps ravaged by bushfire this past 2019-2020 summer was jarring. The scale, severity and destruction of these fires was unprecedented and I'm concerned if we don't prioritise biodiversity the beautiful alpine ecosystems I enjoy every summer won't be there for future generations to appreciate. The plants and animals that survive in alpine areas are already on the limit of their climate envelope so are particularly at risk. Climate change is making things a whole lot worse and things will continue to decline unless the right commitments and funding from governments are made.

My proposals are as follows:

1. Phase out coal and gas burning, which is making the climate crisis worse and driving devastating extreme events like heat waves, fires and floods.
2. The devastation inflicted on our wildlife and forests from the 2019 - 2020 bushfires has made forest protection and a rapid logging transition more urgent. The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 industry transition must be brought forward. Two immediate priorities are protection of unburnt Greater Glider habitat, and a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland.
3. The state government must urgently implement and properly resource Action Statements (plans for recovery) for all threatened plants and wildlife. Victoria's plants and wildlife are at risk, with over 2000 recognised as threatened with extinction however only 15% have Action Statements.

4. The rights and interests of Traditional Custodians should be recognised in all aspects of land and water management, as well as decision-making in relation to their traditional lands, including traditional management practices such as cultural fire. First Nations - declining ecosystems have profound implications for First Nations.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, if you wish to contact me about the contents of my submission I can be reached at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Miranda Braakhuis
[REDACTED]

* I give permission for this submission to be made public.

