

Please find below and attached our submission to the Victorian Government Inquiry into The Extinction of Threatened Species

To: The Victorian Government

Re: Submission to the Inquiry Into The Extinction of Threatened Species

We write with deep concern for the future of our Victorian parks and wildlife. We live in northeastern Victoria in the midst of the Chiltern Ironbark Forest, so we are well aware of the importance of maintaining sustainable ecosystems so that our native species can be protected. We are also very familiar with the devastating effects of drought and bushfires. It is time for the Victorian Government to take greater action on climate change and the protection of native species and ecosystems so that our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren can continue to enjoy the beauty of our native wildlife.

With over 700 native plants, animals, insects and beautiful ecosystems under threat due to massive land clearing, logging and mining, it is vitally important that the Victorian State Government puts in place greater conservation measures to ensure the retention of the 120 animals, birds, plants, insects and fish that are currently on the brink of extinction. Sadly, more than 70 threatened species live in forests that are still being logged! And on top of the threat of land clearing, logging and mining, the recent fires have caused even more devastation destroying more than 50% of the habitat for 185 rare and threatened native species. We have all seen the heart wrenching photos of badly burnt koalas and other native species! We cannot imagine Australia without koalas, the greater glider, smoky mouse and mountain ash eucalyptus, just to name a few of our native species.

It is vital that our Victorian Government acts now and decisively to bring about real change. We encourage the government to turn this devastating situation around by investing in jobs that will help to restore habitat and wildlife. It is important that the following measures be implemented:

a) A huge program of weed and invasive species eradication

Victoria is overrun by weeds and invasive animals, which kill and out-compete our native plants and wildlife. It's a big job to manage them, but it's critical for restoring habitat. We could create thousands of jobs clearing weeds out of rivers, creeks, farmland and national parks, and humanely managing introduced animals like cats, deer, rabbits and foxes.

b) A tree-planting workforce to restore habitat

67% of Victoria's trees, mangroves, shrubs, and other plants have been cleared since colonisation. Much of what's left is in poor health. We could create thousands of jobs in both the city and the country, replanting trees and vegetation in our parks, streets, rivers and creeks right across our state, but especially in bushfire-affected areas. We could also help landowners plant native vegetation on their land.

c) A dedicated program for reviving species that are facing extinction

The work of rescuing Victoria's more than 120 species at risk of extinction deserves and needs a dedicated program of funding. NSW has committed \$100 million to a 'Save Our Species' program, which systematically identifies risks to species and goes about addressing them. It also includes action like breeding programs so healthy populations of animals, birds and plants can be restored. Victoria has nothing like this program and spends almost no money on this type of dedicated species recovery work. We also spend very little money on research for our scientists to study new solutions to the extinction crisis. It's time that changed.

d) An end to habitat destruction and the strengthening of nature laws

We cannot hope to stop extinction unless we stop the destructive activities that are driving it. We need to:

- End native forest logging and transition to a plantation based timber industry
- Phase out coal and gas burning, which is making the climate crisis worse and driving devastating extreme events like heat waves, fires and floods
- Change the laws that allow wildlife to be killed, and grasslands and other habitat to be cleared, with little to no ramifications.
- Stop destructive and unnecessary development like the Western Highway Duplication and the proposed Westernport gas ship terminal which continue to bit-by-bit erode the health of Victoria's environment for corporate profits.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this enquiry.

Sincerely,

Pam and James McDonald

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