

From: Ann Williamson <campaigns@good.do>
Sent: Sunday, 16 August 2020 8:56 AM
To: ecosystems
Subject: Submission into the Inquiry into Ecosystems Decline in Victoria

Categories: Submissions

Dear committee,

Many thanks for this opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystems Decline in Victoria.

The reason why we see continued ecosystem decline comes down to the fact of personal value systems of those that represent us in government.

Such decisions can not be left to individuals that may not understand or value the role natural ecosystems play and the detrimental long term impact this has on us all. It is vital that our environmental laws are strong and are followed to ensure we can reverse this decline.

The Inquiry into ecosystems decline in Victoria should take into account the following reforms to help ensure that we make the most of this opportunity:

1. Properly Resource and implement the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988. The Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act is the centrepiece of Victoria's biodiversity conservation legislation. Reforms last year have "refreshed and modernised" the Act, updating the objectives, adding a new duty for public authorities, and introducing new conservation tools. However, if the Act is not properly implemented, this tinkling around the edges was just a waste of time and money.
2. Our nature protection laws must address the issues around our changing climate. The past summer's devastating bushfires demonstrate the terrible impact that climate change can have on our wonderful natural places and wildlife. Climate change presents a massive challenge to Victorian ecosystems. Failing to address climate change stops our laws working effectively. Climate adaption must be a part of our legal frameworks.
3. Improve compliance and enforcement with our environmental laws with an independent conservation regular with a clear legislative foundation and all the legal powers needed to ensure Victoria's conservation laws are compiled with.

4. Protect Victoria's precious wildlife. Update and reforme Victoria's Wildlife Act 1975 to make sure that it meets the Victorian community's expectations for how our valued wildlife will be protected and preserved for future generations.

5. Prevent the harmful impacts of new development. While the Morrison government is in a hurry to handover responsibilities under our national environmental law - the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act - to state governments, we know that Victorian laws are not fit for purpose. Victoria's planning laws and environmental impact assessment laws need to be brought up to date to make sure that infrastructure projects properly account for their impacts on Victoria's biodiversity before we even think about handing over responsibilities.

6. Stop the drivers of ecosystem decline. Nature protection laws should be a safety net. We need to address the pressure on Victorian biodiversity protection laws by removing key drivers of ecosystem decline such as native forest logging, unsustainable use of water resources, and the impact of invasive species. Stopping native forest logging sooner rather than later, more sustainable water resource management, and new fit for purpose invasive species management legislation are needed of ecosystem decline is to be turned around.

7. Boost ecosystem restoration. Nature protection laws alone will not be enough – our laws must also guide and encourage the restoration of Victoria's ecosystems. With climate change already having a terrible impact on Victorian flora and fauna, the challenge is urgent. Whether it be on public land or private land, our land management must be subject to appropriate obligations to ensure that ecological processes and natural assets are there for future generations to enjoy.

Strong nature protection laws will provide the backbone for a healthier future for Victoria's ecosystems, ensuring the people, places and wildlife we love can thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Williamson

[Redacted signature]

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