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Sent: Monday, 17 August 2020 9:55 AM
To: ecosystems
Subject: Submission into the Inquiry into Ecosystems Decline in Victoria

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystems Decline in Victoria.

We know the main drivers of ecosystem decline: land clearing, the encroachment of Melbourne and other areas of urban expansion, damage to water systems, logging of native forests, the depredations of feral animals, invasive plant species - the list goes on. And to add to all these stresses we have climate change.

This Inquiry is an opportunity to begin reversing ecosystem decline. Above all we need to:

- * make sure that all our nature protection laws take climate change into account;

- * make sure that the laws we have cover all the destructive forces listed above (and any important ones not listed!), i.e. that we stop the drivers of ecosystem decline;

- * introduce new legislation as necessary, e.g. to stop logging of native forest ASAP, to corral and manage invasive species, to ensure water resources are preserved and of best quality;

- * update and improve planning and environmental impact assessment laws in particular so that urban development and infrastructure projects are properly assessed and controlled and guided to limit damage to biodiversity and environmental quality;

- * make sure that ALL our environmental laws, including the recently updated Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, are strongly supported and enforced, through an independent authority with teeth;

- * review and where necessary update Victoria's Wildlife Act 1975 to properly protect our precious wildlife.

* Finally, we need to go beyond the safety net provided by the above measures, and plan to restore and rejuvenate (and even extend) ecosystems.

In the background to this inquiry is the federal government's review of the EPBC Act, and the Morrison government's evident haste to hand over responsibilities to state governments. At present Victorian laws are not up to the task. The inquiry is a precious opportunity to make them fit for purpose.

I live in a peri-urban area and see at first hand the damage done by feral species such as deer and rabbits, introduced weeds and over-exploitation of local watercourses. I am also close to the Central Highlands forests that are constantly under threat of logging, with dreadful consequences for small animals, birds and other creatures. Our home is also in the area burnt on Black Saturday 2009. The need for strong action and good resourcing of environmental protection is very evident.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Brenan

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