

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find enclosed my submission to the above enquiry.  
I am happy for this to be made public.

Our family has been a regular visitor to the Grampians (especially since we had children) and it is one of our favourite places. As a contrast we are also long term visitors to Somers on Westernport Bay.

In the Grampians the loss of habitat due to bushfires, the increase in weeds and the rising number of introduced species is very noticeable. At Somers the loss of seagrass beds in the Bay over the years has led to a marked reduction of sealife especially on the reef areas which used to support an amazing array of creatures and seaweed growth. Also, koalas in the area have drastically reduced in number.

I understand that Victoria has the highest proportion of cleared areas of all the states. To maintain a healthy ecosystem we need to have viable habitat and this means we need more forested lands! It is truly disheartening that some of our oldest trees (hence suitable habitat trees) are in roadside reserves that are all too frequently bulldozed for the next road project. If we are serious about preserving our biodiversity then we must elect to maintain these remnant areas just as one example.

It would be great if we can look to a future where we invest in looking after our environment – such as protecting the mangroves and sea grass beds in Westernport (from the proposed AGL Gas project for a start) or in weed eradication in areas like the Grampians with sensitive and unique flora. Culling and control of introduced species is also a key to this.

I hope that the outcome of this enquiry will lead to a boost in funding and jobs in this important area.

Regards  
Paul Leitinger

