

Environment and Planning Committee
Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

17/8/2020

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Sanja Van Huet. I live on the Bellarine Peninsula. I moved here 10 years ago because I love the ocean and the areas proximity to the Great Ocean Road. I moved here at a time that I needed to escape my stressful office environment. I am lucky enough to now be able to work from home.

One of the best things about living here is being closer to the forests in the Angahook National Park and the Otway Ranges. I love to hike and explore the great outdoors. It brings me a sense of peace, escape and wholeness (especially in these times of increasing public anxiety and mental illness).

I have seen many logging trucks coming from the Otway Ranges. I am worried that the Otway region, a unique and world renown area, will be destroyed – all for wood chips that go into toilet paper or for photocopier paper.

I know that this is not the only place in Victoria that is being harvested to ‘wipe our bums’.

This makes me very sad and angry as well. The destruction of these beautiful forests, and the animals and insects they support, is avoidable.

Recycled paper is so readily available for these uses.

I would like to see all logging in all Victoria’s native forest stop so that their unique ecology can be preserved.

The decisions of the Ecosystem Decline Inquiry can help save and protect these areas.

Please make a commitment to the following:

1. Bring forward the Victorian state government’s commitment to a 2030 industry transition. Immediate priorities are protection of unburnt Greater Glider habitat, and a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland.
2. The Victorian state government must develop carbon accounting and policies that include forests.
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. Declining ecosystems have profound implications for First Nations.
5. Victoria needs a new, independent, well-resourced conservation regulator to police deforestation and other destructive industries. The EPA is the independent

watchdog for pollution, but currently there is no independent watchdog to ensure industries comply with environmental laws, with numerous breaches to laws continuing to occur and a long history of regulators turning a blind eye.

6. Community rights must be guaranteed when governments are making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access necessary information, the right to challenge environmental decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.

As a concerned Victorian resident, I urge the Inquiry to make the right decision – and not compromise or follow economic values.

Once these areas, and the animals they support, are lost – they will never become part of our children’s memories. Protect our forest environments at all cost.

Yours Sincerely,

Sanja Van Huet

