

Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry regarding Extinction Crisis

To whom it may concern,

Thank you so much for taking on this Inquiry; given that 120 Victorian animals, birds, plants, insects and fish (that we know of) are on the brink of extinction and given that Australia as a whole has one of the highest extinction rates in the world, according to the IUCN list and the Australian EPBC Act list, this Inquiry is vital for the survival of some of Victoria's non-human species.

I am someone who is both passionate about and has studied highly in the fields of biodiversity, conservation and natural history, having acquired a first class honours in Ecology at the University of NSW and having worked in conservation around Melbourne since 2011.

I love the Australian bush and our wildlife and have worked hard to conserve and expand our unique biodiversity. During this COVID-19 crisis I have been working with my colleagues to make educational videos about our local flora and fauna to share with schools and the local community (Hobsons Bay in western Melbourne), where we would normally deliver live "walks and talks" about these issues. So far we have produced a video on reptiles, Sheokes and Echidnas – with several more I am editing about Acacia's, Ironbarks and Tawny Frogmouths. When making the video about the Echidna, I had to explain that whilst Echidnas used to be in Hobsons Bay, it would be very unlikely to see one these days due to development and human expansion having pushed them out of this area.

Although Echidnas are not threatened or endangered in Victoria, it is just another example on how we impact on the habitat and distribution of these and other species, forcing them to retreat and allowing them smaller and smaller areas to exist in; and then when we have catastrophic bushfires like last summer, we now don't know how many seemingly "safe" species have been pushed into a threatened category. However we do know that the fires destroyed more than 50% of the habitat for 185 rare and threatened Victorian species.

And what we also know is that Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia; just last year I witnessed more of our critically endangered western volcanic plains grassland (of which <0.1% remains) being paved over for more factories in my municipality of Hobsons Bay. This should not be allowed to happen to a critically endangered ecosystem, offset or no.

We also know that over 700 native plants, animals, insects and ecosystems are under threat and that more than 70 threatened species exist in forests that are still being logged.

The good news is that many ecosystems, plants and wildlife have shown resilience and can be restored with the right solutions being implemented. I would like to see the inquiry recommend the following:

1. Weed and invasive species eradication
2. Native (indigenous) plants being planted to restore habitats – including (but not limited to) grasslands, sedgelands, saltmarshes, mangroves and forests
3. Dedicated programs for reviving species facing extinction
4. An end to habitat destruction and strengthened nature laws

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and I look forward to the results of the Inquiry. I am happy to have my submission be made public.

Kind regards,

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