

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

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**SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

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I am extremely concerned about the logging of native forests and land clearing that is happening in Victoria because these activities are key drivers of the decline of wildlife, biodiversity and the ecosystem as a whole.

Trees are integral to the health of the environment; they absorb carbon dioxide and store carbon which helps to slow the rate of global warming; this is imperative for the health of Victorians and Australia in general. Trees are vital; they are the biggest plants on the planet and give us oxygen, stabilise soil and host complex microhabitats. When young, trees offer habitation and food to communities of birds, insects, lichen and fungi, and when older, trees provide cover to a wide variety of wildlife.

The catastrophic bush fires of 2019/2020 destroyed so much of Victoria's forests and killed billions of native animals which means that more trees are needed desperately and more than ever.

Also the Traditional Owners have not given consent to logging in Victoria's forests and it is time that the wishes of these people are respected. Traditional Owners bear responsibility to look after their lands as laid out by their ancestors which is why Victoria was in such good shape before colonisation took place. Therefore it is very distressing for Traditional Owners to witness the massive decline in biodiversity and not to have their wishes acknowledged and respected.

The impacts of climate change can no longer be ignored. The rise in temperature will have a devastating effect on humans as well as all flora and fauna. The loss of trees is a severe threat to the survival of threatened species and ecosystems. The extinction of just one animal, insect, plant or microsystem is an absolute tragedy which we should be doing all we can to avoid.

Unfortunately there are weak and ineffective state and federal environmental regulations as well as a severe lack of funding for National Parks, restoration projects as well as weed and pest control. The Traditional Owners should be involved in these projects.

Recommendations and actions:

There should be an immediate and rapid transition out of native forest logging.

There should be the identification and protection of key areas of habitat which are critical for threatened species to survive.

There should be greater protections for threatened species against logging, mining, development and fossil fuel projects.

There should be rapid restoration of areas which have been heavily impacted by logging and other extractive industries as well as the areas affected by the 2019/2020 bushfires.

There should be a clear process to recognise and address the impacts of ecosystem decline on Traditional Owners.

There should be priority given to the wishes of Traditional Owners and involvement in the management of their traditional lands.

These traditional lands were stolen and sovereignty was never ceded so not only is it morally right and just for custodianship to be returned to Traditional Owners but they have proved over thousands of years that they know how to look after the ecosystem.

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File1:

File2:

File3: