

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I love the natural environment including all its creatures and plants but, more importantly, I understand that we humans are part of and completely dependent on it for our survival. In this country and in the state of Victoria we have a poor record for responsible interaction with the natural world and we have an ethical obligation to do something about this which is more than lip-service.

Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia. Since colonisation, we have lost 49 of our known species and a further 2000 odd are on Threatened Species Advisory Lists. In some cases the population decline has been alarmingly rapid in recent times. Twenty years ago the Greater Glider was considered common. It is now listed as endangered, its population having crashed by 80% in the 20 years before the Black Summer fires.

The Greater Glider is an animal I have a particular interest in and affection for as it can be found not far from my home. It gives me great delight to visit these forests at night to spot them high in the trees, their distinctive eye-shine betraying their position. It is important to know where to go though because so much of our local forest has been logged in recent decades and regrowth does not provide the hollows necessary for these animals. It is distressing to discover a number of them in forest which is slated for logging and to know that they will die and the species will not recolonise the area in my life time if at all.

Of course where a sufficient number is detected and reported prior to logging, habitat trees must be left. Even when these trees survive the removal of surrounding forest, the feed trees have been removed so the Gliders starve anyway. Their fate is just one illustration of what happens when a thriving forest ecosystem that was lucky enough to survive the fires is destroyed by industrial logging of native forest. The exemption from the EPBC Act granted to VicForests through the RFAs is a disgrace. There is no excuse for continuing this destructive, poorly regulated and wildly unpopular practice.

It is unclear how many more species, perhaps including the Leadbeater's Possum and the Greater Glider, we will already have lost by 2030 when logging of native forests is planned to finish. Full transition to plantation-only harvesting needs to occur immediately.

Meanwhile so-called "salvage logging" saves nothing but instead causes immense harm to a forest environment already devastated by fire and struggling to recover.

Although I have a particular interest in forests I am very conscious of other aspects of ecosystem decline that have not been well-managed.

We need to control feral species. We cannot allow horses to devastate our alpine regions just because of a sentimental fondness for "The Man from Snowy River". We cannot protect deer for the benefit of recreational hunters. A significant increase in the resourcing of National Parks is needed, not just for feral animal management, but for weed control, rehabilitation of damaged areas and even fire fighting.

Inappropriate peri-urban development is still occurring and having an avoidable impact on ecosystems. Real estate "development" needs to be more strictly controlled.

Finally, the changes to the climate and the already observable impact on ecosystems are terrifying. Victoria may seem a small part of the global problem but we do need to do our bit to combat climate change. Victoria must reject any new fossil fuel projects and phase out current ones as quickly as possible. Land clearing must not only be arrested but also reversed where practicable. In the 21st century all planning needs to be viewed through the lens of climate.

There's some debate about who first said "If not us, who? If not now, when?" but they are still good questions.

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File1:

File2:

File3: