

Dear Parliamentary enquiry into ecosystems decline in [Victoria.ecosystems@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:Victoria.ecosystems@parliament.vic.gov.au)

I walk in the forest and the seventy year old Mountain Ash trees rising to the sky with few low hanging branches or hollows for animals to nest in. Stags are few and far between. A dense undergrowth of fern, wattle, sassafras and fallen logs makes it difficult to walk through. With time biodiversity will increase and the endangered animals of Sooty owl, greater glider and leadbeaters possum will come back to inhabit these forests but the Government will not allow this.

Future generations will not see our Mountain Ash forests in their full grandeur with enormous trunked trees knarled and branching in all directions and possums like pandas peering down from dizzying heights. These forests will become grand and varied in 100 to 200 more years but they are soon to be logged by VicForests supported by the Victorian Government.

Greed, money, corruption, fear of losing ones job, fear of losing power, silence and bureaucratic inertia governs the lack of care for our forests and their future. The logging industries want the same straight trees with nothing in between to hamper their logging operation. The logging industry does not want varied animal or plant species in the forest because that means VicForests can be taken to court. The logging industry just wants to destroy our biodiversity and the government is supporting this crime.

Our Western predecessors tried to eliminate the first nations people 100-200 years ago and now our Government's continue this process by eliminating our precious varied plants and animals. This is a continuation of colonisation and destruction. We, outside of government battle to protect what is left. We go out in cold and rain and try to find elusive endangered species and then try to raise money to fight court battles to protect our forests and our selves against our government. The government should be protecting us, our land and our plant and animal species against destruction but does the reverse! This is ridiculous.

Environmental laws are modified by State and Federal Government to make it easier for this destruction to take place. To make it easier to destroy plants, animals and rare species found on our landscape. Using our taxes, the government employs expensive barristers and lawyers to fight its case for more destruction! We have to battle to raise money privately to fight our own government, trying to defend endangered species and forests.

Landcare is espoused as the way to protect nature. But planting trees and bringing our diverse eco-systems back is much, much harder than keeping the complex ecosystems we already have. I walk over landcare sites and see most of the trees have died. They have not been cared for or maintained. Taxpayers money has been spent on failed replanting. I am not against planting trees and have planted many myself but often the sites chosen for landcare are not the most critical, the most eroded, the most needing of plant cover.

Exploitation of soil, trees and rivers on private farmland goes apace. I walk over farmland and it is bogged up by cattle walking over largely bare hills. Few trees have been left and many of the old ones are dieing. Logging and cattle have degraded our rivers whose banks have been eroded by cattle walking in and out. Cattle farming should be phased out and taxed for damaging the Australian countryside and contributing to carbon in the atmosphere.

The government has no coordinated plan to protect the biodiversity of our rivers which are silted and turbid. There is no coordinated plan for river care and every government agency passes the responsibility for rivers and the blame

their damage on to every other agency. Rivers are not fenced in and protected and this is a major failing of our government and private landholders.

The only place for nature is on our roadside reserves and in our forests and these are ravaged by government.

What hope is there for nature?

What hope is there for our planet?

What hope is there for us to tackle climate change?

Carbon is accumulating in the atmosphere and the State and Federal Government are doing nothing about this. Trees and forests are one of the main absorbers of Carbon but there seems to be little recognition of this by our Government and most people are concerned with everyday problems and cannot face these broader and long-term issues which their children will have to face.

Dr. Lea Jelinek

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