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**Categories:** Submissions

Stephanie Wang  
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To the Environment and Planning Committee, regarding the Victorian Extinction Enquiry;

I moved here from Canberra ten years ago. I'm a Chinese-Australian woman, twice transplanted, and I love Melbourne deeply and call it my home. Something I've always loved about Victoria is its green heart, and the patches of wilderness to be found, even in the city. I live near Merri Creek. One of my greatest joys is the wildlife there. Two years ago a colony of Bell Miners moved into the wooded area behind Ceres – you could hear their sweet, chiming calls from dawn till twilight. Years before that a friend and I came across a dead tree sprouting what looked to be a number of fluffy growths. It was a family of tawny frogmouths, the three chicks like balefully glaring pom-poms.

Now, I see other things encroaching on this area I love. Every other day it seems there is some new chemical effluvium that has washed downstream from factories further north. Trash lines the creek banks and wraps around tree branches. Sometimes my partner and I walk down the trail collecting litter in huge bags, and within two days plastic dots the landscape as though we had never taken any away. We see fewer native birds and bees; more corpses of creatures killed by the dogs their owners let off leashes.

What's happening at the Merri Creek is a microcosm of what's happening across all of Victoria. We've been asleep at the wheel, and meanwhile the problems of habitat destruction, extinction, and ecosystem collapse only grow in scope and complexity. While we've been sleeping 66% of Victoria's native habitat has been cleared – the highest of any state. 120 endemic species have reached the brink of extinction. Some we will never get back. The other day a chain-link fence in Stawell garrotted five critically endangered Swift Parrots – five, of only 1000 breeding pairs left in the wild. Introduced deer in the Yarra Ranges and beyond trample native seedlings to death, destroying the delicate ecosystem and endangering Lyrebirds and other species. Lyrebird expert Alex Maisey recently said he fully expects that, left unchecked, the deer disaster will cause the extinction of rainforest in the Dandenong Ranges within his lifetime (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvHossy13-Q>).

What fire and apathy haven't yet destroyed, is down to us to save. We need a plan to eradicate weeds and invasive species. We could restore native habitats by planting trees, creating jobs by so doing. We could implement a 'Save our Species' program, like the one NSW has introduced. We need to strengthen our conservation and nature laws, making it illegal to log native forests and transitioning to a plantation-based timber industry. We need to stop burning coal, which is bleaching our reefs and worsening the bushfire season each year. We need to stop propping up these short-term, short-sighted policies that are burning down the house we live in and start fixing the house. We have a tiny, rapidly-diminishing window in which to save Victoria's green heart. Please take this seriously. We have to wake up.

Yours sincerely,  
Stephanie Wang

\* I give permission for this submission, minus my personal details, to be made public