

Jenni Baker



23/05/20

Dear Panel - Extinction Inquiry,

I make this submission as I have profound concern for the rate of extinction of Victoria's unique wildlife.

I was hopeful as a result of the devastating bushfires of 2019/20, which burnt 1.4 million hectares in Victoria alone, that the clear national and international public concern and heartbreak at the devastation these fires inflicted upon our already highly vulnerable wilderness and unique native animals would send a clear signal to governments to respond by protecting and securing our environmental legacy.

Unfortunately, as 2020 rolls on and our attention is focused on containing the COVID-19 virus, it is clear that this has fast become yesterday's news for our decision-makers and sadly we have returned to a business-as-usual approach, which is defined by clear disregard for nature and the environment.

This is most explicitly played out in Victoria by the insistence of State Government owned VicForests to continue to log and burn our last remnants of forestation at an industrial-scale post-bushfires, despite abundant evidence that this is no longer economically or ecologically viable. Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia with more than 70 threatened species residing in native forests actively being burnt and logged. The practices Vicforests use are so violent and brutal, they are not just impacting on the sustainability of wildlife that managed to survive the fires, the level of residual air-pollution is having dire consequences upon on the health of local townships and Melbourne.

The State government incomprehensibly also recently approved hunting of critically endangered wetland birds, despite COVID-19 restrictions on almost every other aspect of our lives. It seems clear we have not just disregard for wildlife in our state, but indeed active policies to destroy and decimate. This is only more difficult to understand when we consider the considerable tourist and lifestyle benefits and therefore economic opportunity which are lost when we fail to protect our wild spaces.

Biodiversity of our animal and plant life is diminished continually and we are all the less for it. We need to strengthen the environmental protections that we have for our fragile and vulnerable wild spaces before it is too late, and we all are forced to live in a degraded and decimated land. I love this country and during this COVID-19 pandemic one of the few places I have been able to find solace is in nature.

We need to develop and design our futures in an integrated ways working alongside and harnessing our natural resources, relying on expert scientific evidence and seek understanding of land management from traditional owners, so that both the country and the people prosper and flourish maintaining our lifestyle which is second to none in the world.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, if you wish you may contact me about the contents of my submission,

Sincerely,

Jenni Baker