

## Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Dear Environment and Planning Committee,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline.

I am Lucas fay, 22-year-old who grew up on the Mornington peninsula, who developed a connection to the ocean by playing at the beach every day. I am currently living in north Melbourne, whilst juggling a Bachelor of Film and television degree, running music events and playing gigs in Melbourne whilst working for an environmental advocacy group.

Australian nature is part my identity, they are destroying my personality pillars and my deep connection to the places that I feel the most at home. I care about the health of our oceans. Australian leads the world in fossil fuel exports and it is drastically affecting the health of our oceans. From coral bleaching, rising sea levels and habitat destruction due to fossil fuel projects that are approved within our weak environmental legislation.

The devastation inflicted on our wildlife and forests from the 2019 - 2020 bushfires has made forest protection and a rapid logging transition more urgent. The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 industry transition must be brought forward. Two immediate priorities are protection of unburnt Greater Glider habitat, and a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland.

There are opportunities for the state government to protect forests for all Victorians to enjoy now and into the future. Two community led initiatives are the proposed Great Forest National Park and Emerald Link conservation economy proposal.

In the face of climate catastrophe, Victoria's forests play a critical role in removing carbon pollution from the air we all breathe, nourishing us with clean air and safe, clean drinking water. The Victorian state government must develop carbon accounting and policies that include forests.

The state government must urgently implement and properly resource Action Statements (plans for recovery) for all threatened plants and wildlife. Victoria's plants and wildlife are at risk, with over 2000 recognised as threatened with extinction however only 15% have Action Statements.

The rights and interests of Traditional Custodians should be recognised in all aspects of land and water management, as well as decision-making in relation to their traditional lands, including traditional management practices such as cultural fire. First Nations - declining ecosystems have profound implications for First Nations.

Victoria needs a new, independent, well resourced conservation regulator to police deforestation and other destructive industries. The EPA is the independent watchdog for pollution, but currently there is no independent watchdog to ensure industries comply with environmental laws, with numerous breaches to laws continuing to occur and a long history of regulators turning a blind eye.

Community rights must be guaranteed when governments are making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access necessary information, the right to challenge environmental decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.

Lucas Fay,



I agree to this submission being made public.