

Dear Sirs

I am a resident of the suburb of Mernda in the City of Whittlesea. In this area within the urban growth boundary, the local municipality has done an admirable job of retaining mature river red gum trees within the estate developments. This adds to the character of this area, and means that we are blessed with substantial numbers of cockatoos, corellas, and other parrots even though the environment has been greatly disturbed. The Red Gums and the birds are reminders of what the area once was.

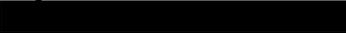
The Mernda environment was once characterised as Grassy Volcanic Woodland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain, an environment that excited Major Mitchell and the early Europeans, and which had sustained and been sustained by Aboriginal communities for tens of thousand of years. Pastoral and agricultural developments since European settlement have left most areas of this woodland disturbed. Because of its attractiveness to pastoralists, very little has been given long term protection. This of course has led to the loss or threatened loss of many species of specialised mammals, birds, reptiles, and plants.

In this area, the urban growth boundary has been set at Mason's Road. When one drives north up Plenty Road, and crosses Mason's Road, one is immediately greeted by what is the best and largest remaining area of Grassy Eucalypt Woodland in the State. There is an area of 1,200 hectares that will prevent the extinction of a number of species of flora and fauna if conserved and managed appropriately. Right on the doorstep of metropolitan Melbourne, its conservation value will be complemented by its recreational and educational value. The woodland and grassland ecological communities may provide habitat for at least 12 animal species and more than 20 plant species that are listed as nationally threatened.

I understand from the City of Whittlesea that the State Government committed to fully secure the Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve by 2020 as part of the 2008 Melbourne Strategic Assessment Agreement with the Federal Government to extend the Urban Growth Boundary.

I urge the Government to take swift action on the protection of the proposed Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve, as promised, and ensure the future of at least 12 animal species and more than 20 plant species that are listed as nationally threatened.

Faithfully

Hugh McKinnon


REFERENCES:

"Grassy Eucalypt Woodland Reserve needs to be protected", press release by City of Whittlesea, Tuesday, March 10, 2020

"Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors", Victorian Government, June 2013

"Nationally Threatened Ecological Communities of the Victorian Volcanic Plain: Natural Temperate Grassland & Grassy Eucalypt Woodland", Australian Government, 2011