

From: bruce campbell [REDACTED]
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Subject: Inquiry into the Loss of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Categories: Submissions

ecosystems@parliament.vic.gov.au

This submission is not confidential.

I am very concerned by ongoing threats to our state's biodiversity. As an active member of a landcare network I personally experience the general apathy displayed by politicians at all levels of government towards effective, long term, properly funded protection and improvement of biodiversity. There is an urgency that only frontline workers feel while decision makers and funders always put other priorities first. We continue to treat the environment as predominantly a resource to be drained of value. The parts we do spend some money on protecting are under-resourced and declining in natural value through weed and feral animal invasion, recreational misuse, illegal resource extraction, rubbish dumping and more. This is happening against a backdrop of climate change, increasing wild fires and unchecked urban sprawl, all of which are hammering our diverse ecosystems and their biodiversity.

We have no political leaders wielding power at any level championing our unique natural environment. Without high level leaders speaking up for nature, most people will not sit up, listen and begin to comprehend the enormity of the problems nature faces in Victoria (and Australia). We need leaders that take long term environmental sustainability seriously. In the triple bottom line so often touted it is always the natural environment that gets traded away. If this were not the case, why have our biodiversity and ecosystems continued to decline? When all has been traded away to agriculture, resource extraction, human settlements and human recreational desires, what will remain? We need champions to envision a future where biodiversity flourishes and humans flourish within an ecological system that is truly sustainable.

Why are all single use plastics not banned now?

Why do we continue to log old growth forests when the evidence is overwhelming that this is sending species towards oblivion?

Why do we continue to pour partly treated and partly filtered sewerage and micr plastics into the sea?

Why do we prioritise the racing industry over protecting threatened species on our beaches?

Why do we think building a fossil fuel port in Westernport Bay is in any way supporting a sustainable future?

Why are we not leading the world in transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2030?

Why is every stream, wetland and riparian area in the State not protected from grazing and spoiling, after decades of farmer 'education'?

Why do so many waterways continue to have such poor water quality after decades of knowing this?

Why do farmers continue to drain wetlands without punishment?

Why does government choose population growth and subsequent urban sprawl, the laziest of economic growth drivers, over long term drivers for sustainability?

Why do our citizens by and large have such a low level of knowledge about Victoria's unique flora, fauna and ecosystems, including marine systems?

We have been and remain at a turning point in our brief recent colonisation of this land that was managed sustainably for thousands of years prior to our intervention. This long, slow turning under the governance of the State of Victoria has seen massive changes to land and sea use that have wrought destruction on our unique ecosystems and wildlife. Without pause, this destruction will only continue until we have passed the point of no return.

But we still have a chance to stop and reverse the decline of our ecosystems and biodiversity. Change for the better will require leaders in government to work with leaders in science, agriculture, landcare and the community who already know what is needed to stop the trend towards loss and turn it towards conservation, restoration and sustainability. It will require prioritising spending in support of this.

At this time in our history, where one of the smallest of life forms - a virus - has shown how superficial and precarious our human society and its constructs are, now is the time to combine rebuilding society and economy in partnership with nature, not against it. Our children, grandchildren and all future generations will thank us for the wisdom we can display today, if we choose to embark on a journey to rejuvenate the natural world that we so fundamentally depend upon.

Bruce Campbell

