

From: Jessica Lucas [REDACTED]
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To: ecosystems
Subject: Submission for the Extinction Inquiry

Categories: Submissions

To Whom it May Concern,

I wish to make a submission for the Parliamentary Inquiry on Extinction.

Since 2011 I have been a volunteer wildlife rescuer for Wildlife Victoria. I have first hand experience in regards to difficulties our native creatures face in terms of their survival in urban, regional and bushland areas. In particular, it is very clear from my rescue work that whenever humans and wildlife interact in the wild, it usually involves a devastating consequence for the animal.

Aside from rescuing, I volunteer to visit schools and kindergartens to speak with children about wildlife, what harms it and what can be done to help. Each time I am overwhelmed with the passion and engagement shown by the children towards these animals. They are fascinated and care deeply about native wildlife and it reinforces the feeling I have that we have some of the most special and unique animals in the world, here in Australia. We are so lucky and must look after our unique species for our children.

With the increasing threat of bushfires plus a reduction of habitat due to development for farming, forestry and housing it is no wonder our animals are facing extinction.

I propose the following three solutions to help with this problem:

1. Ecosystem Restoration Camps. www.ecosystemrestorationcamps.org

Founder John D. Liu was a journalist covering the revegetation of the Loess Plateau by the Chinese government in the 1990s. The area regenerated was 64,000 square kilometres. He saw the scale of what was possible and what techniques could be used. Please see the image below of before and after the project in the Loess Valley.

Since then he has founded an organisation that helps to set up camps around the world. Volunteers or paying tourists come to the camp, upskill through training on ecosystem renewal and participate in the regeneration work needed in the local area.



There is a fantastic opportunity here for the Australian Government to provide similar training and accommodation centres in bushfire affected areas. So many Australians are now out of work or are looking to expand their skills. The camps would provide a healing solution to both unemployment post-COVID19 and the regeneration of communities and habitat for bushfire devastated areas.

Studies have shown that if a large enough area is revegetated, it changes the climate within that area by increasing overall moisture in the soil and air. If we can regenerate on a grand scale it will increase rainfall, and therefore minimise the bushfire risk in the long term. Here is a link to a study:

<https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2017/07/19/1621516114>

Revegetating large areas will not only benefit wildlife, reduce bushfire risk and increase rainfall. It will also sequester carbon from the atmosphere into the soil in these revegetated areas, thus providing a solution to fighting climate change.

2. Research and Education

We need more research on extinction rates of wildlife across Australia.

We also need to teach school children the importance of our native wildlife. Their role in the wider ecosystem and encourage a life long desire to protect our lands and the animals that live on them.

3. Government Commitment to Protect Wildlife

We need the Government of Australia to amend the laws so that wildlife are more protected than they currently are. Killing wildlife or destroying habitat should carry a criminal punishment.

Further, if the Government had a Department of Conservation with trained rangers that could rescue and protect wildlife and wildlife areas, it would not be up to non-profit volunteer organisations to do all the rescues. At this time it is impossible for every animal that is reported to be able to get rescued, because all rescuers are volunteers. Such a department would generate jobs, provide training opportunities and provide a nationwide framework of prioritising conservation and the prevention of extinction. New Zealand has been operating a D.O.C. for decades that demonstrates these outcomes very successfully.

I am just one ordinary person, a mother, a small business owner. I am not a scientist or a politician. All I can do in these times is to pass on the strong desire I have to protect our native wildlife from extinction and the solutions I can see are possible. The love I have for these animals has prompted me to take the time to write this submission.

I hope you will take the time to read my submission and I trust that the Government will take some of these considerations to heart for the sake of protecting these creatures that are under our care and for the sake of the world we want our children and grandchildren to live in.

Kind regards,

Jessica Lucas

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