

## **Maeve Bannister**

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Submission By :  
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### **Submission to Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee, Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria**

I am making this submission as a result of the significant threats now facing Victoria's ecosystems and natural environment. The shocking decline in population and biodiversity of our plants, animals, birds, insects and marine populations is a serious issue.

I make these comments as a person who has had the good fortune over the last 50 years to have enjoyed the outdoor environment in many parts of Victoria through bushwalking, camping, photography and fishing activities. As a resident of South West Victoria I regularly visit the Grampians, the Glenelg River National Park and the wild beaches along the coast. I am also an active volunteer with local Landcare and Environment groups.

The reasons for ecosystem decline are many and complex, and indeed the causes extend well beyond Victoria borders. However, the adverse impact on the environment from climate change and global warming both now and in the future are so significant that meaningful and urgent action to address this issue must be a major part of government focus.

My comments and suggestions are by intent general in nature. However, I strongly believe that a broad holistic approach, based on expert scientific advice that is widely available, is required if there is to be any chance to address the declining state of our ecosystems.

Hence I urge this committee and the Victorian parliament to consider and include the following within all policy and legislative actions -

1. Implement policies to urgently address global warming which is a key driver of significant ecosystem decline. This should include decarbonising the Victorian economy and transition to 100% renewable energy by 2030.
2. Abandon the current moves to expand the natural gas industry (onshore and offshore)  
This should include a moratorium on further seismic testing and gas exploration in the Otway Basin.
3. Protect public beaches to preserve habitat for shorebirds and coastal species and vegetation.  
To this end commercial horse training should be prohibited on beaches including in the Belfast Coastal Reserve (between Warrnambool and Port Fairy).
4. Implement programs to effectively and humanely eradicate and control feral animals (horses, goats, pigs, deer, cats, dogs) across the state including in Alpine areas, National Parks and reserves and on private land.
5. Enact legislation and laws to provide strong biodiversity protection. Victorian legislation should counter and overcome the current significant inadequacies of the Commonwealth EPBC Act (including addressing any subsequent amendments that are being considered by the Commonwealth Government in Aug 2020)
6. Immediately halt logging of old growth forests.

7. Increase the area of remnant vegetation, including grasslands, that is protected in national parks and reserves.
8. Implement a program to reintroduce aboriginal traditional land management practices for fire risk mitigation and biodiversity enhancement. This should also include development of more indigenous ranger roles throughout the state.
9. Increase the emphasis on environment subjects in primary and secondary school (should be compulsory). Develop community information programs about climate change and its adverse effects on ecosystems and biodiversity loss.
10. Increase the funding for local environment initiatives including support and funding for Landcare groups.
11. Provide incentives for farmers to rehabilitate on farm wetlands and remnant native vegetation.