

Dear Committee Members,

I spent the first ten years of my life in Victoria then my family relocated to Queensland where I spent the next twenty years of my life. When the opportunity arose to move back to my home state I did so but much to my dismay when I moved back to Victoria I discovered the native fauna I had seen in large numbers when I was young largely eradicated to the point where I could no longer find them in the numbers I had seen when I was young. Camping when I was young was a family ritual and I recall fondly the experiences I had when coming across large numbers of platyusus, wombats and koalas but now I consider myself lucky to even see one of these animals in the wild let alone large numbers of them. I was an avid bushwalker when I was young and that has continued into my adult years and while I still love doing it I miss seeing native fauna in the numbers I once did if I am fortuitous enough to see any at all. Sadly it is not only the native fauna that I noticed had diminished in numbers but also the native flora was noticeably absent and in its place were invasive species and weeds wherever I went throughout this great state. I could go into details of the number of native species of flora and fauna that we have lost or are close to losing but I am sure you will hear those numbers from experts so all I ask is that you listen to the experts, act on their recommendations as well as read and give due weight to the submissions of those who have seen the reduction in numbers and diversity of our native fauna and flora as they travel around Victoria.

According to statistics released by the Victorian Government at least half of Victoria's native vegetation has been cleared including 80% of the original vegetation cover on private land and Victoria is still losing 4,000 hectares per year most of which of which is endangered grassland. This has caused a biodiversity crisis as native species no longer have a habitat that they require to either survive or thrive. If this clearing is to continue for housing or crops the risk of extinction to both our native flora and fauna is a real risk.

Thankfully there are solutions to these problems which are absolutely achievable with the right level of funding and commitment from governments. A huge program of weed and invasive species eradication, a tree-planting workforce to restore habitat, a dedicated program for reviving species facing extinction and an end to habitat destruction and strengthened nature laws would not only prevent further loss of native flora and fauna but provide jobs which are needed after recent losses of jobs due to Covid-19. There are examples of the environment recovering with the right level of protection and funding and you all here today have the power to make sure the environment receives the right level of protection and funding to both recover and thrive again.

I am happy for my submission to be made public though I want my address and any other information that could identify me to be withheld.

Kind Regards,

Timothy Shaun Boyle

[REDACTED]