

Environment and Planning Committee

Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

28th August, 2020

Dear members of the Committee,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria.

I've lived in Melbourne for the past 5 years and one of the many things I love about this city is its proximity to nature. I find living here manageable only because I can get out into nature and recharge. As a south Australian I had no idea how lush, unique, ancient and beautiful it is in Victoria.

As Australians, our native animals and plants form part of our identity and as a nation we are proud that they are found nowhere else on earth. However with this fact comes responsibility; when we allow them to become extinct on our land, they are gone from the planet for good. Are you aware that Australia has the largest vertebrate mammal extinction in the world? Or that we were in the top 10 highest deforesters on the planet in 2018 (and the highest first world country)?

Being from SA, I also hadn't experienced the modern logging industry to the extent that occurs here in Victoria. The first time I drove past dead, brown hills of logged forest I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I had just been hiking through dense tree ferns, mountain ash and myrtle beech forest, hearing lyrebird and fresh water trickling close by. I couldn't fathom the destruction.

These forests provide a home for animals that don't live anywhere else. They are the lungs of our state of Victoria and attract rainfall that filters water into the catchment areas that supply Melbourne with some of the best drinking water in the world. I won't lie - South Australia's water is rubbish compared to here!! They moderate our climate, and they are carbon rich. With our scientist predicting more and more droughts to come, it is more important than ever to have natural ecosystems to attract this rain.

In spite of all this and in the wake of the unprecedented and catastrophic bushfires we've experienced and are still experiencing, many of these native forests are still on the logging schedule.

As you undertake this important inquiry into Victoria's extinction crisis, I urge you to ensure that:

The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 native forest logging industry transition is brought forward, including: immediate protection of Greater Glider habitat; a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland; releasing support for working people before 2024.

Community rights are guaranteed when governments are making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access necessary information, the right to challenge environmental decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.

The rights and interests of Traditional Custodians are recognised in all aspects of land and water management, as well as decision-making in relation to their traditional lands, including traditional management practices such as cultural fire.

The Victorian state government must develop carbon accounting and policies that include forests.

Plans for recovery of threatened plants and wildlife are implemented urgently and properly resourced.

The government protects forests for all Victorian's to enjoy now and into the future including supporting the Emerald Link conservation economy proposal for East Gippsland.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, and I invite any further discussion via email

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Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Emma Downey

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