

From: Jo Cary [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 19 August 2020 11:12 AM
To: ecosystems
Subject: Submission into the Inquiry into Ecosystems Decline in Victoria

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Dear committee,

The Parliamentary Inquiry into ecosystem decline in Victoria is much needed and is to be commended. My submission focuses on the ecosystem decline in Victoria's native forests.

The mismanagement of native forests in Victoria was highlighted in a recent Federal Court decision - Friends of Leadbeater's Possum Inc v VicForests (No 4) [2020] FCA 704. In this case the court found that VicForests' conduct of forestry operations was illegal and likely to have had, and continue to have, a significant impact on the endangered species of the Greater Glider and the Leadbeater's Possum. The case summary by Justice Mortimer states that VicForests' forestry operations damage or destroy existing habitat critical to the survival of the two species and prevents new areas of forest from developing into such habitat in the future.

Justice Mortimer also found that it is well accepted on the expert scientific evidence that there are large and presently unaddressed risks to our native species from climate change.

The Victorian government's prolonged destruction of our native forests together with permitted private land clearing has seen devastating effects on our native flora and fauna species. Of the 3,330 known Victorian species, 49 are extinct and 2,097 (63%) are on the Threatened Species Advisory Lists. More than a quarter of Victoria's wetlands have been lost since European settlement, and the remaining are mostly in poor and degraded condition. With the consequences of climate change and the recent devastating bush fires, these statistics are set to become much worse unless the government takes swift and meaningful action.

In addition, regional communities have been devastated by the recent unprecedented bushfires and the coronavirus. Supporting "green jobs" in activities such as revegetation and other programs in distressed regional areas would help to create regional economic benefits and have multiple other benefits such as:

- (i) creating wildlife corridors thereby contributing to the protection of Victorian flora and fauna species. One key driver of ecosystem decline in Victoria is habitat fragmentation, which the creation of wildlife corridors would help address;
- (ii) helping to protect and maintain our waterways and water storage systems. For example, experts say that continued logging of the Thomson Catchment for Melbourne could lead to a 20% loss of water yield (the amount of

water that flows through the catchment). This is equal to the water use of around 600,000 people every year. Australia is at risk of further prolonged and sustained drought and we must do everything we can now to help prevent this;

- (iii) protecting our land and ecosystems for future generations ensuring there is intergenerational equity;
- (iv) creating carbon sinks thereby helping prevent the most devastating effects of climate change. The results of NASA's international research team on this point are consistent with recommendations made by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018 which found 950 million hectares of new forests could help limit the increase in global average temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2050

My submission recommends the Victorian government undertake the following actions:

1. Immediately cease native forest logging and support a swift transition of regional industries and workers to jobs focused on plantation logging, land restoration and revegetation. Ending native forest logging cannot wait until 2030. All or most demand for wood products can and must be met from existing plantation forests only and all paper products should be manufactured from recycled material and not our native forests.
2. Ensure that no salvage logging occurs in burnt native forests. The forests and wildlife that have suffered from the bushfires need support to recover. Salvage logging pushes extremely vulnerable threatened species further towards extinction.
3. Support large scale employment programs to plant and maintain nature corridors along existing waterways as an initial priority and undertake effective weed and invasive species eradication programs. Many countries around the world are developing plans for a "green" focussed coronavirus recovery. It was recently reported that the Madrid City Council has launched a tender to plant hundreds of thousands of new trees around the city's perimeter. (refer <https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thelocal.es%2F20200710%2Fmadrid-wants-to-build-biggest-metropolitan-forest-in-europe&data=02%7C01%7Cecosystems%40parliament.vic.gov.au%7C50336e3584414c4aa3e308d843dca7a%7C821af0ec31404137af0e6690286fb673%7C0%7C0%7C637333963135562672&sdata=4XtAtudCqJ0IXgUtQIvVF2QiyofIJTGChVnJvairO%2FA%3D&reserved=0>)
4. Oppose the devolution to the states of the federal government's responsibilities of assessment, approvals, compliance and monitoring under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).
5. Properly implement the amended Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and prioritise enforcement of that Act. Urgently needed implementation includes development of revised lists of threatened species, the rollout of the new obligation on public authorities to give "proper consideration" to biodiversity conservation, and a program to identify and designate critical habitat.
6. Update environmental laws to ensure biodiversity is protected and to arrest and reverse species decline by immediately—
 - a. repealing the Forests (Wood Pulp Agreement) Act 1996 (which allows logging of native forests beyond what our native forests can bear); and
 - b. ending Victoria's agreement with the Commonwealth regarding the discredited Regional Forest Agreements (all logging must be subject to the Commonwealth's EPBC Act).

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Cary

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