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**Sent:** Friday, 28 August 2020 11:04 PM  
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**Subject:** New Submission to Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

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Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Dr Belinda van Heerwaarden



**SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

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As an evolutionary and conservation biologist specialising in understanding the adaptive capacity of species to respond to climate change, I am extremely concerned about all of the terms of reference. I am especially concerned about the extent of the decline of Victoria's biodiversity and the likely impact on people and ecosystems, and if more is not done to address this, including the consideration of climate change impacts. On this point, it is becoming abundantly clear that species and ecosystems are going to be widely impacted by climate change and if we don't do something to reduce the direct anthropogenic causes of decline and extinction in plants and animals in Victoria, the impacts of climate change will be more devastating.

I am also concerned about the adequacy of the legislative framework protecting Victoria's environment, including grasslands, forests and the marine and coastal environment, and native species. Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia - 66% of our land has been cleared of native trees, shrubs and plants – this is the habitat that supports our native wildlife. Over 700 native plants, animals, insects and ecosystems are under threat. Over 100 Victorian plants and animals are on the brink of extinction.

We need to start thinking about protecting species and ecosystems now and in the future and slowing climate change. My research suggests that many species will not be able to handle more than 1-2 degrees of warming. We need to think about maintaining biodiversity, including genetic diversity, to maintain ecosystem function under climate change.

We also need to think about reducing emissions and creating jobs for Victorians. Suggestions include...  
Upgrading the grid to bring more solar, wind, and storage online, and help establish the country's first offshore wind farm.  
Bringing forward the Victorian Renewable Energy Target of 50% by 2030 to 2025, and establish a new target of 100% renewables by 2030.

Funding the installation of rooftop solar and storage on all public buildings such as schools, hospitals, libraries, fire stations, and SES facilities.

Investing in a new fleet of Victorian-made trains, trams, and electric buses.

Upgrading the public transport network to improve accessibility for everyone in the community.

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