

**From:** Hilary Hughes [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 27 May 2020 2:53 PM  
**To:** ecosystems  
**Subject:** Extinction Inquiry

To whom this may concern,

I hope this email finds you well.

I've always swam. Since I learnt to swim at Deewhy from around 3 years old. From this love of the ocean and exploring rockpools, it has grown to be a love of all nature and wild animals. I can vividly remember one of my 'Three Wishes' as a young child was to be a bird. I'm from a generation that learned from Captain Planet and the Planeteers, as they worked hard to save the world from destruction by uncaring and selfish humans.

As an adult I still love the feeling of being in saltwater, feeling refreshed and physically in something that is so much greater than myself. I prefer to run along trails in among the Australian bushland with only birds as music, rather than the concrete and headphones to block the noise of cars. For the last 10 years I have been worked in Environmental Education, driven by a desire to inspire others to care about our world.

Working with children they clearly understand what is right and wrong about sharing and how unfair it is for animals to be forced to sacrifice their wellbeing for humans to 'thrive'. Unfortunately, rather than speaking proudly about the efforts of our Leaders, I am forced to share grim facts about how Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia - 66% of our land has been cleared of native trees, shrubs and plants and that more than 70 threatened species make their home in forests that are still being logged. It's difficult to be inspiring about the future when these are the facts.

I feel as though the terrible event that is COVID-19 is like the planet sending us to our rooms to think about what we have done. The closeness of humans and animals in terms of our physical connection and impacts of our choices has become even more apparent. It's a time to re-evaluate and decide what we want to do on the other side of this event. The cost to jobs and slowing down of the world has seen us develop to less selfish behaviours, such as; sharing food, appreciating views out our windows and looking after our local communities.

This is a great opportunity to continue to care about others and expand that care to our amazing natural world. While teaching children I would regularly discuss the reasons for why a species becomes endangered;

C – Climate change

H – Habitat Loss

I – Introduced Species (and diseases)

P - Pollution

P – Poaching

If we look at these threats and consider ways to overcome them through future job opportunities, there is a chance for this period of horrific human loss to become once of positive human action.

### **a) A dedicated program for reviving species facing extinction**

The work of rescuing Victoria's more than 120 species at risk of extinction deserves and needs a dedicated program of funding. NSW has committed \$100 million to a 'Save Our Species' program, which systematically identifies risks to species and goes about addressing them. It also includes action like breeding programs so healthy populations of animals, birds and plants can be restored. Victoria has nothing like this program and spends almost no money on this type of dedicated species recovery work.

We also spend very little money on research for our scientists to study new solutions to the extinction crisis. It's time that changed.

### **b) An end to habitat destruction and strengthened nature laws**

We cannot hope to stop extinction unless we stop the destructive activities that are driving it. We need to:

- End native forest logging and transition to a plantation-based timber industry
- Phase out coal and gas burning, which is making the climate crisis worse and driving devastating extreme events like heat waves, fires and floods
- Stop destructive and unnecessary development like the Western Highway Duplication and the proposed Westernport gas ship terminal which continue to bit-by-bit erode the health of Victoria's environment for corporate profits.
- Change the laws that allow wildlife to be killed, and grasslands and other habitat to be cleared, with little to no ramifications.

### **c) A huge program of weed and invasive species eradication**

Victoria is overrun by weeds and invasive animals, which kill and out-compete our native plants and wildlife. It's a big job to manage them, but it's critical for restoring habitat. We could create thousands of jobs clearing weeds out of rivers, creeks, farmland and national parks, and humanely managing introduced animals like cats, deer, rabbits and foxes.

### **d) A tree-planting workforce to restore habitat**

67% of Victoria's trees, mangroves, shrubs, and other plants have been cleared since colonisation. Much of what's left is in poor health. We could create thousands of jobs in both the city and the country, replanting trees and vegetation in our parks, streets, rivers and creeks right across our state, but especially in bushfire-affected areas. We could also help landowners to plant native vegetation on their land.

I hope that you take this all into consideration and make a decisions that helps the current and future generations.

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**Hilary Hughes**

[REDACTED]

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of country I am working on and you are working on and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

I am sending this email at a time that suits me right now. I do not expect you to respond out of your work hours or straight away to this email. Please read and respond to this email at a time that suits your work practices and your own family, fun and wellbeing needs.