



From: POV eSubmission Form <ecosystems@parliament.vic.gov.au>
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To: ecosystems
Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Categories: Submissions

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Ms Kay Shields



SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Dear Environment and Planning Committee,
I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline. My name is Kay Shields and I am a retired school teacher. I have always had a great passion for communicating to my students the need to look after our shared home, as Mother Earth is the provider. I must say children 'get it' and their keen interest and care for nature is heart-warming, but many adults obviously did not learn this fact and hold a view that it is mankind who provides.

I grew up in the city but spent most holidays in Victoria at Euroa, Chiltern, Crowlands and also Gunbar in outback New South Wales. Most Sundays mum would pack a scrumptious picnic and send us off for the day so she could have a rest. With my dad, brother and sister we would drive, fish, mushroom or walk through the Victorian countryside and along the Great Ocean Road. My dad and brother could identify any bird or animal they saw and shared what they knew about their behaviour. The love of Victoria's natural places: its beauty, its animals and its serenity we all shared.

Driving out west from Melbourne now it is a totally new landscape. I no longer see waving grasses full of seed heads, flocks of birds or a solitary bird of prey through the car window. There are fewer stands of trees and countless house tops as urbanisation has taken away the western plains and the great diversity of the plant and animal life it supported. Even the Cheetham Wetlands, a wetland of international significance that is supposed to be protected, is being encroached on by urbanisation and the debris that comes with us, threatening the survival of migratory species that travel across the world to feed and breed here.

My brother, now in his 80's, has been a keen fisherman all his life. He still goes fishing but never brings home a fish, the only fish to be caught are introduced species like the European Carp or Redfin. He constantly complains about the degradation of the rivers and reservoirs, caused not only from global warming but by the deliberate policy of government to trade water as a commodity! This has prevented enough water to cleanse our rivers and overflow into billabongs and wetlands that are breeding grounds and rich food sources for many species. It has also contributed to the drying of the natural environment leaving tinder dry bush in a state that has a prolonged bushfire season.

I live near Melbourne Airport where the local creek, a tributary of the beautiful Maribyrnong river, has been contaminated with PFC's because of fire safety training from the airport. The Maribyrnong river is now polluted from that toxin, most likely a carcinogen but not yet proven, so you cannot fish or swim in it. My area had illegal asbestos dumped into Brimbank Park and also beside a school in Cairnlea from rogue developers. People in St Albans are paying the price of toxic waste dumping too. These people are bearing the legal, financial, health and genetic burden from the deliberate action of the former Sunshine Council to cover those dumps with soil and release the land for housing, action that was condoned by the Victorian Environment Protection Agency at that time.

I realise humans have made a better life for themselves because of our technical knowledge and capabilities however the environment has paid a heavy penalty for our progress and some unfortunate people have also begun to pay an unintended price as well. We are all part of a biological chain of life that depends on clean air, clean water and viable soil. Our environment is giving us every indication that the links are breaking. We need a government that will act to maintain a healthy natural system to support not just us, but all the wonderful plant and animal life we share the planet with.

We need an overarching policy to address the wholistic systems of the environment to maintain its viability. Victoria needs a new, independent, well-resourced conservation regulator to police rogue operators and destructive industries. Community rights must be guaranteed when making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access information, the right to challenge decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.

Immediately the state government must implement and properly resource plans for the recovery of all plants and wildlife threatened with extinction, currently over 2000 species. They must plan for corridors and parcels of land to address the number one cause of extinction-loss of habitat. In particular it must act now to protect the Cheetham Wetlands and the remaining 1% of the Western Plains grasslands.

Yours sincerely,
Kay Shields



I agree to this submission being made public.

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File1:

File2:

File3: