

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

Categories: Submissions

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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There is strong evidence now that Ecosystems around the planet are in serious decline and the reversal of this current long term decline in Biodiversity needs urgent structural attention.

My comments concentrate on Nillumbik Shire, where I live but the ecosystem decline is Statewide and there are similar or worse issues in every other Shire.

Despite being committed to protecting and improving Nillumbik's biodiversity and agricultural productivity as stated in the Nillumbik Environmental Charter, incremental loss of vegetation across the shire is significant. Land clearing continues to occur at a faster rate than revegetation. Waterways are in poor shape, and the quality of "significant roadsides" in the Shire has been downgraded (Nillumbik Shire 2014 State of the Environment report).

Associate Professor Randall Robinson – Deputy Director of the Institute for Sustainable Industries and Livable Cities, Victoria University Research, Victoria University Melbourne confirms that biodiversity is "in decline in Nillumbik with a wide range of evidence that cannot be ignored". Evidence includes:

- proliferation of noxious weeds such as Chilean Needle Grass, Serrated Tussock, Boneseed and Sweet Pittosporum
- Prevalence of introduced invertebrate pests, exacerbated by many of the introduced weeds, directly impacting on many native species.
- Decline of native insect species
- The decline in nectar-producing plants in the Shire, leading to a decline in small, nectar-feeding birds
- Decline in stream flows and creek biota because of upstream water harvesting into legal and illegal dams;
- The general drying of the climate which has led to shifts in most plant and animal communities throughout Australia, including in Nillumbik, with sharp declines in some notable groups of species including Orchids.

The matters on which I wish to focus on in this submission are as follows:

1. Climate change is a major driver of ecosystem decline. Changes to the climate, caused by humans, is already having a severe impact on Victoria's environment. Further warming will only make things worse. Victorians must prepare for more frequent and intense droughts, fires, heat waves, extreme rainfall events and coastal inundation, whilst doing all we can to mitigate causes including fossil fuel use, land clearing, outdated agricultural practices and

food waste.

ACTION: Establish much more ambitious climate change targets.

2. There is a need for improved planning controls and Legislation to protect Biodiversity

ACTION:

(1) Strengthen Victoria's Planning Provisions in relation to the Rural Conservation Zone and the Green Wedge Zone. The RCZ in particular is the one statewide rural zone that has a specific focus on conservation of native vegetation communities. There is growing pressure for built development in the Rural Conservation Zone and Green Wedge Zone and current planning provisions are not strong enough to stop a cumulative, deleterious impact on biodiversity values.

(2) Specific elements of current legislative frameworks that need strengthening are reporting, monitoring and accountability requirements. There is no value in having strong regulations regarding actions if there is no capacity to monitor compliance, require accountability or impose consequences for inappropriate actions.

(3) Maintain the Urban Growth Boundary around Melbourne so that increased population does not result in even more urban sprawl and loss of Habitat

3. . Currently there is confusion over responsibility for managing creeks and associated buffer zones.

Our creeks and waterways are sadly degraded.

The Yarra Strategic Plan and Birrarung Council are an innovative start to remedying this but it is just a start and similar action is needed for ALL rivers and major tributaries

ACTION

(1) Support the Yarra Strategic Plan

(2) Establish effective communication between government, water authorities, and communities in order to achieve better outcomes for waterways

(3) Reduce extraction of water from rivers and creeks.

4. There is a demonstrated need for Habitat protection and Enhancement and the development of wildlife corridors is proven to greatly assist with this.

ACTION:

(1) Protect and enhance existing native habitats.

(2) Reconnect isolated patches of bush by planting linking corridors of appropriate native species.

(3) Phase out logging in native forests within the next four years and cease salvage logging immediately

5. Education for the Community in sustainable land management needs a much greater focus

ACTION

(1) Establish programs to promote and support regenerative agriculture in Victoria, thereby increasing biodiversity on farmland as well as increasing agricultural output and carbon storage in soil.

(2) Improve the health of the land by reducing the impacts of other identified threats – invasive weeds, feral animals, erosion etc.

(3) Consult widely with people in Landcare and Friends Groups. Volunteers in these groups are involved in activities such as planting, weed control, mulching, plant and animal monitoring and water quality monitoring. State based agencies and local governments could make much better use of local knowledge bases.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment. .

We need to act now!

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File1:

File2:

File3: