

In my submission

Key recommendations

1. It must be acknowledged by all levels of government that the Australian climate is changing as a result of the accumulation of greenhouse gasses, particularly carbon dioxide, in the atmosphere. Global warming is accelerating the rate of native species extinction.
2. Fundamental reference documents regarding ecosystem condition and influencing factors should include the latest “Nature Conservation Review” (NCR4) published by the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA).
See <https://vnpa.org.au/publications/nature-conservation-review-2014/>

In addition, the biennial “State of the Climate” reports jointly published by CSIRO and BOM should be accepted by all levels of government as bedrock information for the formulation of ecosystem protection policy. See <http://www.bom.gov.au/state-of-the-climate/>

3. The notion of “adaptation” to climate change is flawed. Prevention is the preferred position.
4. To reduce the speed and number of extinctions, all levels of government need ambitious policies to reduce greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.
5. There should be a permanent intergovernmental Disasters Standing Committee, convened by the Commonwealth including representatives of all States and Territories.
6. Logging and salvage logging of native forests magnify the biodiversity disaster caused by bushfires. To save our unique native species, indeed entire ecosystems from extinction, it is essential that all government tolerated native forest logging corporations be wound up as a matter of urgency.
7. The fleet of fire fighting aircraft must be increased, and emphasis placed on rapid dowsing of ignitions arising from lightning strikes and other sources. Barriers to the use of this fleet must be removed.
8. Building codes and Australian Standards relating to bushfire resistant structures need a complete overhaul. The objective must be changed from “saving the building” to “saving the lives of the *people* in the building”. This change of emphasis is not trivial.
9. The “fire-stick farming” practices of Traditional Owners deserve much more serious consideration. Radical changes are needed in our current fire management practices, and Traditional Owners can show us the way. Jurisdictional and administrative barriers need to be removed.
10. There is no place for hectare based forest fuel reduction targets. Indeed, the value of hazard reduction burning diminishes as the climate becomes warmer and drier. Hazard reduction burning is most effective near built assets and human populations.
11. The Commonwealth should have the power to declare a Disaster, and mobilise

people and resources to deal with it, including mobilisation of the Defence Forces for that purpose.

12. There should be no exemptions from the requirements of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. Indeed, the Act and its enforcement need strengthening.
13. The Biodiversity 2037 Plan should be extended to include native forest rehabilitation and protection, with an intention to employ the entire workforce currently engaged in native forest logging. More forested landscapes need to be protected as national parks.
14. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) deserves copious public praise for its role in providing accurate and timely life-saving information during the recent bushfire emergency. The ABC deserves support from all levels of government.

15.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

a) the extent of the decline of Victoria's biodiversity and the likely impact on people, particularly First Peoples, and ecosystems, if more is not done to address this, including consideration of climate change impacts;

- There are numerous threats to Victoria's ecosystems and flora and fauna. Some are legacy issues that hark back to the early days of British settlement in Australia, while others are emerging threatening processes that make old problems worse by exacerbating habitat loss and degradation. As part of your submission perhaps you would like to write about and recommend solutions for particular threats to particular ecosystems that you may have knowledge about and that matter to you.
- Victoria has the highest number of threatened species by subregion in Australia. Since European settlement there has been a progressive rate of native animal and plant extinctions with Victoria losing 18 mammal species, 2 birds, 1 snake, 3 freshwater fish, 6 invertebrates and 51 plants. Of the 3,330 known Victorian species, 49 are extinct and 2,097 (63%) are on the Threatened Species Advisory Lists.
- There has been an increasing trend in the number of critically endangered and vulnerable vertebrate groups, specifically reptiles, and an increase in the number of endangered vertebrates. Of the known species, those that are threatened include: 22% terrestrial mammals, 19% birds, 30% reptiles and 43% amphibians.
- More than a quarter of Victoria's wetlands have been lost since European settlement, and the remaining are mostly in poor condition.

(b) the adequacy of the legislative framework protecting Victoria's environment, including grasslands, forests and the marine and coastal environment, and native species;

- The government of Victoria has a laudable program which addresses the issues above
- It is "Biodiversity 2037"
- The implementation needs to be faster to help mitigate the risk and severity of bushfires.
- See <https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/victorias-climate-change-framework> All State and Territory governments need such a program.
- Most urgently of all, the Commonwealth needs a rational, coherent and ambitious policy to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This policy needs to be aligned with a new CO2-free energy production policy. The Commonwealth's greenhouse gas emissions reduction policy should provide leadership to all States and Territories. The Commonwealth's policies should provide leadership in international forums.

(c) the adequacy and effectiveness of government programs and funding protecting and restoring Victoria's ecosystems;

AND

(d) legislative, policy, program, governance and funding solutions to facilitate ecosystem and species protection, restoration and recovery in Victoria, in the context of climate change impacts;

National parks and conservation reserves protect areas of significance from some damaging activities; but to be truly effective they also need active management, to combat the multitude of weeds and pest animals such as deer, pigs, foxes, cats, and to manage visitors. The management issues are often complex, so we are advocating for our national parks to be managed by a well-resourced team of the very best scientists and land managers. It's what your great natural heritage needs – and deserves. The numbers illustrate this:

- Victoria's parks network contains 4,728 of the state's 5,145 native plant species (91.9 per cent) and 1,102 of its 1,405 native animal species (78.4 per cent).
- Around 70 per cent of the Victorian coastline is managed as national or state parks, coastal reserves, or marine national parks or sanctuaries. These areas protect against storm damage, flooding and erosion.
- More than one million hectares of our water catchments are located within Victoria's national parks. The market value of water run-off supplied through just nine Victorian national parks is estimated at \$244 million per year.
- The Victorian parks network is a major carbon sink, with at least 270 million tonnes of carbon stored in land-based parks and 850,000 tonnes in marine parks.
- The 50 million visits to national, state and metropolitan parks see tourists spending \$2.1 billion per year, and generating 20,000 jobs. Of course, this must be managed carefully.
- So we need to ensure our parks are properly protected and managed.

The key to this is to ensure that there is appropriate funding from the government to do the job.

Currently, Parks Victoria manages 18 per cent of Victoria and approximately five per cent of our marine waters – yet it receives less than 0.5 per cent of state government expenditure.

To put this into context, state health expenditure is about 28 per cent and spending on education about 24 per cent. Of course, we are not questioning the funding of these essential services. This is not a question of 'or' – it is an 'and'.

The Victorian National Parks Association is calling for a doubling in parks funding. Increasing funding for parks to one per cent of state expenditure is essential, and would enable our great natural areas to be properly protected.

Parks funding has been something of a political football, and while total funding is now slightly higher than 2012 levels in raw terms, if CPI adjusted it is well below the 2012 peak by around \$40 million per annum. There are increases planned for in the forward estimates of the state budget which, in raw terms, would be close to its 2012 funding peak. A further \$60–70 million in (mostly) infrastructure funding is planned for in the 2019–20 state budget.

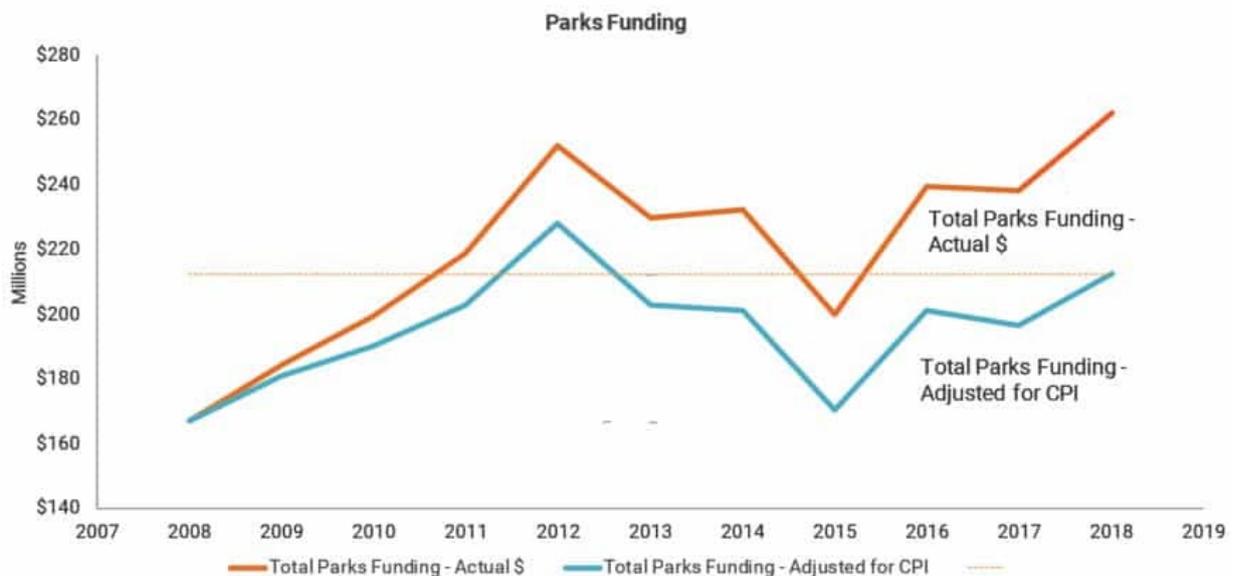
While this all helps, it is insufficient.

In the face of climate change and rapid population growth, greater funding is essential. That is why we are calling for parks to get at least one per cent of state expenditure.

If you believe our parks and reserves need – and deserve – at least one per cent of the state budget to properly maintain and protect them, if you want national parks your grandchildren will be proud of, please join with us in demanding ‘1% for parks’.

[Donate to Demand 1% for Parks](#)

State government funding for parks, when CPI-adjusted, is still well below what our parks need – and deserve. Join us as we demand one per cent of the state budget for parks.



Source: VNPA with data from Parks Victoria, Annual Reports 2008–2018