

## **Environment and Planning Committee Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline**

29 August 2020

Dear Members of the Committee,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria.

My name is Reynie Hafner. I live in Oakleigh East, Victoria. I am a scientist, an environmentalist and humanitarian. I have lived and traveled all over the world, from the most remote National Parks in the world, to the wilderness of ancient ruins in the jungles of the upper Amazon in Peru. But, to me, the unique nature of Australia's own backyard is still the most awe-inspiring place on earth!

My own literal backyard is an ecological bio niche of glorious native birds and our own two resident possums. It never fails to thrill me when I see lorikeets, cockatoos, galahs and honeyeaters enjoying my birdbath and pond, and foraging for food in my garden.

As a scientist, an environmentalist, and a grandmother, I am passionate about tackling the Global Climate Emergency, putting an end to the logging of our native forests (especially following the recent horrific bushfires), and protecting our unique wildlife from extinction so that future generations can enjoy the unique beauty and rich diversity of our amazing ecosystem!

### **YOU CAN HELP!**

#### **Please consider the following:**

1. The devastation inflicted on our wildlife and forests from the 2019 - 2020 bushfires has made forest protection and a rapid logging transition more urgent. The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 industry transition must be brought forward. Two immediate priorities are protection of unburnt Greater Glider habitat, and a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland.
2. There are opportunities for the state government to protect forests for all Victorians to enjoy now and into the future. Two community led initiatives are the proposed Great Forest National Park and Emerald Link conservation economy proposal.
3. In the face of climate catastrophe, Victoria's forests play a critical role in removing carbon pollution from the air we all breathe, nourishing us with clean air and safe, clean drinking water. The Victorian state government must develop carbon accounting and policies that include forests.
4. The state government must urgently implement and properly resource Action Statements (plans for recovery) for all threatened plants and wildlife. Victoria's plants and wildlife are at risk,

with over 2000 recognised as threatened with extinction! However only 15% have Action Statements.

5. The rights and interests of Traditional Custodians should be recognised in all aspects of land and water management, as well as decision-making in relation to their traditional lands, including traditional management practices such as cultural fire. Declining ecosystems have profound implications for First Nations.
6. Victoria needs a new, independent, well-resourced conservation regulator to police deforestation and other destructive industries. The EPA is the independent watchdog for pollution, but currently there is no independent watchdog to ensure industries comply with environmental laws, with numerous breaches to laws continuing to occur and a long history of regulators turning a blind eye.
7. Community rights must be guaranteed when governments are making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access necessary information, the right to challenge environmental decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.

**Therefore, I would entreat you to please:**

1. Hold the Victorian State Government to account on inaction and lack of transparency that has contributed to the decline of nature and species extinction;
2. Demand a rapid transition away from the practices of the past - extractive industries can no longer be given a free pass from impacting Victoria's nature;
3. Strengthen our state environmental laws and close the loopholes that allow exploitation of nature, since for far too long, rogue operators have been let off the hook and regulators have turned a blind eye to illegal logging;
4. Help create a resilient future for Victorian nature, wildlife and communities that we can all depend upon!

Thank you for your consideration of my submission which I am happy to be made public,  
*Reynie Hafner*

Reynolds (Reynie) Hafner  
