

28 May 2020

Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

On 27 December 2019 I was with my extended family at Salmon Rocks. It was picturesque: blue sky, clean waves, an endless, empty beach. I taught my niece and nephew to surf that day. While I was riding a wave, a piece of char hit me in the eye. It started raining ash. Soon we got a text telling us to evacuate. We got out just in time.

Last week we returned to East Gippsland for a funeral. We drove up the range from Orbost to Bonang through a desolate landscape of blackened trunks to the family farm. It was harrowing. I am 32 and have a loving partner. We would like to have children too. I imagine them spending long summer Christmases with their cousins on the beach and splashing about our river in the High Country.

But after this summer, it is hard to imagine future generations enjoying the kind of idyllic summer holidays that shaped my childhood. Our bush is getting smashed by bushfire, climate change, logging, urban sprawl and invasive species. It needs drastic action and bold leadership to help preserve as much as we can. I am writing to implore you, our elected representatives, to lead.

I come from farming stock, I hunt and fish and collect firewood and I believe in healthy rural and regional communities. Those communities need jobs. But we must urgently stop logging native forest. Fortunately, there is so much work that needs to be done to protect our bush. We need an army of people removing weeds, culling invasive species and planting new trees. And yes, sustainably harvesting timber from plantations. What better way to pump life into our economy, create jobs and support regional communities than major public investment into protecting our environment for everyone to enjoy? Not only for us, but for future generations, so they can enjoy those idyllic summer holidays that so many of us took for granted.

We also need a commitment and plan to stop species extinction.

Thank you for reading my submission. I will be following the work of this inquiry and my vote at the next election will be determined by environmental protection and action on climate change.

The bush is resilient. Please value it. Please be bold.

Cheers,

Joe Hinchliffe

