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As a Victorian citizen I am making this submission to implore the government to protect our natural environment and the 120 species at risk of extinction in our state.

2020 has seen such destruction of the natural habitat through bushfires ravaging our state and burning 1.4 million hectares. We have seen rare and precious birdlife in our suburbs because their natural habitat has been destroyed and they are seeking food. This is so concerning both because their habitat has been destroyed and they are at great further risk in the urban environment.

With 66% of our state cleared, along with loss of habitat due to the bushfires, more and more species are pushed to the brink of extinction. Current government policy of land clearing is leading to both direct loss of habitat as well as greater fire risk which further threatens our fauna and flora.

During the Victorian lockdown I have greatly missed the ability to get out of the urban environment and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of natural environments, such as those along our beautiful coastlines. The natural environments near Melbourne rivers, parks and beaches have been inundated with people trying to enjoy the outdoors and nature reminding us how important these places are to us all.

Our family often visits coastal and rural Victoria in particular the Great Ocean Rd and Mornington Peninsula. While we enjoy the benefits of Melbourne life, having grown up in the country, we need to regularly reconnect with natural environments. This has never been more obvious to us than during this current lockdown when it is not possible.

We cannot wait any longer to address the issues of threatened plants, animals and ecosystems. Our state needs to implement action that eradicates weeds and pests, builds habitat, stops logging of old growth forests and greatly reduces carbon pollution. Our government needs to assess all projects with an environmental lens and stop placing short term convenience and profit over long term environmental health.

Regards

Annie Howitt