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**From:** Lesley Walker [REDACTED]  
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**To:** ecosystems  
**Subject:** Submission on the extinction crisis

**Categories:** Submissions

I wish to make a brief submission to this parliamentary inquiry into our extinction crisis. My name is Lesley Walker.

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The substance of my submission is that humans should be just one component of a balanced and sustainable ecosystem. Until recently we might have been thought of in that way. However, as our numbers and the misplaced belief that we can treat the environment in any way we chose and be free of harmful consequences have both increased, we face an awful reckoning at the hands of our damaged ecosystem.

I have daily and direct experience of the poor regard many people hold for the rights of others, both human and non-human, to enjoy a relatively unspoiled environment. I collect rubbish as I walk my dog. Presumably most of the discarded materials; plastic straws, coffee cups, masks etc are dropped by people irritated by the inconvenience of responsible disposal. (Or a more responsible lifestyle generally.) They do not think about the fact that their rubbish will end up in a huge ocean tip. And they have not been educated to behave in a more sustainable and respectful way. It saddens me every day.

Of course, this thinking is creating a world which is on a collision course with mass extinction. The planet cannot maintain its balance as our population grows and individuals become ever more demanding. More and more species are endangered and/or close to becoming extinct. So it is the responsibility of our leaders to model better ways of thinking and behaving. Recognising that our environment is imperilled by our behaviour is a beginning. Creating legislation to protect it is a good next step.

Fortunately, as we learn to live with coronavirus restrictions and face the challenge of restoring an economy that gives people meaningful employment and helps us face the challenge of the climate emergency, there are lots of things we can do.

1. A coalition of more than 80 landcare, environmental, farming and conservation groups has already written to state and federal governments proposing the creation of 24,000 jobs in land rehabilitation as part of a post-pandemic stimulus package. This should be seriously considered. The weed and invasive species eradication and tree planting programs to restore degraded habitats they advocate would be a brilliant and popular initiative. (Even Tony Abbott couldn't disagree.)

2. Obviously we need to stop habitat destruction and strength laws to protect our natural environment. We need to:

- End native forest logging and transition to a plantation based timber industry

- Phase out coal and gas burning, which is making the climate crisis worse and driving devastating extreme events like heat waves, fires and floods.
- Stop destructive and unnecessary development like the Western Highway Duplication and the proposed Westernport gas ship terminal which continue to bit-by-bit erode the health of Victoria's environment for corporate profits.
- Change the laws that allow wildlife to be killed, and grasslands and other habitat to be cleared, with little to no ramifications.

3. There is also a clear need to develop specific programs around the protection of species that have been identified as threatened, and research done to establish which species might qualify. Legislation to set aside the funds for this needs to be a priority. NSW has its 'Save our Species' program and Victoria needs the same.

Thank you for conducting this inquiry. I hope that the future will be better as a consequence of your findings and recommendations.