

Dear Environment and Planning Committee,

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

My name is Susan Whelan.

I am a retired primary school teacher, mother of 4 and grandmother of 5, so far.  
Having grown up in the Melbourne South Eastern suburb of McKinnon for the first  
23 years of my life, I then married, and moved to the Melbourne Eastern suburb



I have lived here now for the past 44 years.

All my life I have loved to be outside in nature and enjoyed both suburbs with their own unique characteristics; bayside beaches which we visited often as children, the Dandenongs close by with its magnificent fern gullies, waterfalls, tall trees; lush green everywhere, tree lined streets and an abundance of beautiful parks, including the most natural, my favourite, Wattle Park, with its native eucalypts and gorgeous yellow wattles.

For me **NATURE IS HEALING** for all who encounter it.

However, I have noticed many changes in nature during my lifetime with the drastic decline in ecosystems caused by human behaviours which is leading to the extinction of many species. I have great concern for the future, unless we act now, to protect the gift of our natural world.

One of my experiences of this destruction was over 30 years ago while staying with my husband's family in Eden, just over the Victorian boarder in NSW. As his family worked at the woodchip mill they took us to see it.

I was completely shocked at the size, and number, of trees being logged. We stood and watched truck load after truck load of these beautiful giants being brought to the mill to be shredded, shipped off to Japan and made into paper. **I had no words.**

Just this question:

**"HOW COULD THIS BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN?"**

As we drove away, with little conversation, we noticed areas lining the road with signs showing the regeneration plantations. These tiny regrowth forests made it even more shocking as the trees here were planted 10+ years earlier and were so small in comparison to those logged and coming in on the trucks. I could not make sense of any of this.

This destructive human activity has also been happening here in Victoria for too many years.

**These magical trees are our breath of fresh air, they are home to many living creatures who can only survive among them, and they provide us with a lot more important elements (both physical and spiritual) than paper could ever do.**

**THEY MUST BE PROTECTED EVERYWHERE.**

I would like to live **in a society of human beings who have the wisdom to take responsibility for the wellbeing of other life forms on our planet whose continued existence is threatened by the thoughtless behaviour of our own living species"** (Jane Goodall).

We don't own this land, we are custodians, so let's take good care of it for future generations.

We can learn so much from The First Custodians who have successfully nurtured this land for more than 60,000 years. Seeing our government adopt **ALL** the recommendations for fire management from our first peoples during the Royal Commission into the 2020 Victorian bushfires has created hope for better outcomes in other areas of environmental management.

We expect as voters in a democratic society, to have our concerns heard.

We know there are a variety of sustainable, efficient practices, with little or no adverse impact on the environment, already implemented in many parts of the world, so we know things can be done better.  
**WHEN WE KNOW BETTER, WE DO BETTER.**

It is clear that inaction in the past by governments has contributed considerably to the decline of nature and it's species,  
Therefore:

**We MUST PLAN an urgent move away from these past practices** and a stop to extractive industry's lack of accountability for their disastrous impact on Victoria's nature.

**WE MUST strengthen our environmental laws** so there are no longer loopholes that allow the exploitation of nature.

**We trust that those we put in power** to care for our world and all who live in it **will create a strong and stable future for Victorian nature, wildlife and communities, that we can all depend on.**

"We, humans, and only we, have developed a sophisticated spoken language. For the first time in evolution, a species evolved that was able to teach its young about objects and events not present, to pass on wisdom leading from the successes, and the mistakes, of the past. With this language we can ask, as no other living being can, those questions about who we are, and why we are here". JANE GOODALL

I know that many species of flora and fauna across our state, and country, are disappearing. This is why I am here expecting my voice to be heard in raising awareness about what is happening to our natural world and its inhabitants, and to **ensure we create sustainable protective laws for our environment.**

**THE ROLE WE ALL MUST PLAY is be better stewards of this gift of earth than we've been in the past , creating a better future for all generations to come. We can do it.**

I trust I will be heard so that the new laws will protect our natural world providing a better future for nature and all forms of life which depend on it for survival.

**Yours Sincerely**  
**Susan Whelan**