

## **Submission for the Inquiry into the Loss of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Decline in Victoria**

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Loss of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Decline in Victoria.

My name is Lucy Foley. I have lived and worked in Victoria for 20 years. Currently, I am a resident of Coburg, Melbourne, where I have lived for 8 years, next to the Merri Creek. I regularly visit, walk, camp and holiday in the many rich and beautiful diverse landscapes within and close to Melbourne, and across Victoria. I not only feel a strong and passionate connection to nature, I feel myself to be a part of it. I also feel a strong and passionate interest in the stewardship of nature in this state. I belong to a number of local networks and communities with interests, including the Victorian Nature Stewards Program.

The state of biodiversity loss in Victoria is dire. Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia - 66% of the land has been cleared of native trees, shrubs and plants – this is the habitat that supports native wildlife. Over 700 native plants, animals, insects and ecosystems are under threat. 120 Victorian animals, birds, plants, insects and fish are on the brink of extinction.

Climate change has arrived and has shown its force with the 2020 bushfires, which burnt with an unprecedented ferocity. The horrific extent of loss of flora and fauna species from these fires, and the resultant long-term impacts to ecosystems and biodiversity is set to dial up cumulatively over coming decades, as average summer temperatures increase due to global warming.

My personal observations of decline in my local home area in Coburg, Moreland, includes severely degraded habitat and decline of local flora and fauna species and struggling natural waterways – The Merri Creek and Edgar's Creek, due to the impacts of settlement and development, wastewater run-off, industrial pollution and unchecked recreation-use since European colonisation to today. Urban ecologies are as important as rural and regional areas for maintaining and supporting species diversity. While local Friends groups have done remarkable work with rehabilitation in certain tracts and areas of these waterways, this work needs much greater resourcing and support.

Beyond the urban fringe, ecologies are similarly struggling and degraded from over 200 years of ongoing clearing. Logging, habitat loss, unchecked development, poor agricultural practices, poor management of pests and invasive species, lack of legal protections and the impacts of climate change are creating daunting conditions for rehabilitation and recovery.

I, among many Victorians in the communities I live and work amongst, am horrified by the destruction that has, and continues, to take place, causing the current extreme state of biodiversity loss and ecosystem decline. There are actions that can be taken however, to help mitigate and halt the decline.

I urge the Victorian Government to take action via the following:

- Move with urgency to 100% clean, renewable energy sources by 2030.
- Move with urgency towards a treaty with Indigenous communities in Victoria and meaningfully supporting and acknowledging Indigenous knowledges, self-determination and stewardship of country.

- The October 2020 budget and post COVID-19 stimulus package must invest in measures that rein in emissions and protect communities from intensifying climate impacts.
- Stronger and more robust environmental laws and framework which provide status and protection for nature ie. Nature Laws which give nature a legal status, and stronger Animal and wildlife rights and protections.
- Improved funding for Victorian National and State Parks to manage their many pressures, including pest, plant and animal control.
- Support and encourage biodiversity-sensitive agriculture; invest in research & development to expand this industry, e.g. Regenerative Farming, Permaculture
- Stop land clearing and encourage and support more plant-based agriculture and reduce animal agriculture
- Stop logging remnant native forests which are habitat for native wildlife asap
- Protect the coast and the bays; protect and restore the Great Southern Kelp Forests.
- Address destructive tourism and recreational use of significant areas.
- Ban duck shooting. Shooting of native birds is decimating populations that are under stress from drought and climate emergency, and it is polluting and damaging wetlands, in particular Ramsar-listed wetlands
- Improved funding and support for wildlife protection and rescue organisations.
- Improved and ethical and compassionate and uniform strategies to addressing the impact of introduced species, including horses, deer and cats, in urban and regional areas, including containment of pet cats inside homes.

Sincerely,

Lucy Foley

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Note: I do not wish for this submission to be treated as confidential