

Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Submission by David Smith.

Early in 2019 a family farm of 60 years passed into new ownership. Within weeks thousands of trees had been killed and burnt, a remnant swamp land-formed, and the koala seen escaping the devastation just disappeared. Decades of painstaking work, raising seedlings one by one by hand, care for land - erased.

The dramatic loss of foundation ecology; the insects, the swamps, the birds, the moisture recharge systems; has so visibly accelerated in recent decades. The new agribusinesses use chemicals, fire, and bulldozers to favour immediate commercial gain over longer economic sustainability.

We know that Indigenous Australians were the ultimate economic rationalists who prioritised a sustainable ecology for the security of many generations into the future. We also know there is a small cohort of farmers who maintain farm production and restore their land's ecology. Yet, in spite of these rude examples, we continue to treat our environment as a consumable accessory for recreation and tourism, not as the foundation of and for our life.

It is quite obvious that the current patchwork of frameworks, legislations and good intentions by many groups is not adequate. Whether it is chemical use, feral animals, forest destruction, the hardening and covering of arable land, the drying of land, waste management, risk transference; there is a hesitancy, even a deliberate reluctance, to decisively address the issues. More important than review of the frameworks and legislations, is the leadership to use and apply them, and the community assent to enable them; to actually act. Revised frameworks must have a systems approach; ecology, community, commerce; and a path to transition to the outcomes required.

Our hope is that our grandchildren's children might have access to quality water and food, let alone hear the call of the Brolga in the swamp or see a pair run as they launch into flight.

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