

SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO ECOSYSTEM DECLINE IN VICTORIA

We write as a concerned group of people living in the Trentham District of the Victorian Central Uplands Region of Victoria.

We believe supporting and maintaining biodiversity across the state of Victoria is critical. It is our ethical duty to allow native plants, animals and other organisms the opportunity to thrive within functional ecosystems. Further, our own health - mental, physical and economic - depends on these systems.

There is no economy without the environment. And yet in Victoria we have allowed biodiversity to decrease at alarming levels over the past two hundred years. The list of threatened species and ecological communities continues to grow with little urgency being given to addressing the causes, nor is there properly resourced implementation of measures to reverse the downward trends.

Commitments by government to act in defence of our declining ecosystems are not being fulfilled. The Western Grasslands Reserve exemplifies this: only 10% of the 15,000 hectares of land that was promised, to restore this critically endangered grassland ecosystem, has been purchased.

Further, Victorian regulations development designed to protect and compensate for loss of biodiversity caused by economic development essentially do the opposite through initiatives such as off-setting where rules are vague, broad and set the bar extremely low.

We, and our future generations, face a very uncertain future with continued habitat fragmentation, changed climate, increased intensity and frequency of fire, water shortages, invasive species ingress, pollution and more.

We urge the Victorian Government to implement more effective measures to support our environment including:

- honouring the commitment to develop and act upon Action Statements for the 1700 Victorian species threatened with extinction, whose action plans are still awaiting being written
- recognising the importance of forests for carbon capture, water catchment quality, habitat provision and air purification by transitioning immediately away from unsustainable logging and by developing carbon accounting mechanisms
- include the interests, rights and skills of Traditional Custodians in all aspects of land management, particularly the delivery of appropriate fire regimes
- elevating and celebrating the importance of biodiversity through community programs, educational curriculum and more nuanced, less politicised dialogue

Now is the time to build ecosystem resilience. Now is the time to elevate the level of focus and action - not only conserving but improving ecosystems before we go beyond the point of repair.

Signed by : Trentham Sustainability Group, Biodiversity Team and other members of our network

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