



**Submission to the Inquiry into the decline of Victoria's Ecosystems.
2020**

31st August,

Friends of Nillumbik Inc thanks the Victorian State Government for the opportunity to provide feedback into the Environment and Planning Committee's inquiry into the decline of Victoria's ecosystems and the investigation of measures to restore habitats and populations of threatened and endangered species.

Friends of Nillumbik Inc (FoN) is a grassroots not-for-profit, community volunteer group. We have around 1000 supporters who live and work in the Shire of Nillumbik. The purpose of our association is to support and promote the environmental and landscape values, neighbourhood character, orderly planning and good governance of the Shire of Nillumbik. We have worked with local residents for over twenty years and lead a team of community groups and interested people who oppose inappropriate development and value the protection of our precious Nillumbik Green Wedge.

In the interests of brevity of submission, FoN would like to acknowledge and support the excellent recommendations as detailed by of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA), Environment Justice Australia (EJA) and all other not for profit regional environmental, landcare and wildlife carer groups. We concur with every word. It is of our opinion that the good work they have done in detailing the problems and describing the solutions for how Australia can stave off the looming loss of Vegetation Classes, Flora Species Biodiversity and by extension, the extinction of invertebrate, faunal and marine species is extraordinary. The facts are stark and clear. The dire predicament we are in and the consequent solutions to combat the loss of unique Australian species have been presented over and over again at every "nature" inquiry held by Federal, State and Local Governments for years. We have the solutions. All we now need is all levels of the Government to implement them.

The result of this latest "Extinction Inquiry" **must be** the recommendation and follow up legal changes to the wording in policy documents and strategies, particularly as pertaining to development, land-clearing, forestry, and land management plans. The protection of species as an adjunct to humans, must rapidly elevate up the list of what is deemed important enough for protection and funding. It is now the essential time to replace words

such as, “should” and “shall consider” with “must” and “mandatory” when considering the impacts on the natural environment. Two examples, are here:

1. When considering “such and such proposal” the owner/manager/responsible authority **must ensure** that No-Net-Loss of biodiversity occurs. (We tried offsets in this Country and it has not worked).
2. The provision of a wildlife corridor as part of “such and such development” **is mandatory**. From local experience, FoN will attest that if wording allows wriggle room to opt out of protecting the environment then local governments will take that route.

In conclusion, if the results of this Inquiry do not lead to specific, measurable and accountable changes to the legal obligations for the protection of our indigenous vegetation and animals then the next inquiry will be into How Do We Encourage Overseas Tourists To Visit Now That We’ve Lost Our Country’s Uniqueness.

Greg Johnson (President)