

From: Martine Holberton [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 9 June 2020 10:54 AM
To: ecosystems
Cc: Daniel Andrews; Lily D'Ambrosio
Subject: Submission: Extinction Inquiry

Dear Parliament of Victoria,

I hereby make my formal submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into extinction rates in Victoria.

120 Victorian animals, birds, plants, insects and fish are on the brink of extinction. These precious animals are our neighbours, our community members, our pollinators, our lifeblood. How can we continue to treat our home so appallingly, as if it's an infinite provider and we can take as we please!?!??

Our home is on fire. The summer's bushfires have only made things worse, but decades of under-funding, land clearing, weeds and invasive species, and logging have severely damaged Victoria's ecosystems.

In case you didn't already know these alarming facts, here they are again for you:

- Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia - 66% of our land has been cleared of native trees, shrubs and plants - the habitat that supports our native wildlife
- Over 700 native plants, animals, insects and beautiful ecosystems are under threat, with this number growing every day
- 120 Victorian animals, birds, plants, insects and fish are now at the brink of extinction
- More than 70 threatened species make their home in forests that are still being logged

I am a proud Victorian - partly because I think this state is progressive. But we need to be more progressive - we need to be fearless leaders, trailblazers.

We can do this!! There are many solutions that can restore habitat and wildlife. These solutions are absolutely achievable and have been shown to be successful with the right commitment and funding from governments. Our world is a truly remarkable place. It will heal with the right care and protections.

Right now, as we come to grips with the economic fallout from COVID-19, it's a perfect time for governments to spend public money and create jobs looking after people and the environment. Here are just some solutions:

- a) A huge program of weed and invasive species eradication Victoria is overrun by weeds and invasive animals, which kill and out-compete our native plants and wildlife. It's a big job to manage them, but it's critical for restoring habitat. We could create thousands of jobs clearing weeds out of rivers, creeks, farmland and national parks, and humanely managing introduced animals like cats, deer, rabbits and foxes.
- b) A tree-planting workforce to restore habitat 67% of Victoria's trees, mangroves, shrubs, and other plants have been cleared since colonisation. Much of what's left is in poor health. We could create thousands of jobs in both the city and the country, replanting trees and vegetation in our parks, streets, rivers and creeks right across our state, but especially in bushfire-affected areas. We could also help landowners plant native vegetation on their land.
- c) A dedicated program for reviving species facing extinction The work of rescuing Victoria's more than 120 species at risk of extinction deserves and needs a dedicated program of funding. NSW has committed \$100 million to a 'Save Our Species' program, which systematically identifies risks to species and goes about addressing them. It also includes action like breeding programs so healthy populations of animals, birds and plants can be restored. Victoria has nothing like this program and spends almost no money on this type of dedicated species recovery work. We also spend very little money on research for our scientists to study new solutions to the extinction crisis. It's time that changed.

d) An end to habitat destruction and strengthened nature laws We cannot hope to stop extinction unless we stop the destructive activities that are driving it. We need to:

- End native forest logging and transition to a plantation based timber industry
- Phase out coal and gas burning, which is making the climate crisis worse and driving devastating extreme events like heat waves, fires and floods
- Stop destructive and unnecessary development like the Western Highway Duplication and the proposed Westernport gas ship terminal which continue to bit-by-bit erode the health of Victoria's environment for corporate profits.
- Change the laws that allow wildlife to be killed, and grasslands and other habitat to be cleared, with little to no ramifications.

[This article](#) was published in the Guardian today. The writing is on the wall for fossil fuels. These numbers don't lie! So let's get cracking and show the rest of Australia that we can restore environmental harmony while also achieving economic growth!

Sincerely,

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Martine Holberton

Sustainability Communications Consultant - Melbourne & Sydney


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