

From: Debbie Carruthers <campaigns@good.do>
Sent: Wednesday, 26 August 2020 4:08 PM
To: ecosystems
Subject: Parliamentary Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

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Categories: Submissions

Dear Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into ecosystem decline in Victoria.

It is vitally important to Victoria's heritage and the legacy of this Government that we urgently address the declining health of Victoria's environment. As a society we have a responsibility to this and future generations to take action to protect and restore our environment. The situation requires urgent attention and has been made more dire due to the horrendous bushfires that occurred earlier this year that had a devastating impact on the environment and our wildlife. The next bushfire season is not far away.

Can you clarify what happened to the State of Environment Report to which the Victorian Government was required to respond?

There are a number of key threats that have driven the decline in Victoria's ecosystems and wildlife such as climate change, deforestation (logging), clearing of native vegetation and the impact of invasive species. It is deeply concerning to watch the declining biodiversity in Victoria including threatened Victorian animals, plants and insect life.

Why is native forest logging allowed to continue until 2030 in Victoria despite a recent federal court case that found much logging in Victoria is in breach of national environmental laws and is directly driving animal extinction?

We must as a priority develop and implement strategies to better protect our flora and fauna native to Victoria. So many species are being lost at an alarming rate. Could consideration be given to a program similar to what is in New South Wales called the 'Save Our Species' which has \$100M in dedicated funding.

At Glenaladale, in East Gippsland, Kalbar's proposed mineral sands mine will see the excavation of up to 13 square kilometres of vegetation including over 680 mature trees and various EPBC protected habitats such as the Gippsland Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Associated Native Grassland and other species listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Mining at any cost should not be allowed and offsets don't address the loss of these valuable and unique parts of our ecosystem. Grasslands are incredibly important habitat for a range of native plants and animals.

Victoria's primary legislation for ecosystem and threatened species protection is the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. Yet in the life of this legislation, we've seen the deterioration of Victoria's environment because the laws lack the teeth they need to protect the environment for destructive activities including logging and damaging developments like roads, mines and new housing developments. The key flaw in these laws is that intervention to protect the environment is discretionary - it's up to the Minister for Environment to use these powers only if they want to. In practice, successive Victorian Environment Ministers chose not to use these powers because they sit within Labor or Liberal governments who chose to prioritise destructive activities.

Please take some strong and forward thinking action to protect and restore Victoria's environment.

I give my permission for this submission to be made public.

Yours sincerely,
Debbie Carruthers

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