

# Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Submitted by Melanie Thewlis on 31/08/2020

I'm writing to request that the Victorian Government do more to arrest ecosystem decline in Victoria. I grew up in Melbourne and have had the opportunity to hike, camp, canoe and raft through a huge diversity of our ecosystems, including the Snowy, Mitchell and Murray Rivers, the Alpine High Country, coastal areas including Anderson's Inlet, the Mornington Peninsula and Warrnambool, and the Grampians and Mt Ararat. These experiences are central to my identity as a Victorian.

Sadly, it has also become clear to me how fragile and at risk our native ecosystems are. Victoria is the Australian state with the highest percentage of cleared land. Over 700 native plants, animals, insects, and ecosystems are under threat. 120 Victorian animals, birds, plants, insects, and fish are on the brink of extinction.

This ongoing decline, coupled the recent horrendous summer of bushfires and the looming risk of climate change, is a heavy burden on our mental health.

I believe we need greater investment to ensure we rebuild resilient ecosystems in the face of climate change and increased bushfire risk.

We should be investing in reforestation programs that foster a sense of connection to Country. Aboriginal people should be central to these programs.

We should be ending logging of native forests much sooner than 2030.

We need to find a way to arrest the decline of the Murray River Basin.

Programs to control invasive species need more funding.

We should be looking at how we can build back green from the economic crisis of Covid-19.

We should also be looking at how to restore remnant ecosystems, whether that's in regional or suburban areas, and how these can provide safety corridors as wildlife needs to migrate due to climate change.

I implore you in the strongest possible terms to do more to protect our biodiversity heritage.