

From: [REDACTED]
To: [ecosystems](#)
Subject: a submission for the parliamentary Extinction Inquiry
Date: Monday, 31 August 2020 4:10:21 PM

Dear Parliament,

An article in *The Guardian* several months ago said a study found that non-native grasses planted by cattle farmers for pasturing, caused some of the recent fires in Australia to burn three times hotter than normal

Land-clearing for grazing cows and sheep, the introduced species' *par excellence*, is displacing habitat and contributing to biodiversity loss and the climate crisis. With 3.5 million beef cattle in Victoria, and 1.3 million dairy cows, three regions contain up to 800,000 cattle each. Victoria is overpopulated with hungry and thirsty cows. Many crops grown here are to feed livestock and this is inefficient land use. Each cow can emit up to 700 litres of methane a day, a greenhouse gas 30 times more heat-trapping than CO₂. That is as well as the CO₂ released by the deforestation required by the meat and dairy industries.

A drop in demand for cow's milk of 11% in recent years shows that preferences are changing, and to prop up failing, polluting industries with government subsidies is unwise. Those subsidies promote deforestation, extinctions and global heating and then there are land degradation issues and intensive water-use problems. It would be ideal if dairy farmers could be given financial incentives to transition to more environmentally-friendly, plant milks, organically grown.

Politicians have been unable as yet to tackle this incredibly difficult subject of animal farming, because it confronts entrenched Australian values, identity, and tradition. Animal farming makes very expensive food - it costs the earth and the climate. Collectively, around the world, animal farming contributes significantly to the disruption of earth's formerly stable climate. The wellbeing of this land, the forests and rivers and native wildlife, and our own health, demands a change to regenerative, sustainable food systems.

The link of animal farming to deforestation, extinctions and climate crisis is becoming increasingly apparent. Gas emissions and other pollution from this sector are massively underestimated. Gradual herd reduction strategies are a viable option, by limiting restocking. The more land-clearing is done, the drier the land becomes, with resulting erosion, soil salinity, acidification, soil compaction and drought. This is why Western Australia is not a big beef producing region today -- because the land was cleared decades ago for grazing and that caused desertification. Can lessons be learned from the mistakes of Western Australia?

I have great memories of seeing koalas in the wild at Wilsons Prom as a teenager. Also of seeing many kangaroos and wallabies at the Grampians National Park, where I was astonished by the number of different bird calls there. I have heard a lyrebird concert in Sherbrooke Forest, where every bird of the forest, magpie, kookaburra etc is imitated, one after the other. The intense presence of ancient eucalyptus forests is beyond anything.

Recently I found out that two million kangaroos are legally hunted in Australia every year. I hope that stronger laws will be formulated to protect and nurture native wild animals and native plants and trees in Victoria.

The modesty of our human perception and its limits, must make us hesitate before continuing to destroy ecosystems. This is not just timber, but accommodation for up to 30,000 species, forests are multi-species dwellings and food providers. Then there are the ancient trees themselves, which manage water in ways we do not fully understand. Forest creates rainfall, and the big trees channel water to the understorey plants. In a dry continent, we should protect our water interests. Where the forests are, the most rains fall. If you look at maps of Australia, the forested areas are the highest rainfall areas.

We need to become more sensitive to the forest, to realise its atmosphere of peace and tranquility is of a higher order. People are drawn to the forest to regenerate their spirits. Planetary weather needs forests. The killing of these forests is a symptom of not understanding them or the necessity of their place in the order of things.

There are not many havens of total nature remaining, and many of these are under threat. The ones we have now should be protected.

I think moving away from toxic chemicals in food production would be progress. Organic farms are sustainable and could be encouraged by subsidies.

I advise that plantation timber could be planted on barren land and that no thriving forest will be felled to plant these monocrops. No more land clearing is the basic message to stop extinctions. I hope an eco-authority will be established to oversee compliance with environmental laws.

The correspondence of bringing millions of livestock animals into the world, with extinction of wildlife and habitat and forests, please understand.

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