

This submission is offered as a perspective from a resident and conservation volunteer of far South Western Victoria. My observations are as follows:

- Multiple agencies seem to be chasing the same ball and sometimes getting in each other's way. There is duplication of infrastructure.
- Data sources that inform planning decisions, such as the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA), appear to be hopelessly out of date. Lip service is given to Citizen Science, eg. Atlas of Living Australia, but the data collected appears to be discounted or disregarded by the professionals.
- Some of the non-government environmental organisations working in this area are very switched-on and effective, Birdlife Australia and Nature Glenelg Trust are examples. Directing greater resources to them might be a way forward.
- The Terms of Reference for this Inquiry are broad but I was surprised to find no specific mention of environmental education and awareness. "Ecological literacy" needs to be made a key element in the fight to stop ecosystem decline.
- Recently, reviewing old files, I was shocked by the sheer volume of wordage in a seemingly endless cycle of reports, inquiries, frameworks, reviews and so on. How much better off would we be now if those resources had been spent toward on-the-ground work?
- Parks Victoria funding appears to dry out the further you get away from Melbourne. Parks' corporate mantra of "Healthy Parks – Healthy People" seems to be all about keeping the campers happy and not about conservation of our biodiversity assets.
- As to the "the adequacy of the legislative framework", the rules might look fine on paper but if they are not enforced, they are worthless. The Inquiry should look to whether enforcement is workable on-the-ground and properly funded. One concern in our community has been over-harvesting of Pipis and Fisheries have been stretched to keep on top of the issue.
- Local council is expected to play an important role in environmental protection especially in the context of planning and enforcement. In a sparsely populated shire such as Glenelg, all the incentives are around growth and revenue and ecosystems are some way down the list of priorities.
- I am fearful that biodiversity will suffer even more in a rush to post-pandemic recovery and renewed economic growth. Somehow, we need to shift the paradigm and make biodiversity an integral part of that, rather than a victim of it.