

Jo Rye



To: ecosystems@parliament.vic.gov.au

Regarding the Extinction Inquiry, I speak to you as someone who spends several days a week in the Wombat Forest near Daylesford. I volunteer at a wildlife shelter, where I help to raise and heal numerous species of animals, whether endangered, such as the Powerful Owl, or relatively common, such as the wombat.

I would like to add my voice as someone who knows that our natural wonders are in trouble. We must act now, and be responsible guardians of our native forests and wildlife, if we hope to have any beautiful natural treasures to leave to our children.

Even before last summer's terrible bushfires, our wilderness was in trouble. Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia - 66% of our land area has already been cleared.

Extinction is a real threat for many species in Victoria. We absolutely must not take our natural heritage for granted.

- 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;
- the recent bushfires burned 1.4 million hectares, just in Victoria, and pushed already critically endangered species like the greater glider, smoky mouse, mountain ash eucalyptus and many others perilously close to extinction.

As a wildlife carer, these numbers are not just statistics to me; they demonstrate the perilous state of our 'web of life', and represent the suffering of so many creatures as they lose their homes, and their lives.

I appreciate that the Victorian Government announced last year, that they would stop old growth logging, and phase out logging of native timber after ten years. However, since then a huge area of Victoria, including much valuable habitat forest, went up in smoke in the summer bushfires.

However, there are many active steps which could be taken to reverse the decline of many species, which could also create many jobs, for instance:

- accepting recommendations by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Committee (VEAC) to establish new National Parks;
- working with indigenous elders to care for country;
- establishing a tree-planting workforce to restore habitat; and
- creating a dedicated programme to revive species facing extinction.

I look forward to hearing about the active steps that the Victorian Government will take to address the extinction crisis we currently face.

Yours sincerely,

Jo Rye.