

From: a & j [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 31 August 2020 4:56 PM
To: ecosystems
Subject: Submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Categories: Submissions

Environment and Planning Committee
Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

31st Aug 2020

Dear members of the Committee,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria.

I've lived in Melbourne for the past 21 years and one of the many things I love about this city is its proximity to forests and nature.

As a migrant from a multicultural background living in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, I find the proximity to national parks a joy and privilege. My family love to head out into nature and enjoy the serenity and beauty of the wilderness.

We moved to Australia with a vision of a vast, dry land with a few scrubby gum trees, kangaroos skipping around, koalas, crocs, the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru in the centre. We had no idea how lush, unique, ancient and beautiful it is here, home to more plants and animals than anywhere else on Earth. It's breathtaking. However what also took my breath away was witnessing the devastation of an industrially logged native forest just 2 hours from Melbourne back in 2014.

We went for a trip to visit the forests of the Central Highlands around Toolangi, while we did visit pristine old growth forest, we also saw logged coups with the slash either left in wind rows or burnt. The devastation was horrific, all around the forest destroyed and one lone tall tree left standing in the middle, all the tree ferns left could not survive the disturbance and the fire lit to deal with the slash. On top of that the devastation was further exacerbated by the sight of coups all over the surrounding slopes that had been similarly logged and destroyed.

All that destruction to primarily make wood chips for paper, when the 80% of the supply is already coming from plantation forests. The remaining 20% could also be taken from there and the forest left to recover and provide essential habitat for the fauna that cannot survive without it.

We must have a moratorium on logging native forests in the state, the rate of decline of our endangered and critically endangered species depends on it. Government Departments have failed in their duty to protect and preserve our environment for generations long into the future.

At the rate we are losing habitat we will be seeing extinctions within our own lifetimes, our grandchildren and their grandchildren will not be able to enjoy the wilderness we have been able to.

Climate change and the resultant bush fires are issues that needs to be taken into consideration when planning for future impact on the environment.

There is ample scientific evidence that the practice of salvage logging is the most detrimental destruction of habitat, as it removed trees that are alive before they have been able to sprout with epicormics growth and provide food to animals that have been devastated by bushfires. Despite the devastating bush fires we just had last summer, salvage logging went ahead and further devastated fire damaged forests in Victoria.

Plans for recovery of threatened species need to be urgently implemented to halt the decline of some iconic species.

Greater Gliders, a species that was once considered abundant, has had an 80% decline in just the last decade. There needs to be urgent intervention to stop this decline, the animal needs to be listed as vulnerable/endangered in the Central highlands so effective measures to protect the specie can be put in place.

Wetlands need to be protected, so all aquatic animals have a refuge there and are not subjected to the cruelty of being shot, wounded and killed during duck shooting season.

Our volcanic plains grasslands are the most endangered ecosystem in the country, yet property developers are allowed to clear land. Money set aside for offset purchases has not been spent, so there are no offsets for the fauna. In my mind offsets do not really work, as they are not located contiguous to or even near the area where the habitat is lost. I do not understand how land dwelling animals - reptiles, ground dwelling birds like the Plains Wanderer and insects etc are expected to travel long distances that are not connected to find new habitat when their habitat is destroyed.

Good quality habitat must be protected on site with no destruction allowed under any circumstances.

As you undertake this important inquiry into Victoria's extinction crisis, I urge you to ensure that:

- Community rights are guaranteed when governments are making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access necessary information, the right to challenge environmental decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.
- The rights and interests of Traditional Custodians are recognised in all aspects of land and water management, as well as decision-making in relation to their traditional lands.
- The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 native forest logging industry transition is brought forward, including: immediate protection of Greater Glider habitat; a moratorium on logging in East Gippsland and the Central Highlands; support for people working in affected industries, by creation of jobs in sustainable industries like Eco-tourism.
- Plans for recovery of threatened plants and wildlife are implemented urgently and properly resourced. The government protects forests for all Victorian's to enjoy now and into the future including support

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, and I invite any further discussion via email at

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Sincerely,

Anne Makhijani

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