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To: ecosystems
Subject: Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry on Ecosystem Decline

Categories: Submissions

Submitted on behalf of Neil Marriott, President of KORS Inc., Panrock Reservoir Road, Black Range, Vic by Alanna Burton, [REDACTED]

Please accept this submission from Keep Original Route Supporters Inc., a community group formed to reduce environmental losses on the Western Highway widening project. Thank you for the opportunity to submit. This submission is not confidential.

The extent of the decline of Victoria's biodiversity.

Biodiversity decline is strongly underway according to the State of the Environment Report 2018 Report, with most indicators trending in the direction of extinction. Two thirds of the State has been cleared, a quarter of Victoria's wetlands have been lost and the remainder have been degraded. Seventy species are on the brink of extinction. Grasslands are especially hard hit being easier to remove. These losses are now exacerbated by climate change. This inquiry comes none too soon.

The adequacy of the legislative framework protecting Victoria's environment.

As the considerable extent of decline shows, the current legislative framework and its implementation is not adequate. The legislation and the way it is implemented are not protecting our origins, our life support system and our inspiring and healing places. The economic incentives to degrade our life and identity-giving natural assets are given greater weight by decisionmakers in a way that sell the public short in the medium and now even in the short term. The Flora and Fauna Guarantee needs to be strengthened and more completely implemented so that decisionmakers have sufficient reason to decide to protect our future rather than acquiescing to the current incentives for short term advantage for some groups.

We support the implementation of the 50 recommendations of the 2011 Parliamentary inquiry in the Environmental Effects Act.

Governance and funding solutions to facilitate ecosystem and species protection, restoration and recovery in Victoria.

We support greater funding of restoration works, control of invasive species and the creation of biolinks to mitigate the extensive fragmentation that has occurred. We support developers undertaking to provide the same level of connectivity, quietness and patch size (for example) after their project is complete as away of creating a market for the values and assets being eroded with no current market signal.

This may require a "skin" of biological community being recreated by the developers over the development to reintegrate the native patch fragmented by the development. This is effectively a strengthening of the offset requirements to the point where more efficient use of existing built assets may be more attractive to government and developers. We support the offset system being extended to the mitigate the loss of agricultural land.

With stronger environmental legislation, and funding for its implementation and enforcement. We support greater funding for judicious restoration under expert supervision. With the threats addressed, there appears to be good prospects of some natural recovery, if climate change is vigorously addressed as well.

Other related matters.

The key drivers of ecosystem decline is commonly recognised to include urban expansion driven by population growth, fragmentation by linear infrastructure, invasive species, extractive industries, hunting of native animals such as waterbirds and fish, native forest logging, water harvesting and major pipelines, and intensification of land-use as enabled by greater rates of energy resources in agricultural operations.

To address this underlying set of causes, a step change is needed. This means that the change to legislation needs to be sufficiently major to stimulate significant reorganisation in the economic structure and in private behaviour.

Thank you for this opportunity and for your positive response and action.

Alanna Burton

Vice President, KORS Inc

