

I, the undersigned, am making a submission on the decline of Victoria's ecosystems and the loss of the habitat of our native species.

I believe the current framework is inadequate. It is lacking in funds, resources and the personnel to deliver its outcomes and enforcement.

I have recently watched the ABC series Australia Remastered: Wild Australians. I was struck not only by the extraordinary and unique nature of our flora and fauna, but also its vulnerability. I was prompted to write this submission as many of our species are endangered or are close to extinction. It is startling to me, and to the majority of Australians, that more is not being done to protect and assist the recovery of our wildlife.

I am sure you already have the statistics at hand, but according to scientists such as Doctor Hugh Possingham, Chief Scientist at The Nature Conservancy and Professor of Mathematics and Ecology at The University of Queensland, we have lost most of the grasslands and woodlands of Eastern Australia. Logging is still taking place in Victoria's native forests. Our State has the highest number of threatened species by subregion in Australia. The latter is a shameful statistic.

Our native animals have to contend with many things: increased temperatures, drought, bushfire, invasive plants, feral predators and, most obvious of all, land clearing. It has been a death by a thousand cuts. While we have national parks, wildlife corridors have been interrupted or lost through mass development projects in suburbs and on the outer edges of our cities. Loss of tree canopy affects us all. Trees not only provide habitat and improve air quality. They improve the health and well-being of all of us.

The seasons play an important role in preserving the vital connections in the natural world. When seasons are out of synch, food for one species is not available for another. One can only imagine the results when one species in the chain becomes extinct. Both land clearing and species extinction are being implicated as possible causes of pandemics, such as the one we are now experiencing.

All the above are sound reasons to address the decline in Victoria's ecosystems and habitat loss. I urge you to adopt a legislative framework which will protect habitat, establish recovery plans for native species and take action to reduce feral animal and invasive plants. Such a framework must be funded properly and enforced.

Susan Holberton