

My submission on ecosystem decline in Victoria- but also Australia wide -this is a bigger problem than just Victoria.



“I think sometimes we need to take a step back and just remember we have no greater right to be here than any other animal.”

—*David Attenborough*

Graham Connell –Farmer, apiarist, design draftsman and concerned citizen.

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A summary of the main reasons...

- THERE IS NO PLANET B
 - WE HAVE THE KNOWHOW AND THE SIENCE TO BACK US UP SO LETS ACT FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL CREATURES AND PROTECT THEIR ENVIRONMENT
 - NO SECOND CHANCE AND NO PERSONAL SATISFACTION OR SENSE OF WELLBEING WITH THE WAY THE PLANT IS HEADING. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF POLITICIANS TO ACT ON THESE OBSERVATIONS FOR THE BETTERMENT OF OUR EXISTANCE AND WELLBEING.
1. Lack of education of the population and not treating the environment with respect. We must adopt our indigenous peoples' respect for and reliance on, the whole ecosystem and have a deeper regard for our country. It's the only one we have. Craig Reucassel sums up the issues we face so well I don't have to reinvent the wheel
<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/fight-for-planet-a-our-climate-challenge>

E.g. Protection of the Hooded Plovers breeding areas is vital . Especially around populated holiday areas. More education of the people is required to protect these little battlers from people literally trampling the chicks to death or letting dogs loose on these beaches ----I seen both issues with sadness-issues lack of education and lack of surveillane by wildlife officers on these beaches and monitored 24/7. We have to do this if you are going to allow co-existence and over development take place in sensitive areas.

2. The city versus country divide is growing, and the city is where the loudest voices come from and the resultant poor policy is driven from. The fact is both the city and rural areas rely on a healthy environment to survive.

3. Farm land & forestry degradation with unsustainable farming and soil practices, which flows on to compromised water and stream quality then fouling of the oceans etc etc.

E.g. the nutritional value of food now is greatly reduced compared to years ago as the use of synthetic fertilizers and chemical use grows in the wider farming environment. There are good things happening with examples of regenerative farming principles that leave and maintain a better productive farming enterprise, producing good quality and more nutritious food but the chemical lobby groups are a powerful and loud voice that dominates policy outcomes THIS MUST CHANGE.

4. Habitat loss and quality not having priority consideration at the planning policy stage.

E.g. I refer to the Greater Bendigo Shire that continually approves developments, both industrial and residential, on land within the protected BOX IRON BARK FOREST at every opportunity, with no regard for this threatened ecosystem status. A series of aerial photographs readily available on NEARMAP or GOOGLE EARTH show massive destruction of this type of ecosystem within the shire in recent years. Another example is how the almond industry have removed large areas of Mallee scrub to plant water hungry orchards of almonds –how did this get approval when the Murray Darling basin is dying a slow painful death? Water, the most important resources to life, should NEVER have been allowed to be manipulated by accountants and foreign interests' control. We now count the cost of poor policy on a massive level and who actually wins out of this I ask? No one, least of all the environment, with river health & salinity just two of many degradation issues arising through lack of, or too much of, river flow at inappropriate times of the year.

5. The environment must have priority over development / economic considerations. I don't know of any proposal where the environment has won over the almighty \$\$\$\$\$. This must change if we are to enjoy a sustainable future.

E.g. AGL gas station in the protected Western Port bay. This is ludicrous in this day and age its threatening the ecology of this bay for the benefit of big business. I find the science AGL are hanging their hats on flawed. The claim they can discharge chlorine in vast amounts without having effect on the bay outrageous. Also the claim that the cold water released when thawing the frozen gas and the quantities required for zero effect-----unproven.

<https://environmentvictoria.org.au/campaign/stop-agls-dirty-gas-plan-for-our-bay/>

6. Population growth and the resultant pressures on our environment and natural resources are increasing at an exponential rate and the environment is losing out at nearly every turn.

I was horrified to learn the 4 most important economic drivers in the state of Victoria are:

a/ construction

b/ education

c/ population growth

d/ tourism

None of which have a sustainable plan moving forward out of this COVID issue.

7. Waste management must be brought under control with recycling of all packaging and materials being considered to a full life cycle to reduce landfill. This in itself is a monetary and moral decision for government and must be addressed NOW. The lobby against container returns must be dismissed. Craig Reucassel has summed up the issue so well, he's fantastic <https://iview.abc.net.au/show/war-on-waste>

Example: WE must pay for the new closed system of generating waste. We must take ownership of our own waste, as so well highlighted with the refusal of China and the other Asian countries to take and process our waste, and we now see that it's being moved to underdeveloped countries to be processed using very primitive polluting methods that

effect those peoples' health and environments. I believe there is policy in place to address this now, but how long has it taken to act – I ask!?

8. Lack of enforcement of existing rules and existing planning policy.
E.g. EPA licences / conditions, native vegetation protection legislation, mining licence conditions etc. The rules and guidelines are there to be enforced, but who does the compliance checks and polices these rules diligently? There is a lack of compliance checking being undertaken on so many of these policies and if anyone dares bring issues up they are poo pooed and made feel like idiots for doing so. This is wrong. It is pointless having the policies without the appropriate policing. Example: If illegal infringements start out of hours and go through a long weekend, a lot of damage can be done in a very short time. Please take action when the public report breaches and be available to act 24 hr / 7 days.

9. Local government doesn't police planning restrictions in a manner that protects our environment.

10. Use of toxic chemicals in the wider farming and public environment which degrade each system as it passes through it, must be addressed.
E.g. one of the many examples is the wide spread use of neonicotinoid pesticide sprays in our environment when they're getting banned overseas. I am an apiarist and see the effects of this every year when apiaries are inadvertently sprayed with this product or suffer the effects of the farmers planting treated seed.

11. Lack of planning at policy / landscape level for connectivity between existing habitat vegetation areas. This is leading to isolated populations and lack of genetic biodiversity in effected species.

12. Pest animals in our fragile environment :cats, foxes, wild dogs, horses, camels, pigs, goats, the list goes on and on, and weeds :gorse, hawthorn, variety of needle grasses, again, where do I stop, but also include insect pests, pathogens and birds and in the oceans and streams carp redfin etc etc etc. Containment and eradication must be considered and implemented to reduce their impact on the states ecosystem & environment, especially in sensitive and threated ecosystems.

Example; horses in the high country & cattle, although cattle have been removed, the lobby continues to pursue access. They are not a historic element of the high country but a destructive ecosystem destroyer.

13. Biosecurity is at the front line and is good and getting better, but needs to be better financed with up to date detection equipment as the number of incursions through our border security system is horrifying. Every year we see more and more attempts to bring in prohibited items with little or no penalty for attempting to do so. Send perpetrators home and ban them from entering Australia again.

Example: Asian bees into Victorian ports and Varroa mite (not here yet but inevitable with activity in every other country but Australia). Small hive beetle entered when the Olympics were in Sydney in 2000 & is now rampant in eastern Australia. CORONA VIRUS, a pertinent incursion showing what detrimental effects a really bad one can do to the environment and economy. Biosecurity protocols to deal with these incursions are in place, but not tested, and government seems too slow to stop these incursions effectively. Control plans & methods need to be quickly enacted if the problem is to be stopped. eg Asian bees in Queensland and small hive beetle in NSW which escaped out of the containment areas so easily. Not to mention plant & aquatic pest and animals etc etc etc.

14. Water authorities lack of compliance and forward planning, with facilities not keeping up to pace with required infrastructure to deal with rampant industry & population expansion.

Example: Local water authority's COLIBAN WATER release of thousands of Megs of contaminated Class C water into the Campaspe river at

Kyneton attributing to water quality so low that the river was unusable for many kilometres downstream from the release point & outbreak of blue green algae in Lake Eppalock over the last few years & rendering the river useless to the farming community that rely on it so heavily.

15. Mining operations having a detrimental effect on water tables and hydrology.

E.g: Fracking- so good to see this is banned at the moment but again the cards of the lobby group and the federal government are trying, at every turn, to reverse the policy! Watch this space.

So sad when a renewable energy source is available at a cheaper cost & without the destructive outcomes to the environment as using fossil fuels.

In Victoria, as in other states, underground de-watering of mines is taking scarce water resources out of the system and away from community use, polluting large areas of the state –I refer to mining companies contaminating waterways around Costerfield area with dust and pollution from the mine.

16. Aboriginal heritage and cultural values must be considered, enforced and implemented at federal and state levels properly

E.g. Rio Tinto blowing up cultural heritage sites.(not within Victoria but you get my inference)

17. Policy is in place but not enforced diligently enough. We only get one chance at this and the opportunities are getting eroded at every turn. I liken it to whittling away at the big stick, keep whittling until there is nothing left. We need to act for the good of the environment now.

18. Inappropriate large scale enterprises in pristine environments fouling the location and ecosystems well into for the future after the enterprise has moved on.

E.g. Salmon farming in Tasmania

<https://www.et.org.au/sustainable>

world heritage areas and private developments in RAMSAR world heritage areas (How did the federal minister approve this? This type of sanctioned degradation is disgraceful and the ministers responsible should be released from their positions.)

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-12-06/developer-issues-legal-threat-to-minister-over-protected-wetland/10581734>

19. We must also tackle global warming with the same zeal and tenacity as the Covid 19 crisis has been dealt with. This must include looking at population growth and sustainable forecasting well into the future.

20. Mine rehabilitation-

The amounts collected for bonds from mine operations don't cover the rehabilitation of sites costs after operations have ceased.

Example* anywhere in Victoria where mining operations have taken place the areas are left in a very poor state and unsafe condition after the mining companies have left, never completing their obligations claiming "we are broke and can't afford to do it" after reaping vast sums of money for years, leaving it to government to clean up these sites. Unfair and unsustainable. Accountability needed big time.

I can give multiple examples of each issue if required, but feel it wouldn't be helpful at this point in time.

What I am trying to show is the ecosystem is a complex and misunderstood part of our economy and needs protection and enhancement NOW before it's so fragmented and of such poor quality that it's of no benefit as a valuable part of our being & soul.

It's poignant to note that with the CORONA VIRUS and bipartisan approach to the issue, the world air pollution levels are so much better due to reduction of plane flights and car use worldwide. Never really thought a conferencing software programme could have such a powerful beneficial environmental outcome to eliminate the need to travel to meetings (go ZOOM).

With the ecosystem being attacked at every turn by every industry and activity it won't be long before the big stick is gone FOREVER.

Relevant References

CSIRO paper on ecosystem design in Victorian coastal waters.

<https://www.publish.csiro.au/rs/pdf/rs16008>

Damning report on (FEDERAL) Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act by Graham Samuels

<https://epbcactreview.environment.gov.au/resources/interim-report>

Radio interview on the Environmental Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act

https://abcmedia.akamaized.net/rn/podcast/2020/07/bst_20200721_0647.mp3

Minister Sussan Ley Minister for the Environment response

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/negotiations-to-start-over-conservation-act-review/12475698>

Please consider these issues and don't just treat it as a 'tick' on the public consultation process -we can't expect the planet to just keep giving without a negative result.