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Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Categories: Submissions

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Ms Sally Stead



SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Submission

2019 was Australia’s driest and hottest year, as a result of rising global temperatures and climate change. This led to devastating and incredibly costly bushfires across the country that wiped out 1 billion native animals.

Australia is home to some of the most unique and beautiful nature in the world. Our country has vast grasslands, endangered forests and diverse woodlands that provide shelter to our most precious threatened species. Yet Australia is one of the worst developed countries in the world for broadscale deforestation— killing tens of millions of native animals (including threatened species) and wiping out endangered forests and woodlands. In fact, we’ve cleared nearly half of our forest cover in the last 200 years, adding significantly to environmental damage, habitat destruction and climate change.

Victoria

- Victoria suffered the 2019/2020 bushfires which wiped out thousands of native animals, and over 70% of forests in East Gippsland.
- Only 1% of the Central Highlands Mountain Ash ecosystem remains unlogged and unburnt. East Gippsland is home to mainland Australia’s last unbroken tract of vegetation from snow to shore.
- With climate change and bushfires already threatening our endangered species and ecosystems, we must do more to protect our forests.

People are fed up and the government has started listening and acting. There is no denying the logging of native forests is unethical, unsustainable and even unlawful in many cases.

- The Andrews government has admitted that logging native forest is unsustainable. It has announced an end to native forest logging—but not until 2030, because that’s when unsustainable wood contracts enshrined in special legislation for one company, Nippon, run out.
- Recently the Federal Court delivered final orders and injunctions to protect 66 areas of forest home to the threatened Greater Glider and critically endangered Leadbeater’s Possum.

- (The judge also made formal declarations of unlawful logging by VicForests in those 66 areas and ordered VicForests pay Friends of Leadbeater's Possum's costs of running the case).
- In light of these recent decisions and the 19-20 bushfire season that devastated communities across Victoria and destroyed so much of Victoria's forests, an end to native forest logging must come sooner than 2030.

My recommendations/ actions:

- A rapid stop to native forest logging to remove one of the key drivers of decline of threatened species in Victoria.
- Greater protections for threatened species against extractive industries such as logging, mining, development, and fossil-fuel projects. Climate change and bushfires also have significant and grave impacts on forests and wildlife. Taking strong action on climate change has the potential to halt these impacts to climate change vulnerable threatened species.
- Restoration of areas which have been heavily impacted by logging and other extractive industries, as well as areas impacted by the horrific 2019/2020 bushfires.
- Clear processes and actions to recognise and address the impacts of ecosystem decline on First Nations peoples, and prioritisation of First Nations voices and involvement in management of country and traditional lands, returning custodianship to Traditional Owners.
- Support for the Great Forest National Park. This would connect up existing parks and conservation areas by adding 355,000 hectares of new protected forest.

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File1:

File2:

File3: