

Environment and Planning Committee  
Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria  
Parliament House, Spring St  
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

31/8/2020  
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Dear Committee members,

I wish to make the following submission to the committee urging measures to restore habitats and populations of threatened and endangered species in Victoria. As a biologist and proud Victorian, I treasure our truly unique natural wonders that we have on our doorstep. The loss of these precious ecosystems to various threat over the past century has meant that much of this richness will not be enjoyed by our descendants. We must act at this critical juncture to save what remains of them.

I urge the committee to consider the following measures to address key drivers of ecosystem decline and restore habitats and populations of threatened and endangered species.

- 1) **Strengthen Threatened species laws** – Our current laws to protect species are not strong enough to ensure that they protect threatened species against the threats of logging and habitat destruction. The current requirements for logging to self-assess impacts on threatened species do not require science. The underfunding of government
- 2) **Resolve the two conflicting needs of the State's dual purpose to protect the environment and to exploit it through shelving VicForests.**
- 3) **Reduce Habitat fragmentation** – Centuries of land clearing has reduced native ecosystems to small areas that are not sustainably resilient to existing threats and pressures. Targeted efforts to bridge these ecosystems, such as creating green corridors e.g. implement a new Greater National Park to connect isolated ecosystems and enable greater resilience of our flora and fauna to survive the increasing impacts of bushfires and disease.
- 4) **Increase Native parks to mitigate Climate change** – Our ecosystems, whether they be wetlands or forests are the lungs and blood of our planet. We must ensure our natural spaces are kept in good health to help buffer our food production areas from desertification and floods, to help as carbon sinks (a valuable resource in carbon trading markets), and to temper heat and wind changes in cities.
- 5) **Control invasive animals & plants** – our delicate ecosystems are under threat from a range of invasive species such as feral deer, pigs, goats, horses, rabbits, cats and foxes, serrated tussock and willows. Greater funding of programs to control these, including changing public opinion are key to reducing these threats.
- 6) **End Native forest logging** – which fragments forests and damages habitat for forest-dependent species. So little of our wild spaces remain. The destruction of our great forests needs to end now.

- 7) **Ban unsustainable hunting of native wildlife** – over-fishing of our rivers and seas means that the industries that depend on these are on borrowed time. An environment first management of water ecosystems will mean these industries are sustainable for the long-term and survive alongside our unique water ecosystems.
- 8) **Better water regimes** – due to dams or over-extraction, the ecosystems that depend on these water flows have dwindled. We must improve water management, tighten controls, better police water access and strengthen water rights for ecosystems that are public resources.
- 9) **Better planning and control of urban development.** Population growth – especially around metropolitan and large urban centres leads to permeant land clearing and fragmentation. We need to take a generational (long-term) approach to urban planning and population growth by intentionally preserving and defending these ecosystems for our grandchildren. Victoria’s forward thinking on ‘green corridors’ in the 80s means that Melbourne now enjoys some of the best urban parklands in the world. This is our opportunity to ensure that our grandchildren get to enjoy our unique natural heritage.
- 10) **Providing public resources for ecosystem management** – increased investment is needed if we are to preserve our natural spaces. It is a case of once it is gone, it is never to come back. With the advent of COVID-19, many Victorians are enjoying a new love for their natural spaces as integral to their mental and physical health. Why not invest public resources into preserving and enhancing what remains as a Victorian green economy?

I thank the Committee for consideration of this submission.

Kind regards,

Lindus Conlan