

Dear Standing Committee on Environment and Planning

I, Conrad Lindner, would like to make an individual submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria. My phone number is [REDACTED] and my email address is [REDACTED]. My submission can be made public as required.

As a young person who moved to Victoria in 2019, I highly value our state's natural environment, its biodiversity, and the collective relationships that we share with it.

Despite only having lived in Victoria for a year and a half, I am passionate about the importance of caring for the state's biodiversity, noting especially that we find ourselves in the midst of a biodiversity crisis on a global scale. For this reason alone, it is pertinent that we prioritise the conservation of the native flora and fauna, to do our part in combating the global issue. This Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline will do well to not only quantify the extent of biodiversity loss in Victoria, but to identify also the key systems, governance and otherwise, that have played a part in contributing to the loss.

Important to note is that it is already well known and understood how further losses to biodiversity can be prevented, and the solutions are not technically complex. The hurdles preventing recovery, however, are systemic, and will require significant systemic change.

Crucially, Victoria must stop logging native forests. In particular the role of VicForests in conducting illegal logging, putting already-threatened species at even higher risk of extinction, must be thoroughly condemned.

Further, the interconnectedness of crises that are unfolding simultaneously must be acknowledged, as the solutions for one issue often have co-benefits for another. An example of this is the climate crisis, which is undoubtedly a contributing factor to Victoria's biodiversity decline. Addressing this matter proportionately, by rapidly phasing out coal and gas burning in the state, will not only ensure that Victoria has done its part in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and its contribution to climate change, but will additionally improve air quality and the health of our natural environments.

The collective impacts of developments and projects must also be considered into the future, as the impacts of individual developments and projects have to-date not triggered adequate protections for existing habitat. Projects must be assessed according to their potential impact to natural environments, and only those which can demonstrate no net-loss of biodiversity or habitat for protected species should be allowed to proceed.

Finally, biodiversity in cities must not be overlooked. Enhancing biodiversity in our cities will encourage a healthier human-nature relationship in which children grow up learning to appreciate the criticality of natural systems and biodiversity in the natural world, and as a result, the future of the state of our environment will be in better hands than it is today.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards

Conrad Lindner