

31 August 2020

Submission for Victorian Extinction Inquiry

I am sending this submission as the environment, the habitat that supports our unique wildlife, is very important to me, my family and friends. Wilsons Promontory, The Grampians, our local reserves and parks are all special places where we all spend time observing nature and wildlife.

Natural environments play a crucial role in both the mental and physical health of communities. The loss of nature and access to green spaces can contribute to mental distress and environmental grief experienced by communities who place significance on these areas. This can detrimentally impact on the long-term mental health of a community.

Our State's natural environment has suffered from the unprecedented fires, logging continues despite 66% of our land being already cleared and Victoria being the most cleared state in Australia. Precious wildlife and ecosystems are in danger of being lost forever; we have more than 700 native plants, animals and insects under threat.

I urge this inquiry to look at ways of preventing an irreversible extinction crisis; to restore and protect habitat and wildlife. This is the time to be looking at investing and funding solutions that protect and enhance the environment for wildlife and community health and wellbeing.

Programs that control and remove invasive weed and animal species should be created so habitats can flourish. Combined with tree planting and habitat restoration work many more jobs would be created.

I urge Government to strengthen nature and environmental protection laws as we cannot prevent continuing extinctions without stopping the destructive activities driving it. Logging of native forests must end, coal and gas burning must be urgently transitioned away from as they are driving the climate crisis and extreme events. Destructive and unnecessary developments like the Western Highway Duplication and the proposed Westernport gas ship terminal destroy our natural environment for corporate profit.

I know many thousands of Victorians share my sense of betrayal, environmental grief and despair over the destruction of wildlife and their homes for short sighted, arguably environmental vandalism, developments for corporate profit and greed. It's these unsustainable and environmentally damaging projects that drive extinction and contribute nothing to future generations having a natural environment to enjoy that need to be stopped.

I urge you to protect grasslands and the wildlife that rely on them through strong laws with criminal charges being laid when laws are broken.

With Victoria having more than 120 species at risk of extinction I think they deserve and need programs and funding to rescue them. **We need money spent on scientific research and studies into solutions to the extinction crisis we face.**

I want to see programs and funding to protect, enhance and restore our natural environment to prevent more extinctions and for the health and well-being of wildlife and humans.

Janet Wheeler

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