

Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Dear Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee
of the 59th Parliament.

As a teenager living in the 1980s in Tennyson St Kew, I knew an old 'original' neighbour who told stories of the local dairy and cows he played amongst growing up in the street.

I remember the sounds of the clip clop horse and cart delivering milk. By the time I was able to freely walk, the Eglinton St dairy became D'Alterio's truck yard.

Walking on my way to school I would pass paddocks, which ran between Pakington St and Cobden St, with horses in them. On the weekends my sister and I would jump the fence and try riding them; only luck prevented us from being injured.

Within my lifetime Melbourne's rate of change in the natural and built environment is accelerating to meet the 24-hour business cycle.

The dairies, truck yard and paddocks have been replaced with high density housing. The street cricket and billy cart racing have been swallowed up by car culture and stranger danger.

My personal experience is that of one ecosystem being replaced by another. Such trends have accelerated globally. Land clearing of natural ecosystems has occurred to make way for new suburbs and the farmland to feed us.

Indigenous people here and abroad have fought and continue to fight capitalism's replacement of their cultures and natural environment with products. Colonial expansion has no end point, which is recognised by many in civil society such as Jack Mundey's Green Bans, anti war movements, unions, S11(protesting the World Economic Forum), Extinction Rebellion and revolutionary theologians.

Thirty-five years ago I would ride my bicycle to Beaumaris and snorkel between Ricketts Point and Table Rock Point hunting for flat head, leather jackets and abalone. The site was full of diverse species and was a joy to explore. Huge sting rays and other fish would swim by. I listened to old men on the cliff and shoreline reminisce on how good the marine sanctuary was when they were young. I remember thinking, 'hard to believe it was better than this'. I snorkelled at Ricketts Point a few years ago and experienced a desert in comparison to what was there over thirty years ago. Numerous report on the health of Port Phillip Bay has confirmed the decline I witnessed.

As a Darebin resident, surrounded by Darebin, Edgars, Central and Merri creeks the local friends of the creeks often report declining creek health due to higher colloidal and lower oxygen levels brought about by high-density living, feral species and rising temperatures.

There are many well-intentioned people who enter councils or parliament. They write well thought out policies and pass laws hoping to balance the natural eco systems with the demands of capital. This dates back over 141 years ago with Australia's first national park.

Regrettably other species on this planet do not mobilise themselves into political parties, nor lobby or focus groups. If they could, it would be they who would be flooding this enquiry with submissions, in the same way as disgruntled electors who are opposed to a policy which although in the "best interests of Victoria" will impact on them.

Notwithstanding the many passionate environmentalists who try to speak on behalf of these other creatures, they are not empowered to set a regulatory framework which defines limits concerning the disruption caused by humans to their habitats. We believe our rhetoric about humans being superior to all other living things, and this is the basis of our industries placing their needs first. We do so in the belief that we are improving the lives of people or making societies more prosperous. But what right do we have to live in a manner which is so disrespectful of other species and their needs?^{Andrew Hunter, from}

Beaumaris, discussing with LZ

Yet Australia's Federal and State elections campaigns by Labour and Liberal are overwhelmingly based on greed. Hip pocket sentiments of tax cuts, jobs and growth and war on terror favour corporations. Victoria's, Australia's and our global ecosystem cannot compete with the dominance of capital expansion that most politicians and corporations campaign for.

On T.V I see Greg Combet, (whom I stood beside at Appleton Dock, defending the MUA wharfies against then Prime Minister Howard's mercenaries and Premier Steve Brack's Victoria police violence), selling the jobs and growth story. Where workers \$trillions are going to keep them busy in work concreting Australia. Where is the story of worker's 10% of the trillions protecting the environment and reduced hours of work, like the Green Bans? The capital rules the people, not people rule capital.

The rules on the continued destruction of our ecosystems are prioritised in the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act. Commonwealth constitutions are feudal remnants premised on trade deals between the states and the protection of accumulating private property, be it individuals or corporations.

The trade wars exploded into WWI. 31 million civilians destroyed along with 9 million military personnel. Wars environmental destruction created the 1918-1919 pandemic, killing between 60 -100 million more people, and was caused from a virus jump between species.

Post WWII reconstruction and decolonisation saw liberation movements from below. Some states attempted to create constitutions based on land for the Commons. They were met with war and replaced with compliant rulers to fit within spheres of political influence such as: Philippines, Greece, Germany, Korea, Vietnam, Central America and Africa.

Capitalist production exploded creating a divided consumer society not seen since the feudal lords of the manor. Citizens like you and me become branded consumers. We are busier, wealthier, fatter, mobile and neurotic as we competed for a diminishing economic pie. All inspired by the major political parties and their corporate backers.

The adequacy and effectiveness of government programs to protect citizens and the environment have failed. Inequality and environmental destruction have accelerated – billionaires maintain 40 years of

global warming inaction. Corporations demand an expanded economy – our environment and workers simply serve as a means to exploit.

Corona Virus 2019(Covid-19) is the current expression of environmental destruction. Another viral jump between species due to habitat loss and corporate farming practices. In *Big Farms Make Big Flu*, Dr. Rob Wallace wrote pandemics to be more probable as a consequence due to capitalism's mode of food production.

Covid-19 crisis demonstrated that conservative politicians can quickly give up their religion and implement Keynesian economics.

Economic theories of money are not set in stone and collaborative exchanges of goods and services are possible.

Globalisation has offered opportunities. The nation state is now an antiquated idea. Competition between states is dangerous with militarism and environmental exploitation. A new espionage Cold War is emerging.

We need a new constitution.

Our new constitution will be an ever-changing breathing document to include real power for Indigenous people and the rights of nature. The Labor Party of old fought for such values.

Our constitution will be committed to creating citizens, an informed educated active citizenship to public affairs and resource use.

Abolition of the states will save taxpayers billions of dollars and rid a layer of bureaucracy, further stream-lining services and accountability to citizenship.

The Corporations Act will be abolished. Entities for profit will not be protected over and above the rights of people and nature.

(Australian Peoples' Tribunal for Community and Nature's Rights an initiative of the Australian Earth Laws Alliance <https://www.earthlaws.org.au>)

Democratic rights in the workplace are to be linked to the health of society and the environments which sustain them, including eliminating class distinctions.

Elected officials will be immediately accountable to the populace. Citizens' power will not be traded for representative casino democracy.

The parliament web page and electoral offices shop fronts to display the measure of environmental improvement in hectares rehabilitated land and species population and CO2 PPM counter. This will be a performance indicator to the citizens as we walk by their sterile offices.

Freedom of Information paramount. No more 30-year rule in hiding political documents and contracts to protect politicians and their business mates' deals. Transparency to be the new normal.

Past environmental and human injustices (murder, stolen land & wages) will be given reparations.

This will require brave politicians and community activism. If you are not up to such task, please find a person to take your place immediately.

Sincerely,

Leon Zembekis

