



The Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Environment and Planning  
Parliament House, Spring Street  
East Melbourne 3002

To the Committee Manager,

I am pleased to be making this submission to the **Inquiry into Ecosystems Decline in Victoria**.

I grew up in Gippsland, on Gunnai-Kurnai land, and spent the first 20 years of my life playing and learning in the bush, swimming in the Freestone Creek, and camping at Cape Conran and Wilson's Promontory.

As an adult, I have travelled, lived and worked in more than 20 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. I have seen many amazing places, but few are as beautiful and none as precious as the ones we are fortunate enough to have in Victoria.

Our land, plants and animals are precious, and they are under increasing threat. For too long, their ability to survive and thrive have been subordinate to economic growth, and this has brought many species to the brink of extinction.

This inquiry is a welcome and much-needed effort to address these issues, and the success of the inquiry and subsequent actions must be measured on the extent to which they redress this balance.

Protecting the habitats of endangered species is vital. Victoria needs to do much more to protect native forests that are home to so many of our threatened species. The incredible Tarra Bulga National Park is a living, breathing demonstration of how reforestation can support native species to thrive, boost sustainable tourism, and support the health and wellbeing and health of many Victorians. Reforestation won't just support ecosystems and contribute to emissions reduction, but it can drive economic growth through job creation.

Invasive species are another key threat to endangered species requiring decisive action. Invasive terrestrial plants and animals threaten the balance of ecosystems and according to DELWP, cost the Victorian economy around \$900 million per year. Shifting to a focus on preventive management is key to effective management, and will also support job creation.

These threats are worsened by incrementally increasing temperatures resulting from climate change. While many species were already teetering on the brink of extinction in recent decades, the threat they face is significantly increased by incremental warming, risking the collapse of entire ecosystems. The underlying drivers of climate change require urgent attention at all levels - from local communities through to national and global.

Victoria and other jurisdictions have led the way in the context of a national policy vacuum, with increasing support from the private sector and energy companies. But decisive action needs to be coordinated in order to be genuinely effective. Our national response to COVID has demonstrated capacity for cross-partisan action grounded in science - these efforts and relationships need to be capitalised on to push for stronger climate policies across and within jurisdictions, and at the national level.

While Victoria has demonstrated environmental leadership in some areas, we can and need to do much better. This inquiry will be pivotal to mapping future action, and I would urge the Committee to pay particular attention to environmental and conservation experts, as we seek to redress the balance in environmental management, and climate change action.

In addition to protecting and promoting our precious places, animals and plants, serious investment in biodiversity protection has the added benefit of job creation, at a time when building clean, green industries can support economic recovery from COVID-19, while transitioning towards a low-carbon future.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Noble

31 August 2020