

Environment and Planning Committee
Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

17/7/20

Dear members of the Environment and Planning Committee

I am a mum of two teenagers, a Career Counsellor and Dance teacher. I grew up in the suburbs of Melbourne in the 1970's and 1980's and had the pleasure and privilege of spending nearly every weekend and most school holidays up at my grandparent's property in Seville, Victoria (up towards Warburton). They kept horses on the property and I used to ride up through the bush on my own. It was so incredibly beautiful, peaceful and something that I really took for granted until I left Australia to live and work overseas for 13 and a half years. While I was away, I missed being able to escape into the bush and craved being able to hear the sounds of the birds in the forests and to really feel cocooned in nature. I also thought it would always be there for me when I returned.

I believe that our forests are unique and so is the native flora and fauna that inhabit them. The sounds of a native Australian forest are so different to anywhere else in the world. While these days I don't ride horses very often I love to go bushwalking and camping and to be out in nature with my family. In summer we regularly attend the Turrumurra music camp near at Penny Royal near the Otway Forest Park and the Great Otway National Park. This location and the trees are absolutely awe inspiring. But I believe being able to be in nature has become even more important with the Covid-19 pandemic that we are currently living with. Having beautiful natural places to visit locally seems even more important for health and mental wellbeing. To be able to breathe more deeply and forget about everyday concerns.

I have been aware and deeply concerned about the logging of our old growth and native forests for some time now. I am deeply disturbed by logging in Toolangi and Kinglake because these are areas I am familiar with. I am beyond devastated that after the bushfires with so much loss of our wildlife and native forest, clear felling of our precious forest has continued. We need to be ferociously protecting what we have because once these forests have disappeared they will not return. This loss of habitat for our unique wildlife will and is already leading to extinction of many, many unique Australian species. And for what? Copy paper and wood chips? And addition to the loss of species and the destruction of ecosystems we have climate change to contend with. There is just so much evidence that we need more trees to help keep our planet cool and purify our air and not less. We urgently need to value our natural world for our future generations to enjoy.

As you undertake this important inquiry into Victoria's extinction crisis please can you consider the following actions:

- The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 industry transition must be brought forward. Two immediate priorities are protection of unburnt Greater Glider habitat, and a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland.
- Plans for recovery for all threatened plants and wildlife must be brought forward and implemented urgently.
- The rights and interests of Traditional Custodians are recognised in all aspects of land and water management, as well as decision-making in relation to their traditional lands, including traditional management practices such as cultural fire.

- Victoria needs a new, independent, well resourced conservation regulator to police deforestation and other destructive industries.
- Community rights must be guaranteed when governments are making environmental decisions, including the right to participate, the right to access necessary information, the right to challenge environmental decisions and the right to transparency in government decision making.
- The state government protects forests for all Victorians to enjoy now and into the future. Two community led initiatives are the proposed Great Forest National Park and Emerald Link conservation economy proposal.



Thank you for taking into consideration my submission.

Kym King



* I agree to this submission being made public