

Valerie Tepper

8th May 2020.

To be presented to the Parliamentary Inquiry into tackling the extinction crisis in Victoria.

Please accept my submission. I am a grandmother of 5 and our family grew up in Flowerdale, Victoria. We lost our family home in the Black Saturday fires in 2009. Despite the risk, our love of the natural environment and living with the native birds and animals gave us a joyful fulfillment city life cannot. Echidnas, wombats, wallabies and kangaroos would come graze on our front lawn. We watched out for lizards, snakes, bushytail and ringtail possums, phascogales and the miniature feather tails. One day a migrating koala crossed our lawn. We were able to bear witness to bird cycles, cicada cycles and were aware of frog populations when they were enjoying abundant years of rain and when silence denoted their demise in drought times.

We not only lived in the bush we holidayed in at as well on our annual summer holiday to Wilson's Promontory. I loved contributing observations on the annual lyrebird count in the Kinglake National Park. I am in a bush walking group and we hike. I have born witness to the good years prior to the devastation of the fires and the encouragement of recovery when systems are left to nature to regenerate. So, I speak from experience when I hear people speak of their need to have meaningful engagement with the natural environment to maintain good health and a sense of wellbeing. It is our balm, our restoration, our sustenance. The diversity of flora and fauna we so value is our nourishment. It nurtures our heart and soul. It is heartbreaking to know we are not taking the care we ought to be taking.

We are ignoring the science at our own peril. You don't need me to regurgitate the facts and figures. There is an abundance of evidence laid out before you from far more qualified people than me. But I know in my heart of hearts that we do not have the right to keep on denying habitat for the survival of species. We need to make amends. I am deeply concerned that my grandchildren may not know these simple pleasures and worse still, suffer the consequences of government inaction due to an unconscionable wilful ignorance of the facts laid out before it by the scientific community.

I implore you to listen to the millions of Australians and people around the world who are desperately trying to bring reason to the powers that be to restore balance from the imbalance commercial rapacity has created.

I implore you to reassess the wisdom in declaring the moratorium against logging in state forests from 2030 and bring it forward to 2020 in response to the critical situation Victoria is in post our last summer season of bushfires. We desperately need the time to recover.

We have enough plantation timber to meet our needs. Should we be expected to sacrifice our state forests to fulfil the pulped and chipped demands of the rest of the world. The answer is an emphatic no, no, no!

I implore you on behalf of the future generations of all species to make the right decisions and do the right thing. Leave native forests be, whether burnt or not. Please give endangered species a fighting chance.

Valerie Tepper

PS. You have my permission to make my submission public if necessary.