

Dear Committee,

I am a professional and a volunteer who cares deeply about this inquiry and the implications for our ecosystems and Victorians. My background is in ecology, with a Bachelor of Environmental Science (Wildlife and Conservation Biology) and Bachelor of Applied Science (Honours). I currently work in this field, and am a committee member and regular volunteer with several Landcare and Friends groups.

I am passionate about helping other young people connect with our natural environment. This is partly because, the more I learn, the more I realise just how quickly we are losing these species I hold dear, such as the Brown Treecreepers who live in the bush near me. I'm lucky enough to be linked up with lots of mentors in my community, some who are farmers who grew up here, who teach me about the land. But all too often a show and tell where I learn about a new plant that leaves me full of wonder, ends with a story about how there used to be so many more than there are now. Every lesson is bittersweet.

I want to be able to play that mentor role for younger people, but with hope for the future. To take them out and show them the amazing plants and animals I love, and know that they will be here in fifty years' time.

I sincerely hope that this inquiry into ecosystem decline leads to strong action to protect our biodiversity in Victoria. From what I have seen in my twelve years of experience working in this field, the need for protection and urgent action is highly necessary. Experts on the ground and community volunteers are calling out for it every single day.

Key actions I feel are particularly needed at this time are summarised below.

#### **Better public land management**

I was saddened, but not surprised, by the findings last year of the Victorian Auditor General's report, '[Protecting Victoria's biodiversity](#)'. I wish to see the issues identified in this report addressed urgently. Across the board, I believe we need much more investment in natural resource management on both public and private land.

#### **Landscape restoration for climate change**

Significant large-scale funding is urgently needed to implement action on the ground in order to instil climate resilience in landscapes. This would be to pre-emptively support ecosystems and populations vulnerable to collapse in the face of the changing climate. Increasing connectivity in the landscape, strengthening refuges along riparian corridors, increasing genetic resilience, and other ready-to-go actions could all be the make or break difference for many species as we edge closer to the tipping point with climate change.

In addition, official guidelines to support land managers and community groups with landscape restoration practises (i.e. revegetation, weed management) are sorely needed.

Thank you for the chance to make a submission, and I wish you all the best with the inquiry.