

Environment and Planning Committee
Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

[date]

Dear members of the Committee,

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria.

I've lived in Melbourne for the past 8 years and one of the many things I love about this city is its proximity to the forest. As a kiwi from a small town surrounded by national parks, I find living in a big city manageable only because I can get out into nature and recharge.

I moved to Australia with a vision of a vast, dry land with a few scrubby gum trees, kangaroos skipping around, koalas, crocs, the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru in the centre. I had no idea how lush, unique, ancient and beautiful it is here, home to more plants and animals than anywhere else on Earth.

It's breathtaking.

What also took my breath away was witnessing the devastation of an industrially logged native forest just 2 hours from Melbourne back in 2013. Imagine this - my friends and I are hiking through dense tree ferns, mountain ash and myrtle beech forest, feeling buoyant with the scent of leaves and loamy earth hitting my nostrils, fresh air rejuvenating my lungs. I hear a lyrebird and fresh water trickling close by.

But as we walk, the sounds of nature disappear and I hear a distant chainsaw roar. We stumble into a clearing and before us lies a graveyard of trees. Nothing remains standing and the earth shakes as we feel them falling, one every minute. I can't believe my eyes, and I feel a rising fury and sadness when my friends tell me that is just one of hundreds of areas being cleared by machines, predominantly to make disposable products like paper.



These forests provide a home for animals that don't live anywhere else. They are the lungs of our state of Victoria and attract rainfall that filters water into the catchment areas that

supply Melbourne with some of the best drinking water in the world. They moderate our climate, and they are carbon rich. You don't need to be a scientist to understand that an intact forest is one of the best ways to store this greenhouse gas.

In spite of all this and in the wake of the unprecedented and catastrophic bushfires we've experienced and are still experiencing, many of these native forests are still on the logging schedule.

How is it that this is still happening, at a time when our state government needs to acknowledge the extinction crisis?

It's 2020. We're wiser than this. It doesn't make sense to me that there needs to be a discussion about whether or not we need better and more effective laws to defend nature.

If you zoom out and look at the broader picture, Victoria's natural places form part of the intricate web of life that is integral to the survival of all life on Earth. In these times where people are seeking refuge as a result of devastation wrought by the changing climate and destruction of our environment, we must act as the global citizens we are and do everything we can to safeguard our future as one with clean air, water, food, and places of spiritual nourishment.

We need to do everything in our power to protect and restore nature, including recognising the rights and practices of Traditional Custodians, who have been managing these landscapes for the past 60 000 + years.

As you undertake this important inquiry into Victoria's extinction crisis, I urge you to ensure that:

Community rights are 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 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.

The Victorian state government's commitment to a 2030 native forest logging industry transition is brought forward, including: immediate protection of Greater Glider habitat; a continued moratorium on logging in East Gippsland; releasing support for working people before 2024.

Plans for recovery of threatened plants and wildlife are implemented urgently and properly resourced.

The government protects forests for all Victorian's to enjoy now and into the future including supporting the Emerald Link conservation economy proposal for East Gippsland.

Thank you for your consideration of my submission, and I invite any further discussion via email at [insert email address].

Sincerely,

Tria Manley
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