



Monday 7 December, 2009

MEDIA RELEASE

50 year vision brings hope for Victoria's environment

An alliance of leading environment groups today welcomed the Victorian Government's 50-year vision to reverse the state's loss of nature and to reconnect the landscape, but warned it would take serious investment to make this vision a reality.

"The Victoria Naturally Alliance applauds the government's new Land and Biodiversity White Paper and its proposal to reconnect the landscape with very large networks of wildlife corridors," alliance spokesperson Karen Alexander said.

"Our natural environment needs all the help it can get. CSIRO says 44 per cent of native plants and 30 per cent of native animals are already threatened with extinction in Victoria. By reconnecting areas of native vegetation these animals will be able to move through the landscape more easily as climate change bites.

"But the White Paper's vision will mean nothing unless the government commits enough money to implement the recommendations. We strongly urge the government to act quickly and allocate the required funds to make this 50-year vision for Victoria's environment a reality."

Bush Heritage Australia and Greening Australia Victoria both welcomed the White Paper.

"Reconnecting our bushland mainly needs to happen on private land and this is acknowledged in the White Paper," Bush Heritage Australia CEO Doug Humann said.

"However, in the face of warmer, drier conditions we need to further support landholders to do this work with special consideration to the high costs involved."

The Victorian National Parks Association Executive Director Matt Ruchel said the overall direction of the White Paper was positive, but that the groups were concerned about the details of some key initiatives.

"Conservation groups are extremely nervous about proposals to overhaul the state's main conservation legislation, including abolishing the independent Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) and reworking the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act," he said.

"The powers and resourcing of these entities should be strengthened, not just streamlined."

The Wilderness Society's Victorian Campaigns Manager Gavan McFadzean said protecting the natural environment was important in reducing the effects of climate change.

"The White Paper shows the State Government is starting to grasp the importance of protecting nature in the fight against climate change and adapting to its more severe impacts. This must form a critical part of the government's climate change response," he said.

Environment Victoria's CEO Kelly O'Shanassy said investment in the state's environment had many benefits.

"Restoring Victoria's natural environment will create jobs and deliver regional economic development through tourism and new industries," she said. "For example, new Red Gum national parks in northern Victoria will create 40 park management jobs and more than 20 jobs in the tourism sector."

All groups in the Victoria Naturally Alliance contributed to the development of the White Paper over the past three years and will continue to work with government and others to ensure the protection of Victoria's natural environment.

The Victoria Naturally Alliance argues that protection of the state's native plants and animals from threats including climate change and habitat loss is essential for a healthy community and economy.

The alliance, led by the Victorian National Parks Association, includes the Australian Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society, Environment Victoria, Greening Australia (Vic), Bush Heritage Australia, Bird Observation & Conservation Australia and the Invasive Species Council.

For more information: read the Victoria Naturally Alliance's White Paper backgrounder.

To arrange interviews, contact: Sacha Myers, joint media officer, on 0417 017 844 or Victoria Naturally Alliance spokesperson Karen Alexander, on 0439 306829.



Victoria Naturally Alliance argues that protection of the state's native plants and animals from threats including climate change and habitat loss is essential for a healthy community and economy. The alliance, led by the Victorian National Parks Association, includes Australian Conservation Foundation, The Wilderness Society, Environment Victoria, Greening Australia (Vic), Bush Heritage Australia, Bird Observation & Conservation Australia and Invasive Species Council. See www.victorianaturally.org.au