



The Victoria Naturally Alliance – a shared vision

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MEDIA RELEASE

New plan to bring environment back from the brink

Deakin University and a coalition of nine of Victoria's leading environment groups, the Victoria Naturally Alliance, will today launch a report that shows how Victoria's stressed environment can be brought back from the brink.

Carrie Deutsch, Victoria Naturally Alliance spokesperson, said the report, *Ecological Processes in Victoria: Policy priorities for sustaining biodiversity*, showed a new approach to looking after the environment was needed.

"According to CSIRO, 44 per cent of plant species and 30 per cent of animal species are already extinct or threatened in Victoria," she said.

"With 10 dry years, extensive fires and the continued loss or damage of native vegetation, we are seeing a decline in native birds, mammals, insects and reptiles and an increase in exotic pests across many parts of Victoria.

"The Victorian Government is failing to reverse the decline in the state's plants and animals and needs to take a new approach to mend the damage."

The strategy outlined in the report is based on protecting and restoring the "ecological processes" and connections that shape, drive and support Victoria's ecosystems and species.

Ecological processes include nutrient cycling, water flows, dispersal of animals and seeds, local adaptations by species to changing climatic conditions, disturbance regimes associated with fires and flooding, and interactions between soils, plants and animals such as pollination and competition.

"We need to expand our approach to conservation to ensure that ecological processes, which are nature's building blocks, are protected and restored," Ms Deutsch said.

"If we don't do this, it is like trying to build a house on poor foundations. If the foundations are damaged, no matter how flash the house is, it will fall down."

Deakin's Associate Professor Geoff Wescott, said if ecological processes are altered or degraded, then the species and habitats that depend on them may change or disappear.

"Actions which focus solely on particular species, habitats or places are unlikely to be effective over the long term unless the ecological processes which support these values are also sustained and restored," he said.

"For example, if we want to protect rivers and wetlands, we need to ensure that flows of water are provided at the right times and places."

Deakin's Professor Andrew Bennett said the best way to sustain a healthy environment for Victoria in the long term, was to use conservation strategies that were directed toward maintaining or re-establishing the integrity of ecological processes.

"We have to scale up our efforts in Victoria, and match the resources to the scale of the problem. Victoria can't afford to let our life support system unravel," he said.

The state government's Land and Biodiversity at a Time of Climate Change White Paper is a key opportunity to address the failings leading to large numbers of threatened species across the state.

The Alliance is calling on the government to boost resources for protecting and restoring habitat on both private and public land through a range of measures.



The Victoria Naturally Alliance wants to see Victoria's native plants and animals protected from threats including climate change and habitat loss. For more information go to www.victorianaturally.org.au.



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Download the Ecological Processes in Victoria: Policy priorities for sustaining biodiversity report from the [Victoria Naturally Alliance website](#).

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For further comment contact:

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Led by the Victorian National Parks Association, the Victoria Naturally Alliance is made up of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Environment Victoria, Greening Australia (Vic), The Wilderness Society, Trust for Nature, Bush Heritage Australia, Invasive Species Council and Bird Observation & Conservation Australia.