



The Victoria Naturally Alliance – a shared vision

MEDIA RELEASE

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Local councils desperate for state support to overturn biodiversity crisis

Local councils are frustrated by a lack of State Government funds and resources to battle Victoria's growing biodiversity crisis and are crying out for help in the face of climate change, an alliance of eight environment groups said today.

The groups were responding to the release today of a report by the Environment Defenders Office (EDO) that analyses submissions to the first stage of the government's Land and Biodiversity White Paper inquiry.

The report, *Land and Biodiversity – a Call for Action*, found that of the 24 councils that made submissions, the majority raised concerns about the threats posed to Victoria's native plants and animals by climate change, particularly the increased risk of bushfire and reduced rainfall.

"Councils and local environment groups are at the frontline of nature conservation in Victoria," said Karen Alexander from the Victoria Naturally alliance, which is led by the Victorian National Parks Association and includes the Australian Conservation Foundation and Environment Victoria.

"But too often they are left shouldering the most difficult parts of that responsibility on their own."

In its submission the Buloke Shire Council said the government should take more responsibility for the biodiversity crisis, instead of "dumping" everything on local governments. Bayside City Council said a lack of funds for public and private land management was a "major threat to biodiversity".

Councils on Melbourne's fringe, including the City of Casey, branded urban expansion the biggest threat to biodiversity, while in regional Victoria weeds and pests were the dominant threats.

The analysis also found that calls for "urgent, ongoing and longer-term funding" for environment projects across Victoria clearly dominated the more than 350 submissions made to the government inquiry.

"Without a major increase in funding and resources a real commitment cannot be made to turning around Victoria's biodiversity crisis," EDO principal solicitor Brendan Sydes said.

The government launched the land and biodiversity inquiry in April last year after warnings from the Victoria Naturally alliance that the state's natural systems had been pushed to breaking point.

CSIRO analysis shows that 44 per cent of Victoria's native plants and 30 per cent of its native animals are either extinct or officially threatened. A recent report by the Victorian Catchment Management Council revealed that despite hundreds of millions of dollars and countless volunteer hours invested over the past 20 years the state's plants, animals, soils and waterways are continuing to be further degraded.

The VCMC report said that in environmental and economic terms "the impact is profound".

"The Land and Biodiversity White Paper represents a major opportunity to turn this around by ensuring significant funding increases for statewide initiatives, and for councils to do their job well and help protect the state's environmental assets," Ms Alexander said.

The next stage in the process will be a "Green Paper", due out in April.



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 EDO report:

The EDO report Land and Biodiversity - a Call for Action can be downloaded from the Victorian National Parks Association's Reports page – www.vnpa.org.au. You can also download the report from the [Environment Defenders Office](http://www.edo.org.au/edovic/) website – www.edo.org.au/edovic/.

Download submissions

All submissions to the first stage of the State Government's Land and Biodiversity White Paper inquiry can be downloaded from the Department of Sustainability and Environment website: www.dse.vic.gov.au/landwhitepaper.



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