



The Victoria Naturally Alliance – a shared vision

MEDIA RELEASE

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Rare Melbourne bushland going, going ... gone?

Government plans to restore Victoria's damaged natural environment could be too late to save some of Melbourne's rarest bushland from development, an alliance of the state's leading environment groups warned today.

"The local community has spent years trying to get protection for an extremely rare and important patch of Valley Heathy Forest next to the Blackburn Lake," Victoria Naturally Alliance project manager Carrie Deutsch said today.

"If the State Government doesn't show leadership and step in now Melbourne could lose yet another piece of its natural heritage as development again wins out over the environment."

Victorian environment minister Gavin Jennings recently indicated the State Government would not step in and buy the site currently owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church and which forms a vital link in the fragile Blackburn Lake-Gardiner's Creek ecosystem

The small patch of native bushland, recently recognised for its very high conservation value by the Department of Sustainability and Environment, could be sold to commercial developers.

Local group the Blackburn Lake Environmental Education Park believes the forest could be saved if tools talked about in the State Government's recently-released Land and Biodiversity Green Paper were put into practice but fears time is fast running out.

"The community and landowners have seen this site dragged through the planning process for four years," said BLEEP committee chairman John Bergin.

"We see the protection of the Valley Heathy Forest as a magnificent opportunity for the State Government to show some real leadership on this issue," he said.

"The VCAT planning process won't protect this area. It makes little provision for public access, will destroy the green corridor linking the forest with the Blackburn Lake, and the inevitable development will see this community of native plants and animals die a slow and painful death," Mr Bergin said.

Carrie Deutsch said it would be a tragedy to see the destruction of this rare patch of Valley Heathy Forest simply for a lack of funds.

"This small site could become an enormous environmental education resource for kids and a fantastic spot for local residents to unwind and relax in," she said.

"It also represents some of Melbourne's rarest bushland. If we can't protect our last few remaining pockets of natural bushland what hope is there for the 'liveable city' and our kid's future."

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

For further comment please contact:

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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.