

**ONLINE SUBMISSION DETAILS**

<b>Date Received</b>	24/02/2017
<b>Organisation</b>	Australian Wildlife Protection Council
<b>Postcode</b>	
<b>How do you think we should improve the FFG Act?</b>	<p>Australia has one of worst extinction records of any nation, with the government listing 54 mammals, birds, frogs and other animals as extinct. Another 909 species are critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable. Across Melbourne, 20 fauna and flora, ranging from chirping frogs to delicate orchids, call the city home.</p> <p>Even our Victorian native emblem is not safe! The Leadbeater's possum is not the only animal at risk, with several gliders including the koala-like greater glider in dangerous decline. People like [REDACTED] have been critical of government decision making for some time, particularly the failure of officials to factor in the 72,000 hectares of ash forests damaged in Black Saturday to long-term resource yields. Throwing out the words "sustainable" logging industry is pure rhetoric with no substance!</p> <p>A guarantee must actually be functioning, with alerts, strategies and follow up implementation of actions to ensure any threatened species are actually supported by programs to mitigate the threats. The processes and measures available to conserve and protect flora and fauna must not be overly burdening, or complex, but set out procedures and step-by-step strategies. Action statements must be implemented, as a mandatory requirement of the FFG Act. Vague ideals are a waste of time and lead to nothing. Successive governments have failed to implement almost all of the key features of the legislation.</p> <p>A current list of unprotected wildlife under the Wildlife Act, together with details of the declaration orders (period of declaration; and any conditions, limitations or restrictions) should be available to the public, on government websites. This should include an up-to-date list of all State Wildlife Reserves and Nature Reserves.</p> <p>Management plans for each State Wildlife Reserve and Nature Reserve together with details of any reviews of the plans should be listed on bill-boards to be seen by the public, to encourage public cooperation and input. DELWP should publish Action Statements and achieved results, listing specific species in Victoria.</p> <p>The government should collect and annually report on its compliance and enforcement activity, including data on potential breaches, complaints received from the public, charges, investigations and prosecutions undertaken, and outcomes, to wildlife groups, conservation societies and academics in the zoology/ecology fields.</p> <p>This is all part of communication to those with a stake in protecting our wildlife.</p> <p>What can't be over-emphasized is habitat-protection! Destroying and vandalizing habitat is a sure guarantee of a threatening process! There are many commercial interests in land-clearing, logging and urban expansion. Since the late 1990s the logging industry in Victoria has been exempt from adhering to federal environment laws that protect our nationally threatened wildlife. Only native forest logging gets this special exemption known as a 'regional forest agreement' (RFA). So, where the biodiversity is the richest, the land-clearing laws virtually don't exist? The extension of the RFA has been condemned by proponents of environmental justice with the move widely seen as a precursor to extinction of many threatened species.</p> <p>Habitat loss is the most insidious of all threats facing land-living wildlife, and</p>

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protected areas like national parks are one of the best ways to combat the destruction. But in research published recently show that in some places the pace of protected areas isn't keeping up with the losses! While almost half of Victoria's coastal land is privately owned, only a quarter of this private coastal land contains native vegetation - the remainder has been cleared. Land clearing for urban development continues to be one of the biggest threats to this type of ecosystem, as coastal areas have some of the highest rates of urban development of any private land in the state. The plan to double Victoria's population by mid-century is not sustainable, desirable, economically valid or environmentally justified.

According to a 2015 University of New South Wales study, the number of waterbirds in eastern Australia had fallen to the second-lowest level on record. The Birds of the Murray River Basin study also found that bird breeding rates have been down since 2011-12. In 2015-16, 972,000 million litres of water was provided to Victoria's most vulnerable and threatened plants and animals, with 73 wetlands and 73 river reaches receiving environmental water. The Duck shooting season will run for 12 weeks from March 18, with a bag limit of 10 birds per person per day, Agriculture Minister Jaala Pulford announced this year. Activists were again preparing to keep watch across the state's wetlands for hunters shooting threatened species. Why allow such misguided and ecologically destructive "sports" to continue?

Property developers depend on liberal access to land-clearing policies, and it's an incremental decline of habitat, and an assurance that more species will be ultimately lost! Exemptions allow landowners to remove some native vegetation in certain circumstances without the need for a permit. It's all too easy to make a token "off-set" assuming that bio-diversity and native species will just cooperate and shove on!

(a) provide a verifiable basis for species numbers collection that would stand as a bulwark to the Government's non-disclosure/distortion of information, Environment policies that actually support habitat destruction, and to the damage being done by endless land-clearing and human population growth in Australia.

(b) involve people locally in what is happening; give them an important helpful activity that might actually encourage those who stay inside and continue.

(c) connect people from local to regional to state to national on the basis of wildlife counts and get local communities to participate in care, breeding and habitat recovery plans.

The "rivet-popper" hypothesis (Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1981) states that in the light of the uncertainty about both the degree of redundancy and the size of future stresses in both airplane wings and ecosystems, programs of continual "rivet-popping" (forcing species to extinction, in the case of ecosystems) is a good analogy. We need a redundancy of species to keep ecosystems healthy and functioning. One we lose too many species, or "rivets", ecosystems that depend on their services end up declining - we end up with dysfunction and decline!

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the review of the Fauna and Flora Guarantee Act

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