



**Knitting Nannas of Toolangi
(KNOT)**

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Review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act
Regulatory Strategy and Design
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

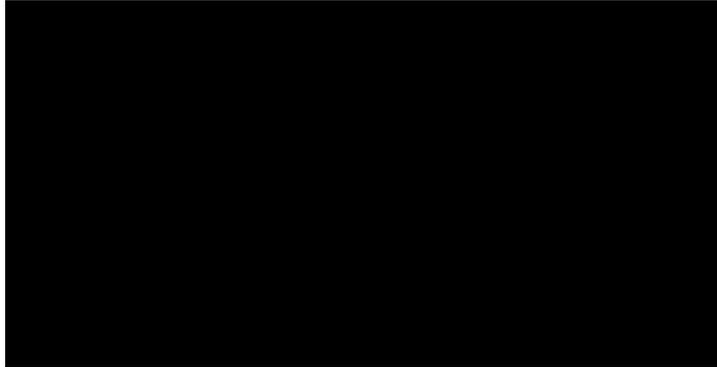
Submission to the review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act

Thanks for this opportunity of commenting on this significant and potentially powerful Act, recognising that, as in the last 18 years the population of this significant and now critically endangered species has reduced by 80%, a robust emergency response is urgently required.

We would first like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the Mountain Ash Forest, which to our understandings include the Bunurong, Gunaikurnai, Taungurung and Wurrundjeri peoples, and pay respect to their elders past and present, knowing this is our local forest -and one of the most endangered in our State. We would also like to see these traditional custodians acknowledged in the Act.

Significance to the Nannas As elders ourselves in our community of Toolangi and surrounds we are compelled to contributor to this Act, as we have seen the lack of action implemented through the current Act. Specifically for us the Leadbeaters Possum is a symbol of how we regard the fauna of this state. The Leadbeaters Possum, to us is not just a critically endangered species, but, is a “ ‘indicator’, ‘focal’, ‘umbrella’ or ‘flagship’ species for the conservation of its montane ash forest ...” on which our community is based. This became even more significant to us since the devastating ‘Black Saturday’ fires in 2009 when many surrounding communities, people, homes, forests and animals were burnt, including a large portion of the protected habitat areas for the Leadbeaters Possum. We and our area was affected but thankfully not badly burnt -and we were deeply devastated by the losses but grateful for our lives and homes and our local forest and its inhabitants. With such enormous heartfelt loss, the visible continued destruction of our remaining habitat, without regard to the reduced habitat was and continues to be shocking and disturbing. In light of this destruction we are all now able to play our part in what we leave for our grandchildren

and strongly urge you to strengthen the Act to help protect and help recover the Leadbeaters Possum.



Below we will highlight recommendations of the Act first terms of proposals that we believe to be worse for the environment and then the next section our responses to the Act in terms of how it needs to be done, so that it does have the possibility of achieving its overall positive aim.

Proposals that will be worse for our environment:

- *Abandonment of 'the guarantee'*

Section 4.1

We are deeply troubled at this proposed change as it signifies downgrades of the government's commitment to ensuring *all* species of flora and fauna in Victoria should survive in the wild. The discussion paper is suggesting this objective is too ambitious and that it should no longer be included in the Act.

The centrepiece of the current Act is the commitment to ensure that all species of flora and fauna in Victoria survive and retain their potential for evolutionary development in the wild.

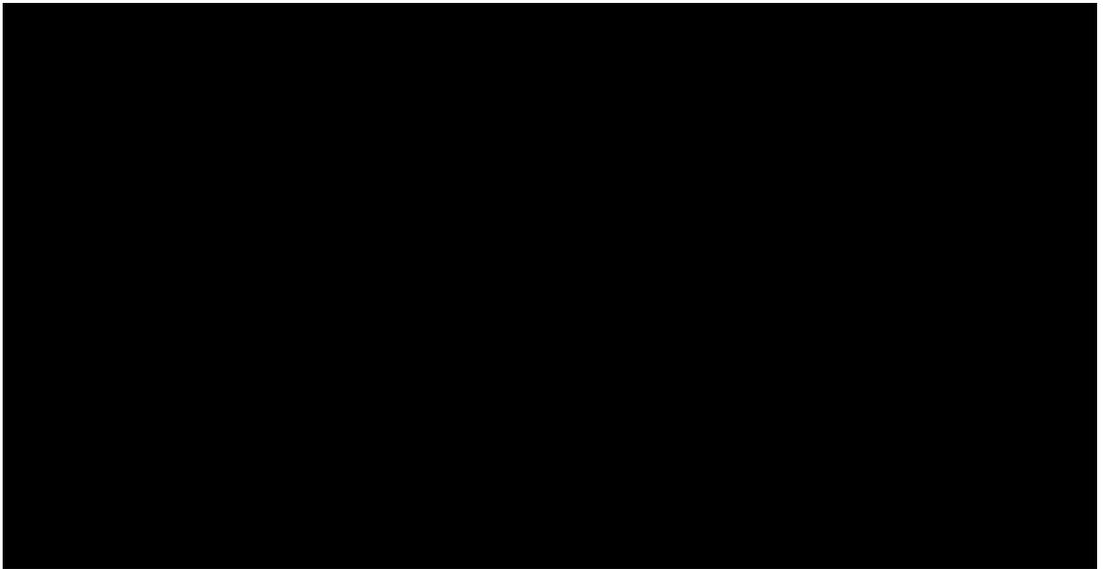
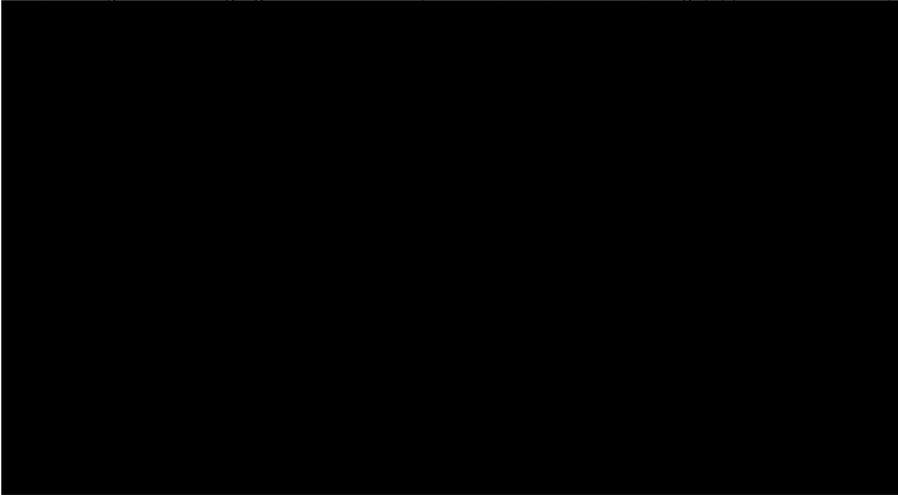
- **Drop the requirement for action statements for all listed threatened species**

Section 4.3

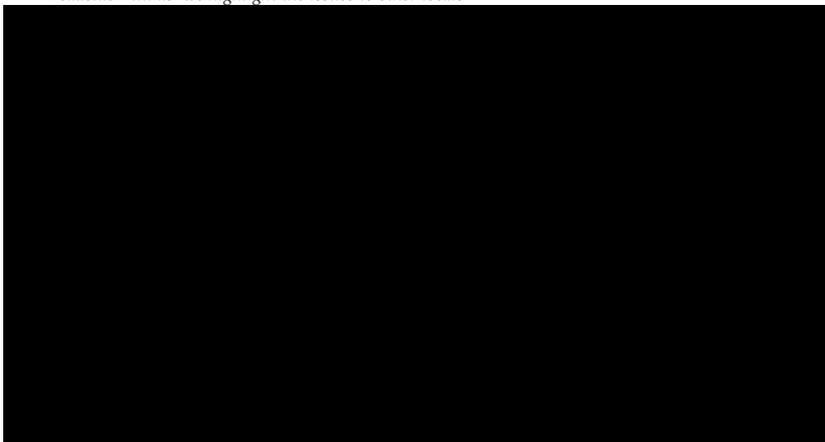
Producing action statements is currently the only binding action that the government must take to protect listed threatened species.

Action statements are fundamental in establishing adequate recovery planning for threatened species. Action statements for specific species also inspire communities to protect their local places that are critical to the survival of individual species.

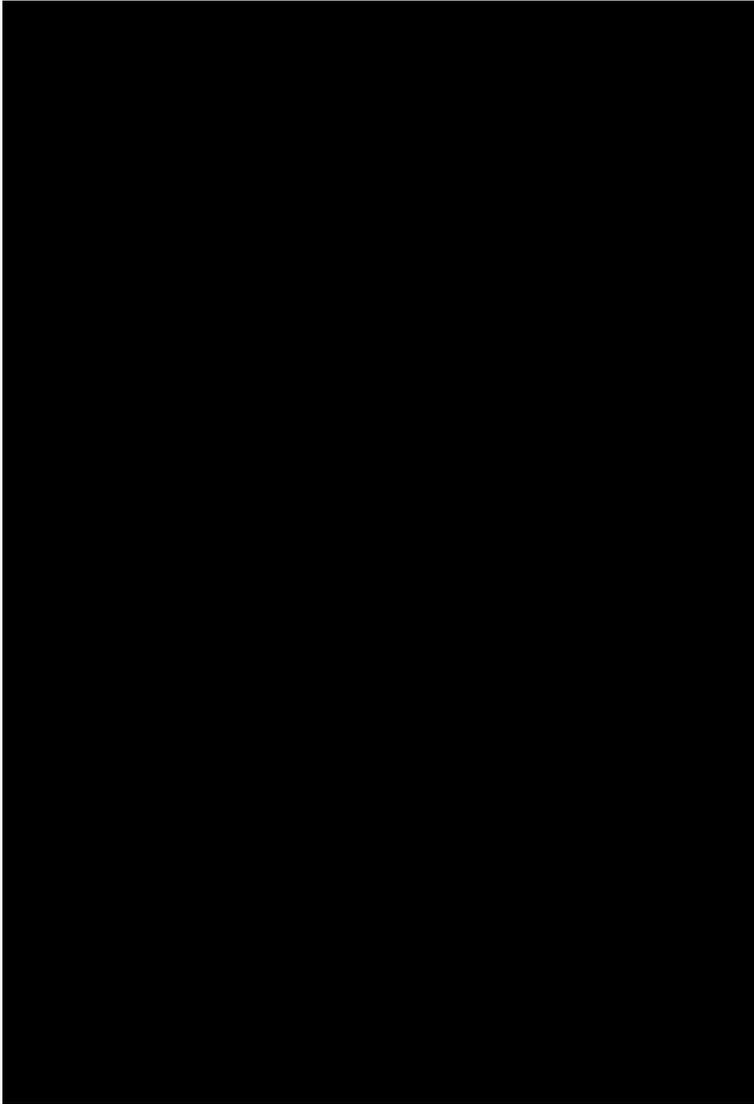
As Knitting Nannas we highlight vulnerable areas of habitat Siloia Creek Road Toolangi (left) and Blowhard Rd (below)



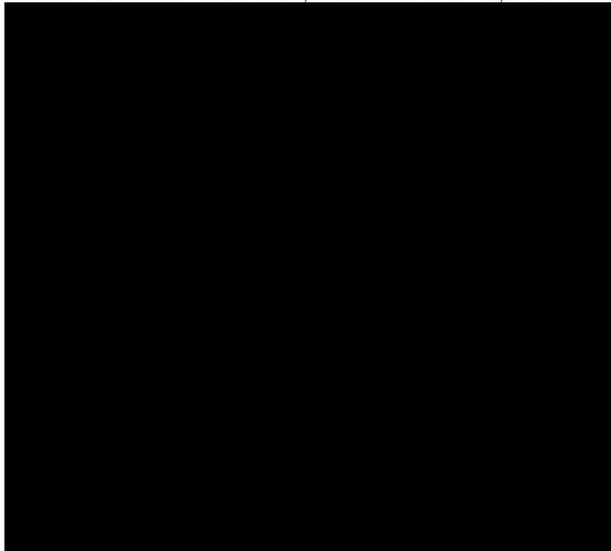
Roadside Knit as we highlight the issues to other locals



June 2015 KNOT live in the community and see the benefits of bringing family, friends and tourists to our extraordinary mixed age forests.



KNOT are concerned about the broader biodiversity loss – when the habitat of the Leadbeater's is removed



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May 2016 – Yellowdindi Coup When a coup is 'harvested' in reality it leads to total devastation. We understand this from the research – but shockingly see the effects in our own neighbourhood.. year after tragic year...



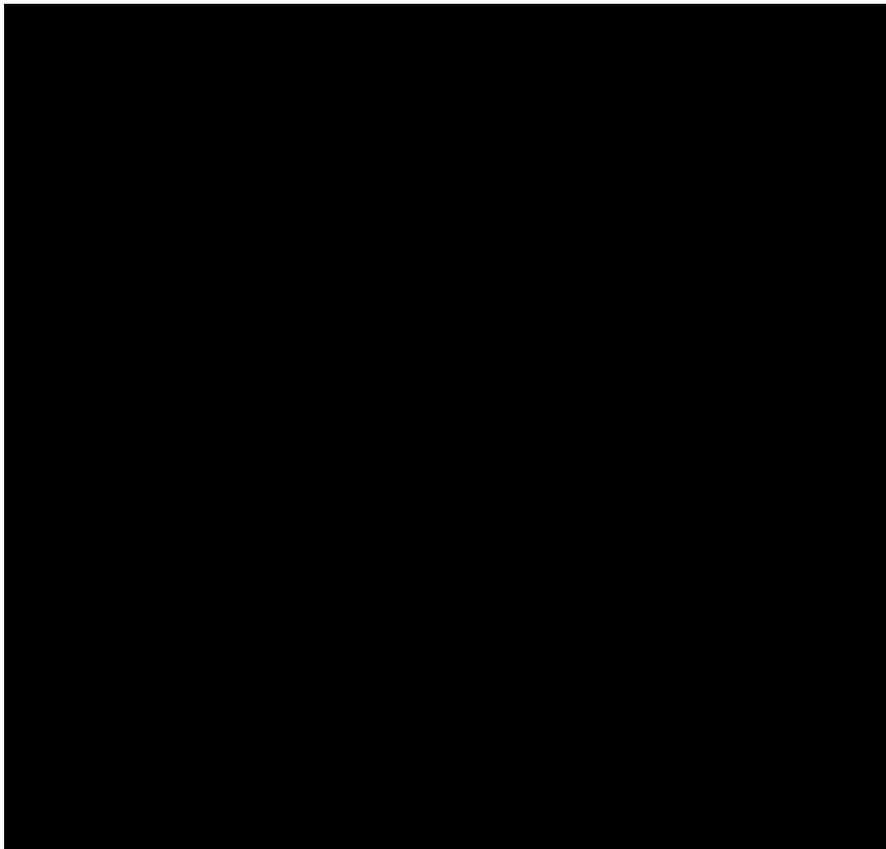
October 2015 A potentially bleak future for our children and grandchildren as 87% of logged Toolangi forest being wood chipped for paper. These children may never see the Giants we have seen in our lifetime



Yellowdindi Coup in the Toolangi State Forest a month after being burnt May 2016 Every part of the coup area is dried impacting not only the coup itself but the surrounding vegetation and integrity of the forest as a whole



May 2014 This is a picture of Nolan's Gully - a beautiful, pristine part of Toolangi forest untouched by fires and logging. A place of water catchment and it now is going to be logged by VicForests. Toolangi locals find it very strange that a Government owned company can kill off wondrous forests and wildlife



How these recommendations can be achieved

In addition to these minimum required safeguards above - we know that there needs to be a robust processes of implementing these measures, monitoring their adherence to prevent breaches and introducing effective accountability measures – so that if any breaches do occur they are dealt with swiftly & independently with severe enforceable penalties.

It is clear to us that the Act needs to recognise the following in order that the goal of the Act can be realised.

Essential elements that will strengthen protection of our environment that we would like to see in the Act are:

An enhanced chance for survival of threatened species by removing exemptions and special treatments for government departments and some industries

The Act needs to take precedence over Regional Forest Agreements (RFA), so that the The Regional Forest Agreements, and in particular the Agreement for the Victorian Central Highlands, is undermining efforts to preserve the Leadbeater's Possum. It needs to be ended preferably before it expires in 2018, and definitely not renewed. We strongly support the more than 30 environmental groups who signed a statement on May 18 this year demanding that agreements allowing the clear felling of Australian native forests not be renewed. We agree with Lorraine Bower of the Australian Forests and Climate Alliance, who called for an end to logging in native forests. "By giving the logging industry unfettered access to public forests over the 20 years of the RFAs, other industries that could support jobs and growth, such as the carbon market and tourism, have been stymied," "The RFAs act as a loophole excluding logging from accountability to federal environmental laws that would apply to any other industry, enterprise or individual landowner."

An independent body appropriately funded to implement, and more strongly enforce the Act: This body will enable:

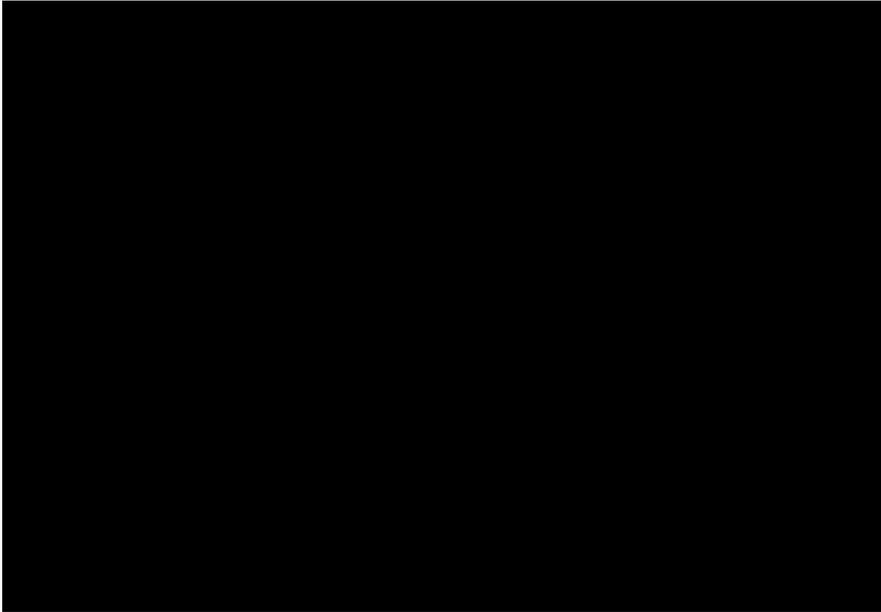
A clear suite of stronger accountability tools, including clear monitoring and evaluation based on the *adoption of a common assessment methodology using IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) criteria*

Stronger enforcement, real penalties and better tools for accountability, that would also enable community groups to initiate action when breaches of the Act have taken place

Clear targets and timelines to direct investment and programs for threatened species protection and recovery, across the whole state

A mandatory requirement for the Minister to intervene when important species or habitats are under threat

KNOT are disheartened with every log truck – showing us the swathes of destruction of the habitat and animals in our forests



Someone directly involved in the logging industry posted this photo to us Knitting Nannas– showing the lack of regard that they have for the forests and those of us in the local community. While obviously not sanctioned by Vic Forests – we see this as a reflection of the culture that is allowed to foster in the industry.



- **Develop a publicly available framework to assess and monitor the effectiveness of the Act** , In line with the publication Recovery Actning Restoring Our Life to our Threatened Species (Australian Conservation Foundation et al 2015), we do need a Act that we can see and see that it has been monitored and that there is accountability for actions to be undertaken.

Thank you for taking the time to review our recommendations for this vital Act – which we see as having intergenerational impacts on our families our communities and our forest as well as our iconic environment.

Yours sincerely

Knitting Nannas of Toolangi (KNOT)



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