

**ONLINE SUBMISSION DETAILS**

<b>Date Received</b>	27/03/2017
<b>Organisation</b>	Individual
<b>Postcode</b>	
<b>How do you think we should improve the FFG Act?</b>	<p>By way of introduction, I'm originally from Sydney and have lived in Melbourne for the past 11 years. My children are growing up here in Victoria and I'm deeply concerned about how historically the Act has performed since its inception. By your own admission it hasn't performed well and is weak in enforceable policy or law, with Victoria leading the country in deforestation and extinction. I'm really heartened to hear that the act is being reviewed in the wake of new research and up to date climate-science. I'm thrilled there will be a stronger focus on habitat protection as a strategy of species preservation.</p> <p>The Black Saturday bushfires were a terrifying wake up call to all Victorians that environment and land management is critical. Hopefully, with your reviews of current legislation we can bolster the natural environment to sustain our growing population.</p> <p>Thanks for the opportunity to submit my recommendations as part of the review. Here are my recommendations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. People Power. Include an obligation for community consultation on land management policy and actions, for public and private land. Give Victorians the right to review Government decisions ie. Don't bulldoze habitats while our backs are turned guys!</li><li>2. Removing Exemptions that run counter to the spirit and body of conservation law. Eg. VicRoads are allowed to remove trees without consultation. VicRoads can become a model citizen with a strategic focus on conservation and preparing Victoria for climate change, let them and other 'exempt' bodies get in on the ground floor as part of the solution. If I worked for VicRoads that's something I could really get excited about! A strategic approach will create employment, training and opportunity for community inclusiveness.</li></ol> <p>Exemptions, bylaws and ordinances which provide loopholes for VicForests to log without consultation or environmental review should be removed. Why have a law protecting forests from private citizens but not loggers? Private Citizens don't log forests on their days off, they recreate in them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Strong Stop &amp; Protect laws. Establish a clear standard of protection for ALL threatened species and habitats in Victoria clearly and properly communicated across industries, councils and communities. Protection must be enshrined in law, enforceable and include financial or criminal penalties.</li><li>4. Establish a means to protect HABITAT, not just individual animal species. Like the Basin Creek Rainforest Complex. Living systems like rainforests are not just breeding grounds for some rare marsupial, though it doesn't hurt. Habitats are worth preserving, particularly those which are not already severely damaged by logging and firestorms. A provision for Unique, Irreplaceable, Pristine Habitat Protection is vital, not just a piecemeal focus on threatened species resulting in partial logging, which weakens forests and leaves them open to drying out and fire-damage. This one is key in terms of future-proofing Victoria for Climate Change.</li><li>5. Actionable mitigation strategies must be implemented and reviewed regularly. This includes targeted phased activity around wildlife culling and control of invasive and destructive species like foxes, cats and deer.</li></ol>

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6. A stronger community and scientific consultation framework on urban expansion. eg. Reviews must taking into consideration how urban or industrial expansion (ie. New roads, landclearing & development) will impact on areas and animal populations which are recognised as ecologically, aesthetically and culturally valuable. This involves a means to allow public submissions and consultation on the declaration of protected habitats.

7. Who will enforce the penalties? A Nature Cop on the Beat! An independent authority to monitor and enforce the FFG, at the executive level.

Right now, dedicated environmentalists must face off loggers at the ground-zero level of immediate habitat destruction. ie. While the chainsaws and bulldozers are already running. This occurred as recently as February when a Leadbeater's habitat was cleared near Warburton.

8. Targets and Timelines – A biodiversity plan could be detailed, up to date and reviewed regularly in consultation with experts like Environment Victoria and Bush Heritage Australia. Beyond Stop and Protect there should be a strategic and integrated approach in place, in consultation with local Victorian biologists, ecologists, traditional owners and experienced consultants from expert groups such as Bush Heritage Australia and Environment Victoria.

Thanks for reading and best of luck with the review process. What an exciting time to be working in environmental policy.

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