

My submission will be based on five cornerstone improvements I believe that the Flora and Fauna Act of 1998 need. They are based on my appreciation, value and interaction with Victoria's native flora and fauna.

- 1) **Threatened species need better protection with better plans:** Currently several iconic Victorian species are at risk of extinction and further decline. Species that I have enjoyed photographing in Victoria such as the Helmeted Honeyeater, Southern Brown Bandicoot and Leadbeater's Possum (photos attached). The Leadbeater's Possum and other species (e.g. greater glider, sooty owl, yellow-bellied glider) occupying the Mountain Ash forests of Victoria face extinction due to the logging practices that are seemingly exempt from any environmental law. Proper oversight needs to occur to ensure that no industry is exempt from environmental destruction, especially when it involves threatened species. As Melbourne continues to sprawl better protection of threatened species from industry and land development needs to occur.



- 2) **Stop and protect:** If flora and fauna are under threat then stop and protect powers need to allow the minister to intervene until such a time when proper management plans are undertaken. For example, when the Blue Vein logging coupe was being clear-felled environmental groups and individuals were forced to devote a lot of time to pressure the Minister to stop the logging of Leadbeater's Possum habitat. The delays of the state government intervening meant that a lot of the area was logged before the coupe was finally abandoned.
- 3) **Law enforcement:** of individuals, industries and companies that break the law and put threatened species at risk needs to improve. This would mean that more resources (including staff) are allocated to the protection of flora and fauna as well as legislation that allow heavier penalties for perpetrators.
- 4) **Targets and Timelines:** Recovery and protection plans need to be better developed with targets set out from the onset and that these targets can be achieved within a short time frame. Detailed short term targets need to be strategically consolidated to form long term goals of habitat, fauna and flora protection and recovery.
- 5) **Legal Empowerment of the community:** If industry, companies or individuals threaten Victoria's flora and fauna the revised act should allow for communities and members of the public to take legal action against the perpetrators. The flora and fauna of this state is collectively under everyone's guardianship and thus we should be able to legally act on behalf of the environment and on behalf on the generations who are yet to come.

"A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." – Ancient Greek Proverb