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To <land.whitepaper@dse.vic.gov.au>
cc
bcc
Subject ACF Mullum Branch submission - Land & Biodiversity White
paper

Project Director
Land & Biodiversity White Paper Project Team
Department of Sustainability & Environment

By email to land.whitepaper@dse.vic.gov.au

Dear Madam/Sir,

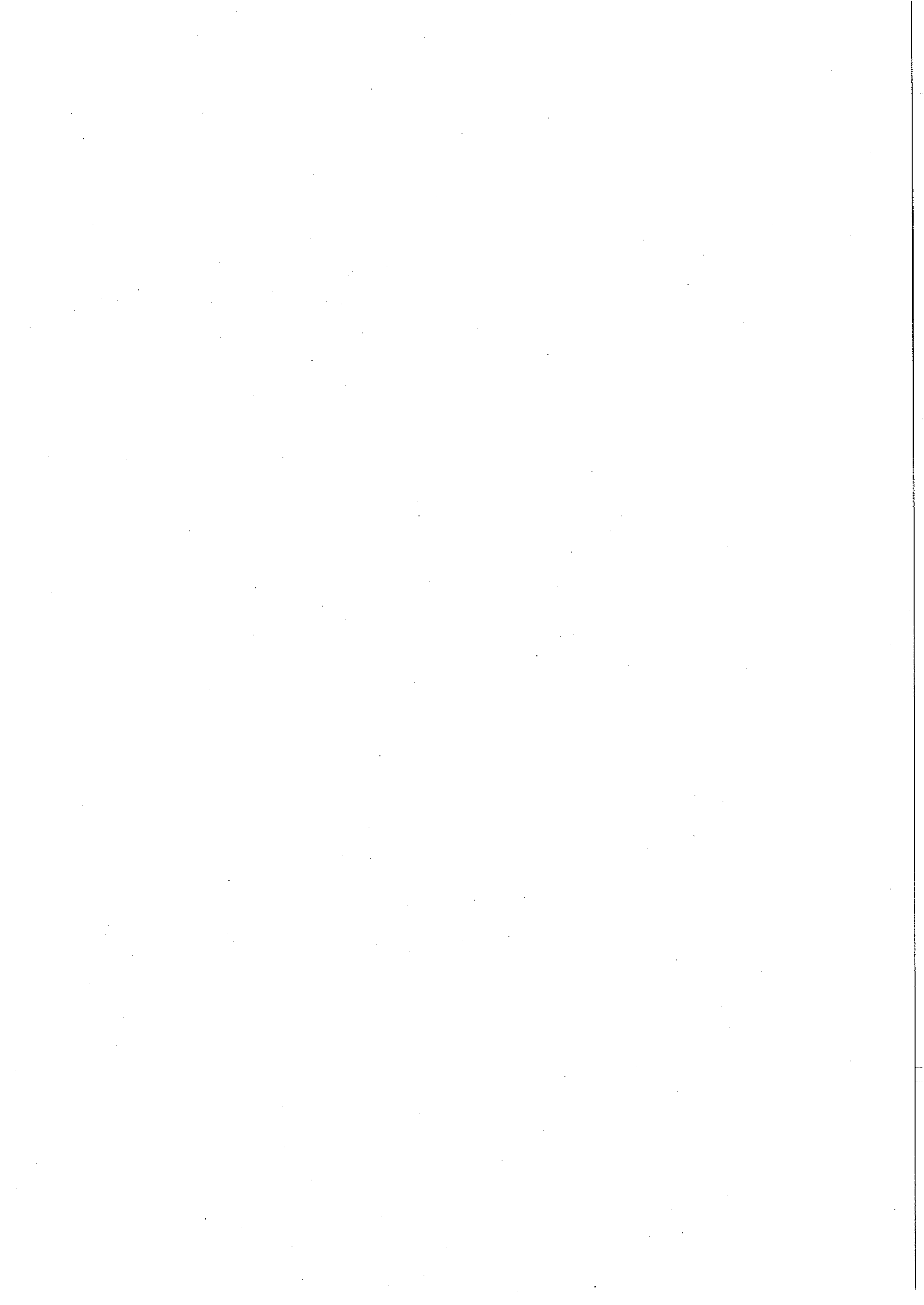
I attach to this email the submission of the Mullum Branch of the Australian Conservation Foundation
on the Land and Biodiversity White Paper

Yours sincerely,

J.K. Le Cornu
Honorary Secretary
Australian Conservation Foundation Mullum Branch
Tel: 03 9802 0794



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21st June 2007

Project Director
Land & Biodiversity White Paper Project Team
Department of Sustainability & Environment
PO Box 500
East Melbourne, Vic, 3002

Sent by email to: land.whitepaper@dse.vic.gov.au

Dear Madam/Sir,

Since its formation in 1986, the Mullum Branch of the Australian Conservation Foundation has been active in promoting the proper recognition of environmental values and the competent management of land and biodiversity in Australia generally and in Victoria in particular. It takes a pragmatic approach, communicating and constructively working with government ministries, government authorities and relevant industry participants, to maximise feasible improvement.

Biodiversity is under threat because of the increasingly negative impact climate change is having on it. It is critical both that greenhouse gas emissions are reduced quickly and that measures are put into place to ameliorate these impacts in their existing settings, or to provide new opportunities for the biodiversity's preservation. Even then, there will be some irreversible biodiversity loss. The task will be not just to minimise this in a general sense, but to ensure that important, specific opportunities are not lost by oversight. A carefully targeted approach will be needed, which identifies where the most important and feasible actions are, and puts into place effective measures which deliver the desired outcomes. This poses one of the hardest challenges government has ever faced.

We describe below the six prime and practical suggestions we wish to make in this submission. They relate to land and biodiversity areas where immediate action is feasible and able to deliver specific, short term benefits.

1. Effective targeting and modelling of threatened micro-habitats

In order to save biodiversity it will be necessary to model a range of micro habitats of key indicator species (both flora and fauna) to identify and shape the management of impacts of climate change on these habitats. This will be needed so as to target and prioritise those actions which are likely to be the most successful, as there will be limited resources. Plants with restricted ranges and animals with poor fecundity and/or restricted diet will be most at risk, but they may pose the least prospect for success without such modelling tools.

2. Meeting the challenge

Dealing with the impact of climate change on biodiversity poses one of the hardest challenges government has ever faced. A successful outcome will require a major increase in resources, e.g. equipment, technology and people, dedicated to biodiversity preservation over an extended period of time.

3. Need for a uniform platform for data

In order to generate effective modelling and management of climate change, there is a need to develop across relevant agencies and land management bodies a uniform or compatible platform, so data can easily be shared or overlaid. This should include all layers of data, such as land tenure, vegetation, soils, fauna distribution etc. Management responsibility is often co-ordinated

between agencies, so there is a need for such a uniform/compatible platform on which detailed information can be shared easily.

4. Soils

There is a great dearth, even in Victoria, of our knowledge of local soil types. We will need to improve our knowledge of soil types and their distribution, but in such a way that it can be easily shared amongst relevant land managers. We need to know which soils will be at greatest risk from climate change because of possible increased aridity, loss of vegetation cover, or greater water runoff. It will also be necessary to identify locations which provide alternative preservation possibilities where biodiversity movement is required.

5. Water

Climate change will put increased pressure on the provision of water for effective stream flow. This makes it critical for the allocation of water rights. The connection between ground water and surface water needs to be acknowledged in these water rights. Ground water contributes directly to the amount of above-ground stream flow. To treat one without the other will not provide a solution to the problem.

6. Action to ameliorate the impact of climate change

Emission trading appears to be the preferred approach. It places a cap on greenhouse gas emissions as permits are needed for every tonne emitted, and it results in a price being put on emissions, driving action to reduce them. Short and long term national 'stretch' emission reduction targets need to be put in place, e.g. a 20% to 30% reduction by 2020 and a 60% to 90% reduction by 2050, and the national emission trading commenced by 2010.

For the emissions trading system to be effective, it will need to at least involve:

- Coverage of the greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors of the economy. None should escape the cap. This includes mining, manufacturing, farming and service industries.
- A standard, robust national measurement and reporting of the annual source greenhouse gas emissions, consistent with the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol and eventually with any world-wide scheme. It should recognise that measurement approaches may differ between sectors, such as direct measurement in some sectors and scientifically based prediction in others, e.g. methane from animals, and nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide from soil.
- The creation of a large government advisory body, specifically set up to provide advice to emitters, such as for farmers and small businesses, to enable them to best adapt to the introduction of emissions trading. It would also provide feedback to those responsible for the continuous improvement of the emissions trading scheme.

Adroit management of the introductory transitional stage will be crucial for the survival of an efficient emission trading scheme.

We look forward to the production of a green paper and the opportunity to comment further.

Yours sincerely,

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