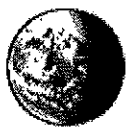


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Tanya Clarke

To land.whitepaper@dse.vic.gov.au

cc

29/06/2007 03:56 PM

bcc

Subject Land and Diversity White Paper submission

To whom it may concern,  
 I live in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges and use these ranges at least two or three times a week for recreational walking. As I walk widely in this region I am struck by how fragile the natural environment is that is close to suburban habitation. Weed infestation is common, erosion after rainfall rife, particularly on tracks put in for fire breaks, and I am deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on this fragile environment, in terms of loss of biodiversity and the subsequent health of native plants and animals. I believe areas like these which contain state and national parks need protection because of their vital role in being a haven for native plants and animals, providing solace and rejuvenation to humans in an increasingly urban world and in connecting us to what is vital for human survival.

- Somehow the issue of biodiversity has not got the publicity it deserves, and as a matter of urgency there needs to be a coordinating body established that overrides the numerous other bodies and authorities that have an interest in this area. There are innumerable bodies and Groups making their own decisions and plans in relation to what each thinks is best for our natural environment. We need an overall "vision", a clear roadmap, clear targets, monitoring strategies and evaluation procedures and a clear description for the everyday public as to who is responsible for what - so that everyone is pulling in the same direction and also that the wheel is not being constantly reinvented. A way to "synthesise" these authorities and their roles and duties needs to be recommended in this White Paper.
- As a priority what is needed is an attention-grabbing media campaign to enable people to understand what constitutes biodiversity in Victoria and its importance to people. This could be linked to education campaigns in schools, influencing curriculum content and encouraging school groups to undertake projects in their areas, with the support of local groups, to promote biodiversity.
- We need to reward both city and country property dwellers who save original, remnant native vegetation on their land and/or revegetate their land with the native plants that attract native animals. Local Councils, particularly in urban fringes close to areas of remaining native forests, need to have the power to educate property owners about the importance of the eradication of noxious weeds in their gardens and roadside verges and provide help in eradicating them. Weed infestation is a particular problem in the Dandenong ranges and its foothills. Shire Councils who show they are enhancing biodiversity in their area should be supported financially and with increased resources.
- What is needed at the big picture level is a notion of linking existing areas of native forest to provide corridors for native animals when the impact of climate change may necessitate their movement from one area to another. There needs to be good financial returns to private landholders to facilitate this and financial and other support to community and Land Care groups attempting to revegetate degenerated areas by planting indigenous native species. A notion of people being custodians of the land needs to be promoted, rather than individual, private ownership of the land, where people can do what they want with their own private land. If expert help and advice could be given to property owners to ensure people plant appropriately, coupled with an effective media campaign, people are more likely to see themselves as being vital in promoting biodiversity in this State.
- In the Dandenongs and in other areas, too, firebreaks and fire tracks have wreaked havoc and the DSE needs to be directed and advised about

appropriate ways to tackle these tasks. Advice by local community groups on valuable colonies of plants should be sought by the DSE. Fuel reduction burns are also a problem and appear to have reduced native plant species. Clear evidence as to the effects of these burns on biodiversity needs to be researched and made public.

- In relation to the Montrose area, where I live, the extension of the quarry in the area by Boral poses a threat to biodiversity in that it threatens a tract of rare, grassy woodland.
- Further afield, the logging of water catchment areas and of areas of remaining native forests need to be considered in the context of biodiversity and the impact of climate change.

There is much more that could be said about enforcing regulations in house building to reduce green house gas emissions and other efforts to reduce the impact of climate change but I want to focus on the above points that relate more directly to the issue of biodiversity, however this is not separate from the Government seriously thinking of ways to reduce green house gas emissions and encouraging this for all Victorians.

Given that Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia - with the loss of about 70% of our native vegetation through land clearing - climate change is going to make the situation worse and action needs to happen now to ensure a viable future for our children and grandchildren. This is a beautiful State and I know that I am privileged to live in such a beautiful part of this State but I fear what will happen to the native plants and animals in the future if we don't act now. I know I speak on behalf of many of my friends and neighbours who may not have had the time to respond to your call for submissions to the White Paper process. We are many and we do care.

Yours sincerely,  
Tanya Clarke