

Submission to Senate inquiry into:

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THREATENED SPECIES AND ECOLOGICAL
COMMUNITIES PROTECTION IN AUSTRALIA.

Personal context.

For the past twelve years I have lived on the verge of the North-western edge of the Toolangi State Forest, and have regularly conducted groups of people on visits to the State Forest, to the Wirrawilla Rainforest Reserve, and the Murrindindi Scenic Reserve. Of these only the Wirrawilla Rainforest Reserve was largely spared the Black Saturday bushfires.

My university training and my teaching experience has nurtured in me a deep interest in all things to do with the natural world – geology, ecology, ornithology, and a better than average knowledge of native trees and wildflowers. In my 15 acre bush block in Glenburn I have shared in the planting of hundreds of local species, mostly grown from seed on the premises.

Case Study

The Toolangi State Forest is also one of the few remaining ecosystems that supports the threatened Leadbeaters Possum. The forest was largely destroyed in the Black Saturday bushfires, and what is left is a ‘doughnut’ of old forest surrounded by the burnt area. This area is still being logged at what seems to me to be an alarming rate. As the 2013 bushfire season gets under way I fear that this remnant old forest could be damaged or even disappear. The research of Professor Lindenmeyer is particularly telling on this point. (<http://leadbeaters.org.au/states-emblem-nearly-extinct/>)

Even within the Toolangi State Forest there are several ecosystems supporting ecological communities. Typically these would be the drier sclerophyll forests of the northern forest to the small rainforest reserve and the larger old growth mountain ash section. These constitute not only small communities within themselves, but also a broader interconnected set of communities. Destroy any one of these and the effects on the others would be disastrous ecologically.

Major species that move between these communities range from kangaroos in the

drier part, on to lyrebirds and the leadbeaters possum in the rainforest reserve and the old growth areas. Communities do not survive in isolation.

In the broader thinking which we all must embrace is that sustainable living for all species including our own sits in the context of the larger bioregions that we might call the Yarra Valley or the Highlands Southern Fall, which intersect and interact at their boundary edge.

In the last analysis the artificial state boundaries must not become a barrier to the effective protection of natural species and resources (e.g. water) which interact with other ecosystems and even bioregions. The oversight that the Commonwealth exercises should be retained and possibly extended in the national interest.

Trevor Parton