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The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment & Communication

Dear Secretary

Since the arrival of Europeans in Australia 220 yrs ago numerous animal species have become extinct + vegetation classes severely diminished. It is said that the number of mammalian extinctions exceeds anywhere else in the world.

Major factors that have brought this about are habitat clearing, introduction of feral animals that compete for food and destroy vegetation (rabbits, goats, pigs) + predation by feral animals especially cats + foxes. Added to this is direct killing by humans.

Commonwealth legislation at present concentrates on the wrong end of the extinction process. Animals + vegetation are listed for protection when they are in imminent danger of extinction: then action is taken. It would be far more effective if efforts were made to prevent this situation occurring.

Actions should include:

1. Much greater emphasis on limiting vegetation clearance with a recognition that offsets are

a very poor solution to vegetation clearance as there is always a severe diminution in biodiversity.

2. Real efforts to diminish the numbers of feral animals especially cats, foxes, pigs and cane toads

3. A recognition that the landscape is severely fragmented. This in itself is a threatening process. Reconnection of habitat will provide some degree of resilience.

Newly emerging threatening processes that need to be dealt with are the rapidly expanding coal seam gas exploitation with its negative impacts on land & water tables. The supremacy of mining should be reassessed.

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission has directed an intolerable burning regime on public land with no consideration of the negative impacts on biodiversity. The Commonwealth should be able to and should intervene.

The Commonwealth's supervision of the environment is ineffective on many levels. This should be redressed so that there is clear central leadership with the states forced to comply. An example is the ludicrous situation in Victoria where the habitat of the state faunal emblem, the leadbeater's possum, continues to be logged almost certainly forcing this little animal to extinction in the wild. Commonwealth laws must be changed so this cannot happen.

Yours faithfully
John Bardsley.