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9 December 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Re: The effectiveness of threatened species and ecological community's protection in Australia

As a resident of Healesville, Victoria I am concerned about forest protection of Leadbeater Possum habitat. We have a strange situation here where the Healesville Sanctuary tries to preserve the possum by taking it from the wild and bringing it into breeding programs and yet on the nearby hills Vicforest (State Government statutory body) is ripping out the trees where the possums live!!

The Leadbeater possum is only one example of an endangered species which needs protecting. During the construction of the North-South pipeline (Yea to Sugarloaf) in Victoria under the Labor Government an endangered tree was bulldozed because it was not on the "threatened species list".

From my understanding it is not an automatic process to get a threatened species onto the list. An endangered species can remain unlisted and if the species is not listed then it is not protected (as the flora removed during the pipeline construction). Process approval can take years and it makes no difference even after a catastrophic event, such as the Black Saturday fires in Victoria. Even after a successful listing it can take years to be adopted! Funding is often not available to protect the species when it finally gets onto the list.

Management of our endangered fauna and flora needs to be a priority. If the list is to be effective then it must be pro-active in terms of its listings, it must include funded recovery plans for the species and its management assured across areas of critical habitat. The logging of Toolangi forests, a Leadbeater Possum habitat, is a good example of where a threatened species is not being managed and where its habitat is being destroyed. VicForest have not surveyed the area thoroughly (if at all) to see if any possums are there. In the last month two possums have been sighted and photographed by a local group. They are at risk even now as the stag they were found is in poor condition. As logging continues to remove pre 1900 trees the possums have limited options.

Historically, conservative governments have a poor environment record (see Quarterly essay "After the Future" by Tim Flannery). It is important therefore that an effective list is provided which cannot be disputed by loggers and contractors and bodies like VicForest which is backed up by federal power.

I have been greatly saddened by my experiences up at the coupes at Toolangi. I have seen confused and frightened Kangaroos sitting on the edge of decimated coupes. I have seen dead mammals, their faces sawn off with chain saws. I have heard the Lyre Birds singing in the forests nearby and know what awaits their fate. How can this be tolerated? How can this be "sustainable" the current vogue word for managing our forests?

We must do a great deal more to ensure species listed are valued and protected. It should be easier to access the list and receive proper support and funding to save our endangered creatures and plants.

Yours sincerely

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