

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

RE: Upcoming Senate Committee Inquiry into ‘The Effectiveness of threatened species and ecological communities’ protection in Australia.

To the Members of the Standing Committee Environment and Communication,

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend a lecture by Prof. David Lindenmayer on the Leadbeater possum and its endangered habitat in the forests of Victoria. I was deeply moved by that lecture as it painted a very grim picture of the Leadbeater’s future survival chances if no decisive action is taken to save the big ash tree forests and thus the habitat of the Leadbeater. The scientific evidence that Professor Lindenmayer has gathered over several decades is very strong and convincing and shows that the Leadbeater is on an extinction trajectory unless the current logging practices will be restricted and changed and the forests will be allowed to age naturally. All this is further confounded by wildfires and the damage associated with the fires.

The reason why this lecture moved me so deeply has to do with the fact that I am not an Australian resident, but a tourist from Germany who came here to experience the pristine wilderness and natural wonders of your beautiful and fascinating country. Coming from a relatively small country where industrialisation and the search for profit have affected nature to the extent that entire landscapes have been voided of animals, rivers have been diverted and straightened, hills have been levelled to fit industrial agricultural needs, trees have been cut and natural forests have been confined to areas that are either too remote or too uneconomic to use, it truly pains me to witness the current discussion about biodiversity and conservation issues in Australia and especially in Victoria. For me as an outsider who marvels at the natural wonders of your country and who is awed by the wilderness that is still existing in parts of Australia, it is absolutely incomprehensible that you would put this natural wealth at a risk. In the south of Germany where I live, eagles used to be quite common. The eagles were breeding on tall trees in the countryside. Logging and intensive agricultural land use resulted in trees being cut and more or less disappearing from the countryside where they are “inconvenient”. As a consequence, the eagles moved more and more towards the mountains where they still found tall trees that nobody could get to. Today the eagle population has been reduced to a very few individuals that are highly protected and they are constantly at the edge of total extinction as their food supply has also dwindled dramatically in the wake of the “culturisation” of the land.

In Germany, many species have already been extinct and there are many more highly endangered species (plants and animals alike), simply because we always valued economic growth more than the protection of nature. Economic growth, however, can only be sustainable when it incorporates nature and when it recognizes that natural resources are finite – biodiversity is one of those finite resources. Unfortunately, this realisation was made too late in Germany. Another excuse that Germany and other developed countries that have to struggle with similar problems could come up

with in their defence is that scientific data on the interdependence of ecosystems has not yet been available for too long. Today, the scientific data are available, however, and they can no longer be ignored. In my opinion, countries with such a tremendous natural wealth like Australia have the duty and the responsibility to protect their pristine environments and thus protect biodiversity. I therefore strongly urge you to review the entire species protection process in favour of a much more rapid and effective protection of endangered species such as the Leadbeater's possum.

Thank you for your consideration.

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