

Further Questions on Notice taken from Ms Melina Bath -
Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria

Submitted by Richard Hughes, Victorian Campaigns Manager, The Wilderness Society Victoria.

Question 1

What financial or in-kind support are you offering WOTCH?

Answer 1

This question is outside the terms of reference for this Inquiry.

Question 2

Noting definitive CSIRO research that finds that invasive weed species are by far the greatest threat to threatened species, at the Hearing you answered that although you have thousands of members none of your programs target weed eradication. Why?

Answer 2

There are multiple analyses of the drivers of extinction in Australia. These variously highlight habitat loss, invasive species or climate change as the predominant driver, depending on how the analysis was done, relevant species and location. Wilderness Society is campaigning and engaging community members to secure strong environmental laws that are properly enforced, including threatened species protection that properly addresses invasives and other threats. As an example, our submission to the Royal Commission into Natural Disasters highlighted the need to redress the vast underinvestment in invasive species management and endangered species recovery programs.

Question 3

Acknowledging the harm that feral animals cause to flora and fauna in the forest, why do you not participate in programs aimed to eliminate feral animals?

Answer 3

The Wilderness Society is deeply concerned about the impact of invasive fauna. Our focus is on the intersection where habitat destruction exacerbates the impacts of invasive fauna on threatened species. We would welcome the Committee making a recommendation to increase funding for invasive fauna management programs and also recommendations that decision-makers incorporate this multiplier effect in their regulation of destructive activities.

There are a range of examples where the protection of forests from logging reduces the impact of invasive animals on threatened species, because logging and associated roading open up previously intact areas of forest to incursion by invasive species. For example:

- The Action Statement for Long-footed Potoroo recognises that timber harvesting and roading increase access for predators such as foxes, which are known to have a negative impact on Long-footed Potoroos.
- The Action Statement for Smoky Mouse recognises proximity to intensive logging can be associated with increased abundance of Red Foxes

Question 4

Are there any circumstances that any type of forestry would be acceptable to you?

Answer 4

A good general example is the large scale plantation industry within Victoria, that is certified FSC full management.