

Inquiry into soil sequestration in Victoria

Submission no. 18

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Chair
Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE, VIC 3002

RE: INQUIRY INTO SOIL SEQUESTRATION IN VICTORIA

Dear Hon. Mr. Pandazopoulos, MP

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Parliamentary Committee for Environment and Natural Resources regarding soil sequestration in Victoria.

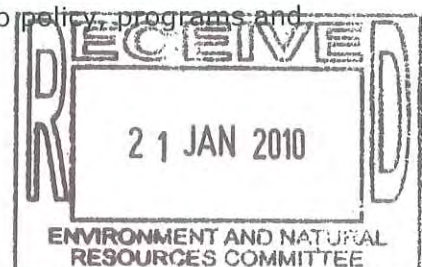
I would like to offer my support for this inquiry and the broad terms of reference of the committee. It is a timely and important piece of work.

The Victorian State of the Environment Report, published by this office in 2008, draws attention to soil health and the essential role it plays in the condition of Victoria's natural and productive landscapes. In particular, soil carbon contributes to plant nutrition, nutrient cycling, soil structure, erosion control and water-holding capacity.

The importance of soil carbon and overall soil health reaffirms the importance of Victoria's public land estate and challenges us to improve the condition of Victoria's modified landscapes that remain in a highly stressed state.

Soil carbon is also an important part of the large and complex carbon cycle, containing more carbon than our atmospheric and plant/animal pools combined. It is therefore important to consider soil carbon sequestration as part of the climate change mitigation and adaptation discourse.

Soil carbon sequestration clearly offers the potential to tackle multiple problems but it is a complex field and not without challenge. I welcome the work the Victorian Government is already undertaking, however, I hope this inquiry will act as a catalyst to fill knowledge gaps, develop improved techniques of measurement, and further connect scientific knowledge to policy, programs and investment.



Most importantly, I encourage the Parliamentary Committee to focus on identifying soil carbon sequestration options that deliver win-win scenarios. Specifically, options that benefit local and regional natural and socioeconomic systems, contribute to Victoria's climate change response, involve and empower Victorian communities, and avoid perverse outcomes that can accompany soil carbon sequestration.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make comment and, as my office has already discussed with the Committee's Executive Officer, I look forward to the opportunity to participate in the forthcoming public forums and release of the final report in August.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kate Auty

Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

20/01/2010