

## **Submission to: Land and Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change Green Paper**

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The **Friends of the Gippsland Lakes, Parks and Reserves** provides an avenue for interested persons to participate in projects and activities to enhance the environment, amenity and facilities within the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park, Lakes National Park, Blond Bay Reserve, Gippsland Lakes Reserve and crown land frontages abutting the Gippsland Lakes, Victoria, Australia.

### **Our Submission:**

**The proposed 50 year vision for land and biodiversity in Victoria is:**

**Victorians actively conserving and restoring ecosystems to ensure our land, seas and waterways are healthy, resilient and productive.**

A range of policy directions and proposals have been outlined in the Green Paper for comment. Friends of the Gippsland Lakes, Parks and Reserves (FOGL) wish to comment on a number of these:

#### **6.5 Managing aquatic ecosystems.**

- We propose that there be State legislation enacted in order that Crown frontage to all waterways, including those leased by private landholders and riparian zones on private land that collect and channel water to waterways, are revegetated with biodiverse habitat species. If this is not undertaken by landholders, (who should have access to Government funding to facilitate the revegetation), a levy should be imposed.
- Ongoing maintenance of these sites, in order that pest plants and animals are controlled, could be given to community groups in perpetuity and appropriate funding granted. Landholders could also be given increased resources for pest and weed control on these sites, as an alternative. It is essential that Government lead with targets, plans and resources. Access to water for stock and recreational pursuits should be factored into the revegetation process.
- If community groups are to be part of the revegetation process insurance for this activity should be provided.
- As indicated in the Green Paper, there are a number of agencies responsible for the State's riparian zones – DSE, CMAs, local government and Parks Victoria. There are also a number of agencies responsible for marine zones eg Coastal Boards, Parks Victoria. This has resulted in unclear management arrangements. We propose that there be one agency responsible for rivers, wetlands and estuaries.
- We propose that consideration be given to the idea of Regional coordinators/facilitators (paid positions) to assist the variety of Volunteer Groups. These people would be responsible for providing knowledge to community groups, coordinating their work and solving on-ground problems.

## **6.6 Building ecological connectivity**

- The recent document published by the Department of Climate Change (1)\* contends that a critical component of conserving species is the availability of suitable habitat. It comments that connectivity of habitat can be important for facilitating the movement of different species. The rivers and streams that feed into the Gippsland Lakes, as well as the gullies on both private and public land, are important conduits for species movement. As such, it is important that they be planted with vegetation species that will provide habitat corridors.

## **8.2 Better systems to share knowledge**

- The internet is probably the most useful tool for accessing knowledge for community groups. A central information store/database, which is publicly accessible for both input and retrieval of data, would be the most efficient way to share knowledge.
- Community groups will need training in order that data input is accurate.

## **8.3 Understanding the impact of our actions.**

- Outcomes measurement is going to be essential if we are to be able to effectively assess the activities we undertake in the community. It would seem at the moment, that employees of organisations like Parks Victoria do not have the resources to undertake this. We are suggesting that volunteer groups or paid contractors be recruited for this activity. Perhaps there could be a network of Keepers or Wardens who are primarily responsible for assessing and reporting the impact of actions.
- Community groups need an easy method of compensation for out of pocket expenses if they are to be involved in monitoring. They will also need adequate training by people with good knowledge in the area to be monitored. This may be done by someone in the private sector.

## **9.1 Landcare and volunteer organisations**

- Volunteers would appear to be a major component in the 50 year vision for land and biodiversity in Victoria. If this is to work, Government has to support them wholeheartedly via recruitment, training and compensation for expenses. Administrative and Project management support, via the earlier proposal for a Volunteer Coordinator/Facilitator, would be a way of dealing with this issue.
- There seems to be an expectation that volunteers will do a lot of the work to support the 50 year vision. Government should also be considering increasing or restructuring its own workforce. The multiplicity of agencies appears top heavy but individual agencies seem extremely under resourced and unable to cope with present land management at the ground level.

## **10.5 People near the coasts and sea**

- Volunteers need training in order to develop a knowledge base so that they are better informed when working in coastal ecosystems.
- Preaching to the converted on issues affecting coastal ecosystems often makes us feel that we are going nowhere fast. We suggest that the Victorian Government provide funding for advertising, primarily for television, which runs in prime time and which addresses environmental issues in a form that will arouse and educate the wider community and how it must adapt to the impact of climate change generally and specifically about issues affecting the

coast and the sea. The public needs to be engaged more widely than it currently is, given that climate change is going to affect us all, especially if we live and holiday near/at the coast.

- There would seem to be a great urgency to much better resource public land management. Habitat protection, which must occur, according to the recent publication by the Department of Climate Change (1)\*, is said to be a more effective strategy than systems that mainly target endangered species and communities. This will have the best chance of success on public land. Options need to be canvassed to improve these resources and may involve the employment of more contractors or staff.

### **Bibliography**

Dunlop, M and Brown, P.R. Implications of climate change for Australia's National Reserve System: A preliminary assessment. Report to the Department of Climate Change, and the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. March 2008.