

20 July 2021

To Whom it may concern:

Wettenhall Environment Trust is a perpetual grant making organisation that supports projects that will make a positive difference to the natural living environment. The objectives of the Trust are: to build capacity in local communities to effect long-term beneficial change in the natural environment; to support and encourage research into, and monitoring of, all aspects of Australia's natural environment; and to support education relating to our natural environment.

Since 2007 we have been supporting a range of organisations around Victoria to carry out community-driven landscape restoration. We have invested over \$1.2m in this program. We provide grants to employ workers, as well as funding to produce educational materials and carry out research. The groups we support work with farmers and landholders to improve the health of local landscapes by planting habitat corridors that connect up with parks and reserves.

The Yarram Yarram Landcare Network is one of the eight organisations we support in this program. We are wedded to this group and are committed to supporting them in the long term. Our commitment involves ensuring they have a project worker in place, ensuring they have an effective governance structure, and ensuring they have the ability to deliver on-ground works. In return the demonstrated conservation outcomes we require include achieving on-ground habitat connectivity and protection, and building partnerships with private landholders.

One of the state government's key priorities listed in the Biodiversity Strategy is to leverage non-government investment in biodiversity and create strategic investment opportunities and partnerships. Also listed in the Strategy is the desire to work with these partners to investigate effective incentives for private landholders to protect biodiversity. Indeed, our investment in the Yarram Yarram Landcare Network over the last decade is good-practice environmental investment, sitting alongside (if not behind) government funding for restoration and conservation activities, and incentivising landholders to enhance native vegetation.

The work of private landholders to provide habitat linkages with the Alberton West State Forest is an example of this strategic investment, partnering with government, and leveraging funding. Millions of dollars of government money will be compromised if the Alberton West State Forest is logged by VicForests, impacting on a number of endangered and vulnerable species of flora and fauna. Philanthropic organisations like ours want to feel we can trust the government to protect the investments that we've made into conservation of habitat and species.

Wettenhall Environment Trust stands behind the landholders of West Gippsland who want to call a halt to logging activities in the Alberton West State Forest. We will continue to support nature conservation projects, hoping that the strength of both government and philanthropic investment in these activities will not be weakened by the logging of connected, valuable, local forests.

Yours faithfully



Elizabeth Mellick (Beth)  
Executive Director