

Environment
2050

A charter to safeguard Victoria's environment



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Proud and determined

Victorians are rightly proud of their environment. It is beautiful, rich and diverse and our communities are actively engaged in its care, protection and restoration.

Environment Victoria's members and supporters have worked tirelessly over the past 40 years to safeguard our environment and the future wellbeing of all Victorians. Many important parts of our environment have been conserved and environmental protection frameworks have been put in place.

But with pressure mounting on our environment, our actions are not enough. Bigger efforts must be made.

Environment 2050 outlines the big changes required over the next 40 years to safeguard Victoria's environment and secure its future. It looks at Victoria's environmental challenges and driving forces, then sets out a transformative pathway to achieve a safe climate, healthy ecosystems and a society that lives well within the means of one planet.

While this is Environment Victoria's charter, we know we can't do it alone. Ultimately we hope that all Victorian governments, businesses and communities will use this charter as a roadmap to an environmentally sound state of Victoria.

Environment Victoria, Board and Staff

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One planet: 7 billion reasons

All human life depends on nature.

Earth's ecosystems - our oceans, rivers, soil and forests - provide the clean air, water, food, energy and resources needed by every single human on the planet. Yet those ecosystems are collapsing as human consumption exceeds nature's supply.^{1, 2} Our current trajectory of infinite growth on a finite planet is physically impossible.

Our one planet currently has 7 billion people that depend on it for life. It is vital that we treat it with respect, restore it to health and use resources within their limits to safeguard our ecosystems and secure the future for all living things.

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Our goals

In order to safeguard our environment and secure the future wellbeing of all Victorians we must actively, and urgently, transform Victoria into a sustainable state.

The following vision and goals describe what is necessary to achieve a sustainable Victoria. The goals are big. And they're difficult. We know this. But we have adopted them as our own because we understand that the future of all Victorians depends on achieving them.

Our vision for Victoria

Our vision for Victoria in 2050 is that of a sustainable state where the climate is safe and stable, where nature has been restored and healthy ecosystems support our lives, and where every Victorian lives within the means of the one planet we share. Victorians are happy and healthy, enjoying a good quality of life in an incredible place to live.

Our goals for Victoria

Safe Climate

2050 The global climate is safe for all living things.

2020 Victoria has helped to avoid the most dangerous impacts of climate change by taking responsibility for its high levels of greenhouse gas emissions at the turn of the century and halving them by 2020³.

Healthy ecosystems

2050 Victoria's ecosystems are restored, healthy and sustainable.

2020 Victoria has halted the continued decline of its ecosystems and they are on the road to recovery.

One Planet Living

2050 Victorians live well and our ecological footprint is sustainable.

2020 Victoria's ecological footprint has been reduced by at least 25 percent⁴.





**Determined to
safeguard our
environment**

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Environment Victoria's DNA

Who are we?

We are one of Australia's leading environment groups. We are independent and not-for-profit.

What do we do?

We advocate for big, important and permanent changes to safeguard our environment and the future wellbeing of all Victorians.

Why do we do this?

A healthy environment underpins the lives, health and wealth of all Victorians and safeguarding our environment is critical to our wellbeing. Right now we know that our environment is in serious trouble and, because of this, so are all Victorians.

We can restore our environment and secure a healthy future. Victoria can have a safe climate, healthy rivers and magnificent forests rich with wildlife as well as livable cities and communities. In making the necessary switch to clean energy, a green economy and zero waste we will also create exciting new sustainable jobs; modern, smart industries and a more prosperous, resilient future.

We all have a responsibility to act. Our choices today will determine the future for our environment and of all Victorians. Because the challenges we face are both urgent and large, our response must be too. That's why we advocate for big, important and permanent changes and help Victorians to do the same.

Our values:

Courage to always speak up for our environment

Respect for people and for nature

Inclusivity and fairness in the way that we work and the outcomes we seek

Pride in our environment and our work



How we operate

Environment Victoria has a three-point approach to achieving our vision and goals:

Shared solutions

We work with others to develop bold solutions that that rapidly transition Victoria to a sustainable state.

Empowerment

We inspire people, governments and businesses to take action on environmental solutions through advocacy, education and empowerment.

Accountability

We hold people of influence, governments and businesses to account for their decisions and actions through research, report cards, public commentary, thought leadership and showcasing best practice.



Victoria's environmental condition

This is a snapshot of the health of our environment, extracted from the latest State of the Environment Report⁵ for Victoria.

Water

The health of Victoria's rivers and wetlands varies. It's healthy in the open coast, alpine region and East Gippsland, but in poor health nearly everywhere else, including most urban rivers and bays. Groundwater quality is poorly understood but salinity levels are rising.

Snapshot

- 21 percent of Victoria's rivers are healthy, 32 percent are in poor condition
- 9 out of 10 Victorian rivers flowing into the Murray River are in poor condition
- 37 percent of natural wetlands have already been lost
- 21 fish, 11 frog and 29 waterbird species are threatened

Land and biodiversity

Victoria's landscapes have been largely cleared. Native vegetation and biodiversity is fragmented and declining in quality. This is causing salinity, soil erosion and acidification, the spread of pest plants and animals and the loss of native species.

Snapshot

- 70 percent of Victoria's landscapes have been cleared
- Victoria is losing 4,000 hectares of native vegetation each year
- 157 animal and 778 plant species are threatened and 24 animal and 51 plant species are extinct



Climate

Victoria's air quality is generally in good condition although there are local hotspots posing health risks. The ozone layer above Victoria is stabilising, but Victoria's climate is warming and is predicted to become less stable.

Snapshot

- **Victoria's climate has warmed by 0.6°C since the 1950s and this warming trend is projected to continue**
- **The past decade has been the hottest on record in Victoria.**

Think about it

These are the risks of our declining ecosystems:

- Availability of clean water
- Quality of air, water and land
- Productivity of farms, forests, waterways, estuaries and bays
- Personal security from climate change-induced drought, heatwaves, floods and fires
- Industrial productivity, economic security and jobs
- Affordable, comfortable living
- Tourism and unique natural places to visit

Victoria's environmental challenge

Infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible. Yet despite this, our society continues on a path towards environmental collapse. We need to do an immediate U-turn and rapidly transition away from the business as usual forces driving this destruction.

Driving force 1:

Rising greenhouse gas pollution

An increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere increases average temperatures, and even small rises in average temperature can increase the likelihood of droughts, floods, heat waves and fire danger.⁶ This is why climate change is the greatest challenge: it puts our economy, livelihood and safety at risk.

Burning fossil fuels for producing electricity and powering our transport is the main cause of greenhouse gas emissions in Victoria⁷, which also contribute to global greenhouse pollution. Under business as usual, greenhouse emissions are set to increase by over 40 percent by 2050 (from 2000 levels)⁸.

Driving force 2:

Resource over-shoot

The ever rising global population and consumption of natural resources has put the world's ecosystems into 'ecological overshoot'. Our global society has grown beyond the planet's capacity to sustainably support life because we are using resources like energy, trees and fish faster than nature can replenish them⁹.

Today we are operating at 50 percent above the earth's capacity and our current economies and wellbeing rely on stealing resources from future generations¹⁰. With a global population projected to increase to 9 billion by 2050 and an increasingly affluent society consuming more¹¹, this over-shoot will spiral out of control.

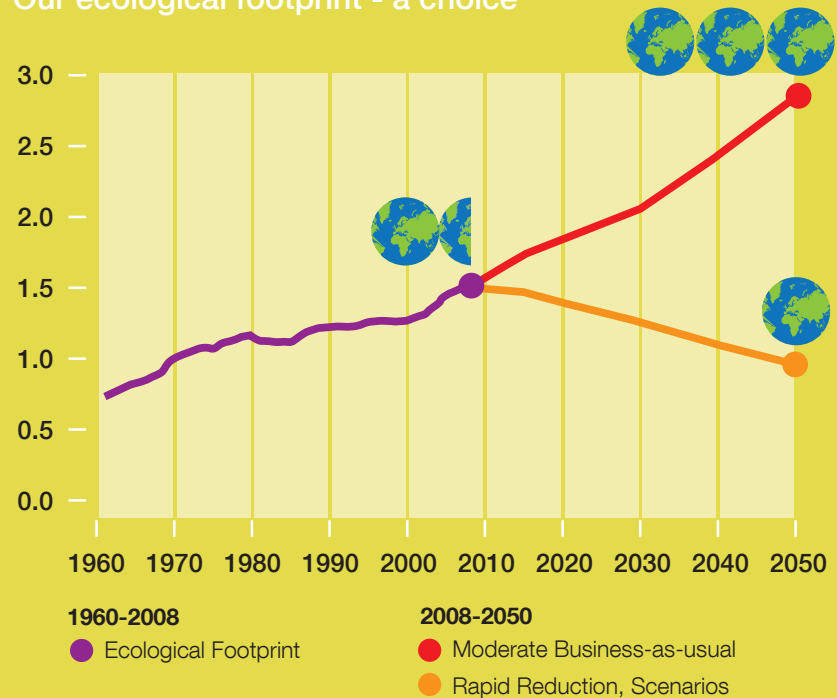
Victoria's ecological footprint is three times higher than the world average, largely due to our highly polluting energy supply and the way we produce and consume the food we eat and the goods and services we buy¹².



What is an ecological footprint?

Ecological footprint calculates humanity's demand on nature. It compares the land and water area humanity requires to produce the resources it consumes and absorb its carbon dioxide emissions, against the amount available.

Our ecological footprint - a choice



Source: Global Footprint Network

Driving force 3: **Erosion of natural assets**

The natural assets that underpin the Victorian economy are being steadily eroded and trending towards bankruptcy. Our economy is dependent on resources provided by nature, but our current economic models do not fully value them. A tree may be valued for its wood but not for the air it purifies or the habitat it provides.

A serious market failure is inevitable when the market does not adequately value our biodiversity, ecosystem services and natural assets or account for environmental damage.

Equally problematic is how we measure our wellbeing. GDP is the key measurement but where pollution causes an illness and expensive medical treatment, both the cost of the pollution clean-up and the expenditure on medical services are counted as part of GDP. Thus, GDP increases whilst wellbeing declines.

Economic development is important to any society, but the economy must develop in ways that value, not destroy, ecosystems.



Why is biodiversity so important?

Biodiversity is the rich diversity of all the forms of life that make up the health of an ecosystem.

The myriad of life forms has evolved over millions of years and together provide our environment with a resilience and ability to absorb change, so long as not too much is taken away.

Imagine our biodiversity being akin to the thousands of rivets that hold together the wings of an aircraft.

Lose one or two rivets and the plane still flies.
Lose one too many and the plane crashes.

It's the same with biodiversity.

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Transforming Victoria for the future

Despite consistent warnings about environmental collapse, as a society our response has been piecemeal and inadequate. For example, despite improvements to the efficient use of energy, water and materials, we are using more resources and producing more waste than ever before. And while less pollution is produced per unit of production, pollution such as greenhouse gas emissions continue to grow.

To achieve our vision and goals we must think systematically and act quickly. The sheer scale of change required is enormous and should not be underestimated nor delayed. Although small improvements help, the real change needs to come from the way we think and act. It's not enough to just use an energy-saving lightbulb – we need to rethink how we produce electricity.

Our societal and economic models must be re-designed and our expectations re-imagined if we are to live within the limits of the one planet we share.



Transformative essentials from business as usual



Clean, renewable energy
& energy efficiency

Zero carbon buildings &
transport

Low carbon economy, food,
products & services

Forest protection & carbon
storage in ecosystems



Restore & connect systems

True value pricing of natural
resources

Sustainable primary
industries & urban
development

Sustainable, integrated
planning



Closed loop production
& consumption

Services culture replaces
consumption culture

Respecting our environment
& sustainable behaviours are
the norm

Water, energy & materials
efficiency

Sustainable global
population



Economic models that value
ecosystems & measure
wellbeing

Victorian economy that
supports sustainable
industries & jobs

Laws, markets and
incentives that protect
nature and deter pollution,
waste & nature destruction

Our priorities

Like our planet, Environment Victoria has finite resources. We focus our efforts on where we can create the biggest outcomes for Victoria's environment.



Energy revolution

The way Victoria produces electricity is amongst the most polluting on the planet. The burning of brown coal is the largest contributor to Victoria's considerable greenhouse gas pollution and ecological footprint¹³. Because of this, Environment Victoria's biggest contribution to creating a safe climate is to advocate for, and help pioneer, the shift to a zero emissions energy and energy efficient economy.

Energy guiding principles:

- 1 Energy production and use should not pollute the atmosphere and be safe for humans and our environment.
- 2 Energy should be used as efficiently as possible.
- 3 Energy should be priced at its true cost. As an essential service, some Victorians may need assistance to pay energy bills.



Rivers forever

Our rivers and wetlands are the lifeblood of our state and an indicator of the health of our catchments, land and forests. They are also under enormous threat. For too long they have been treated as drains and too much water has been taken from them. Environment Victoria's biggest contribution to restoring our ecosystems is to restore our rivers and wetlands by securing water for them. We also help protect Victoria's biodiversity within our rivers and catchments.

River and water guiding principles:

- 1 Rivers and wetlands have a right to water and should have reliable water entitlements that secure their health.
- 2 Human activities should not pollute aquatic environments.
- 3 Surface and groundwater ecosystems are connected and should be managed in an integrated manner.
- 4 Water should be used as efficiently as possible and wastewater should be recycled or used to benefit the environment.



Implementation



One planet living

Our current economic and societal systems are unsustainable because we are not living within the planet's means. We have no choice but to change these systems to restore rather than degrade our environment. Environment Victoria's biggest contribution to putting Victoria on a trajectory to one planet living is to advocate for a clean economy and clever forms of consumption that reduce our ecological footprint and secure our future wellbeing.

One planet living principles:

- 1 Victorians should understand that we are fully dependent on our environment for life.
- 2 Victoria's ecological footprint should be sustainable.
- 3 Victoria's economy, laws and markets should drive environmental restoration and community wellbeing.
- 4 Victoria's economy and forms of production and consumption should form a closed loop to ensure everything is efficiently made, used and recycled, making waste obsolete.

Environment 2050 sets the strategic directions for our work. Environment Victoria develops more detailed plans with our members, supporters, partners and stakeholders to achieve our goals. We report against these on a regular basis to our Board and to our supporters through our regular communications and our annual report. It is reviewed every 5 years with the next review due in 2017.

For more information on our plans and activities, go to our website www.environmentvictoria.org.au or call us on 03 9341 8100.

Endnotes

1 World Wildlife Fund and the Global Footprint Network. Global Footprint Report (2010).

2 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Ecosystems & Human Well-being (2005).

3 Australia's per capita greenhouse emissions are one of the highest in the developed world and were four times the world average in 2008 (Garnaut Climate Change Review Final Report (2008). Our relatively significant contribution to global emissions and our continued reliance on highly polluting energy supplies means that we have a responsibility to rapidly reduce our greenhouse pollution. Our goal to halve greenhouse emissions by 2020 is backed by research that shows our emissions can be halved using existing technologies. (Turning it around: Climate solutions for Victoria, 2008).

4 This would reduce Victoria's ecological footprint from 6.8 to 5.1 global hectares per person. By comparison, some of the European nations further advanced in sustainability have a current footprint of 5.5 to 6 global hectares per person and the world average is 2.2 global hectares per person.

5 Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. State of the Environment Report (2008).

6 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report: Climate Change (2007).

7 Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. State of the Environment Report (2008).

8 State of the Environment Report (2008) citing data from the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Australian Department of Climate Change and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

9 World Wildlife Fund and the Global Footprint Network. Global Footprint Report (2010)

10 As above

11 Victoria's gross state product has grown faster than Victoria's population, an indication of an increasingly affluent society (State of the Environment Report (2008) citing ABS data). This is a global trend and particularly evident in developing and emerging nations (World Bank, Global Economic Prospects, 2007).

12 EPA Victoria and the Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. Victoria's Ecological Footprint (2008).

13 Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. State of the Environment Report (2008).



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