Ruth Brown

17 Patty Street

Mentone

Victoria 3194

The Hon Lily D’Ambrosio M.P.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change,

Level 16

8 Nicholson Street,

East Melbourne

Victoria 3002

Dear Minister,

I am writing to implore you to establish the Great Forest National Park (GFNP) in Victoria.

My principal reason is for the protection of biodiversity, including endangered species such as the Leadbeater’s Possum and the critically endangered Mountain Ash ecosystem.

Furthermore, I think the last two years have demonstrated to us all just how vital spending time in the natural environment has become for our mental and physical wellbeing. Only one hour from Melbourne, the GFNP could rival the Tarkine, Tasmania, or The Valley of the Giants in W.A.

The creation of the GFNP will also lead to increased visitation to regional communities who are still recovering from the devastating 2009 bushfires. Local employment opportunities will increase with the development of new visitor infrastructure and the boost to local tourism.

Reputable academic and peer reviewed research demonstrates that logging contributes to higher severity fires in South East Australia and that the proposed area for the park has the most carbon dense forests in the world. Currently, 87% of native forest logged in Victoria becomes pulp, a short-term storage of carbon. Australia was one of more than 100 countries who signed the Glasgow Leaders’ Declaration on Forest and Land Use, committing the nation to halting and reversing forest loss and land degradation by 2030. This pledge to end deforestation stated that preserving forests is crucial to absorbing carbon dioxide and slowing the pace of global warming. Establishing the GFNP would therefore be critical to any policy to reduce carbon emissions. The 2019/20 fires brought the reality of the climate crisis to the masses, protecting what forests we have left from logging is key for ensuring a future for the generations to follow us.

The GFNP will also support Traditional Owners. The concept of the GFNP assumes the sovereigns of this country to be the Boonwurrung/Bunurong, Taungurong, Wurrundjeri and Gunai Kurnai and that they are the rightful custodians of the forests of the Central Highlands of Victoria. Establishing the GFNP will provide the state the opportunity to put words into actions to empower Aboriginal Victorians and support their connection to and ability to care for Country.

Yours in hope,

Ruth Brown