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Vet's impassioned speech at Brookwater forest protest

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Rob Mellett

Dr Jeannet Kessels speech in full

“Good morning, everyone, it’s a privilege to be here with you.

“I have lived within 500m of Woogaroo Creek for 35 years; first in Camira, where I set up a little vet practice at home when my children were small, and now just up the road from here in Brookwater.

“I am the owner and director of the local vets.

“I would like to let you know that my practice is completely behind the work you are doing to save this precious forest.

“I, representing my team of 60 animal caring professionals at Greater Springfield Veterinary, will be vocal in protesting this development.

“Before my time in this area, people used to come from Brisbane for picnics by the Woogaroo Creek.

“They used to call it the Garden of Eden for its glorious biodiversity ... when the rare spotted cunjevoi was common.

“In the late ’80s, we used to ride our horses through what is now Springfield, and wondered at the bird life along the creeks, and see the brumbies and the odd scrubber bull.

“I have seen koalas, echidna, wonga pigeons and quail, and many more. Even the magnificent regent bowerbird.

“Platypus swim and breed in this creek – my neighbours further downstream have seen them.

“In fact, a plaque has been erected just over there to highlight their presence.

“The world has already lost 70 percent of its wildlife since I was a five-year-old girl.

“Seventy percent.

“To hear that my very own ‘backyard’, this precious Woogaroo Forest, where I love to walk, has been marked to be cleared, makes me weep.

“Clearing the Woogaroo Forest will absolutely devastate any remaining populations of the 130 species that reside here.

“When trees are cleared, particularly along rich and valuable creek lines, the animals have nowhere to go.

“Their social structures and feed areas are destroyed.

“The complex ecosystems that they have depended on for hundreds of thousands of years are taken away.

“They are either outcompeted or face aggression, then starve.

“Those that remain are no longer able to breed once their nesting places have been cleared.

“The most priceless of things – that money should not touch – are the wild places, the wildlife, the songs of the bush and the sentinels of the forest.

“These areas that our Indigenous Elders cared for, for 60 000 years.

“That so many precious Australian places have disappeared in just 250 years is beyond my comprehension.

“The world never changes without some disruption; if we want to change things, we need to reconsider what we regard as important for the future of our local communities and of our nation.

“We might need to challenge where the money and the power sits, to ensure that it aligns with what we the people want, and what our children need.

“My staff and I agree that this includes the beautiful wild places, with rich and diverse wildlife.

“In 1803, at the Derwent River, in Tasmania, the governor issued an edict to say that no one was to kill a black swan.

“That was the first environmental law in Australia.

“Now we wouldn’t dream of shooting a koala, but we are still, somehow, allowed to kill them out by removing their food source. That needs to change. Our animals have a right to exist.

“We can no longer regard bushland as dispensable wasteland; it is an invaluable asset to any community and must be protected for the health and welfare of us all. A place to walk together and admire nature, to calm our mental states and to enjoy our precious flora and fauna.

“Thank you for organising this protest to wake our community up to the responsibilities we carry for this planet. In wildness is its protection.

“This precious planet, the only one we know of, in the whole universe, that has love, laughter and intellect, and fairy wrens, platypus and koalas.

“I ask you to use every power that you possess to preserve this Woogaroo Forest.

“Thank you for being here.”



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