

# VBTnews

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

## MANAGING INVASIVE SPECIES WORKSHOP - TOORA

Following the successful Cooperative Land management Forum held by the North East Blackberry Action Group in the Upper Murray last year, the VBT partnered with the Corner-Inlet Blackberry Action Group (CIBAG) on the 17th March in Gippsland to provide information on future options for invasive species management.

40 people listened to topics from a range of presenters including Dr Robin Adair who outlined the current bio-controls for blackberry and options for future research.

Dr Greg Baxter from the University of Queensland presented research into Red Deer populations and what can be concluded from this in relation to other deer species. CIBAG committee member Russell Bond and Project Officer, Matt Stephenson reported on program achievements, and Chris Rankin South Gippsland Shire Biodiversity Supervisor provided data on the progress of the Council's current roadside pest management plan.

Mick Dortmans from the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning explained the Good Neighbour Program for managing pests on public land adjoining private and how it works. Gerard Delaney from Parks Victoria (PV) gave a comprehensive outline of the integrated management of invasive species and working with landholders for better control on private property and PV boundaries.



PRESENTERS AT THE GIPPSLAND WORKSHOP (L-R) GERARD DELANEY, CHRIS RANKIN, DR ROBIN ADAIR, DAVID SMITH, LYN COULSTON OAM, RUSSELL BOND, DR GREG BAXTER AND MATT STEPHENSON.

HVP Plantations representative David Smith reminded the gathering that HVP is always willing to work with adjoining landholders to minimise invasive species impacts on both sides of the fence and are responsive to landholder enquires.

Attendees then gathered in small groups to talk about what they heard and document their thoughts on what is working, what can be done better and the opportunities to get better outcomes. These discussions will be collated with feedback from previous and future forums and made public to contribute to future policy decisions.

### Australian Governments Agricultural Competiveness White Paper

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce has received \$50,000 in federal funding to inform and encourage participation in effective partnerships to reduce blackberry across the state.

The multi-faceted project will include the update of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce's Community Tool Kit, hosting a co-operative Land management forum, production of community service announcements and case studies and a re-print of Weeds of National Significance blackberry control manual.



# Blackberryaction



2013 INFORMATION SESSION HVP PLANTATIONS TRIAL SITE - SHELLEY. DELEGATES LISTENING TO ANDREW BUSSAU (HVP DISTRICT FORESTER)

## HVP PLANTATIONS BLACKBERRY/ FERTILISER TRIAL

The aim of the **HVP Plantations trial** in Shelley Victoria is to determine the growth response in 14-year-old *P. radiata* (first thin to final harvest) to treatments with growth promoting nutrients and blackberry control.

A preliminary trial was installed during the drought years 2003 to 2009. The results from this trial suggested blackberry control was highly beneficial in thinned *P. radiata* plantations. Growth response following blackberry control was 15% better than the untreated control, while nutrient addition showed little extra benefit. These results suggest that water limitation in the trial was one of the main factors limiting growth during the drought and that blackberry was actively competing for the available water.

The second blackberry - fertilizer trial was established in the Shelley plantation in 2011 where drought was less likely to be an issue. The trial was a factorial design to permit statistical analysis of the results. The Control received no fertiliser or blackberry control, Fertilizer site received an application of nitrogen large enough to promote growth (determined by foliage analysis), Blackberry control received a single spray by hand of Glyphosate, Metsulfuron and wetting agent, and the Fertilizer + Blackberry control received both treatments of nutrient and herbicide. Measurement plots are large (about 60 trees) and are approximately 15m in from treatment plot boundary and there are four replications of each treatment.

The trial is to be followed until final harvest when the growth of each of the treatments will be compared and an economic analysis of the returns from blackberry control will be conducted. Since the harvest is still over six years away, current results are of a preliminary nature.

Mid trial measurements in 2015 showed 11% more volume growth in the blackberry control (herbicide) treatment compared to the control, while fertiliser with blackberry control showed a similar response. It seems likely that the cost of blackberry control on this site will be economically justifiable.

Take home message: 'Trees need water, nutrients, warm temperatures and light to grow well. Improving access to water and nutrients by removal of competing vegetation such as blackberries, will improve tree growth.'

## BLACKBERRY ACTION VBT Case Studies

Northern Yarra, Barkers Creek and the North East Blackberry Action Group participants and committee members were interviewed for the production of case studies. The Australian Government funded project has produced six reports and 10 film clips focusing on social, economic and environmental outcomes of their respective VBT community partnership programs.

The outcomes show how different each group is, what drives them and their barriers.

View the VBT case studies online at:  
[www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/resources.html](http://www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/resources.html)

## COMMUNITY STORIES: City of Whittlesea Peri-urban program

The VBT has been working with local landholders and Whittlesea Council staff since late last year to provide information about community options to improve blackberry management. The area of blackberry has increased to a level where the community is concerned and want to do something about it. Contributing factors include land use change, absentee landholders and lack of practical information about control options.

The newly formed Whittlesea and surrounds Blackberry Reference group will begin their blackberry engagement program in spring. The program will target regions in Humevale, Kinglake West, Toorourong, Glenvale and Yan Yean.

All land tenures will be included in the project. Private and public land managers, Melbourne Water and Parks Victoria will work collaboratively with the reference group to ensure a coordinated effort in blackberry control.

Melbourne Water and Whittlesea Shire Council are the key partners of the program and are represented on the steering committee providing strategic and incentive value to the program.



RURAL WHITTLESEA AND SURROUNDS BLACKBERRY REFERENCE GROUP COMMITTEE

Peter Rutley, Chair of the Reference Group, is acutely aware of the challenges facing the group. 'We have absentee landholders, confusion around landholder responsibility and lack of blackberry control knowledge, these issues will need to be addressed by the group.'

Peter went on to say, '...the funding from the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce will help address these problems.'

The support by the VBT will provide a project officer for the group to engage landholders in the target area.

## VBT's Community Partnership Program 'ENABLING COMMUNITIES'



ENABLING COMMUNITIES

'The project officer engages land managers at the direction of the community'

Since 2005, the VBT has supported communities to employ their own project officer. The project officer engages land managers at the direction of the community. There are many positives with this approach, they include building lasting partnerships, increasing the awareness of blackberry as an issue and building the capacity of land managers and communities to manage blackberry.

The VBT's Community Partnership Program is not intended to be a constant source of funding for communities, but a way of leaving a lasting legacy, enabling landholders to meet their responsibilities under the Catchment and Land Protection Act. The Taskforce believes a community-led program will go a long way in achieving this. Blackberry Action Group funding is initially for 12 months, with a maximum of 3 years if funding is available.

Many blackberry groups after a three-year period continue to use existing partnerships and the awareness already built to continue operating. This occurs via biodiversity programs or even at a volunteer committee level.

For more information on the Community Partnership Program contact the VBT-  
[vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au](mailto:vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au)



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### New VBT Group - MooBAG

The Moorabool Blackberry Action Group is in the first year of their Community Partnership Program, focusing efforts between Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh. The aim of the group's project officer is to visit 35 people and sign 20 landholders to agreements in the first year of operation.



SUCCESSFUL BLACKBERRY PROGRAM - CREIGHTON'S CREEK-GOORAM BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

### Dabyminga Blackberry Action Group

Since 2015, the Dabyminga Blackberry Action Group has signed 32 land holders to voluntary management agreements, accounting for 1500 hectares of private property, 300 hectares of which were blackberry.

The group has organised 4 community spraying days, the most recent in February and March 2017 with 14 volunteers attending both days. A helicopter was also organised in conjunction with the Strath Creek Blackberry Action Group with several private properties pooling resources to control blackberry in open areas.

### Creighton's Creek-Gooram Blackberry Action Group

The Creighton's-Gooram Blackberry Action Group has completed a successful first year of their blackberry program, which was kick started with a successful blackberry control workshop in September last year, attended by 30 people at Creighton's Creek.

Furthermore, the group's project officer has signed 21 landholders to voluntary management agreements, accounting for 4323 hectares of private property and 90 hectares of blackberry.

## Community Service Announcements

The VBT is running a third year of community service announcements (CSA's) on Prime, WIN and the ABC, which have been successful in raising awareness of blackberry control across Victoria.

Look out for the new CSA's, screening early spring. These highlight different control options, the benefits of an annual control plan and returning land to productive use. This has all been made possible through the Australian Government Agricultural White Paper Funding initiative.

To view the new CSA's online visit: [www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/resources.html](http://www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/resources.html)



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