

VBTnews

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL BLACKBERRY PROGRAM

As the blackberry action program is a grass roots program embedded within and run by community, it offers a unique approach to dealing with blackberry. Support to initiate control and/or reinvigorate landholders' enthusiasm towards ongoing management is the key.



ALAN HUNT, PRIVATE LANDHOLDER
& DANIELLE CLELAND, NEBAG PROJECT OFFICER

Why has this been so successful and what are the best ways to engage with landholders?

We asked Danielle Cleland, Project Officer with the North East Blackberry Action Group, her thoughts.

'The Project Officer (following the program designed by the Committee) is the direct contact person for your landholders. From my experience it works well if the Project Officer is not someone directly involved within the community (so as to avoid any perception of bias or personal conflict).

A good project officer who is able to relate to people easily, be open to different situations and provide an unbiased point of support will quickly engage landholders.

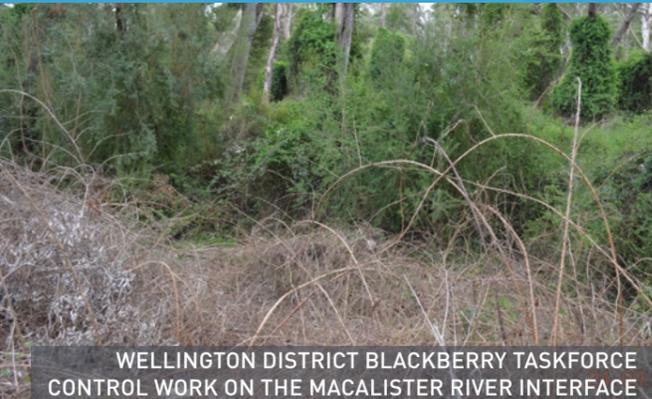
The ability to build relationships with people, starting where they want to start (blackberry in this case), is a critical skill. As the reasons for unmanaged blackberry are complex, understanding 'why' is necessary in order to proceed with a negotiated management plan.

First, establish that weeds are the responsibility of the landholder, understand why the blackberry infestation is out of control then negotiate a plan.'

- Make an appointment and sit down with landholders at the kitchen table or the tray of the ute to discuss the problem
- Provide a map of the property and negotiate an achievable agreement (3 year plan)
- Take along a laptop, mapping software and portable printer. Print and sign the documents and provide maps on the spot. This is really important as it completes the process and saves time (and money)
- Follow up annually with a phone call or visit

The Steering Committee's role is to drive the project, make decisions about incentives and gain the support of partners. The project officer is a community liaison officer.'

Blackberryaction



WELLINGTON DISTRICT BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE CONTROL WORK ON THE MACALISTER RIVER INTERFACE



HUGH FRITH TREATING THE DEMONSTRATION SITE

BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUPS ARE BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE

Wellington District Blackberry Taskforce

The Wellington District Blackberry Taskforce (WDBT) has gained cooperation from a wide range of land managers, including private landholders, Southern Rural Water (SRW) and the Wellington Shire Council (WSC).

The Community Partnership Project has produced excellent results over the past two years, signing up 41 landholders to voluntary management agreements, accounting for 3400 ha of private property.

One of the positive aspects of the program is the eagerness for land managers to work with the taskforce and shift priorities to achieve blackberry control on a landscape scale. This season the group targeted the Upper Maffra region, signing five landholders, accounting for 310 hectares of private property, as a result Southern Rural Water and the Wellington Shire Council sprayed two kilometres of channels and drains and 3 kilometres of council roads respectively.

Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group Obtain Extra Funding

The Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group's (CIBAG) \$49,500 Communities for Nature Grant is now in full swing. The funding supports landholder efforts to control blackberry along abutting waterways of Dingo Creek and Agnes River. The tender process has been completed and certified weed contractors are spraying along these creeks before the end of April 2015.

CIBAG has also gained \$20,000 via the 25th Anniversary Landcare Grants, this targets the Corner Inlet Ramsar Site area, including adjacent land and streams that feed into it. Landholders in these areas will be engaged to control blackberry, in conjunction with contractors working on adjacent waterways.

BLACKBERRY ACTION Towong Pine Oil Demonstration Site

The Northeast Blackberry Action Group in conjunction with the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) recently set up a pine oil based control demonstration near the township of Towong. The VBT are acutely aware of the need for blackberry action groups to have alternative blackberry control options when assisting landholders.

The property involved is 'certified organic', which means traditional chemicals, including glyphosate, metsulphuron-methyl and picloram triclopyr are not used on the property. The pine oil based product used for the demonstration site is NASSA and BFA approved.

The demonstration will be conducted over a year, with results updated on the website in September 2015 and February 2016.

Up to Us Gathering Momentum

Following the mapping of pest plants on council roadsides by Up to Us Blackberry Action Group, the Mansfield Shire sent letters to adjoining landholders outlining the council's works program. A weed forum was also run to engage private and government organisations to discuss how to coordinate weed control in the target area. As a result, Up to Us Blackberry Action Group is implementing an integrated blackberry management program with DELWP, DEJTR, Mt Buller Mt Sterling Alpine Resorts, HVP Plantations, Parks Victoria, Goulburn Murray Water, Vic Roads and Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

COMMUNITY STORIES: Raelene and Russell Bond

Raelene and Russell Bond's property is located in Foster North. Coming from a non-farming background they have climbed a steep learning curve in blackberry management.

In 2013 they developed their three year Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group (CIBAG) plan with realistic and achievable goals, using chemical as the main tool.

One of the barriers faced by the couple has been the steep terrain. In the first year they spent weekends walking the slopes with a 200 litre olive barrel containing chemical on the back of a tractor, with a 30 meter hose and nozzle.

Outside work commitments, in the second year, potentially caused the first year's effort to be in vain, so they rolled out their backup plan. A contractor was engaged and a budget was carefully negotiated. The amount of blackberry controlled was enormous and done quickly, and they were delighted to see large brown patches all over the property. However, they acknowledge the need to continue follow up with any new growth and creep further into larger infestations.



AN IMAGE FROM RAELENE & RUSSELL BOND'S PRESENTATION

As committee members for the Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group they recommend developing a three year plan for blackberry management, as it is easy to consult and keep track.

To view Raelene and Russell Bond's presentation, visit www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au. For more information on CIBAG's program, ring Helga Binder on 0432 141 843

COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS



SCENE FROM THE VBT COMMUNITY SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

'LET'S TAKE ACTION TOGETHER'

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce produced three thirty second community service announcements which aired on the ABC, Prime and Win from January to March 2015. The ads feature private and public land managers, including - Parks Victoria, HVP Plantations and a local landholder with the message 'let's take action together'.

The Community Service Announcements have increased the level of traffic to the VBT website and the amount of correspondence through the VBT email address - vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au. Most enquiries have centred around the Community Partnership Program and blackberry control advice.

The community service ads have been viewed in Gippsland, North East and North Central Victoria and thereby connecting the public to the VBT directly on a wider scale.

To view the community service announcements, visit www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

NEWS IN BRIEF



TBAG Trivia Night

Triangle Blackberry Action Group (TBAG) held a successful trivia night at the Buxton Hotel on February the 11th, with Glen Ridge, former game show host from Sale of the Century, as master of ceremonies. The night raised \$1793 which will go towards TBAG's program. Well done!



CIBAG Award

The Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group received the Yarram Yarram Highly Commended Outstanding Community Group award along with the their project officer Helga Binders' individual Landcare award.

Photo (above): Back, left to right - Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group committee members- Raelene and Russell Bond, Arie Bos, Werner Lange, Front left to right- Helga Binder (Project Officer) and Lyn Coulston (Chair).

Frequently Asked Questions

The VBT has received many enquiries about unsatisfactory results using glyphosate for blackberry control. We would like to hear from you about your experiences using this chemical on blackberry. Please contact us at vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au.

Justannounced

\$5000 from the Victorian Government to progress research into purple blotch disease for blackberry biocontrol. The VBT welcomes this contribution which will kick start our efforts to engage with partners to achieve the target \$50k for the next stage of the research.

Over the next twelve months the VBT will be speaking with Industry, community and other levels of Government seeking support. There has already been a positive response from some of our Partnership Groups with fundraising ideas in their communities.

Some of them sound more like 'fun raising' which is a great way to further the fight against blackberry while enjoying ourselves. A pleasant change from dragging hoses up and down mountains!



CONTACT

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