

A close-up photograph of several blackberry canes. The canes are light brown to tan in color, with some showing signs of aging and peeling bark. They are covered in sharp, dark thorns that point outwards at various angles. The canes are arranged vertically, filling the frame.

# **VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE**

**PROGRESS REPORT  
2013 - 2014**

## CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF BLACKBERRY IN VICTORIA OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS HAS BEEN A REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE COMMUNITY AND THE VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE (VBT).



As demonstrated in this report, the efforts of all involved in the quest for innovative and tailored solutions to reduce blackberry infestations is an indication of the commitment of both the VBT and the communities it supports.

The highlight of the year was the completion of the revised Victorian Blackberry Strategy (VBS) which will be the blueprint for blackberry management 2014-2019. The overall goal is the reduction in the growth and spread of blackberry across the State. This is delivered in a variety of ways, with an emphasis on supporting community efforts through a cooperative approach between all land managers both private and public.

The VBT presented a paper at the Victorian Weeds Conference in May 2014 outlining the benefits and challenges of collaboration between community and Government in blackberry control. We continue to support our Blackberry Action Groups as they engage their communities in better blackberry Management.

Taskforce members work strategically to ensure we are well informed about management options and in turn these are passed on to our groups. The balance between chemical, mechanical and biological control is a subject of increasing concern to our communities. These options were explored in depth this year with well attended VBT sponsored forums at Boolarra and Mt Best in West Gippsland.

The VBT continues to support the continuation of the research into purple blotch disease (*Septocytia ruborum*). All funding has been withdrawn from what is a promising biocontrol for blackberry in shaded areas.

The VBT website contains useful information for land managers involved in blackberry management including the Start up Kit for communities interested in driving a local program.

I would like to thank the Department of Environment and Primary Industries for funding support for the VBT and our partnership groups and their contribution of knowledge and experience to assist with the implementation of the VBS.

Thanks also to the communities taking positive action to achieve local results. Your efforts are contributing to the maintenance and improvement of productive and environmental values across Victoria.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lyn Coulston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Lyn Coulston  
Chairperson – Victorian Blackberry Taskforce



## BLACKBERRY IS ONE OF VICTORIA'S **WORST WEEDS**

Left unchecked, it can rapidly infest entire local landscapes.

On private land, it costs millions of dollars in lost agricultural productivity.

On public land, it hinders our recreational, commercial and environmental activities.

Blackberry can alter water flows and cause soil erosion, it harbours pest animals, can out-compete native plants and it reduces biodiversity.

Blackberry is a serious issue in Victoria and is recognised as one of Australia's most noxious weeds.

## VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE **ACHIEVEMENTS 2013/2014**

### WE CONTINUED SUPPORTING HUNDREDS OF VICTORIANS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO REDUCE BLACKBERRY IN THEIR LOCAL AREA.

This included helping 11 community Blackberry Action Groups in their activities, helping them to employ dedicated project officers to motivate and support local landowners to tackle blackberry on their properties.

We also presented two community roadshows in Boolarra and Mount Best featuring speakers with knowledge and experience in reducing blackberry and other pest plants and animals.

Victorian Blackberry Task representatives visited four community groups interested in joining our Community Partnership program.

We continued to engage with the Australian Government to pursue federal funding into the 'Purple Blotch Disease' *Septocyta ruborum*.

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce presented its paper *From Blackberry Control to Landscape Sustainability Management and the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce* at the 5th Victorian Weeds Conference in May 2014.



## VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

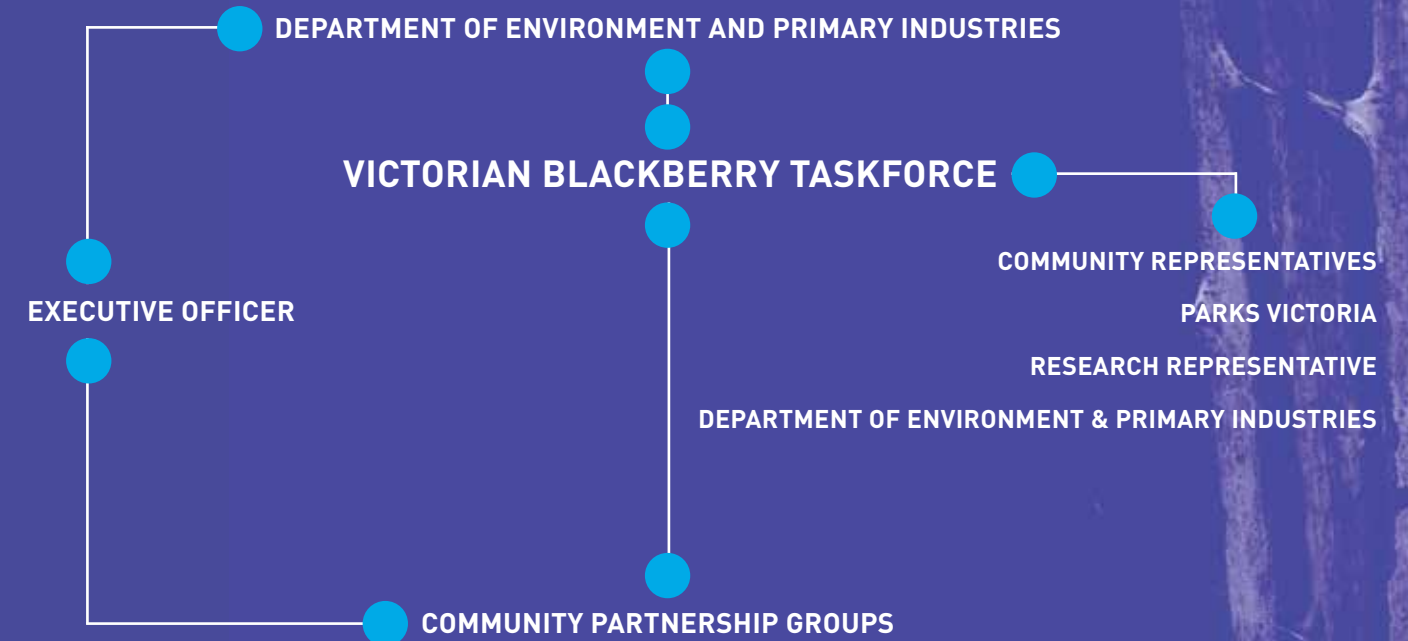
THE VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2001 TO DRIVE AND SUPPORT INITIATIVES TO TACKLE THE SPREAD AND IMPACT OF BLACKBERRY ACROSS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND.

It is implementing a diverse range of blackberry control programs in partnership with state, regional and local natural resource managers, as well as community organisations and private landholders.

One of three Victorian Community Pest Management Groups, the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce encourages and supports community participation in blackberry control by adopting new approaches, community capacity building and providing incentives for action.

The Taskforce has six appointed community members from across each Catchment Management Authority where blackberry is an issue. Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries are also represented on the Taskforce. It also includes an independent research scientist who advises on technical aspects of blackberry management.

Many objectives set out in our 2008 Victorian Blackberry Strategy have now been achieved and a number of changes in the policies and institutions involved in weed management have also occurred since then. The Taskforce therefore revised the Strategy to provide direction for 2014-2019 and we began coordinating, implementing and monitoring the actions it sets out this year.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM SUPPORTS THE ACTIVITIES OF COMMUNITY-LED ACTION GROUPS TO REDUCE BLACKBERRY IN THEIR LOCAL AREA.

This funding helps the groups employ dedicated project officers to drive their activities, which includes mapping the location and extent of blackberry in their region and working closely with local landowners to reduce the weed.

- Our Community Partnerships Program supported the work of 11 community blackberry action groups in 2013–14.
- These action groups are motivating and supporting hundreds of private landowners to control blackberry on their properties.
- They are sharing vital knowledge and experience in blackberry control and encouraging other Victorian communities to join the effort.
- In 2013–14 Victorian blackberry action groups signed another 235 landholders to 3-year voluntary management agreements. Almost 1,000 Victorian private landowners are now registered on the Blackberry Action Database Information System.

## SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ACTION TO TACKLE BLACKBERRY IS A PRIORITY FOR THE VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE





## TACKLING BLACKBERRY REMAINS A STRONG FOCUS IN CENTRAL GIPPSLAND

4  
Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

9  
Number of  
landholders  
visited

175  
Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

131  
Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

29  
Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



## CENTRAL GIPPSLAND WOODY WEED ACTION GROUP

The Central Gippsland Woody Weed Action Group has supported local landholders to significantly reduce blackberry, gorse and broom in the Strzelecki Ranges since the group formed in 2010.

Most landholders who received incentives for weed control from the group after the 2009 bushfires have now completed their 3-year voluntary agreements. All have achieved substantial success in reducing blackberry on their properties and have gained valuable knowledge and networks to help them continue their activities in future.

To date, the group has visited 182 landholders and motivated 92 to sign voluntary blackberry management agreements. This has seen more than 1,200 hectares of blackberry mapped and 1,000 hectares treated.

This year the group expanded its activities with an information day in Boolarra which attracted 50 people.

Despite wet conditions making it difficult to spray blackberry, landholders remained active with several in Callignee pooling their resources to employ a helicopter to spray infestations on steeper slopes.

A major focus of the group is personal contact with landholders and its project officer contacted 19 landholders this year to check on and support their progress in blackberry control.

The Woody Weed Action Group is seeking funding to continue its activities so it can offer landowners financial assistance to tackle blackberry. Latrobe City Council, VicRoads, Parks Victoria, Hancock Victorian Plantations and the Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network remain important partners in the group's activities.

## CORNER INLET BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

The Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group (CIBAG) had a busy and successful first year of activities since forming in June 2013.

It met its target of signing 26 landholders to 3-year voluntary agreements in its first year, with another 11 in negotiation.

The region that CIBAG covers is the largest single contributor to the South Gippsland economy, with one of the highest concentrations of dairy farming in Victoria and important natural tourism attractions.

CIBAG has identified approximately 32,500 hectares of land around Mt Best, Franklin River, Nine Mile Creek and Dingo Creeks as priority areas for blackberry control.

One of the group's first community activities was a 'Blackberry Blitz' forum at Mount Best which attracted 50 participants. The group has also formed a partnership with Parks Victoria which contributed funding from its Good Neighbour program for blackberry control along public and private land boundaries.

26

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

48

Number of  
landholders  
visited

1,657

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

998

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

125

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



## BLACKBERRY CONTROL EFFORTS ARE WELL UNDERWAY ACROSS SOUTH GIPPSLAND





## KING PARROT CREEK BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

The King Parrot Creek Blackberry Action group is well underway in the Flowerdale Valley, Strath Creek and Kerrisdale areas north of Melbourne.

Formed in November 2012, the group focuses its activities on areas with endangered native vegetation, heritage-protected landscapes and the King Parrot Creek, home to the endangered Macquarie Perch.

The group is motivating and supporting the region's many small landholders to control blackberry, with assistance including help with spraying infestations for those unable due to their age or a lack of resources.

The group also offers a 50 per cent contribution on blackberry control chemicals as well as the

use of spraying equipment, including a helicopter for spraying infestations on steep slopes. This year, the group supported 10 local landowners to spray blackberry with the helicopter.

Blackberry control works were also conducted along a stretch of the King Parrot Creek from Flowerdale to the Goulburn River at Kerrisdale this year with Good Neighbour funding from Parks Victoria.

A total of 45 landholders have signed 3-year voluntary agreements in the group's first 18 months of operation. It has inspected over 9,000 hectares of property for blackberry, with around 1,500 hectares (17%) identified as infested.

15

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

15

Number of  
landholders  
visited

5,891

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

72

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

40

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



PARTNERSHIPS ARE HELPING  
PROTECT PRECIOUS NATURAL ASSETS IN  
THE KING PARROT CREEK AREA





## ALL BLACKBERRY CONTROL TARGETS WERE MET ACROSS THE MANSFIELD AND MURRINDINDI SHIRES



## MERTON TO CATHKIN BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

The Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group (MCBAG) has achieved all its targets since launching its activities in early 2013.

Working across the Shires of Mansfield and Murrindindi, the group has signed up 44 landholders to 3-year voluntary agreements in its first 18 months, with 500 hectares of blackberry on private land treated to date.

The group's project officer is proving highly successful, signing up every one of the 44 landholders they have visited to date to voluntary agreements.

There has been a record take-up of financial assistance for blackberry control chemicals

from the local Landcare group since the group launched its blackberry reduction campaign and activities.

A very successful field / demonstration day attracted 30 participants, and the group has now prepared six demonstration sites across the Shires to promote the impact of different chemicals and the effectiveness of the eco-blade equipment.

The group has also built strong relationships with environmental officers at both the Shires, which is seeing blackberry along roadsides across the area systematically tackled.

22

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

22

Number of  
landholders  
visited

392

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

744

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

450

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)





## MITTA TO MURRAY BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

The Mitta to Murray Blackberry Action Group (M2MBAG) has motivated and supported landowners to treat over 3,600 hectares of blackberry infestations in north east Victoria since forming in 2012 – equivalent to almost half the entire metropolitan area of Melbourne.

Established by the Mitta to Murray Landcare Network, the group comprises six Landcare groups, with its Steering Group including landholders, pine plantation owners, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Parks Victoria, the Towong Shire and the North East Catchment Management Authority.

The group has motivated 95 private landowners to sign 3-year voluntary agreements to treat blackberry across 18,600 hectares of land since forming. It has developed guidelines and an application process for landholders to access financial and other incentives to control blackberry and works with Parks Victoria to identify and treat blackberry along the shared boundaries of private and public land.

This year, M2MBAG continued implementing its Strategy and Action Plan by expanding its priority target areas to include Wises Creek, Talgarno, Granya, Jarvis Creek and Bungil. It also held a field day at Eskdale in partnership with the North East Catchment Management Authority.

36

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

38

Number of  
landholders  
visited

7,576

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

2,500

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

1,000

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



## OUTSTANDING RESULTS IN BLACKBERRY CONTROL ARE BEING ACHIEVED IN VICTORIA'S NORTH EAST







## A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO BLACKBERRY MANAGEMENT

## NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

The North East Blackberry Action Group (NEBAG) was formed in 2005 and covers almost 200,000 hectares of public and private land in the Upper Murray Landcare network area, including the Snowy Mountains foothills.

NEBAG helped pioneer Victoria's community approach to weed control and it has encouraged and facilitated blackberry treatment across thousands of hectares in the region with just about all landholders who have signed voluntary blackberry control agreements honouring their 3-year action plans. Many have since increased their overall land care efforts and others have begun controlling blackberry although they have not signed a voluntary agreement and formally joined NEBAG's effort.

NEBAG continues to lead the way with an emphasis on encouraging land managers participating in blackberry control works to adopt an holistic approach to property management. Working with the Upper Murray Landcare Network, opportunities have been provided to increase knowledge and skills with field days on integrated pest management and managing native grasses.

Steep terrain continues to pose challenges for blackberry control and incentives for safe access is a priority for the group. 7.1km of access tracks were installed providing control options for blackberry infestations threatening remnant vegetation.

3

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

20

Number of  
landholders  
visited

1300

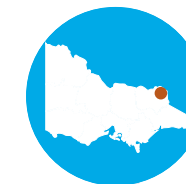
Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

330

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

300

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)





## NORTHERN YARRA BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

The Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group (NYBAG) has helped over 130 small landowners in the Yarra Ranges control or eradicate blackberry on their properties over the last three years.

Since the group was formed in 2011, it has substantially built awareness and action to control blackberry in the region, with 36 landowners completing the third and final year of their voluntary agreements this year. All controlled or eradicated blackberry from their properties using chemical and non-chemical methods. In total, the group has signed 138 private landowners to voluntary agreements, which has seen 178 hectares treated to date.

The group has built partnerships and has received funding and assistance from Victorian

and Australian Government departments and programs as well as Conservation Volunteers Australia, the Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority (PPWCMA), VicRoads and Melbourne Water.

This year the group expanded its activities to include Long Gully near Healesville and Chum Creek and funding from the PPWCMA allowed it to offer them Agricultural and Chemical User Permit (ACUP) training. A blackberry workshop was also conducted in Chum Creek. Over 30 properties were approved from Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program and funding was received again from Parks Victoria's Good Neighbour Program and Melbourne Water's Corridors of Green program.

51

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

37

Number of  
landholders  
visited

835

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

60

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

91

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



## BLACKBERRY CONTROL IS NOW A KEY FOCUS ACROSS THE NORTHERN YARRA REGION





## TRIANGLE BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

The Triangle Blackberry Action Group (TBAG) has achieved outstanding results forming in February 2013 and launching operations in September 2013.

TBAG was established by the South Cathedral Landcare Group and covers areas on Melbourne's north-east fringe, including the towns of Narbethong, Marysville, Taggerty and Buxton.

In its first year of operations, TBAG signed 35 landowners to 3-year voluntary agreements to treat blackberry infestations on their properties.

Strong partnerships formed with public land managers in the region saw TBAG map blackberry

infestations along local roadsides and Murrindindi Shire Council has sprayed 50 km of roadsides to date.

Parks Victoria received funding from its Good Neighbour program to spray along public and private boundaries in the Cathedral Ranges. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries also sprayed properties in the region purchased under the Victorian Government's Bushfire Buy-Back Scheme. These activities have generated substantial support and interest in TBAG's activities across the community.

35

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

70

Number of  
landholders  
visited

1,793

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

375

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

375

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



## MOMENTUM IS BUILDING FOR BLACKBERRY CONTROL ON MELBOURNE'S NORTH-EAST FRINGE





## UP2US LANDCARE ALLIANCE BLACKBERRY GROUP

The Up2Us Landcare Alliance Blackberry Group is showing how partnerships can generate funding and action for blackberry control across a local region.

Up2Us operates in the Mansfield area and formed in 2012 as an umbrella organisation for Landcare and environmental groups in the Alpine region. It comprises the Victorian Farmers Federation, Mansfield Shire and the Ancona, Delatite, Howqua Valley and Upper Broken River Landcare groups.

The group's success in its initial targeted priority areas in Tolmie, Boorolite, and the Ancona and Howqua valleys has seen it expand its activities across the entire Mansfield Shire area.

This year, Up2Us continued sending letters to private landowners alerting them to their blackberry control responsibilities and offering advice and assistance, signing more up to 3-year voluntary agreements. It also conducted a trial of chemical and Ecoblade technology.

Relationships were strengthened with the Mansfield Shire Council, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA), as well as with local farmers and landcare groups. The CMA provided funding to local landowners under its Landcare Grants program, and contributed funding for Mansfield Shire's work treating infestations along local roadsides.

22

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

22

Number of  
landholders  
visited

2,842

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

190

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

100

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



## BLACKBERRY CONTROL EFFORTS HAVE EXPANDED ACROSS MORE OF VICTORIA'S ALPINE REGION





## UPPER CAMPASPE BLACKBERRY GORSE ACTION GROUP

Community blackberry action in the Macedon Ranges continued its outstanding success with blackberry and gorse control this year.

It now employs a project officer to expand and support its activities across the Macedon Ranges Shire around Kyneton, Woodend, Trentham, Metcalf, Malmsbury and Ashbourne.

Since the group formed in 2011 it has galvanised locals to take control of their blackberry and gorse and this year expanded its reach to the Pipers Creek area.

The Upper Campaspe Group is a partnership between numerous Landcare groups in the region along with the Shire, Department of Primary Industries and the Victorian Gorse and Blackberry Taskforces.

The group continued its work with the Shire to coordinate road-side spraying of blackberry and gorse this year as well as at Bald Hill Reserve in Kyneton, which supports a range of threatened plants and animals.

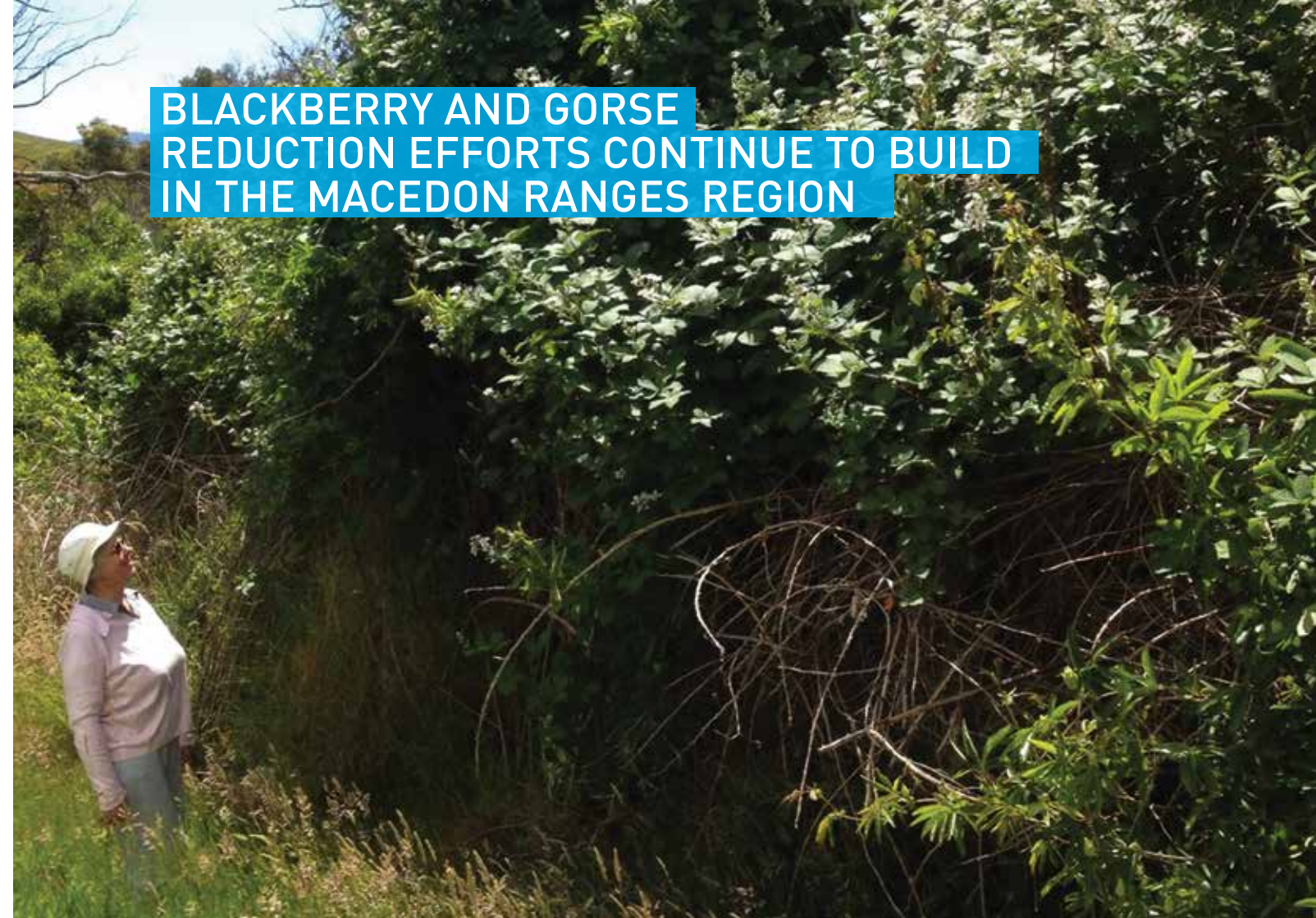
A very successful field day at the Bald Hill Reserve in April attracted over 30 people to learn more about the Upper Campaspe's efforts to control blackberry and gorse in the area.

19

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)



## BLACKBERRY AND GORSE REDUCTION EFFORTS CONTINUE TO BUILD IN THE MACEDON RANGES REGION





## WELLINGTON DISTRICT BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

The Wellington District Blackberry Taskforce has enjoyed great success with its efforts to reduce blackberry in its first full year of operation.

A major focus has been working with Southern Rural Water to reduce blackberry along irrigation channels and drains in the Macalister Irrigation District, and the group's partnerships with the Wellington Shire and VicRoads are tackling infestations along roadsides .

The group's success working closely with particular farms to reduce severe blackberry infestations has highlighted the group's activities and its worth to landholders across the region.

A forum the group held was well attended, including by local media, and many landholders have been encouraged to tackle their blackberry for the first time in years.

21

Number of new  
landholders on  
agreements

62

Number of  
landholders  
visited

1870

Total private  
property visited  
(ha)

150

Private property  
infestations  
mapped (ha)

100

Private property  
infestations  
treated (ha)



## PARTNERSHIPS ARE WINNING GREAT BLACKBERRY CONTROL RESULTS ACROSS GIPPSLAND'S DAIRY REGION





## GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS PARKS VICTORIA

### ERADICATING, CONTAINING AND MANAGING BLACKBERRY REMAINS A KEY FOCUS OF PARKS VICTORIA

Parks Victoria maintained its support for and partnerships with the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce and blackberry action groups to control blackberry in 2013–14.

It undertook blackberry control works covering 28,000 hectares across 74 parks and reserves, with 46 of these focusing on blackberry along the boundaries of public and private land through the Good Neighbour Program.

Parks Victoria also continued to support blackberry action groups for local activities along public and private land boundaries. This included providing funding support, blackberry control chemicals and helping to map and monitor local blackberry infestations.

- In Victoria's north east, Parks Victoria continued its funding support to the Mitta to Murray Blackberry Action Group for its efforts to control blackberry in the Jarvis Creek area.
- In the Upper Murray and Snowy Mountains region, Parks Victoria provided funding support to the North East Blackberry Action Group for its activities in the Mount Mittamatite Regional Park and around Burrowa Pine Mountain.

- On Melbourne's north-east fringe, Parks Victoria worked in partnership with the Triangle Blackberry Action Group to treat blackberry along the boundaries of public and private land in the Cathedral Ranges, with 5km of the boundary mapped and treated.
- In King Lake National Park, Parks Victoria continued its support and work with the Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group, with blackberry mapped and treated along a further 10km of public and private boundaries.
- In Gippsland, Parks Victoria supported blackberry works in the Nine Mile Creek region, supplying chemicals to the Corner Inlet Blackberry Action Group. It also treated approximately 12km of land along public and private boundaries in the Cape Liptrap Coastal National Park.

# GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

### GOOD NEIGHBOUR PROGRAM

THE VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT'S GOOD NEIGHBOUR PROGRAM AIMS TO BUILD POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH NEIGHBOURS TO REDUCE WEED AND PESTS ALONG SHARED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND BOUNDARIES.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) and Parks Victoria work with private land managers and community groups such as Landcare and the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce and its community action groups to plan and deliver blackberry control activities.

In 2013–14, the Good Neighbour Program invested approximately \$714,000 in 113 projects to tackle blackberry on land managed by DEPI and Parks Victoria, almost double the amount invested last year.

### IMPROVED ENFORCEMENT

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PRIMARY INDUSTRIES (DEPI) COMPLETED ITS THIRD YEAR OF IMPROVED ENFORCEMENT IN 2013–14, TARGETING PRIORITY WIDESPREAD WEEDS AND PESTS OF GREATEST CONCERN TO THE COMMUNITY SUCH AS BLACKBERRY.

Under this improved approach, DEPI provides enforcement action for landowners who fail to participate in community action to meet their legal responsibility to control weeds or pests such as blackberry on their property.

In 2013–14 73 improved enforcement projects were conducted over a wide range of pest species across Victoria. 11 of these included blackberry which resulted in 333 properties inspected, 16 Land Management and 100 direction notices issued.

Contact Us

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