



Victorian Gorse Taskforce
Progress Report



2018/19

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Chairperson's Report



The Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) celebrated 20 years of community-led gorse control efforts in 2018/19.

Much has been achieved since the VGT was formed in 1999. The community has a much greater awareness of why we need to control gorse. Diverse landholders have built their knowledge, skills and confidence in tackling the weed. The VGT has built important partnerships, including with local governments, catchment management authorities and other natural environment management agencies. The VGT has also benefited and contributed to national weed control initiatives and biodiversity projects.

Most importantly, over the last 20 years Victorian communities have treated thousands of hectares of gorse across local landscapes. Supported by the VGT, local people have worked together to reduce gorse and helped preserve our natural environment and agricultural land. While there remains a long way to go in gorse control, a state-wide network of organisations and

individuals is focused on reducing its spread. They continue to explore new ways to tackle gorse – in recent years we've seen drones increasingly used to map and spray infestations.

The 20th year of the VGT saw us continue our work in supporting local people and communities:

- **Community funding** – In 2018/19, the VGT distributed more than \$78,000 to 13 local projects (including 2 extensions from 2017/2018) from the Community Grants Fund. More than 115 properties were involved in these projects, with 60 landholders signing up to 3-year voluntary gorse control agreements, in 2018/19, more than 621 hectares of gorse was treated across the state. Some projects continued long-term gorse control activities to reduce large infestations across important local landscapes, while others targeted isolated gorse patches to prevent them spreading.
- **Communications, Community Engagement and Extension Officer** – The value of a dedicated VGT facilitator to build community gorse awareness and action was proven in the second year of the role. Our inaugural



Victorian Gorse Taskforce

Communications, Community Engagement and Extension Officer, Heidi Snow, grew the VGT's social media presence and more landholders are subscribing to updates and news from the VGT website. Heidi helped respond to more than 550 inquiries from landholders about gorse control, helped develop information resources, including our new biannual newsletter, *Gorse Talk*, and helped to provide gorse information to more than 700 Victorians. Heidi also built our partnerships, including by working with local Landcare Groups to organise gorse control field days. The VGT farewelled Heidi in early 2019, with much thanks for her hard work in establishing the role, which Brydie Murrhly has taken on.

- **Information resources** – The VGT continued to develop and distribute important information resources to help people identify and treat gorse. Our updated *Best Practice Guide* for gorse control is available from the VGT website and we distributed the guide, along with our new *Glovebox Identification Guide* at various field days and agricultural shows and events that VGT representatives attended across the year.
- **Atlas of Living Australia** – The VGT continued to support community contributions to the citizen science mapping portal of the *Atlas of Living Australia in 2018/19* (<ala.org.au>). The VGT facilitated and co-funded six workshops in Daylesford, Ballan, Beechworth, Drysdale, Portland and Bass, with training provided to around 180 environmental professionals and interested members of the public on mapping invasive species and biodiversity, adding the information to the online Atlas database and using Atlas data to plan gorse control and monitoring activities.
- **Extension projects** – We launched our second community extension project in the Hepburn region in September 2018, focusing on providing individual on-property gorse control information and support to landholders around Blampied and Kooroocheang. This project focuses on a traditional farming area which is shifting towards smaller lifestyle blocks owned by people who can lack knowledge of why we need to control gorse and how to do it. The VGT is delivering the extension project in partnership with community groups such as the Blampied Kooroocheang Landcare Group and Hepburn Shire Council. It adds to our first

extension project launched in June 2018, which continues targeting landholders around the Bellarine Peninsula.

- **Community promotions** – This year we commissioned a new community service announcement focusing on the priority of getting on top of gorse early to avoid problems for the next generation. The announcement aired across regional Victoria on the WIN TV network and also features on the VGT website.
- **Victorian Weeds Conference** – VGT Chair, Peter Everist, spoke at the 2019 conference about the role of our Communications, Community Education and Extension Officer. Our new officer, Brydie Murrhly spoke about the VGT's Atlas of Living Australia workshops and how the Atlas can help community groups map plant and animal species in their local area.

Looking ahead

As the VGT heads into its third decade in 2019/20, community gorse control awareness and action will continue. This includes progressing initiatives funded under the National Agricultural White Paper project.

Our digital resources will keep on growing, with a new virtual online property map planned for the VGT website. This project is building our partnerships, being a collaborative initiative with the Victorian Rabbits Action Network and the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party.

Thank you to the VGT committee and to the many workers, community volunteers and landowners for their ongoing commitment to gorse control in Victoria. A special thank you to Nicole Garfi and Paige McDonald, our executive officers, for their tireless work in keeping the VGT functioning efficiently. Gorse control takes a long-term sustained effort and your individual efforts contribute to the success the VGT achieves each year.

Peter Everist

Chair – Victorian Gorse Taskforce

Background

The primary role of the VGT is to oversee the implementation of the Victorian Gorse Control Strategy 2014-2019.

The nine principal Goals and Key Directions of the strategy are as follows:

1 Provide leadership in community-led invasive plant control

The VGT coordinates and implements the Victorian Gorse Control Strategy (VGCS) across Victoria. In doing so the VGT makes a valuable contribution to preventing the spread of gorse and developing the community-led invasive plant control model.

2 Achieve an accurate knowledge of the extent and threat of gorse in Victoria

Knowledge of the extent of gorse distribution, including 'clean' areas, provides the basis for effective planning and delivery of control programs. Accurate mapping of the extent of gorse distribution is an important management and education tool. The DJPR Biosecurity and GIS teams provide important support in this area.

3 Promote Best Practice Management for gorse control in Victoria

Gorse control and site rehabilitation is effective and efficient, using Best Practice Management methods.

4 Prevent the spread of gorse into new areas of the state

The VGT places an emphasis on programs in the areas of the state that are at risk from invasion by gorse, where the focus will be on prevention of spread activities, partnership development, community capacity building and, where necessary, enforcement.

5 Achieve a reduction in the core infestations of gorse across Victoria

Ongoing programs are aimed at protecting key community assets where these are prioritised through regional catchment strategies and regional invasive plant and animal management strategies, and within core infestations.

6 Reduce infestations and the spread of gorse in and along corridors

The VGT and facilitators will work with the community and linear reserve managers in focus areas to reduce the spread of gorse in and along corridors.

7 Increase the community's capacity to be actively engaged in long-term gorse control

Communities are empowered to act and are committed to the long-term control of gorse, and are supported to do so.

8 Ensure communities are aware of their statutory obligations to control gorse

Communities are aware of their statutory responsibilities and the VGT will work with partners to advocate that, where necessary, enforcement complements community-led action.

9 Ensure effective monitoring and reporting of the Victorian Gorse Control Strategy

The implementation of the VGCS is monitored, and stakeholders and the community are informed of its progress.



Focus Areas

To provide strategic direction for the control of gorse throughout Victoria, the state is divided into two focus zones (see Figure 1) considering principles of invasive plant control and mapping of present and predicted gorse occurrence (reference *Victorian Gorse Control Strategy 2014-2019*).

Reduction Zone

The Reduction Zone is the part of Victoria where substantial, scattered but not yet widespread and abundant populations of gorse occur. In this zone the Strategy aims to reduce populations (shaded orange on Gorse Control Areas map).

Eradiation and Prevention Zone

The Eradiation and Prevention Zone is the part of Victoria where gorse may already occur as isolated infestations or is predicted to occur based on potential distribution modelling (shaded green on Gorse Control Areas map).

Whilst this Strategy focuses on partnership development, capacity building and compliance, it will support eradication of isolated infestations where feasible. Prevention of gorse incursions will be the priority.

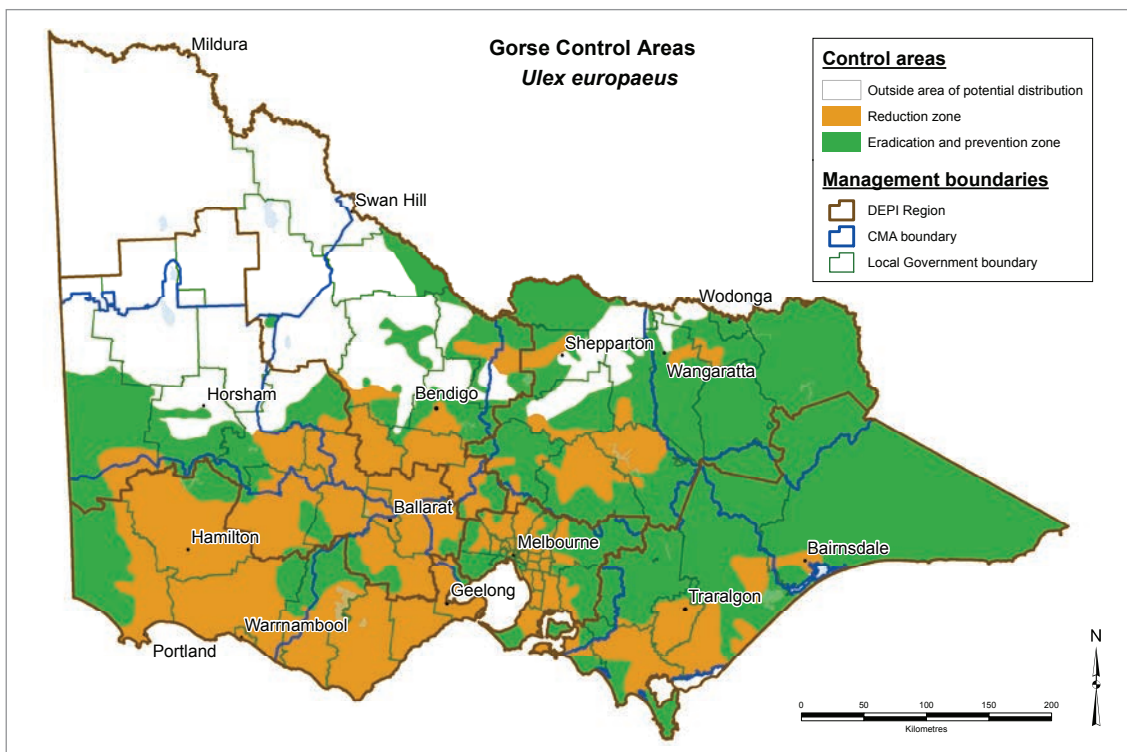


Figure 1: Victoria’s gorse control zones. (DEPI, 2014)

On-Ground Gorse Control Projects 2018/19



The Taskforce has supported the implementation of these projects to help communities build successful control programs in their local areas. The aim for these projects is to increase landholder awareness and ownership of the problem so that long term control can be achieved.

The Taskforce actively promotes the implementation of a Community Led Approach to the management of this widespread pest. This is where a collective of concerned community members have come together to take action towards achieving successful control. Local communities have formed small groups to guide the planning and implementation of these projects. The Victorian Gorse Taskforce has supported these projects by providing resources for their implementation.

‘Large Grant’ Projects

The Large Grants program can be a sustained project that can run up to four years. It provides up to \$30,000 for community-led gorse control education and treatment across a local landscape. This program is about placing a greater emphasis on voluntary control for gorse management rather than regulatory enforcement. Through the Large Grant projects, Project Officers are encouraging landholders to sign up to long term voluntary management agreements recognising that successful gorse control involves a commitment over many years. Where this

Community Led Approach fails to convince landholders of their obligations to control gorse, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) compliance can be recommended so that the sustained action of the majority of landholders is supported. The three large grant projects that were supported by the VGT in 2018/19 assist in implementing the goals and strategies found within the Victorian Gorse Control Strategy 2014-2019. These projects also work to prevent gorse from impacting upon important environmental and agricultural assets.

LARGE GRANTS – YEAR 1

Maintain the Gain – reinvigorating gorse control on Phillip Island and surrounds (Project proponent: Bass Coast Landcare Network)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Landholders involved / approx. hectares of control
\$25,000	Approx \$46,000	20 / 72 ha

Nearest town: Phillip Island

The Bass Coast Landcare Network and VGT supported another 20 landowners to treat gorse in a long-term campaign that has substantially reduced the weed on Phillip Island and San Remo. Six landholders received subsidies for control works in 2018/19 and another three completed work on their gorse without a subsidy. A gorse field day to demonstrate gorse slashing and to highlight the importance of treating regrowth was held, and 100 letters were posted to landholders to encourage gorse control. Bass Coast Shire, the local CFA, Phillip Island Nature Parks, Westernport Water and others also maintained their focus on gorse control. There was disappointment no landowners off Phillip Island (around Grantville) engaged in the project, but the Landcare Network hopes Bass Coast Shire can encourage their future action.



The gorse front stops here

(Project proponent: Project Platypus – Crowlands-Warrack Landcare)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$3,500	\$3,700	5 / 407 ha



Nearest town: Ararat

The Crowlands-Warrack Landcare Group was highly successful in the first year of their project to motivate landholders to reduce gorse around Warrak, Mt Cole Creek and Sheppard Creek. VGT funding helped subsidise gorse control works for landholders including older people. One landholder owns a former blue gum plantation which had become a gorse seed reservoir. Winning the contract to conduct the Ararat Shire Council's 2018/19 roadside weed control works enabled the Landcare Group to coordinate that work to align with private property gorse control. The Landcare Group has expanded its membership and partnerships, working with the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority to reduce gorse in the Mt Cole Creek and other small waterways. The Landcare Group also worked with biosecurity officers to identify and control contaminate soil from road crews



Gorse control in Snake Valley

(Project proponent: Upper Mount Emu Creek Landcare Network)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$23,500	\$29,500	10 / 16 ha

Nearest town: Snake Valley

Gorse control is particularly important in the Snake Valley region near Ballarat because of its location at the top reaches of the Glenelg Hopkins catchment where flooding can spread gorse seed downstream. Landowners on acreage or hobby farms were the focus, with most proving willing to tackle their gorse. Ten landholders treated a combined 16 hectares of the weed in 2018/19, with the Pyrenees Sire Council also treating gorse on adjoining roadsides. Other landowners were challenged by the wet winter and their busy working lives but showed a commitment to reducing gorse over the next year. While large gorse infestations remain in the area, the Landcare Network is encouraged by the achievements to date and is confident the momentum gained will continue



LARGE GRANTS – YEAR 2

WAG Gorse Program 2017/18

(Project proponent: Ashbourne Landcare Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$2,100	-	23 / 27 ha

Nearest town: Woodend

VGT funding is estimated to have generated almost three times the amount in cash and in-kind investment in gorse control from this project's participants. In 2018/19, the 23 landholders who treated gorse last year were followed up with a visit from the project officer. Actions to treat any regrowth areas were agreed, and a subsequent visit confirmed these areas had been satisfactorily treated. More than 170 letters were also sent to local landholders to explain why gorse control was important and project participants posted gorse control signs on fences to encourage others.



‘Small Grant’ Projects

The small grants program is designed so that smaller community based groups can be empowered to implement key gorse control projects in Victoria. The small grants program runs for a single year in a target area. In 2018/19 the VGT funded projects up to \$5,000 (GST exclusive) to support community-led action.



Gorse control

(Project proponent: Northumberland Rd Pipers Creek)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$2,000	\$2,000	2 / 22 ha



Nearest town: Kyneton

This project saw two land owners significantly reduce their largest gorse infestations in 2018/19. The focus is now on spot-spraying smaller infestations and any regrowth that emerges in future years. The biggest challenge for these property owners is surrounding neighbours who are not taking action to control their gorse, as well as a nearby council-owned fire trail with gorse, which risks reinfestation of treated areas.





Gorse control in the Glenlyon area

(Project proponent: Glenlyon Upper Loddon Landcare Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$4,700	\$4,700	8 / 32 ha

Nearest town: Glenlyon/Daylesford

VGT funding helped eight local landholders to undertake gorse control works in the Glenlyon area in 2018/19. The VGT also helped the Landcare Group host a gorse control field day on a participating landholder's property. While a wet winter hampered some in their gorse control efforts, they remain committed to reducing the weed on their properties by the end of November 2019.

Tackling new areas of gorse infestation in Darraweit Guim

(Project proponent: Upper Maribyrnong Catchment Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Landholders involved / approx. hectares of control
Nil	Approx. \$10,000	Approx. 7 ha

Gorse regrowth following bushfires that burned properties in 2014 was the focus of this project along Stockdale Road at Darraweit Guim, 60 kilometres north of Melbourne. The seven participating landholders have been treating gorse on their properties since the fires greatly reduced infestations and VGT funding enabled them to continue this work in 2018/19. The focus is gorse that threatens native vegetation as well as infestations along drainage lines to the Deep Creek to help prevent seed transportation downstream to other properties and into the Maribyrnong River. The project that began in 2017/2018 required further time and continued their project into 2018/19.

White Gum Rd Barkers Creek

(Project proponent: Barkers Creek Landcare Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$1,391	\$1,258	1 / 1 ha



Nearest town: Castlemaine

VGT support enabled the Barkers Creek Landcare Group to subsidise the costs for employing a contractor to mulch a dense gorse infestation along a gully and disused road on a property near the small settlement of Barkers Creek. Smaller outbreaks were hand sprayed. Landcare Group members and other local landowners planted native plants and trees to help regenerate the site to support native animals and plants and to prevent soil erosion. The site will be monitored with any regrowth treated.



South Central Curran Catchment Gorse Project Stage 5

(Project proponent: Blampied Kooroocheang Landcare Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$4,000	\$4,000	4 / 14 ha

Nearest town: Smeaton

The Blampied – Kooroocheang Landcare Group continued its long-term focus on tackling gorse in the local area, with its sixth project supported by VGT funding completed in 2018/19. Located about 40 kilometres from Ballarat, the focus has been gorse in the Muddy and Deep Creek catchment areas which run north of the Blampied township. Many new landowners with lifestyle properties have shown enthusiasm for controlling their gorse, with four more signing up to voluntary management agreements in 2018/19 and 50 per cent of the costs for a professional spray contractor covered. The Landcare Group sent more than 40 letters to landholders during the year reminding them of their gorse control responsibilities and held a field day in partnership with the VGT at Glenlyon. Reinfestation of previously treated gorse patches is a continued focus.



Gorse control – Little Coliban River and adjacent paddocks

(Project proponent: Tylden Landcare Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Landholders involved / approx. hectares of control
\$5,000	\$5,800	6 / 12 ha



Nearest town: Tylden

Properties along the Little Coliban River with gorse infestations that can spread seed downstream were the focus of this project. Six landholders treated gorse along the river's edge and in nearby paddocks, including infestations beneath old growth trees. VGT funding helped cover the costs of control chemicals and the hiring of an ecoblade, with all landholders reducing their gorse. One landholder aimed for a complete eradication of gorse on their property following several years of treatment. The Landcare Group used a drone for the first time in 2018/19 to record 'before and after' aerial video and photography of gorse on a participating property, which proved useful in promoting the outcomes of gorse control works. The Landcare Group also promoted gorse control at the Kyneton Show and gorse control signs remain displayed on the fences of participating properties to continue building local awareness and action.



Managing isolated areas of gorse in the Dales area of the Woody Yaloak Catchment Stage 2

(Project proponent: Woody Yaloak Catchment Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$5,000	\$7,025	10 / 7.8 ha

Nearest town: Scarsdale, Smythesdale

Eleven landowners completed gorse control works on their properties with support from the Woody Yaloak Catchment Group and the VGT in 2018/19. Gorse was sprayed along a creek line near the Scarsdale Cemetery, four landholders who began control works in 2017 tackled additional infestations on their properties and five new landholders joined the effort. Focus areas were fence lines, drainage lines and remnant vegetation, which complemented the Woody Yaloak / Golden Plains Shire roadside weed control program. Landholders received a \$1:1 subsidy for costs of their control works and they also contributed an estimated \$6,300 more in kind. The Catchment Group also contributed \$1,200 to cover program management and coordination costs.



Bellarine Peninsula Gorse Eradication and Landholder Incentives

(Project proponent: Bellarine Landcare Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
\$2,600	\$15,260	4 / 11 ha



Nearest town: Portarlington, St Leonards

Four more landholders joined the Bellarine Landcare Group's efforts this year, with VGT funding subsidising the costs for mulching approximately 11 hectares of gorse on their properties. Two of these properties adjoin the Swan Bay Ramsar wetland of international significance, which supports some of the Peninsula's last remaining remnant native vegetation. One property owner tackled over 10 hectares of gorse at a cost of \$9,000 and has now purchased their own sprayer. The Landcare Group held a field day in Portarlington in partnership with the VGT and City of Greater Geelong, with about 15 people attending. Landholders acting to control gorse continued to display signs on their property fences to encourage others.



Stanley Gorse Control

(Project proponent: Stanley Landcare Group)

VGT contribution 2018/19	Other contributions	Voluntary agreements with landholders / approx. hectares of control
Nil	Approx. \$8,000	21 / 32 ha

Nearest town: Stanley

The Stanley Landcare Group was able to maintain its long-term focus on gorse control in 2018/19 after beginning their project back in 2017/18 with VGT funding to support private landholders in tackling the weed. In previous years the group has focused on supporting public land managers to reduce their large infestations, and the VGT funding enabled them to engage and provide subsidies for private landholders to spray gorse. The group also continued its partnerships with public land managers and plantation owners to continue their gorse reduction efforts.



Income and Expenses

Summary of VGT income for 2018/19:

Source	Amount
Grants – DJPR	\$65,000.00
Refunds	\$16,650.00
Interest Received	\$4,281.07
TOTAL INCOME	\$85,931.071

Summary of VGT expenses for 2018/19:

Source	Amount
Project Subsidies	\$75,921.72
Research and Promotion	\$9,990.91
Administration and Other Expenses	\$13,235.57
Communications, Community Engagement and Extension	\$25,084.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$124,232.20





2018/19 VGT Members

Nigel Ainsworth	DJPR Deputy Director Invasive Species Science
Ron Cosgrave	North Central CMA, Natural Resource Management Committee
Peter Everist	VGT Chair – Haddon Landcare group / Woody Yaloak Project
Nicole Garfi / Paige McDonald	Executive Officers
Brian Rowe	Blampied-Kooroocheang Landcare Group
Peter Forster	Upper Hopkins Land Management Group
Margaret Hatton	Sunday Creek / Sugarloaf Sub-catchments Inc
Karen O'Keefe	Corangamite CMA
John Cable	Glenlyon Landcare Group
Matthew Menhennet	Landmate and Agricultural Manager – Prison Industries Corrections Victoria
Heidi Snow/Brydie Murrhy	Communication, Community Engagement and Extension Officer

