


Progress Report

2021-22



Tackling gorse
takes effort, but
doing nothing
means it just gets
worse

The VGT's vision is clear:

"All land managers, public and private, accept their responsibility for gorse control and the community is supported to take long-term action."

We are working towards this by building knowledge and skills in communities that are battling gorse.

Our multiple websites and resources provide best practice information to landholders. The VGT hopes that through its communications, programs and resources, landholders and stakeholders will feel supported to work together in a community-led approach to prevent the spread and impacts on environmental, social and agricultural assets.

**The VGT exists because gorse is not going away.
It's persistent, coming back year after year.**

Chairperson's Report 3

**Communications
and Engagement** 4

Partnerships 5

VGT Members 5

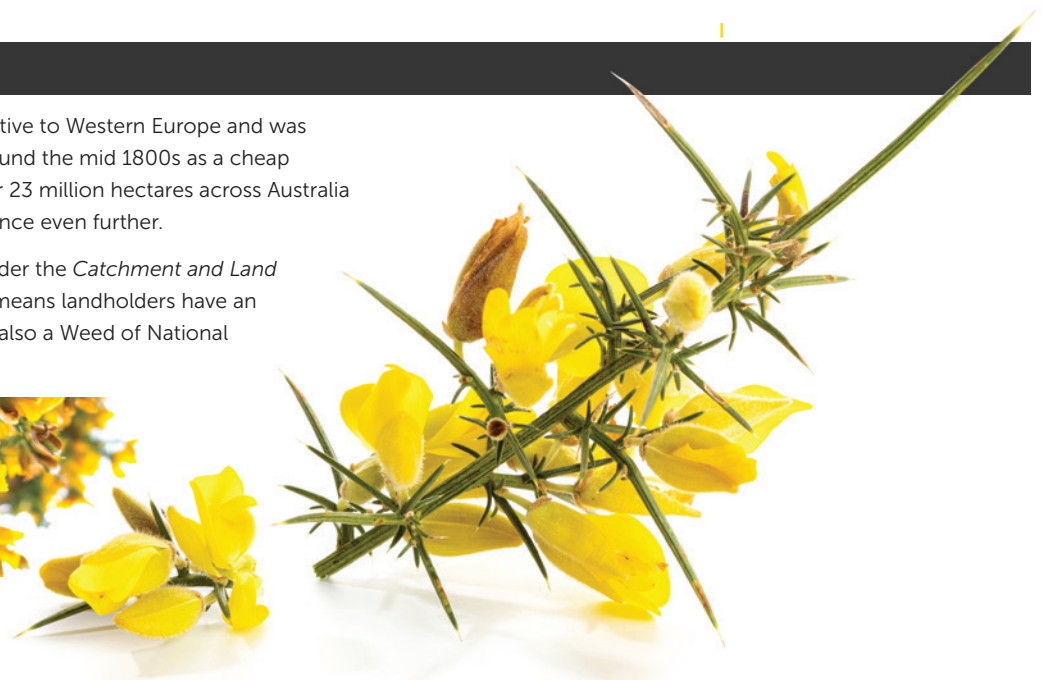
Financial Summary 5

**Community
Grants Program** 6

Gorse

Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) is native to Western Europe and was introduced into Australia around the mid 1800s as a cheap hedgerow. It has spread over 23 million hectares across Australia and has the capacity to advance even further.

Gorse is a declared weed under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, which means landholders have an obligation to manage it. It is also a Weed of National Significance (WoNS).



Acknowledgment of Country:

The VGT acknowledges the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respects to their ancestors and elders, both past and present.

Acknowledgements:

The VGT wishes to acknowledge the support received from the State Government of Victoria through the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions that has assisted in producing this document.

Published and Authorised by:

The Victorian Gorse Taskforce, December 2022

Designed by:

Robt Haughie (BaseGraphic.com.au)

Disclaimer:

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this document is accurate. The Victorian Gorse Taskforce does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence that may arise from relying on any information contained within.

Enquiries:

VGT Community Pest Management Officer,
Department of Jobs, Precincts
and Regions, 475 Mickleham
Road, Attwood Vic 3049

Email:

info@vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

Web:

www.vicgorsetaskforce.com.au

Chairperson's Report

The year brought its challenges for the VGT, with Covid-19 continuing to disrupt planned activities and face-to-face meetings. Despite the difficulties, I look back on this time with pride in our many achievements and continued success. We are implementing our Gorse Control Strategy for 2021-2026 through a range of programs and activities involving community education and on-ground action.

We reinstated our community grants program and were pleased with the abundance of enquiries from landholders and Landcare groups. There is an obvious need for financial assistance and support. We support communities by sharing the cost of on-ground control works.

Nine small grants were commissioned around Victoria in Ashbourne, Winslow, Ararat, Freshwater Creek, Tylden, Lancefield, Kilmore, Amphitheatre and Woodend. Partnerships with other land managers have been forged through these projects. We thank the many Shire Councils for their involvement, ensuring roadside control happens within project target areas. Roadsides are key avenues for the spread of weeds and with financial assistance through the State Government's Roadside Weeds and Pests Management Program (RWPP), we hope that Councils continue control programs on roadsides. We are grateful to the State Government of Victoria for continued funding support; \$65,000 was again provided to the Taskforce in 2021-22.

The previous two years of largely operating remotely provided the impetus for us to further develop our online profile. We have continued our strong online presence through our websites and social media platforms. We know how important social media has been, not only during Covid but to also broaden the reach of the VGT and its cause. This year we hosted two online photo competitions with the winners receiving VGT prize packs. We were delighted to see the competitive spirit of the entrants. We also completed our Virtual Extension Officer website, a fantastic online tool that offers advice for landholders' personal gorse situations in just four simple clicks. The VGT website also received an impressive upgrade, hosting a range of new educational resources.

Controlling gorse requires a long-term commitment from land managers. I believe that through the projects sponsored by the Taskforce, we are reinforcing this reality. After many years' involvement with gorse control projects, I have seen great inroads made by community volunteers and it is pleasing to support this action wherever we can.

Community ownership of the problem is something that the Taskforce strives to promote; this is a key component of a successful project. Gorse always needs follow-up control so it's important that communities are well aware of this. This is an underlying message in all of our work.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the Taskforce committee and to all our partner stakeholders for their continued support and commitment to our Control Strategy. I give special thanks to the Senior Executive Committee and the Grants Review Panel for their time and contribution to VGT operations and projects throughout the year. A special thanks to our Community Pest Management Officer, Nicole Garfi; the Taskforce thanks you for your efforts this past year. Lastly to the gorse warriors who have shown their support through our programs, activities and online platforms. The VGT is so grateful for your continued support and for sharing the VGT cause with others.

Ron Cosgrave

Community ownership of the problem is something that the Taskforce strives to promote; this is a key component of a successful project.



Communications and Engagement

The VGT has continued to develop its profile, incorporating multiple strategies from a stronger social media presence to its innovative “Gorse Warrior” T-shirts and hats. We have strengthened ties with other agencies to support landholders and community groups in their gorse control efforts.

Communications

The VGT has used traditional and novel methods to get its message to as many people as possible, and has featured in everything from television commercials to apparel.

- **National Landcare Magazine** (winter 2022 edition) published a story on the VGT’s Virtual Extension Officer website. The site provides landholders with information on gorse, rabbits and serrated tussock. The VEO replicates an in-person visit, providing advice on the best control methods in just four clicks of the mouse.
- The VGT’s **Virtual Extension Officer** also featured in a story published in The Local, a weekly news magazine for the Central Highlands.
- The VGT published two editions of its **Gorse Talk e-newsletter**.
- The VGT redesigned its gorse plant ID guide, Gorse Talk e-newsletter and best practice guide.
- **VGT commercials** aired on WIN Television in the Shepparton and Gippsland regions.
- The VGT designed “**Gorse Warrior**” T-shirts and hats, which were awarded as competition prizes.
- Sent about 650 **VGT brochures** to stakeholders affected by gorse.

Engagement

Community engagement is an essential part of the VGT’s work, particularly working with other government authorities and agencies. Alerting such groups to ways in which they can help control gorse helps increase the success of works.

The VGT has:

- **Written a letter to V/Line regarding an isolated patch of gorse along a rail corridor where gorse was not common.** The VGT alerted V/Line to prevent further spread along the corridor and into neighbouring properties.
- **Held its first meeting with Agriculture Victoria regional biosecurity staff.** Discussion points included opportunities for collaboration and to inform each other about current and proposed gorse control measures.
- **Met staff from the Good Neighbour Program.** The program, a joint initiative of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Parks Victoria, sees neighbours working to control weeds and pest animals on boundaries of private and public land.



Social media

Social media has proven a vital tool for the VGT throughout the pandemic with increasing numbers of people visiting our Facebook and Instagram pages. Social media achievements include:

- **Two successful VGT social media photography competitions**
- **Facebook page visits up by 58.4% from 2020-21**
- **548 Facebook page likes, up from 477 in 2020-21**
- **Instagram page visits up by 22.9% from 2020-21**

Partnerships

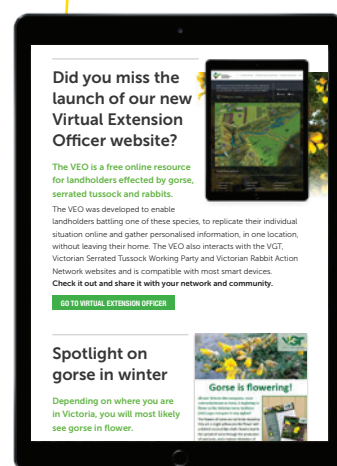
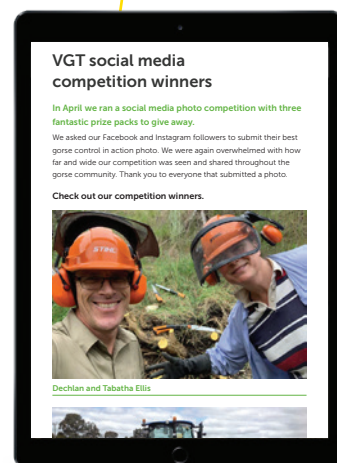
The VGT could not do its crucial work without the assistance of so many. We wish to thank Agriculture Victoria for its continued support. Our thanks also goes to all the stakeholders for their contribution of knowledge and resources. And, of course, thanks to the many communities of gorse warriors that have participated and supported our projects this year. Your commitment and enthusiasm is greatly appreciated. We look forward to continuing our excellent work together.

VGT Members

Member	Affiliation
Ron Cosgrave (Chair)	North Central Catchment Management Authority, Community Liaison Group
Peter Forster (Deputy Chair)	Upper Hopkins Land Management Group
Brian Rowe (Treasurer)	Blampied-Kooroocheang Landcare Group
Margaret Hatton	Sunday Creek / Sugarloaf Sub-Catchments Inc
Matthew Menhennet	Landmate and Agricultural Manager – Prison Industries, Corrections Victoria
Rob Richardson	The Grasslands Society of Southern Australia
Brydie Murrihy	Community representative
Brian Bainbridge	Hepburn Shire Council
Michael Peck	Ashbourne Landcare Group
Rod Sewell	Glenlyon Upper Loddon Landcare Group
Nicole Garfi	Community Pest Management Officer

Financial Summary 2021-22

Expenses		Income	
Promotion/Education	\$22,076	Refunds	\$15,221
Projects	\$30,019	Grant DJPR	\$65,000
Other	\$5,183	Interest	\$179
	\$57,278	Other	\$2,612
			\$83,012



Community Grants Program

2021-22



The small grants program encourages community groups to develop their own gorse control projects. With VGT funding, resources and expertise, people can work together to tackle infestations, increasing their chances of success. The small grants program targets problem areas for one year.

In 2021-22, the VGT funded projects up to \$5,000 (GST exclusive) to support grassroots action across Victorian communities, with grants totalling more than \$30,000.

These projects aim to increase landholder awareness about gorse and inspire people to take ownership of the problem so that long-term control can be achieved. The VGT encourages voluntary compliance rather than regulatory enforcement.

Through many of these projects, landholders are signing up to long-term voluntary work agreements, recognising that successful gorse control involves a commitment over many years.

Some amazing, combined results include:

- **80ha** of gorse controlled
- **44** landholders involved
- **44** three-year voluntary work agreements signed
- **\$30,019** of VGT funding distributed
- **\$164,000** total program expenditure
- **Main control methods used** – mulching, foliar spraying, ecoblade slashing, drone herbicide application, cut and paint.

Testimonial

“The funding provided through the Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) has been greatly appreciated and its support has been instrumental in us continuing to make what has been a significant investment in managing the gorse on our property.

It is encouraging to know that external support is provided, and we hope it can continue to complement our own private efforts.

We understand that we need to keep on top of the gorse management on our property through regular (annual) follow-up attention to treat any regrowth as early as possible and would be grateful to be considered for future VGT support if available.”

Jim Elliott and Sue Preston

from Glenaroua, part of the South West Goulburn Landcare Network Project

Ashbourne Landcare Group

Ashbourne Landcare Group – Gorse program 2021/22



Main control method:

Chemical spraying. Drone application of selective herbicide droplets. Ecoblade slashing combined with selective herbicide application.

**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$5,000

Project description and achievements:

Drone technology is enabling the Ashbourne Landcare Group to build on its success in tackling gorse in the upper catchment area of the Campaspe River.

The community gorse control project began in 2012 with the Weed Action Group, and a letter from Macedon Ranges Shire Council prompted 11 landholders to register in the 2021-22 program.

Landholders contributed more than \$30,000 and treated 32.5 hectares of gorse, with most plants between one and two metres high.

Four landholders engaged a contractor that uses drones to apply selective herbicide, which they found to be cheaper and equally effective as traditional control methods such as high-pressure spraying and ecoblade.

All landholders signed voluntary work agreements, committing themselves to controlling identified areas of gorse over the next three years.

Other contributions:

\$31,737.45

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**

32.5 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**

11 landholders

Nearest town:

Woodend



Best Food and Fibre Environmental Group Inc.

Best Food and Fibre Environment Group Inc Spring Creek gorse removal

Main control method:

Cut and paint.

Project description and achievements:

The Best Food and Fibre Environmental Group is controlling gorse along a section of the Spring Creek near Winslow, an area that is potentially home to the Australasian Bittern and platypus.

Four gorse warriors from two properties are focusing on the riparian zone of the creek and have controlled five hectares of the weed.

The landholders obtained VGT funding to help manage the parcel of land and have contributed more than \$6,000 themselves. While appreciative of VGT support, they said ongoing management of the land will cost more than this one-off grant can fund.

The gorse control work is being conducted in conjunction with tree planting along the creek, funded by a Victorian sports grant with assistance from Clontarf Foundation and Brauer College in Warrnambool.



**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$1,669

Other contributions:

\$6,259

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**

5 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**

4 landholders

Nearest town:

Winslow



Private Group - Woodend

Gorse eradication for 'Eastwood', 'Woofend' and surrounding land

Main control method:

Mechanical removal. Chemical spraying.

Project description and achievements:

New owners of two Woodend properties have wasted no time in tackling their gorse infestations, with support from the VGT.

The three landholders found their properties overrun with the weed, leaving them unable to access parts of their land with gorse reaching two metres high.

They quickly discovered that gorse control takes effort and patience. Realising removing gorse completely would take many years, they set an immediate goal to access problem areas.

Contributing \$15,000 to the works themselves, the landholders funded an excavator to remove the thickest infestations and sprayed new growth with herbicide.

They have controlled six hectares and are committed to follow-up works as part of their long-term plan to eradicate gorse.



**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$2,000

**Other contributions:
\$15,000**

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:
6 ha**

**Land-holders
involved:
3 landholders**

**Nearest town:
Woodend**



Deep Creek Landcare Group

Gorse control in Bridies Lane

Main control method:

Mechanical removal. Chemical spraying.

Project description and achievements:

The owners of farm animal sanctuary Edgar's Mission and a cattle farm in near Lancefield have joined forces to control a dense infestation of gorse on their neighbouring properties.

Most of the gorse was on the cattle property and encroaching on the animal sanctuary. Having both tried individually to control the weed, the neighbours decided a coordinated and sustained effort would be more successful.

A contractor sprayed the small area at Edgar's Mission and a bulldozer removed most of the gorse on the cattle farm after delays due to wet weather. One hectare of gorse has been controlled and both landholders will monitor the situation with plans to spray new growth.



**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$850

**Other contributions:
\$822.50**

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**

1 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**

2 landholders

**Nearest town:
Lancefield**

Private Group – Thompson Creek

Thompson Creek gorse control

Main control method:

Spot spraying.

Project description and achievements:

Past mistakes inspired neighbours to unite in their bid to control gorse at Thompson Creek, near Freshwater Creek on the Surf Coast. Previous efforts had been ad hoc, not implemented correctly and not followed up properly. Five landholders realised collaboration would be far more effective.

Their project targets a spreading infestation along Thompson Creek downstream from the Taylor Gully confluence, a basalt outcrop where the two water sources join.

The landholders engaged a project manager with local experience in gorse control and opted for spot spraying given accessibility issues, the proximity to the creek and the basalt boulders. The area is home to the endangered Pygmy Perch.

Landholders have controlled 3.5 hectares. Follow-up plans include chemical spraying, further gorse removal and revegetation.



**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$4,000

Other contributions:

\$3,960

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**

3.5 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**

5 landholders

Nearest town:

Freshwater Creek



Private Group – Ararat

Protecting remnant vegetation and gorse control on farmland near waterways

Main control method:

Mechanical removal and chemical spraying.

Project description and achievements:

Two Ararat neighbours have joined forces to fund gorse control works on their properties, matching VGT funding.

The landholders are dealing with an extensive infestation – about 65 per cent of their land – and are committed to protecting three waterways and remnant vegetation between their properties. The largest gorse patch is wedged between two of the waterways and is near the largest area of native flora.

The neighbours were inspired to take action to protect the value of agricultural land in the immediate and surrounding areas. The project also aims to reduce fire risk by decreasing the fuel load.

A contractor performed the first round of major gorse control works in May, completing 6.5 hectares out of 8.5 hectares. The landowners will fund works on the remaining 2 hectares and then concentrate on smaller infestations to reduce the seedbank. Chemical and non-chemical methods will be used.



**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$2,000

Other contributions:
\$2,700

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**
6.5 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**
2 landholders

Nearest town:
Ararat



Southwest Goulburn Landcare Network

A neighbourhood approach to tackling gorse

Main control method:

Chemical spraying.

Project description and achievements:

Three new landholders in Kilmore received a shock when they discovered what they thought was pristine property was in fact riddled with gorse. They joined up with two other landholders who had been tackling gorse on their properties to improve land management practices in the area. The five are working with the Southwest Goulburn Landcare Group to obtain funding for chemicals to help reduce the size of gorse infestations and invest in future management.

This round of VGT funding has inspired the five landowners to carry out more works than originally planned with 13 hectares of gorse already controlled. Three landholders purchased their own spray units and tractors to ensure they can continue gorse management on their properties.

Other agencies are supporting the community effort. Mitchell Shire Council will work to control gorse on roadsides bordering these properties to boost chances of success.

Southwest Goulburn Landcare is also working with the Agriculture Victoria Biocontrol Hub, which has undertaken a biological release of Gorse Soft Shoot Moth for gorse management in hard-to-reach places along Broadhurst Creek. Three of the landholders' properties have drainage into the creek. A total of 7000 moths and larvae were released in 2017-18 along 300 metres of waterway.

Landholders say work will be staged across each property over several years and are encouraging neighbours to become involved in future programs.



**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$5,000

Other contributions:

\$40,605

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**

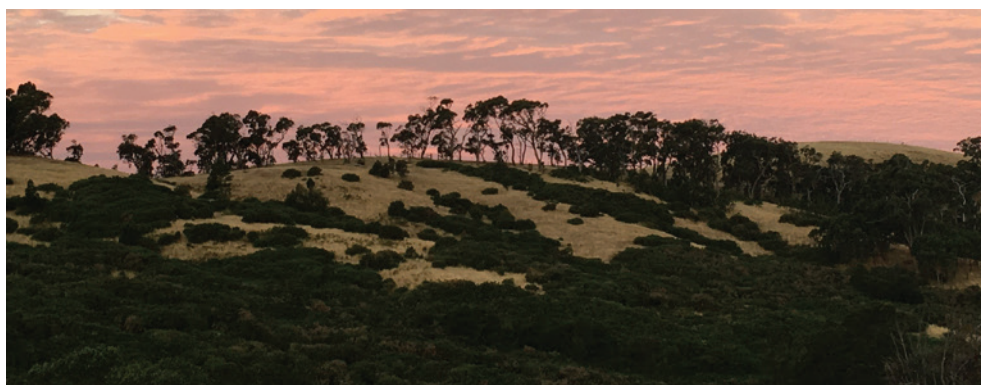
13 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**

5 landholders

Nearest town:

Kilmore



Tylden Landcare Group

Gorse control - clearing up the paddock invader around Tylden 2021-22



Main control method:

Chemical spraying.

Project description and achievements:

Tylden landholders completed their gorse control projects early, despite Covid restrictions in 2021. They targeted gorse in paddocks and along waterways, while aiming to protect biodiversity and agricultural values.

Five landholders have controlled seven hectares, prioritising large infestations to prevent their spread and spraying smaller plants to prevent their establishment. Tylden Landcare donated \$6600 for the herbicide.

All landholders exceeded their funding commitments, reflecting their commitment to the program. A new landholder has already been inspired by the project and participants hope to encourage more community involvement.

**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$4,500

Other contributions:

\$19,449

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**

7 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**

5 landholders

Nearest town:

Tylden



Amphitheatre Landcare Group

Amphitheatre gorse eradication



Main control method:

Chemical spraying.

**VGT contribution
2021-22:**

\$5,000

Project description and achievements:

Gorse has been spreading along waterways in Amphitheatre and the surrounding district, in the Pyrenees Shire, since the floods of 2010.

The Amphitheatre Landcare Group received VGT funding to clean up infestations before they could spread downstream to the Avoca River. The project was delayed due to participants' ill health but the group still managed to complete 5 out of 5.25 hectares of gorse control.

The seven landholders have signed voluntary work agreements, with six completed. Landcare members hope their efforts over the past 10 years have paid off, and future works will only require monitoring and controlling gorse on a small scale.

Other contributions:
\$4,090

**Hectares of gorse
controlled:**
5 ha

**Land-holders
involved:**
7 landholders

Nearest town:
Amphitheatre



