



# PROGRESS REPORT 2020 - 2021

Victorian  
Serrated Tussock  
Working Party



# About Us

The VSTWP is community-driven and focused on providing a strategic direction for Government and community.

## VISION

***To reduce the impact of serrated tussock on Victoria's economy, environment and communities.***

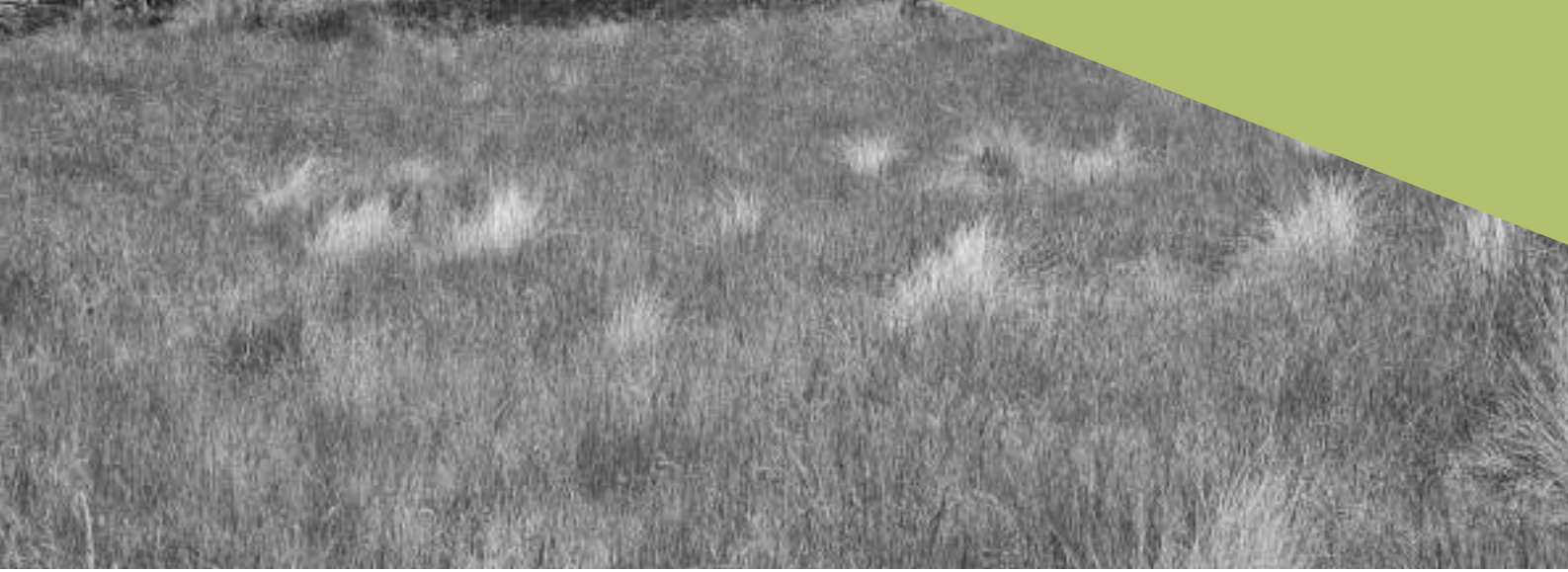
## THE VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) was started in 1995, representing the first community led approach of its kind. The intention was to create a cooperative model of governance between community, Government, and other key stakeholders to deal with the threat of serrated tussock.

The cooperative governance approach to the strategic management of invasive species involves a range of stakeholders to increase participation in decision making and allow for shared responsibility.

The VSTWP has delivered a wide range of serrated tussock programs, including research into management practices, production of appropriate extension materials, provision of incentives to land managers and community groups and comprehensive mapping, extension, monitoring and extension campaigns.





## SERRATED TUSSOCK

Native to South America, serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) is a highly invasive, tussock forming grass that is capable of growing in a range of climates and soil types.

Serrated tussock is a declared noxious weed in Victoria and is a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) due to its highly invasive nature, its negative impacts on agricultural production and its threat to biodiversity. Each mature serrated tussock plant can produce more than 100,000 seeds in a year, which are mostly dispersed by wind. Seeds can also be carried in fodder, vehicles or livestock and transported over vast distances.

The occurrence of serrated tussock in Victoria was first documented in 1954 at a site in Melbourne's north. The estimated area of serrated tussock in Victoria is 240,000 hectares, but its potential distribution has been predicted to cover 4.6 million hectares in Victoria or one-fifth of the state.

The distribution map in figure 1 shows where serrated tussock is currently found in Victoria. If left unmanaged it is estimated that serrated tussock has the potential to infest roughly two-thirds of arable and grazing land in Victoria (figure 2).

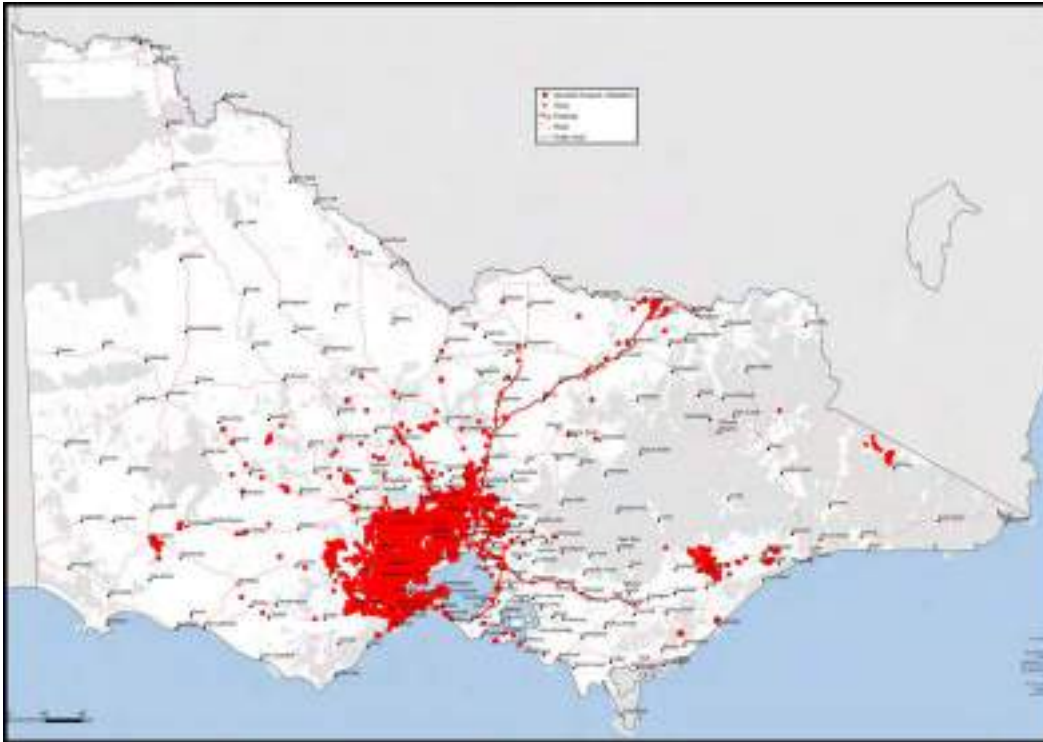


Figure 1: Distribution in Victoria as of June 2020

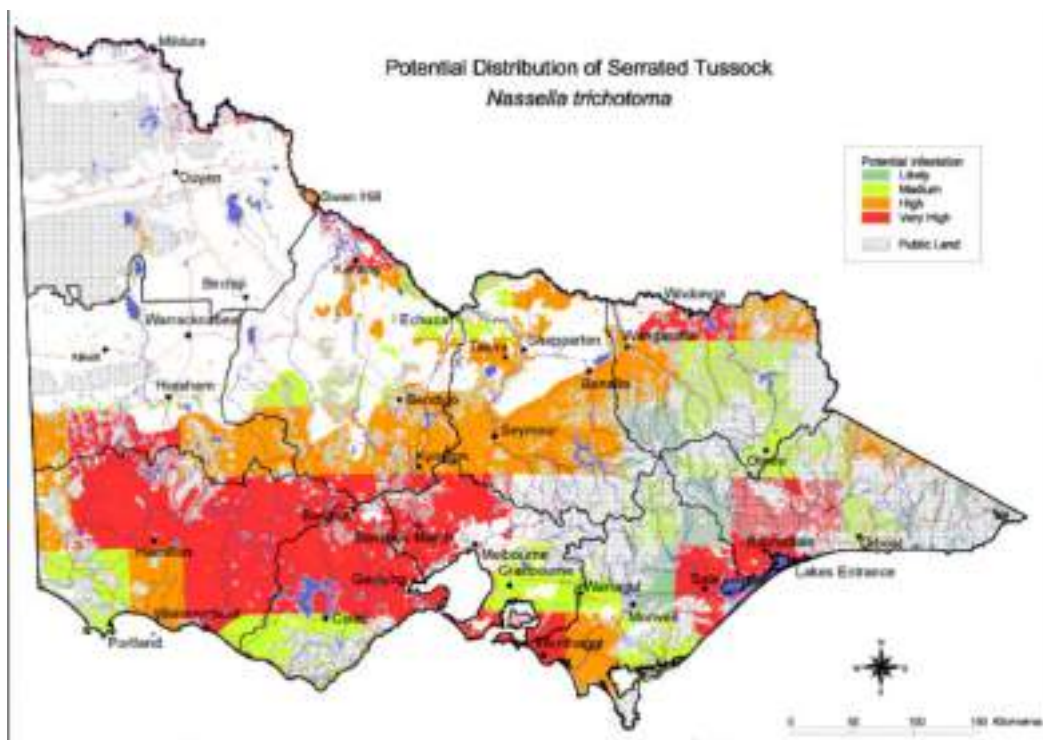


Figure 2: Potential distribution in Victoria

## VSTWP MEMBERS 2020 - 2021

|                  |                                  |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Lance Jennison   | Chairperson                      |
| John Burgess     | Deputy Chairperson               |
| Alan Morton      | Treasurer                        |
| Peter Lindeman   | Community Representative         |
| Wendy Bitans     | Community Representative         |
| John Webb Ware   | Community Representative         |
| Mandy Coulson    | Community Representative         |
| Norm Cameron     | Community Representative         |
| Lachlan McIntyre | Community Representative         |
| Charles Grech    | Community Representative         |
| Graham Hooper    | Community Representative         |
| Shawna Dominelli | Community Representative         |
| Martin Deering   | Secretary (Agriculture Victoria) |

## EXTENSION OFFICERS 2020-2021

Ivan Carter  
Antares Fuhrmann





## CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

As a Weed of National Significance, serrated tussock is regarded as one of Australia's worst weeds due to its invasiveness, potential for spread, economic and environmental impacts. The VSTWP has been tackling serrated tussock since 1995 and continues to support communities, delivering best practice advice through a range of community engagement and extension services.

The 2020 – 2021 year saw us dealing once again with the challenges of COVID and its impact on extension, including requirements to get authorised worker permits, and restriction of in person meetings. The VSTWP usually attends 10-15 field days per year, but we continued to see limited attendance due to COVID restrictions.

This was the last year of federal government funded White Paper projects. The major White Paper projects delivered by the VSTWP were the Citizen Science mapping training, four cost-benefit case studies, distribution of serrated tussock signs, and the delivery of the Virtual Extension Officer website.

In 2020-2021, I continued to represent the VSTWP as part of the review of the community-led management of established pests. This project provided options to enhance community involvement in established pest management and building a national framework on established weed priorities. - *continued over page*

# CHAIRPERSONS REPORT *Continued*

This year also saw the completion of three extension programs at Monegetta Stage 2, and Clydebank, with projects started in Romsey West, Briagolong, and Airly. The VSTWP also provided a grant to the Pentland Hills Landcare group to support community groups impacted by serrated tussock, to raise awareness and educate landowners. Our Communications and Engagement Officer, Ivan Carter continued to promote best practice management of serrated tussock through the media and the Tussock Times, and the delivery of education and training.

Thanks to the stakeholders who support VSTWP projects, including Landcare groups, CMAs, Local governments, VicRoads, the Australian Government, and Agriculture Victoria.

Lance Jennison

*Lance Jennison*

VSTWP Chairperson  
17/04/2022



Lance Jennison,  
Chairperson of the VSTWP



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Since its formation the VSTWP has been responsible for the development and implementation of a number of management strategies; these documents have not only provided direction but have been fundamental in promoting a coordinated community-led approach to serrated tussock control throughout Victoria.

The VSTWP has strived in partnership with all levels of Government and their agencies, industry, research institutions, Landcare, and the wider community to achieve the original recommendations of the strategy. The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party Strategy 2018-2023 outlines how the VSTWP will support communities impacted by serrated tussock and communities at risk of infestation.

The strategy also addresses pathways of spread, maintaining awareness and motivation among stakeholders, along with the need for a targeted approach to extension and education along with increased collaboration and innovation. Some key actions of the new strategy include the design of a new extension program for community groups and the coordination of land managers, as well as industry and Government, in a bid to reduce the impact of serrated tussock.

The strategy identifies that with the widespread distribution of serrated tussock there are numerous opportunities to support other areas of Victoria. The strategy commends the VSTWP's historical focus on the northwest of Melbourne, Bacchus Marsh, Geelong, and Ballarat areas which have been critically important in reducing the impact and containing the spread of serrated tussock. It goes on to say that with the distribution of serrated tussock in Victoria being widespread, there are numerous communities that could benefit from the VSTWP's support. The VSTWP Chairperson Lance Jennison said, "the VSTWP has continued to deliver extension projects in West Gippsland and are providing grants to support community groups impacted by serrated tussock".

These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to assist affected communities throughout Victoria." "The addition of a stronger emphasis on raising community awareness and preparedness across Victoria has assisted us to diversify communications and engage on a deeper level. The VSTWP has been reaching a broader audience through a targeted approach to extension and education, with new videos, case studies and increased online presence," Mr Jennison said.



# VSTWP EXTENSION PROGRAM

The VSTWP has found the most effective way to reduce the spread of serrated tussock from the core infestation is through its extension (educational) programs. At the heart of these programs is their community focus, engaging landowners and empowering them to voluntarily achieve high levels of serrated tussock control.

The VSTWP now completes a second season of inspections for landowners that have not adequately controlled serrated tussock. Where extension efforts are unsuccessful in convincing landowners of their obligations to control serrated tussock, Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions (DJPR) compliance is recommended to support the community. Experienced Extension Officers are engaged by the VSTWP to work with landholders within defined project areas, offering tailored serrated tussock identification and management advice.

In 2020-21, our Extension Officers delivered projects in the following areas;

- Monegeetta, Macedon Ranges Shire
- Clydebank, Wellington Shire

In 2020-21 VSTWP Extension Officers also delivered follow-up inspections for 10 properties in the Monegeetta Stage 1 extension area.

The VSTWP extension project delivers extension services to targeted communities affected by serrated tussock, to raise awareness of the invasive plant, promote best practice management and to encourage communities to voluntarily manage the invasive species. Providing expert one-to-one advice is recognised to be most beneficial to landholders and forms the foundation of success. - *Continued over page*



# VSTWP EXTENSION PROGRAM *Continued*

Extension Officers contracted to the VSTWP form strong working relationships with various stakeholders including private landowners, Landcare, industry, community groups, Local Government, Catchment Management Authorities, and the State Government.

Landholders in the extension area receive the following services:

- An invite to an information day to launch the extension project,
- A landholder information package with serrated tussock identification, control, and management options,
- Individual property visits to inspect for serrated tussock,
- Property maps containing mapped serrated tussock infestations,
- Technical advice on serrated tussock control and management for each situation,
- Information on the local Landcare group,
- Rapid Appraisal Management Plan, if required.

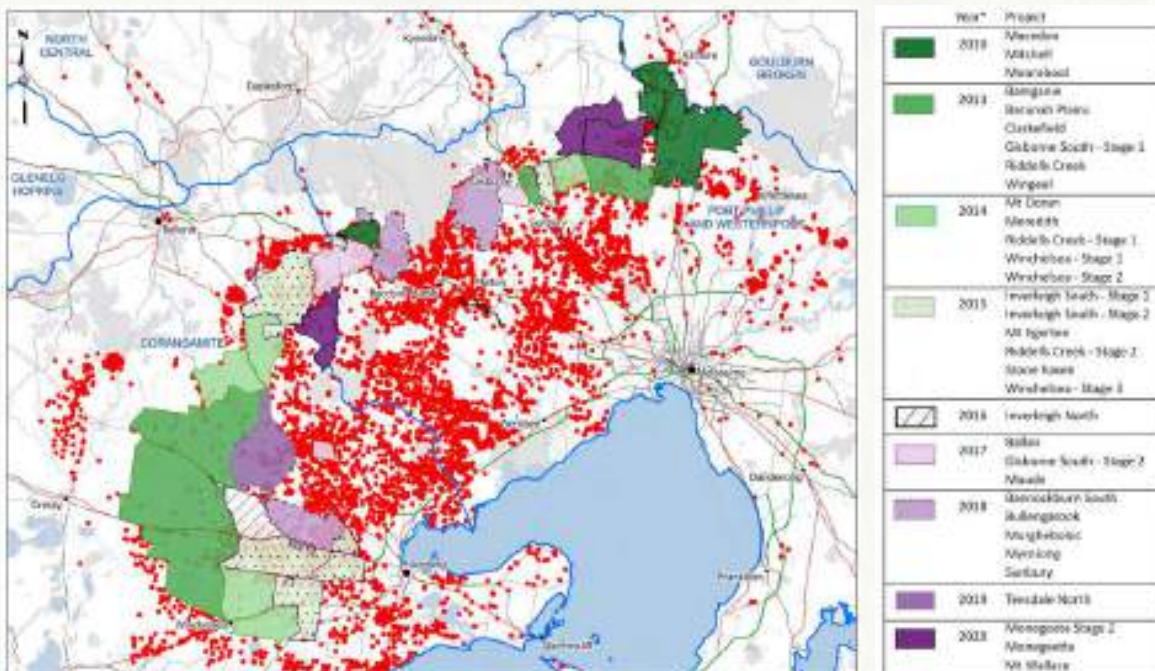



Figure 3: VSTWP Extension Areas 2010/20 (DJPR 2020)





MICHAEL STEVENS SPOT SPRAYED HIS  
PROPERTY NEAR DEEP CREEK,  
MONEGETTA, WITH FLUPROPANATE  
TO CONTROL SERRATED TUSSOCK  
(MAY 2021)



# MONEGEETTA STAGE 2 EXTENSION AREA

The Monegeetta Stage 2 extension project area covers over 6,000 hectares and lies within the Upper Jacksons and Deep Creek Catchment, an area known for its natural temperate grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains. There were 209 properties in this target area, mostly large farms, and hobby farms, in particular horse properties.

This catchment area is known for the natural temperate grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains and high ecological values. The land systems in this target area contain a mix of mostly cleared land and some excellent grasslands that have been used for agricultural production and hobby farm purposes, with some important waterways such as beginning of the Deep Creek and other waterways. There are some larger forest types also to the north-east.

Serrated tussock was in low density across the south and east of the target area, and along the deep creek escarpments.

Of the 209 parcels in the target area, 146 were assessed for serrated tussock and a total of 9 hectares of infestations were discovered. To date, 7 hectares have been treated under voluntary compliance, some pre-inspection, some during the inspection (manual removal of plant) and some after the inspection. There are 2 landowners who have significant infestations that are currently untreated, that require referral to state government for a letter, and around 10 properties that will require a second year of extension to treat all the plants.

The area around Monegeetta is near the core infestation of serrated tussock in Victoria, but still mostly scattered plants, that are mostly easily treated and traceable. The previous media in the area ensured landowners get a yearly reminder to control their noxious weeds, including serrated tussock. Chilean needle grass is a massive problem in the area, and is highlighted in the image below. The VSTWP are well equipped with information to provide landowners regarding Chilean needle grass.

## Key Achievements



**4000 Ha  
assessed land**



**146 properties  
assessed**



**9 Ha observed  
with serrated tussock**



**7 Ha treated  
for serrated tussock**



“THE AREA AROUND MONEGETTA AND BOLINDA IS VITAL TO PREVENTING THE CORE FROM SPREADING INTO FERTILE FARMLAND.”  
– Ivan Carter, VSTWP Extension Officer

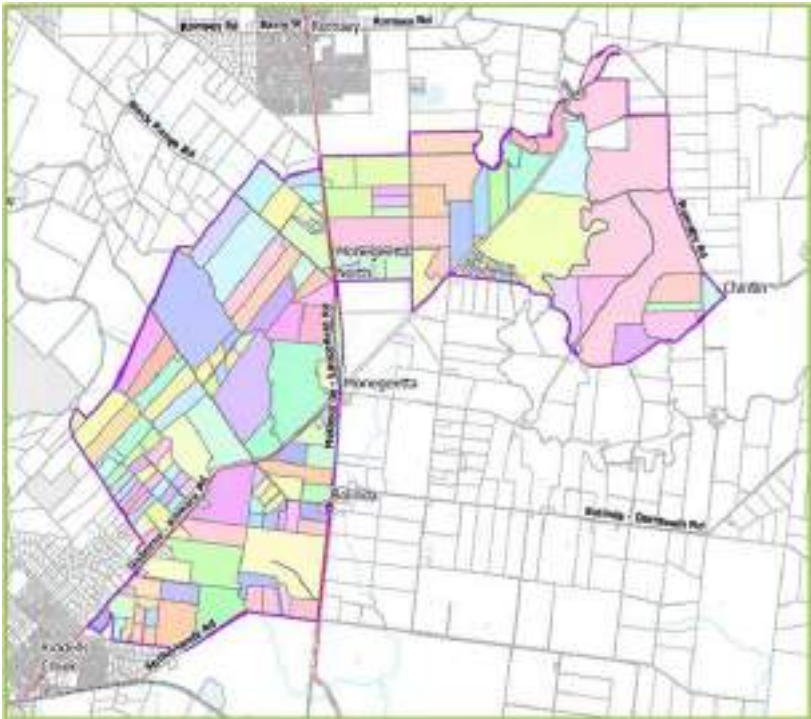


Figure 4: Monegetta Stage 2 Extension Area

# CLYDEBANK EXTENSION AREA

This project encompassed 119 properties across 3,155 hectares at Clydebank, situated on the fringes of east Gippsland. The area is surrounded by inland lakes including Lake Kakydra and Lake Melanydra which lie within the southern reaches of the target area and the Clydebank Morass Wildlife Reserve, which borders the northern properties. Lake Wellington occurs less than 1km from the target area boundary. The majority of land use within Clydebank and Airly is overwhelmingly dairy farming and cropping/pasture, while a small number of lifestyle acreage properties persist throughout.

Many partnerships were formed through this project including the Clydebank and District Landcare Group, Maffra and District Landcare Group, Wellington Shire Council, and Agriculture Victoria – Gippsland region.

Awareness-raising activities consisted of the initial letter distributed to all landholders in the Clydebank target area in early October 2020 by Wellington Shire Council. This letter included the project details and maps of all three target areas and an invitation to the project launch.

A webinar was held for the project launch, in lieu of having a face-to-face field day or community market stall, which occurred approximately three weeks following the letter distribution. Promotion of this project launch included information within the initial letter mail out, via communication with stakeholders and by advertising the event online via the Clydebank Landcare Group Facebook page.

## Key Achievements



**1487 Ha  
assessed**



**61  
properties  
assessed**



**5 hectares  
infested**





"I AM PLEASED THAT THE VSTWP HAS SUPPORTED WEST GIPPSLAND FOR A SECOND SEASON OF EXTENSION. "  
- Lance Jennison, VSTWP Chairperson

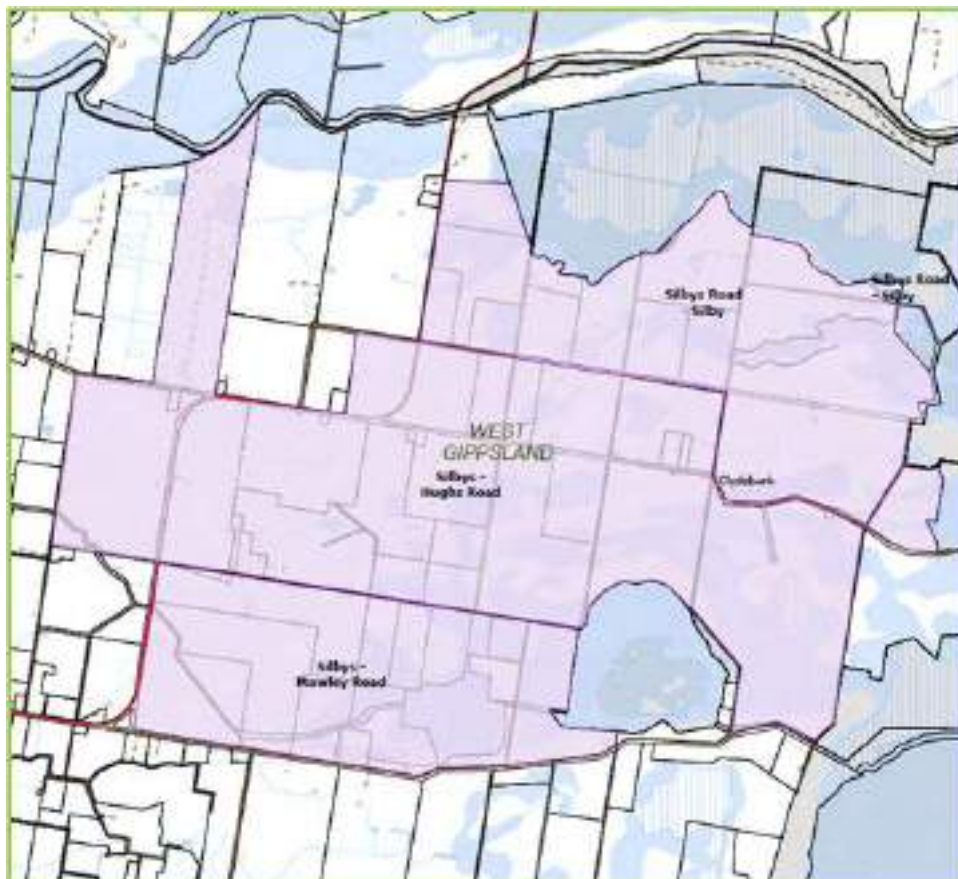


Figure 5: Clydebank Extension Area

# FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

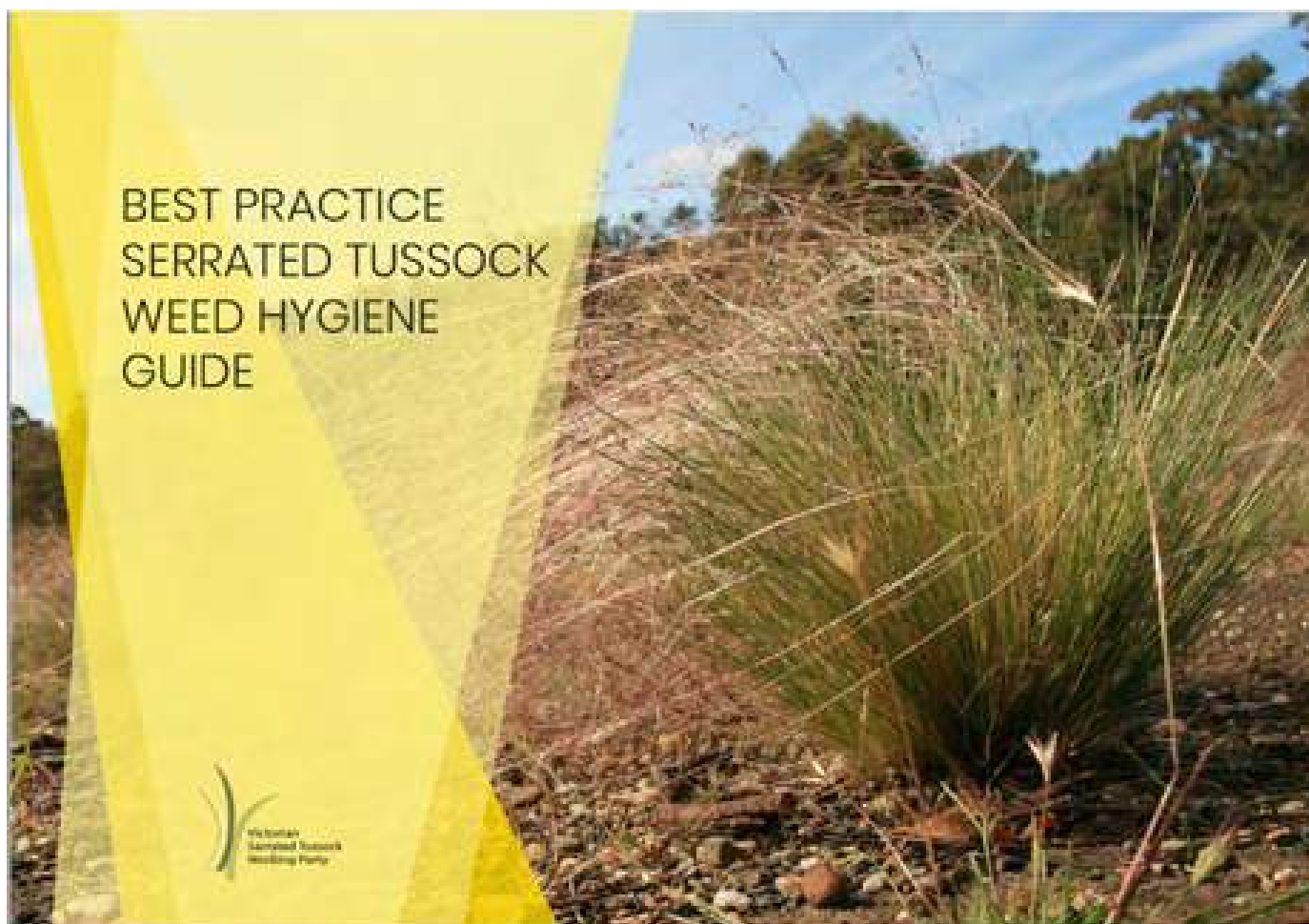
## **Citizen science mapping project**

The Citizen science mapping project aimed to empower Victorian communities to contribute to the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA). The course time was approximately 45 hours and was delivered by CSIRO staff from mid-August to late-September 2020. 37 attendees from a range of organisations across Victoria.

## **Best practice weed hygiene guide**

The best practice weed hygiene guide was developed to increase the capacity of land managers including local government, linear reserve managers, and public land managers, to manage serrated tussock.

The guide provides recommendations for planning site works, implementing weed hygiene measures, and contract oversight.



## Serrated tussock signs

The VSTWP continued to raise awareness of serrated tussock across Victoria by distributing 100 long-lasting aluminium fence signs for proactive landowners and 100 corflute signs for distribution to rural supply stores.

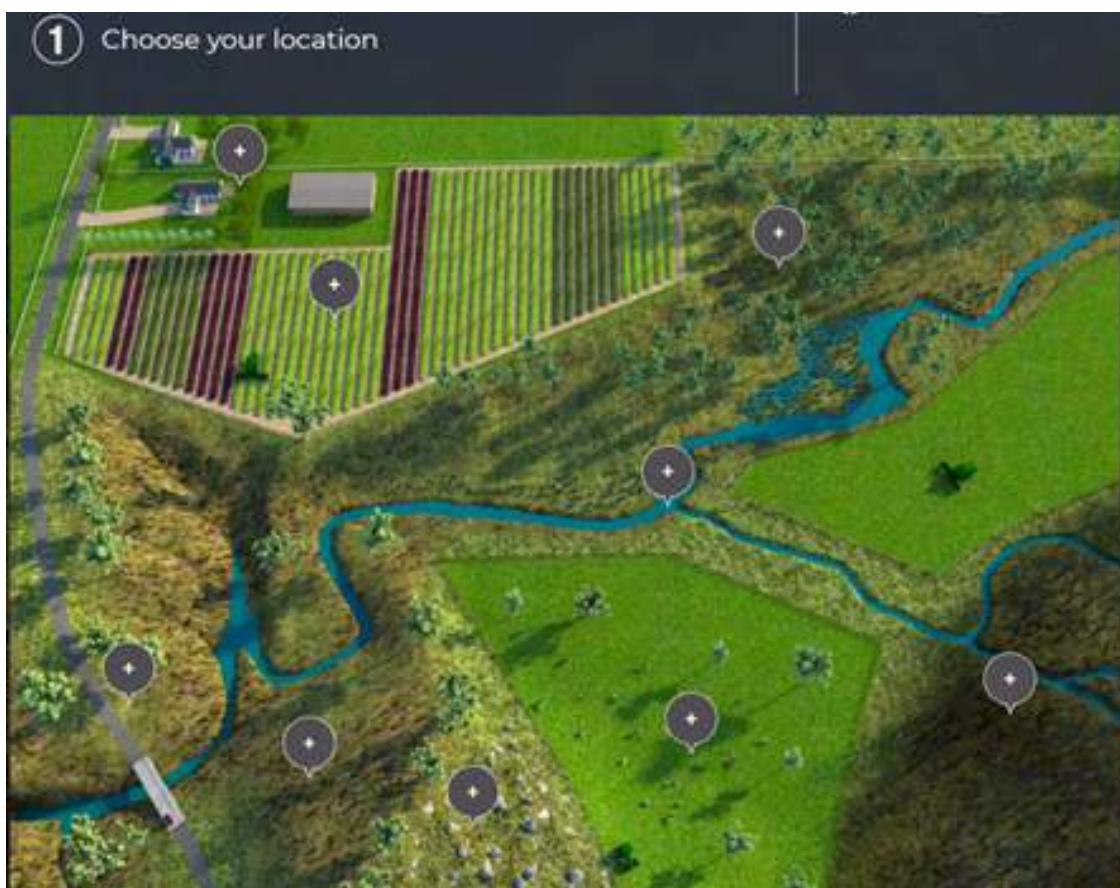
## Four cost-benefit case studies developed

Four cost-benefit case studies were developed to communicate the costs and benefits of controlling serrated tussock in relation to four landowner types;

- small non-commercial landowner
- small commercial landowner
- local government, and
- residential developers.

## Virtual Extension Office project

The Virtual Extension Officer explores ways to control three of Victoria's most invasive species, gorse, serrated tussock and rabbits. The virtual landscape was developed to help access information any time and customise the information to suit landowners situation. The Virtual Extension Office project was led by the Victorian Gorse Taskforce.





# COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

- Over 3,500 pieces of extension material distributed through 4 field days, one stakeholder event, community engagement activities, enquires and extension projects.
- Interviews on ABC Conversation Hour, Bairnsdale FM, ABC Western Victoria, Apple FM, Voice FM and Highlands FM.
- Produced and added five videos to the VSTWP YouTube channel and website.
- Distribution of four editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, delivered to over 303 subscribers via e-news.
- Contribution towards the Virtual Extension Officer Project, to allow landowners to access control options for a variety of landscapes.
- The publication of serrated tussock media articles in eight Local Government newsletters across the state, and 12 community newspapers, promoting the VSTWP and serrated tussock control.

## PROMOTION

- VSTWP Facebook page gaining 556 followers, an increase of 40% over 12 months.
- YouTube channel updated, featuring four new best practice videos attaining over 12,000 views, an increase of 10% over the 12 months.
- Major facebook boost campaign for 2 months, highlighting the services offered by the VSTWP and best practice control.
- Creation of landowner packages folders, for field days and events.
- Serrated tussock signage displayed at Farm Supply Stalls across the State, in Ballan, Castlemaine, Creswick and Sunbury.
- Continued funding for applied science research through Federation University to provide improved management practices for control of serrated tussock.
- Contributed funds to international research into biological control methods for serrated tussock.



# THANK YOU

The VSTWP Committee would like to thank the following groups and organisations for their ongoing support: The large number of Landcare groups and Local councils that have contributed to the success of our projects. The following organisations for providing funds:

- The Victorian Government, Agriculture Victoria, Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions
- Australian Government, Department of Agriculture Water and Environment.
- The following local councils for supporting VSTWP extension projects:
  - Macedon Ranges Shire Council
  - Wellington Shire Council
  - Moorabool Shire Council
  - Golden Plains Shire Council

Without you, our serrated tussock projects would not be as effective as they are today. We greatly appreciate the time, dedication and involvement in managing serrated tussock.

