



# VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

Annual Report 2012-2013



## Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party Annual Report 2012-2013

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For more information on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party visit the website at [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com)

### Our Vision:

CONTROL THE SPREAD OF  
SERRATED TUSSOCK IN VICTORIA  
TO REDUCE THE IMPACTS ON  
THE ECONOMY, SOCIETY,  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT.







“I ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP DEVELOP POLICY AND DIRECTION AT A HIGHER LEVEL, KNOWING THAT IT WILL HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE GROUND.”

**Jim Seager**

**Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party Chair**

Photograph: S. Taylor, ACT Parks and Conservation Service

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Following on from the launch of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy in March 2012, the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party continues to be the lead organisation on serrated tussock in this state. Working closely in partnership with government agencies to maintain funding for education, awareness and extension, the working party works to build the capacity of landholders and regional communities to identify and manage serrated tussock.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party should be proud of their achievements accomplished in the past year. Partnering with the Western Melbourne Catchments Network, the working party facilitated a project in the future Western Grassland Reserves. Funded by the then Department of Sustainability and Environment, the future reserve site and a buffer zone were surveyed and mapped, and areas of serrated tussock treated. Recommendations from the working party were passed on to the State Government to assist with future planning of the site.

We have worked to expand our funding of extension staff and, approaching next year, will have three officers contracted to deliver 'one-on-one' extension programs along the serrated tussock containment line in the Port Philip and Corangamite catchments. The Tussock Times newsletter has received a new look and the website at [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com) was updated and continues to be a key resource on serrated tussock management to the community.

Strengthening partnerships has also been essential to our successes over the last twelve months. Greater agency participation in our projects and communication with stakeholders has been a priority in the past year. In June 2013 the working party participated in the community weeds forum, continuing to maintain partnerships with other community weed management groups and ensure that serrated tussock remains a high priority in the State of Victoria.

Looking to the year ahead, the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party will continue to support best practice serrated tussock management through further extension projects, engaging with stakeholders and communities, and building the capacity of land managers to control serrated tussock.

Serrated tussock continues to be one of our most invasive noxious weeds, causing a significant cost to landholders and the environment. It is critical that all land managers are committed to controlling this noxious weed if we are to significantly reduce its spread and the cost of control. Although we are unable to eradicate serrated tussock from the core area of the State, by working together we can stop its spread and minimise its impact on productivity and the environment.

I would like to thank all the members of the Working Party and our staff for their ongoing participation and look forward to continuing to reduce the impact of this invasive weed. I would also like to thank staff from the Department of Environment and Primary Industries for their ongoing work as a major partner in the battle against serrated tussock.

Jim Seager, Chairman  
June 2013



## WHY WORKING TOGETHER ON SERRATED TUSSOCK IS ESSENTIAL FOR VICTORIA

The highly invasive grass serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*), has the potential to inhabit a significant portion of Victoria due to its ability to adapt to a wide range of climates and soil types. Infestations of serrated tussock have significant impacts on not just agricultural enterprises but also native grasslands and urban settings.

A native plant to the South America, serrated tussock was introduced into Australia in the early 1900s. Since then, serrated tussock has spread over more than two million hectares of south-eastern Australia. Currently in Victoria the spread of serrated tussock is concentrated around a core area to the west of Melbourne, stretching past Geelong and extending north almost to Ballarat. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries has developed a containment program with the aim of preventing the spread of serrated tussock to other parts of Victoria, an approach that the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party supports. Smaller outlying infestations also exist outside this core area, these infestations are managed with the aim of eradication.

The characteristic of serrated tussock to produce large quantities of seed contributes to its invasiveness. A single mature serrated tussock plant can produce more than 100,000 seeds per year, quickly forming a large seed bank. Although most seed falls close to the parent plant, strong summer winds may contribute to seed being dispersed over large distances. Other pathways of spread often not considered include; vehicles and machinery, livestock, fodder, soil and water.

Unmanaged serrated tussock infestations can have damaging effects on land productivity in agricultural settings, and may severely reduce biodiversity values in grasslands by outcompeting native grass species. Large build-ups of serrated tussock biomass and seed heads can also become a fire hazard in both rural and urban settings.

To successfully manage serrated tussock an integrated management approach needs to be adopted by landholders and communities. Using a variety of control methods to reduce the growth and spread provides the best chance of achieving long term control. Beating serrated tussock is a process that requires neighbours and communities to work together.

“WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT AND OTHER STAKEHOLDER ORGANISATIONS, WE ARE BETTER ABLE TO UTILISE FUNDING AND DEVELOP MORE INCLUSIVE OUTCOMES.”

**Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party Member**





# THE VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

*The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party is proud of its achievements in the past year. It has worked hard towards its vision to control the spread of serrated tussock in Victoria to reduce the impacts on the economy, society and the environment.*

## SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

- Successfully surveyed, mapped and treated portions of the Western Grasslands Reserves, and provided recommendations to the Victorian Government on future management.
- Supported 152 properties over 27,429 Ha with one-on-one education and advice on serrated tussock management.
- Ran a successful grants program supporting four community organisations to manage serrated tussock through community awareness, education and extension activities.
- Launched a brand new website at [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com) providing a new resource to land managers, stakeholders and contractors on serrated tussock identification and management.

## VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY COMMITTEE 2012-2013

- Jim Seager (Chair)
- Peter Lindeman (Vice Chair)
- Virginia Lawrence (Treasurer)
- Wendy Bitans (Community Representative)
- Peter Steller (Community Representative)
- John Webb Ware (Community Representative)
- Peter Włodarczyk (Community Representative)
- John Burgess (Community Representative)



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

*The Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2012-2017, launched by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party in 2012, has four objectives.*

1. Early detection capabilities are in place and outlying infestations are actively managed.
2. Existing infestations are under strategic management.
3. Informed and responsible use and management of the pathways of spread reduces the spread of serrated tussock.
4. Capability and willingness to manage serrated tussock is increased.

IN ADDITION TO THESE KEY OBJECTIVES, THE STRATEGY SEEKS TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE THE FOLLOWING OUTCOMES ACROSS VICTORIA:

- An early detection network made up of agencies, industry, community groups and individuals is active.
- The management of serrated tussock is actively integrated and coordinated.
- The community and key partners are informed and willing to participate in the early detection of serrated tussock and to take action to manage serrated tussock in Victoria.
- Capabilities to address serrated tussock have increased.
- The management of serrated tussock by State agencies and others is strategic.
- Research on serrated tussock is providing new social, cultural, biological and environmental control mechanisms.



# BAMGANIE EXTENSION PROJECT

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party delivered a targeted extension project in the Bamganie area, with the aim of engaging with landholders on serrated tussock. The project provided landholders in this area with one-on-one serrated tussock identification and management advice and offered landholders the opportunity to have their property assessed and mapped for infestations.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party strategically chose to work in the Bamganie area to support previous extension projects carried out in the areas of Barunah Plains and Wingeel.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Number of properties provided extension services	152
Number of landholders provided extension services	71
Total number of hectares provided extension services	27,429 Ha
Total serrated tussock infested hectares	1,419 Ha
Number of maps provided to landholders	10

The location of these project areas is adjacent to the Department of Environment and Primary Industries’ serrated tussock containment line. Undertaking extension projects in this area helps to reinforce the containment line, by preventing the spread of serrated tussock and confining it to the core infestation.

The working party has achieved much success promoting and attaining voluntary community led action through this engagement model.



“OVERALL, THE ATTITUDE AND RESPONSE TO THE PROGRAM WAS RECEPTIVE.”  
Victorian Serrated Tussock Extension Officer







# WESTERN GRASSLAND RESERVES PROJECT

The proposed Western Grassland Reserves are an area of 15,000 hectares of land the State Government has reserved to protect native grasslands in Melbourne’s west. The reserves will cover two large areas around Mt Cottrell and Little River and aims to support nature conservation in line with international standards for protected areas.

Reserving 15,000 hectares is linked to the expansion of Melbourne’s urban growth boundary. Creating these grassland reserves mitigates this expansion, which will destroy native vegetation and habitat for plants and animals, some of which are listed under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC).

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party received funding from the then Department of Sustainability and Environment to assist in planning for the management of serrated tussock in the Western Grassland Reserves.

In partnership with Western Melbourne Catchments Network, extension services were provided to landholders in the proposed Reserves and a surrounding buffer area. These properties were surveyed and mapped for serrated tussock, cane needle grass, Chilean needle grass and native species.

An implementation plan was developed that encompassed the mapping data and recommended geographically tailored strategies for serrated tussock management beyond the life of the project. Treatment of selected strategic areas was also undertaken within the proposed southern section of the Western Grassland Reserves. Areas to be treated were chosen based on highest value native grasslands and low serrated tussock density.

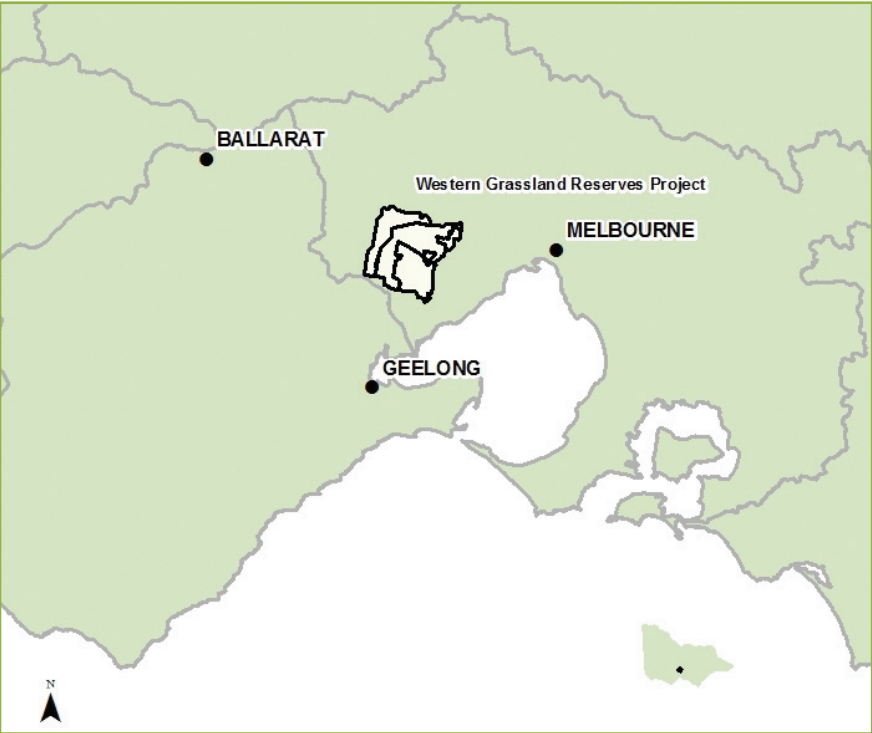
## KEY FINDINGS

- There was a high density of serrated tussock in the southern section of the Western Grassland Reserves.
- Cane needle grass and Chilean needle grass are well established through the Western Grassland Reserves.
- Where there was a low density of serrated tussock there tended to be a presence of Chilean needle grass and cane needle grass.
- The immediate northern and western buffer zones are a potential high risk zone to the future Western Grassland Reserves.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Area surveyed and mapped in Western Grassland Reserves	15,000 Ha
Number of management zones defined by the implementation plan	8
Number of properties mapped and provided extension support	80
Number of properties given advice on treatment options	50
Number of sites treated for serrated tussock	6
Area treated for serrated tussock	587 Ha

- It was found that the Western Grassland Reserves supports significant flora and fauna species. Two EPBC listed plants were seen; Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens* subsp. *spinescens*), which is critically endangered and Clover Glycine (*Glycine latrobeana*), which is vulnerable.
- Evidence and sightings of pest animals were seen during surveys, including foxes, hares and rabbits.
- Large mobs of kangaroos and wallabies were seen during surveying, which will likely require strategic management in the Western Grassland Reserves.







EXTENSION OFFICER, MANDY COULSON  
PROVIDING IDENTIFICATION ADVICE.

## VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY COMMUNITY GRANTS

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Community Grants, supported through Caring for our Country, were offered to community groups in the Port Phillip and, Westernport and Corangamite catchments, to manage serrated tussock through community awareness, education and extension activities.

The four groups that were funded approached their projects differently. The Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network and the Rowsley Landcare Group both ran serrated tussock extension programs where one-on-one best practice management advice was provided to landholders.

Lismore Land Protection Group initiated a project to provide a DVD to landholders highlighting the serrated tussock threat in their area, and best practice management advice through stories of landholders who have successfully tackled serrated tussock infestations.

The Geelong Landcare Network used grant funding to support a field trip for community group leaders centred around a property that had successfully managed serrated tussock on a broad acre landscape.

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Number of community groups funded	4
Total amount of funding provided (including GST)	\$14,141
Number of participants in serrated tussock education activities	586
Number of hectares where sustainable land practices were adopted and a reduced impact of serrated tussock was seen.	14,000 Ha

### HOW ROWSLEY LANDCARE GROUP UTILISED THEIR GRANT FUNDING

Rowsley Landcare Group received funding to run a serrated tussock extension program, which formed part of a larger project involving chemical subsidies and coordinated treatments. The funding they received from the working party enabled the group to provide one-on-one serrated tussock extension to 100 landholders over 8000 Ha in the Parwan/Rowsley Valley area.

Best practice management advice as well as extension material was offered to these landholders. Several landholders mentioned that they were encouraged to take the Rowsley Landcare Group more seriously because of the personal contact from the project, and that it felt more worthwhile doing the weed control when everyone else was doing it. This project attracted six new members to the Landcare Group.

The grant also provided for the administration of the control program run by Rowsley Landcare Group, which organised co-ordinated aerial spraying. This spray program covered 400 Ha of land and allowed smaller holdings to be treated that would have otherwise been unable to arrange effective treatment. The Rowsley Landcare Group also held two field day events during the project duration, to educate and inform the community about the impacts of serrated tussock and effective treatment methods.



The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of serrated tussock grass. The grass is a mix of yellowish-brown and reddish-brown hues, with thin, needle-like leaves and small, dark seed heads. The texture is dense and somewhat chaotic, with many blades crossing over each other.

## THE FOUR OBJECTIVES OF THE VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK STRATEGY.

1. Early detection capabilities are in place and outlying infestations are actively managed.
2. Existing infestations are under strategic management.
3. Informed and responsible use and management of the pathways of spread reduces the spread of serrated tussock.
4. Capability and willingness to manage serrated tussock is increased.

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