



# VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

Progress Report 2013 – 2014



## VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY PROGRESS REPORT 2013-2014

Published by:  
Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party  
Bacchus Marsh Victoria  
October 2014

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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)

## VISION

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

## VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY COMMITTEE 2013-2014

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





“SERRATED TUSOCK IS ONE OF VICTORIA’S WORST WEEDS, BUT WITH A STRATEGIC AND COORDINATED EFFORT IT CAN BE MANAGED EFFECTIVELY”

– JIM SEAGER, VSTWP CHAIRMAN

## CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

I am pleased to present the 2013-2014 Progress Report on behalf of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party. Over the past 12 months the Working Party has continued its campaign to control the spread of serrated tussock in Victoria through the delivery of community education and promotion of best practice management techniques.

The past year has seen an expansion of our extension program, with 3 Extension Officers successfully delivering education and extension services to over 350 landholders in 5 targeted communities. The targeted extension program endorses the community led approach to weed management and remains an effective formula to engage local communities, create ownership, facilitate action and generate practice change.

The strategic progression of the extension program into new areas within the Port Phillip and Corangamite catchments aims to prevent the spread of serrated tussock beyond the core infestation, strengthening the containment line and contributing to the Department of Environment and Primary Industries state-wide containment approach to managing serrated tussock.

Establishing relationships with stakeholders and promoting greater interagency participation in our projects has been essential component to the success of the extension program over the past year. The further development of partnerships with local government and other road management organisations will be of greater significance in the future with the shift in management responsibilities for weeds on roadsides. The adoption of best practice management techniques and weed seed hygiene procedures as part of everyday operations will be critical to managing these notorious pathways of spread.

The long-term success of the extension program hinges on the involvement of all land managers and the implementation of follow-up control. Committed to providing continued support to communities targeted for extension, in 2013/14 the Working Party with the assistance of local government distributed over 100 ‘control reminder letters’

to landholders in the previous project areas of Wingeel, Barunah Plains and Bamganie. The letters not only served as a timely reminder to treat serrated tussock but also offered landholders the opportunity of further management advice.

Building the capacity of landholders and regional communities to manage serrated tussock for the long-term and the further development of partnerships with government agencies and stakeholder groups, will continue to be a high priority in the coming year.

Other successes over the last 12 months include the development and distribution of 4 editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, the launch of a new-look VSTWP website, and the widespread distribution of serrated tussock educational material, all of which continue to be well received and recognised both here and interstate as key resources on the identification and management of serrated tussock.

I would like to thank the Department of Environment and Primary Industries for their continued support in the fight against serrated tussock and the provision of annual funding which enables the Working Party to achieve the objectives of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2012 – 2017.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the VSTWP Committee and staff for their continued commitment, and to all stakeholders who have supported the serrated tussock program and contributed to reducing the ongoing threat of serrated tussock.



Jim Seager, Chairman  
October 2014



## 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 readily invades agricultural land, native grasslands and grassy woodlands, and will rapidly infest areas of bare ground and where soil disturbance has occurred.

The occurrence of serrated tussock in Victoria was first documented in 1954 at a site to Melbourne's north. Since this first recorded sighting serrated tussock has gradually spread across much of Melbourne's western volcanic plains, extending beyond Geelong and Bacchus Marsh. Small isolated infestations are also known to occur at locations around the State including Hamilton, Rutherglen, Redesdale and Seaspray.

If left unmanaged it is estimated that serrated tussock has the potential to infest roughly two-thirds of Victoria.



## THE VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

Established in 1995 to combat the spread of serrated tussock, the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) was instrumental in the development and implementation of the first strategy to manage serrated tussock, 'A Strategy for the Management of Serrated Tussock in Victoria', and subsequent strategies 'Intensifying the Attack on Serrated Tussock 2005 – 2010', and 'Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2012 – 2017'.

The accomplishments of the VSTWP since its establishment have led to a significant reduction in the spread of serrated tussock across Victoria and have increased the capacity of landholders to manage this invasive plant.

### 'OBJECTIVES OF THE VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK STRATEGY 2012 – 2017'

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



“THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF THE EXTENSION PROGRAM BECOMES EVIDENT WHEN A LANDHOLDER WITH NO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF SERRATED TUSSOCK OR MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE IS PROVIDED THE SKILLS TO IDENTIFY, MANAGE AND PREVENT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PLANTS”

– VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY MEMBER

## TARGETED EXTENSION PROGRAM

Our Targeted Extension Program is community driven and encourages collective action across all land tenures by equipping landholders and land managers with the required skills and knowledge to manage serrated tussock.

Extension Officers are contracted to work in defined project areas, offering communities the opportunity to receive tailored serrated tussock identification and management advice.

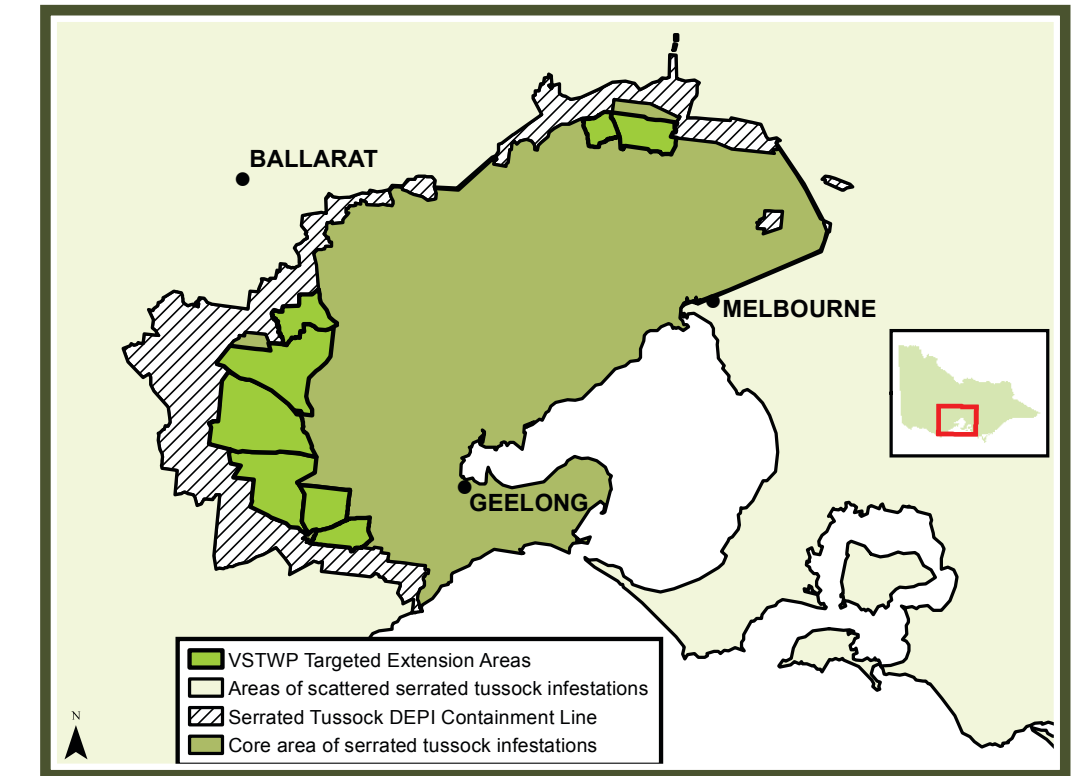
Raising a community's awareness and knowledge of best practice management techniques for serrated tussock not only increases landholder confidence and independence but also strengthens a community's resolve to tackle the problem.

In 2013/14 extension activities were completed in the targeted communities of:

- Clarkefield
- Winchelsea
- Meredith
- Riddells Creek

Our targeted extension program has achieved much success in promoting and attaining voluntary sustained community-led action.

The achievements of the program can be largely attributed to the extensive knowledge and experience of the 3 Extension Officers assigned the task of engaging with landholders and land managers in the target areas.





# CLARKEFIELD

Located to the north of Melbourne, agricultural activities have dominated the land use in the Clarkefield region for many years, and subsequently a variety of weeds are present across the landscape.

Serrated tussock was found to be scattered throughout most of the target area, with higher densities tending to occur along the waterways of Jacksons Creek and Deep Creek and their steep escarpments; areas that are commonly recognised as corridors for seed dispersal and often difficult to access.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

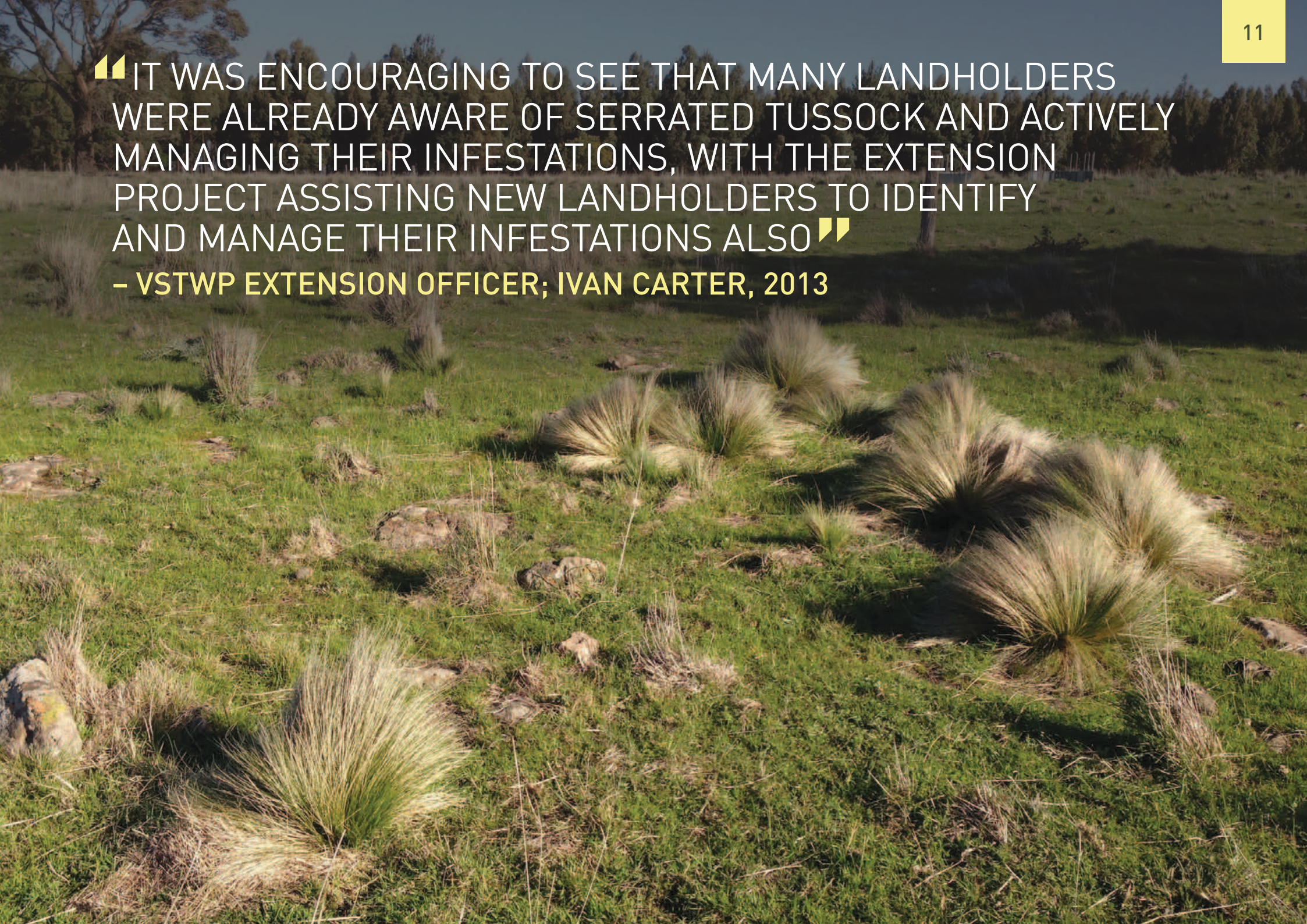
|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Number of properties provided extension services               | 132      |
| Total number of hectares assessed for serrated tussock         | 1,559 Ha |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock infestation      | 281 Ha   |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock at time of project | 222 Ha   |

A number of landholders commented that the level of serrated tussock in the area has greatly reduced over the last decade. This decrease can be largely attributed to the on-going management commitment of many landholders, an active Landcare group and community champions. A highlight from this project was the success of the combined aerial spraying across multiple properties in the steep and inaccessible areas of the catchments.



“IT WAS ENCOURAGING TO SEE THAT MANY LANDHOLDERS WERE ALREADY AWARE OF SERRATED TUSOCK AND ACTIVELY MANAGING THEIR INFESTATIONS, WITH THE EXTENSION PROJECT ASSISTING NEW LANDHOLDERS TO IDENTIFY AND MANAGE THEIR INFESTATIONS ALSO”

– VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER; IVAN CARTER, 2013





# MEREDITH

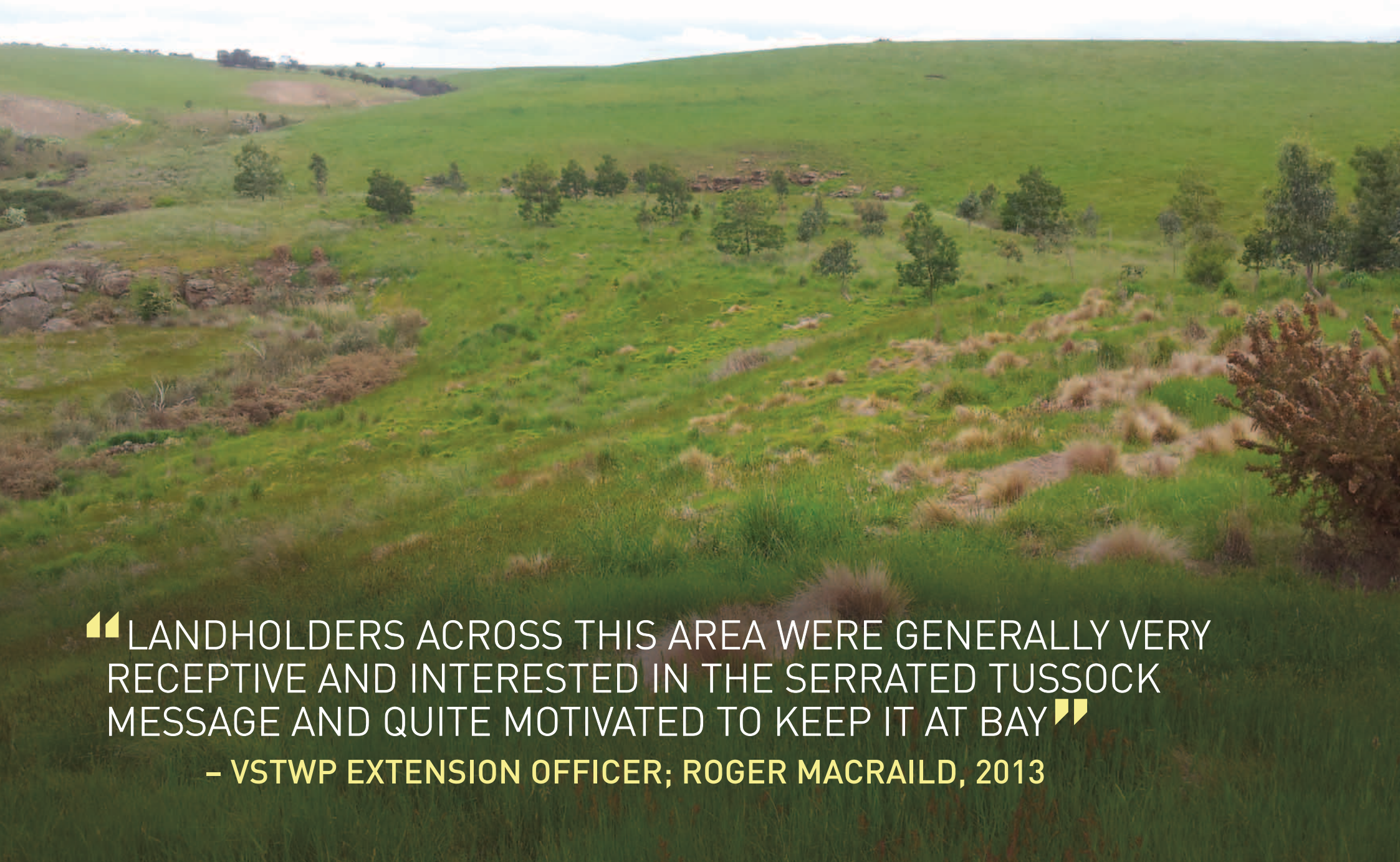
The Meredith target area was located to the west of the Midland highway between the townships of Meredith and Elaine. The target area included reaches of the Leigh River and its tributaries the Cargerie and Woodbourne Creeks. Much of the landscape comprises productive agricultural land, with a number successful grazing and cropping enterprises located in the area.

The majority of serrated tussock infestations detected were low in density and consisted of a few scattered isolated plants. Infestations tended to occur on the drier embankments of the waterways, and in paddocks where soil disturbance had promoted the establishment of plants, which is common to sites with a history of grazing.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Number of properties provided extension services               | 74       |
| Total number of hectares assessed for serrated tussock         | 6,856 Ha |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock infestation      | 10 Ha    |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock at time of project | 10 Ha    |

With such low levels of serrated tussock occurring in the target area, infestations were treated with minimal effort and with a consistent approach, long-term control will be readily achieved. The highlight of this project was the willingness of the landholders and land managers involved to learn how to identify serrated tussock and treat the small infestations accordingly.



“LANDHOLDERS ACROSS THIS AREA WERE GENERALLY VERY RECEPTIVE AND INTERESTED IN THE SERRATED TUSSOCK MESSAGE AND QUITE MOTIVATED TO KEEP IT AT BAY”  
– VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER; ROGER MACRAILD, 2013



# WINCHELSEA

The Winchelsea project area was divided into 3 stages for reasons of workability. In 2013/14 targeted extension works were completed in the areas of Stage 1 and 2, with Stage 3 to commence in 2014/15.

## STAGE 1 - BUCKLEY AREA

Stage 1 of the project area was north of the Winchelsea township. Changing land management practices has ultimately led to many areas, that were once intact native grasslands, being prone to serrated tussock invasion. Contrary to this, along sections of the Barwon River native grasses are still abundant, and distinguishing the widespread native silver tussock (poa labillardieri) from serrated tussock presented a challenge for many landholders.

Only a small number of the serrated tussock infestations detected during Stage 1 contained mature plants, this can be credited to several champion landholders treating serrated tussock as part of their annual weed control regime. The positive of this project was the dedication of several landholders already treating serrated tussock, helping to prevent the scourge from spreading across the region.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Number of properties provided extension services               | 142      |
| Total number of hectares assessed for serrated tussock         | 8,037 Ha |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock infestation      | 7 Ha     |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock at time of project | 7 Ha     |

“LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT IS BEST ACHIEVED THROUGH AN ONGOING COMMUNITY COMMITMENT, APPLYING INTEGRATED WEED CONTROL MEASURES, GRAZING MANAGEMENT REGIMES AND PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF SEED BY STOCK, VEHICLES AND MACHINERY”  
– VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER;  
MANDY COULSON, 2014

## STAGE 2 - LAKE MODEWARRE AREA

Stage 2 of the Winchelsea project area was located to the east of the Winchelsea township and to the south of Stage 1, the area included the environs of Lake Modewarre and Lake Gherang.

Lake Modewarre has been relatively dry over the last 8 years, the noticeable change to the Lake’s environment has made it susceptible to serrated tussock invasion. Similarly Lake Gherang is also prone to the encroachment of infestations, and a small number of mature serrated tussock plants were detected on the Lake’s south western boundary. This infestation was immediately removed by Parks Victoria once informed.



Larger landholdings become more numerous moving east from the township of Winchelsea, here strategic cropping and grazing prevail as the common farm practice. Very few serrated tussock plants were found in this area, cropping being the most likely element keeping serrated tussock incursions at bay. A highlight of this project was the positive response of landholders towards the extension project and their willingness to treat their serrated tussock.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Number of properties provided extension services               | 195      |
| Total number of hectares assessed for serrated tussock         | 2,475 Ha |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock infestation      | 35 Ha    |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock at time of project | 35 Ha    |



# RIDDELLS CREEK - STAGE 1

The Riddells Creek project was made possible by funding received through a Caring for Our Country (CFOC) Federal Government grant. The project area has been divided into 2 stages for practicality reasons, with Stage 1 completed in 2013/14 and Stage 2 to commence in 2014/15.

Stage 1 of the target area was located to the south and east of the Riddells Creek township, the landscape ranges from flat to mildly undulating land with steep slopes leading down to the watercourses of Jacksons and Riddells Creeks. The area is mostly cleared of vegetation, and has been used for a range of agricultural pursuits over the years.

## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Number of properties provided extension services               | 189      |
| Total number of hectares assessed for serrated tussock         | 1,290 Ha |
| Total hectares observed with serrated tussock infestation      | 154 Ha   |
| Total hectares treated for serrated tussock at time of project | 151 Ha   |

Scattered serrated tussock infestations were found throughout the target area, with higher densities occurring along the steep escarpments of the waterways. Many landholders were actively managing serrated tussock on the arable land but to a lesser degree on the challenging steeper gradients. The ongoing management of serrated tussock can be attributed to the communities existing knowledge and an active Landcare group. The highlight of this project area was the keenness of landholders and land managers to voluntarily treat their infestations prior to the serrated tussock seeding.



“THE PROJECT HAS FORGED CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LANDHOLDERS WHO HAVE BATTLED SERRATED TUSSOCK FOR DECADES AND INCREASED THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS AMONGST NEW LANDHOLDERS”  
– VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER; IVAN CARTER, 2013





## SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS 2013 - 2014

- Community engagement, extension and educational services delivered in 5 target communities as part of the VSTWP's Targeted Extension Program.
- Over 20,000 hectares assessed for serrated tussock and 368 landholders provided educational services.
- 425 hectares treated for serrated tussock throughout the 5 extension projects.
- Production and distribution of 4 editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, each edition being delivered to over 300 subscribers.
- Over 1500 pieces of extension material distributed.
- Creation of 2 display banners promoting the VSTWP.
- Delivery of paper on 'Building the Capacity of Communities to Manage Serrated Tussock', at the 5th Biennial Victorian Weeds Conference.
- New look website [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com) launched in August 2013, a total of 801 visits were recorded in 2013/14.
- Four VSTWP meetings convened, attended by stakeholder representatives from Wyndham City Council, VicTrack, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries.





## VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSOCK WORKING PARTY

For more information please visit:

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