



PROGRESS REPORT

2021 - 2022

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 TUSOCK

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 250,000 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).

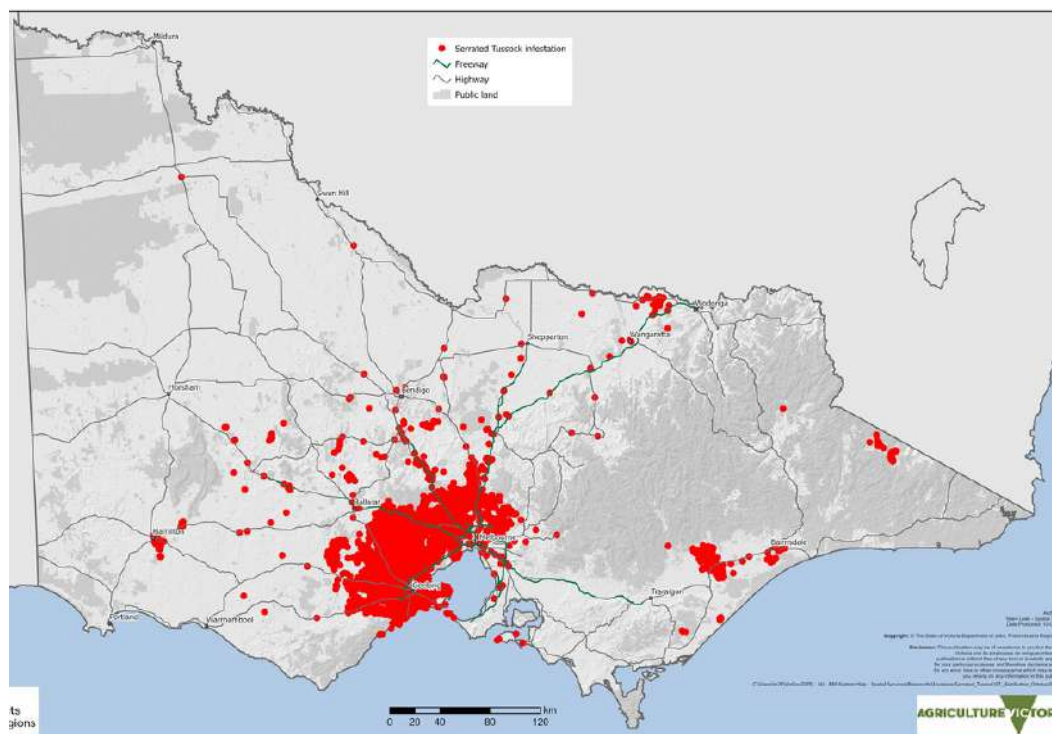


Figure 1: Distribution in Victoria as of October 2022

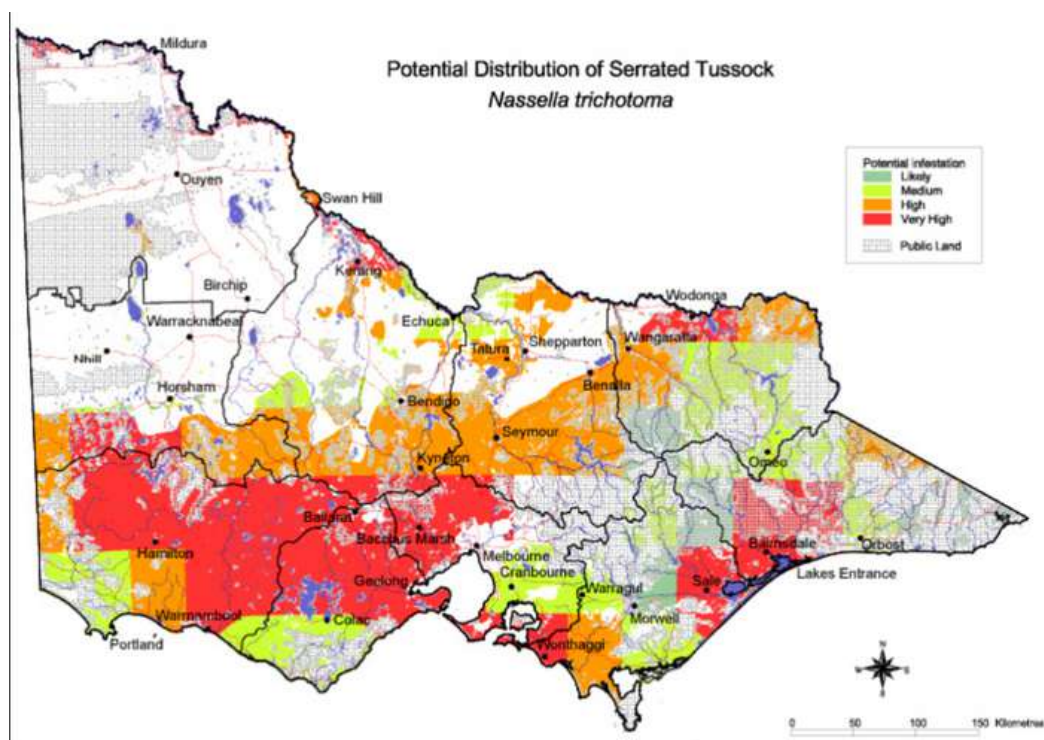


Figure 2: Potental distribution in Victoria

VSTWP MEMBERS 2021 - 2022

Lance Jennison	Chairperson
John Burgess	Deputy Chairperson
Graham Hooper	Treasurer
Martin Deering	Secretary & Executive Officer (Agriculture Victoria)
Peter Lindeman	Community Representative
Bruce Boddington	Community Representative
Lachlan McIntyre	Community Representative
Charles Grech	Community Representative
Joe Lesko	Community Representative
Topsy Baulch	Community Representative

EXTENSION OFFICERS 2021 - 2022

Ivan Carter
Antares Fuhrmann



CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

The 2021-2022 year saw a return to business as usual, after the challenges of COVID, with attendance at events and regular in person meetings, including online options. The VSTWP provided best practice serrated tussock information at key field days including Hamilton Sheepvention, Elmore Field Days, Kyneton Show, Seymour Alternative Farming Expo, Gordon Community Fair, and Ballan Autumn Festival. I attended a number of these field days with the dedicated members of the VSTWP. I also attended the New South Wales and Victoria Weeds conference in Albury, in March this year.

The VSTWP continued to deliver extension programs to educate landowners and encourage serrated tussock management. The 2020-2021 year saw the delivery of projects in Romsey West, north of Melbourne, and in Airly and Briagolong in West Gippsland.

Our Communications and Engagement Officer, Ivan Carter continued to promote best practice management of serrated tussock through education and training, media articles, and the Tussock Times quarterly newsletter. The VSTWP community grant program was reinstated this year with grants provided to the Pentland Hills Landcare group, the Pierrepont Land Protection Group, and the Landsborough Landcare Group. These grants support community groups that are impacted by serrated tussock to raise awareness and to educate landowners.

CHAIRPERSONS REPORT *Continued*

Due to changes proposed through a recent review of establish invasive species, the VSTWP is expecting a decrease in annual funding through Agriculture Victoria, along with changes to the Executive Officer services. We expect the 2023-2028 strategy to integrate these changes and allow the VSTWP to continue the important work in managing serrated tussock across Victoria.

I thank the dedicated VSTWP Community Representatives, Agriculture Victoria and other stakeholders who contribute to the management of serrated tussock.

Lance Jennison

VSTWP Chairperson



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 2021 - 22, our Extension Officers delivered projects in the following areas:

- Monegeetta, in Macedon Ranges Shire,
- Briagolong and Airly, in Wellington Shire.

The VSTWP Extension Officers also delivered follow-up inspections for 10 properties in the Monegeetta extension area, with 2 properties referred to Agriculture Victoria for potential compliance action.

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, Local Government, and Agriculture Victoria.

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.

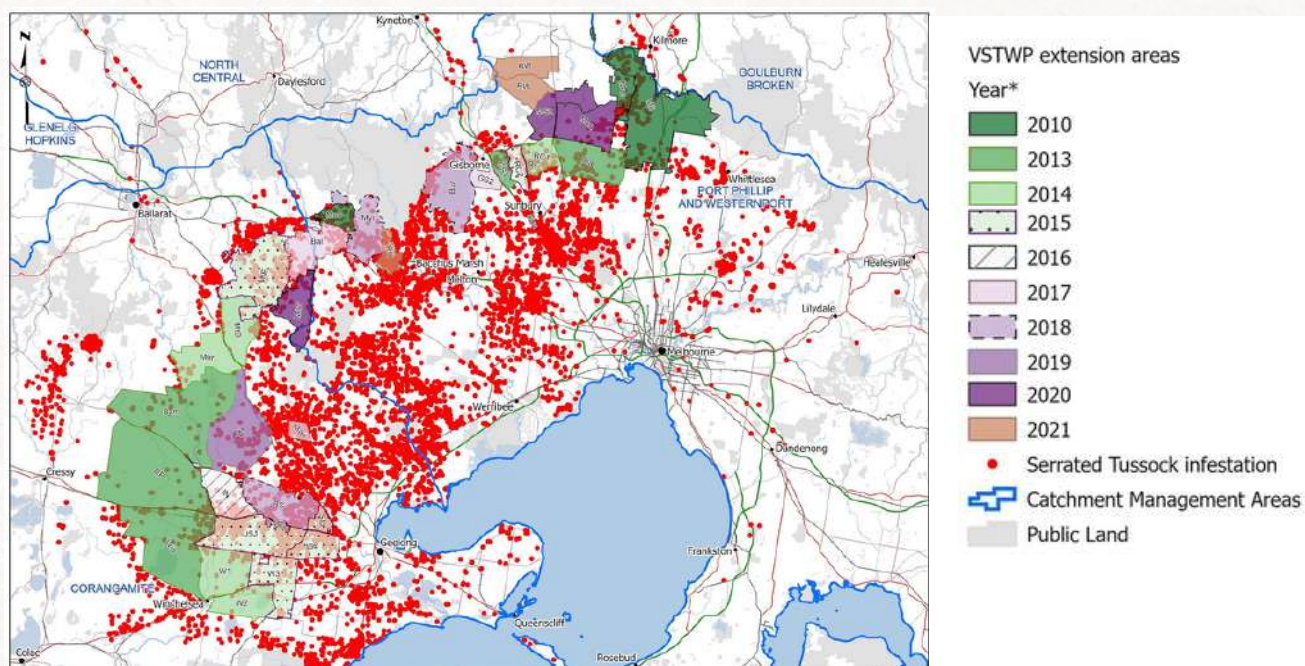
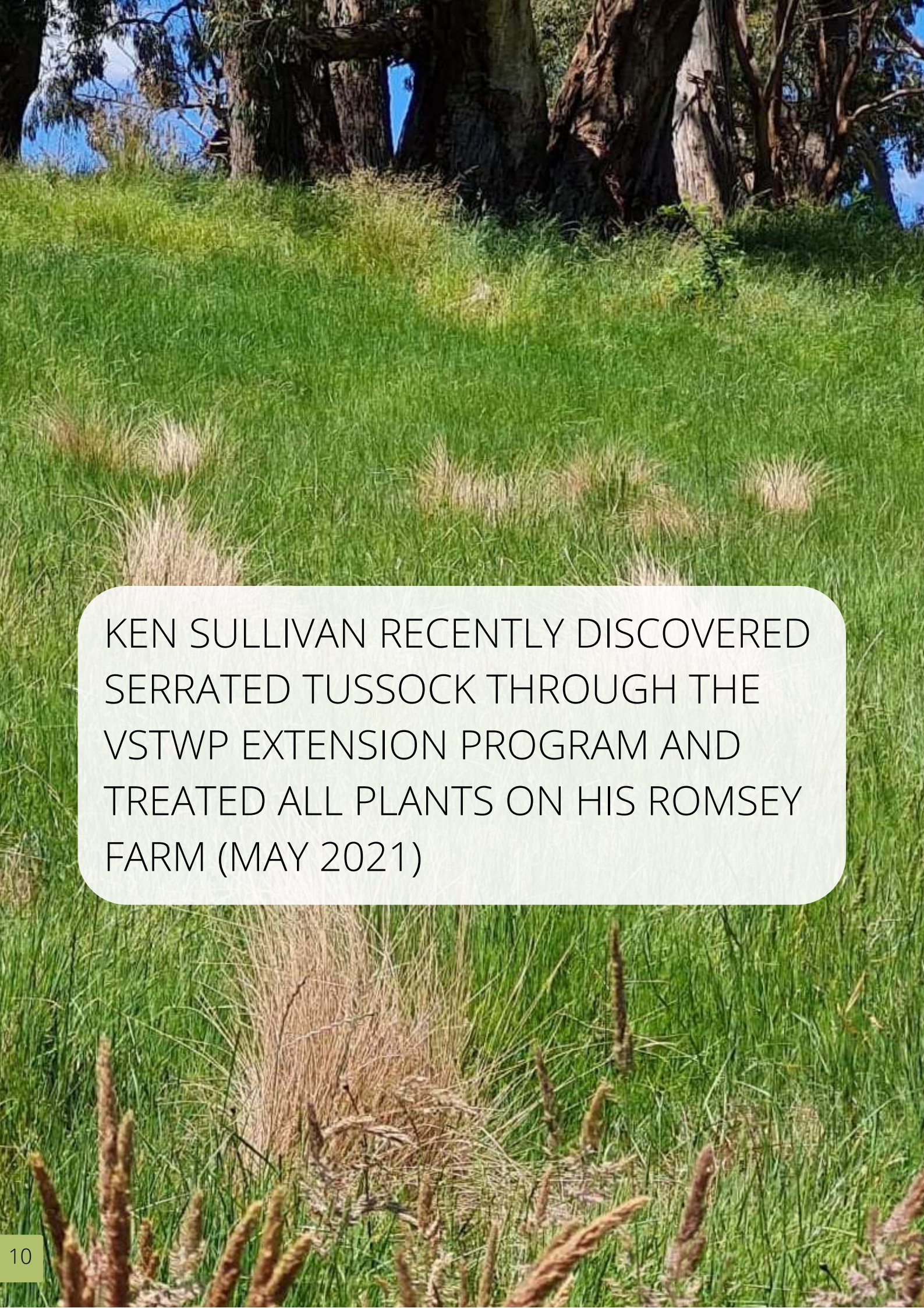


Figure 3: VSTWP Extension Areas 2010/21 (DJPR 2022)



KEN SULLIVAN RECENTLY DISCOVERED
SERRATED TUSSOCK THROUGH THE
VSTWP EXTENSION PROGRAM AND
TREATED ALL PLANTS ON HIS ROMSEY
FARM (MAY 2021)

ROMSEY WEST STAGE 1 EXTENSION AREA

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) completed 122 property assessments as part of their Romsey West Serrated Tussock Extension Project, which resulted in 4 hectares of serrated tussock being treated by landowners. The project was undertaken in an area around the west of Romsey, around the Kerrie and Bolinda townships, and this complements recent extension projects in the Monegeetta and Riddells Creek areas.

The Romsey West project area comprised 180 private properties of mixed land uses and covered over 4000 hectares of prime farming land. Controlling serrated tussock in this area was key to halting its spread further north and west. Areas to the south of the target area, around Sunbury and Clarkefield, have large infestations of the invasive grass. The aim of the project was to educate landowners and the community on how to identify and treat serrated tussock, before it becomes a menace.

Since the commencement in May 2021, the project offered extension services to all landholders in the target area. This included the opportunity to attend a serrated tussock information session online, receive identification guidance, have their property assessed and mapped for serrated tussock, and provided personalised treatment advice. All of these services were free and funded by the VSTWP and complied with strict COVID safe protocols.

Partnerships were formed with the Macedon Ranges Shire Council, local Landcare groups and Melbourne Water, as well as many landowners throughout the project

On completion of the 12 month project, 120 landowners took up the offer of one-on-one advice, improving their ability to identify and manage serrated tussock for the long-term. The outcomes from the project included the treatment of approximately 4 hectares of serrated tussock-infested land across the project area, with only one problem property given more time to get their treatments completed.

Key Achievements



**3390 hectares
assessed**



**151 properties
assessed**



10 hectares infested



6 hectares treated



"WE ACHIEVED OUR AIM OF EDUCATING
LANDOWNERS ABOUT THE DETRIMENTAL IMPACTS
OF SERRATED TUSSOCK"

– Ivan Carter, VSTWP Extension Officer

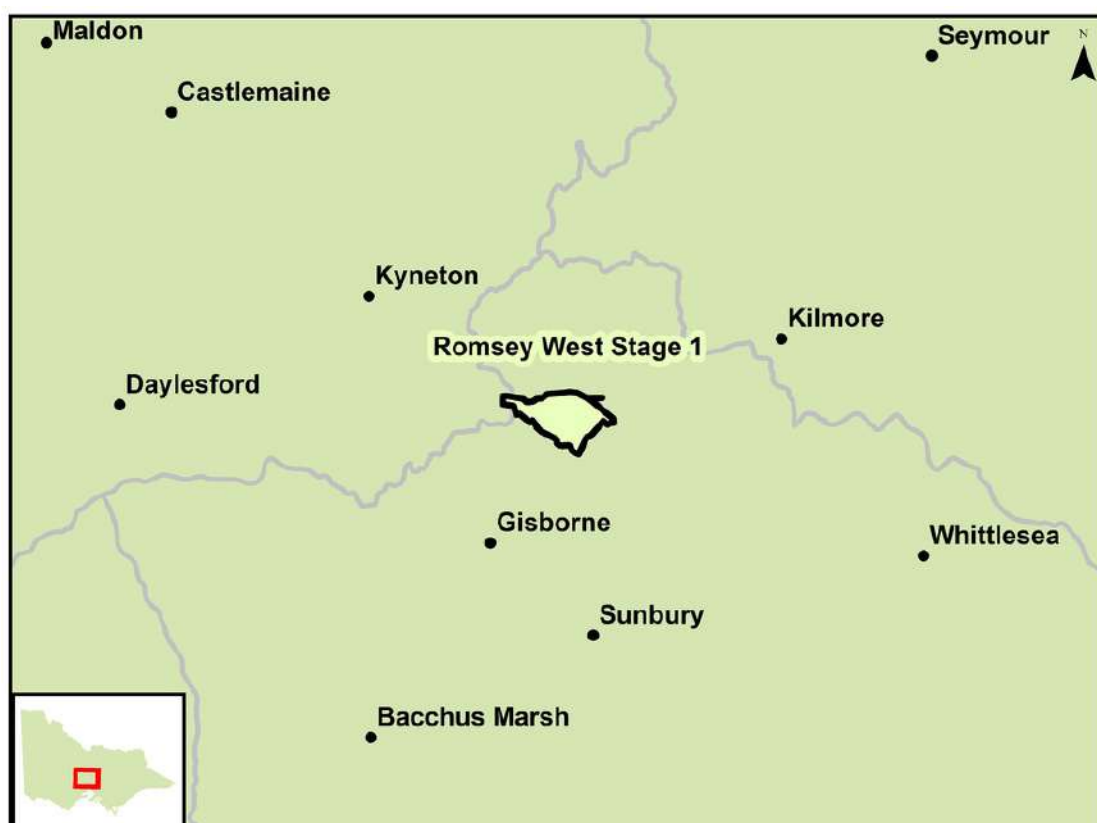


Figure 4: Romsey West Stage 1 Extension Area

AIRLY AND BRIAGOLONG EXTENSION AREAS

The Airly and Briagolong project areas are situated on the fringes of east Gippsland, near the township of Maffra. The Avon River flows along the northern reaches of Airly and many tributaries and channels lie within the target area, including Nuntin Creek and the Main Eastern Channel. Freestone Creek runs west of the township of Briagolong and through a number of properties in the target area.

The Airly and Briagolong projects covered 3920 hectares across 138 properties. Land use within these areas ranges from high-intensity dairy farming and agricultural enterprises along with lifestyle properties/hobby farms and residential properties. The extension projects worked to enhance landowner understanding of best management practice methods and timing of control, to enable long-term successful outcomes.

Five properties were found with serrated tussock infestations. All infestations were under control. The main objective for many of the landowner was to understand the key identification characteristics. Serrated tussock is often confused with the native common tussock grass (*Poa labillardieri*) which to the untrained eye it could easily be mistaken for.

The projects also included the mapping of infestations on all roadsides within the project area. Roadside mapping data was provided to the Wellington Shire Council for their roadside weed management database, to enable early intervention and targeted treatment during their annual works programs.

Continued monitoring by these dedicated property owners and the Wellington Shire Council will no doubt ensure a positive effect across the Gippsland region.

Key Achievements



**2242 hectares
assessed**



**66 properties
assessed**



0.11 hectares infested



“THE PROJECT AIMS TO RAISE AWARENESS, PROMOTE BEST PRACTICE MANAGEMENT AND ENCOURAGE COMMUNITIES TO VOLUNTARILY MANAGE SERRATED TUSSOCK”

– Antares Fuhrmann, VSTWP Extension Officer

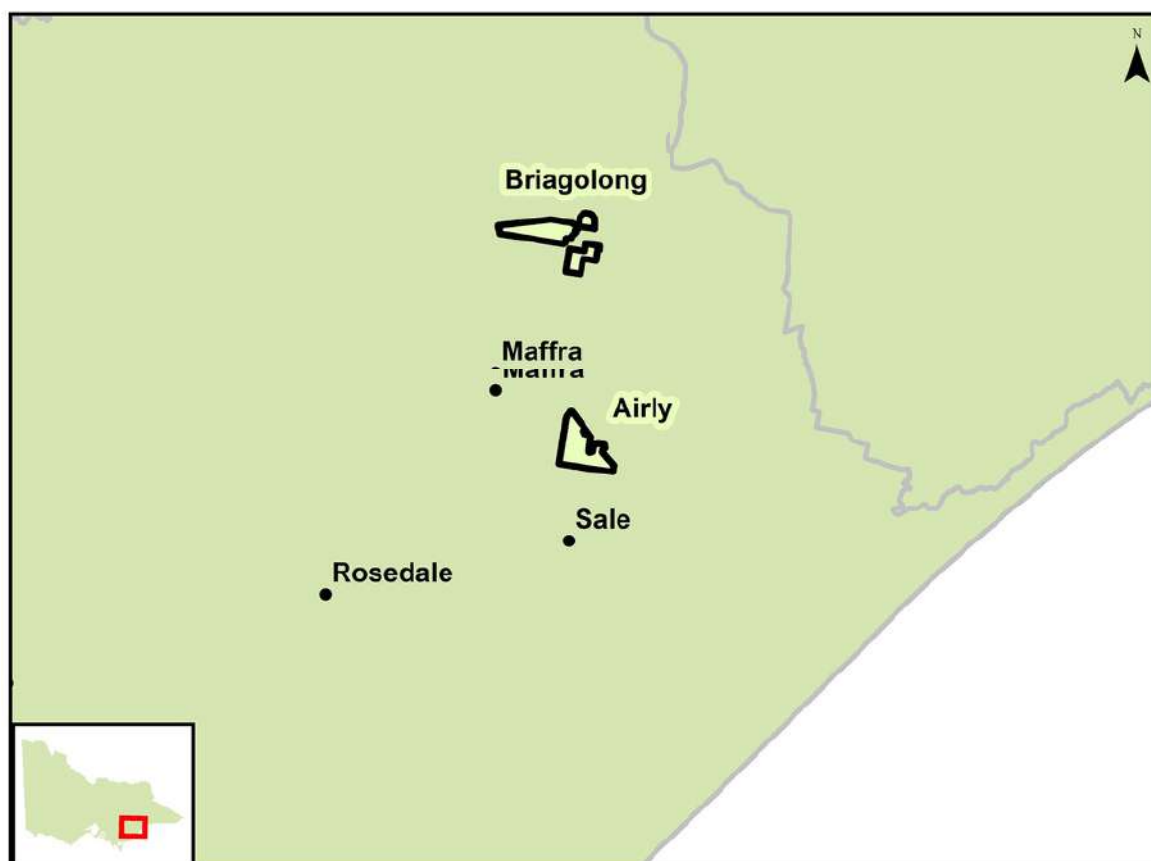


Figure 5: Briagolong and Airly Extension Areas



PROVITION OF GRANTS

The VSTWP provided grants to two community groups to build their capacity to achieve long term management of serrated tussock.

Pierrepoint Land Protection Group – east of Hamilton

- Stand-up banner produced, and static display at a Cafe over 3 weeks.
- 72 membership forms and brochures hand delivered.
- Flier e-mailed through Southern Farming Systems and AgVic contact list.
- Media articles in the Hamilton Spectator, PLPG & two school newsletters.
- Increased landholder and rural community awareness of serrated tussock.
- Engaged with target group - new small landowners.
- Established a more collaborative and productive relationship between the Shire, AgVic and the PLPG.



Pentland Hills Landcare Group – west of Bacchus Marsh

- Mailout through the Moorabool Shire Council to all landowners in the project area.
- Roadside mailbox drop to 500 properties and event notice in the PHLG newsletter.
- Eight media articles/adverts in the Moorabool News, along with a Facebook campaign.
- Serrated tussock best practice field day with talks and presentations from:
 - Rachel Wragg, AusEco Solutions
 - County Helicopters
 - Doug Robinson, PHLG member
 - Mandy Coulson, past VSTWP Extension Officer and VSTWP Member, and
 - Talia Humphries, PhD Candidate, Federation University.
- Over 50 people visited the hall where there was information on serrated tussock and other weeds.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

- Over 4,000 pieces of extension material distributed through six field days, one stakeholder event, enquires and extension projects.
- Interviews on ABC Ballarat, ABC Bendigo, Seymour FM and Voice FM.
- Produced and added four videos to the VSTWP YouTube channel and website.
- Distribution of four editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, delivered to over 323 subscribers via e-news.
- Developed and implemented Instagram channel and engaged wider audience.
- The publication of serrated tussock media articles in six Local Government newsletters across the state, and 12 Landcare newsletters, promoting the VSTWP and serrated tussock control.
- VSTWP Facebook page gaining 588 followers, an increase of 10% over 12 months.
- YouTube channel updated, featuring five new best practice videos attaining over 14,000 views, an increase of 12% over the 12 months.
- Major Facebook boost campaign for two months, highlighting upcoming events and field days. 5000 viewers reached.
- Distribution of landowner packages through local government and Landcare.
- Serrated tussock signs displayed on landowner gates at crucial sites.
- Collaboration with Project Platypus - Upper Wimmera Landcare to install three roadside signs near Landsborough.
- Contributed funds to international research into biological control methods for serrated tussock.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The VSTWP thanks the large number of Landcare groups, municipalities and other organisations that continue to support our projects.

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

The VSTWP acknowledge the support received from the State Government of Victoria through the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

Published and Authorised by: The VSTWP, December 2022.

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