



2016 – 2017
**PROGRESS
REPORT**

VICTORIAN
SERRATED TUSSOCK
WORKING PARTY



VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY PROGRESS REPORT 2016-2017

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For more information on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party visit the website at 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 2016/17

John Burgess	(Chair)
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Virginia Lawrence	(Treasurer)
Wendy Bitans	(Community Representative)
Peter Lindeman	(Community Representative)
Margot Galletly	(Community Representative)
Alan Morton	(Community Representative)
Rob Shea	(Community Representative)
Lance Jennison	(Community Representative)

VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICERS 2016/17

Ivan Carter
Mandy Coulson
Roger MacRaild



CHAIR'S REPORT

Progress continues to be made in the identification, management and control of serrated tussock in Victoria.

This achievement was brought about by a united partnership approach between the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP), communities, public land managers, local government and DEDJTR. The efforts of all stake holders concerned in the identification and control of serrated tussock in Victoria is to be commended.

The past year has been very busy for all VSTWP members, including its Extension Officers. The relentless fight against serrated tussock persisted as new satellite areas were discovered and work in the containment line continued. As well, some sections of the recognised core areas were constantly monitored and managed.

The 2018/23 Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy is nearing finalisation and it is anticipated that it will provide an innovative approach to the management of serrated tussock in core infestations areas, containment lines and satellite locations by employing additional social science and educational techniques for Extension Officers. The approach will focus on establishing sound relationships with stakeholders and will promote greater interagency participation in all project areas, not only to the west of Melbourne, but in Central Victoria and Gippsland.

The use of modern technology is being considered as a tool for Extension Officers, as there is sufficient proof to indicate reliable and accurate identification of serrated tussock in escarpment and hard to access areas is obtainable. As well, early indications are, economic advantages are attainable by using drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV's), in difficult terrain or large area land holdings.

During 2017/2018, the Working Party continued communication with the Victorian public via the very popular VSTWP webpage and the quarterly newsletter, "Tussock Times". Television, radio, Facebook and YouTube were also employed to engage communities and their resultant demographics. It was noted that after each of the media services were transmitted the VSTWP webpage hits increased markedly, indicating that the programs were reaching the targeted audience. The YouTube video received 1600 hits in a very short time and Facebook proved to be very popular.

The almost monthly country Field Days and Agriculture Shows were attended by the VSTWP Communication and Engagement Officer, and Working Party members. This proved to be very worthwhile as it allowed the VSTWP to showcase itself by providing a non-threatening promotion stall equipped with appropriate marketing and educational brochures. It also offered the public a user friendly, "one on one" chat site, regarding identification of serrated

tussock and guidance as to methods of control. The publicity gained from this type of event is immeasurable. At one country show, over two days, more than two hundred people sought advice concerning serrated tussock identification and control methods.

The VSTWP continued to be represented at the federal government funded White Paper Delivery Leadership Group meetings.

Round One White Paper funding was received and the VSTWP provided Community Grants to three community groups to the total of \$48,987.

The White Paper Round Two projects were identified and approved, and funding was provided for the following;

- Social Science research - motivating disengaged landowners by the implementation of effective community engagement.
- Applied Science research - improving the current management practices for control of serrated tussock and,
- The effective management of Field Days in the core areas.

Without doubt, there are challenging times ahead for the VSTWP however, the long-term success of the new strategy and the extension program will depend largely on sound land management and follow up control, including targeted use of legislation, as required. Building the capacity of land owners, communities and stake holders as an integral group is essential to manage serrated tussock on a long-term basis. This aim will be assisted by thorough implementation of the strategy objectives, the extension program and monitored compliance to the agendas.

On behalf of the VSTWP, I wish to thank DEDJTR for its continued funding and support. The line of communication between DEDJTR and the Working Party has never been stronger, or clearer.

I also wish to thank the Land Care Groups, public land managers, local government, other agency stakeholders and the wider community for their continued support. The effort of all stake holders is very much appreciated.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to the hard-working, dedicated members of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party for their commitment to the control of serrated tussock in Victoria, now and into the future.

John Burgess

John Burgess, Chair
March, 2018



*John Burgess, Chairperson
of the Victorian Serrated
Tussock Working Party*

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. Plants readily invade agricultural land, native grasslands and grassy woodlands, and will rapidly infest areas of bare ground. Each mature serrated tussock plant can produce more than 100,000 seeds in a year, which is mostly dispersed by wind; however 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 Melbourne's north. In 1997 the estimated area of serrated tussock in Victoria was 130,000 hectares, but its potential distribution has been predicted to cover 4.6 million hectares in Victoria or one fifth of the state. Serrated tussock is also found in New South Wales and Tasmania.

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.



SERRATED TUSSOCK DISTRIBUTION

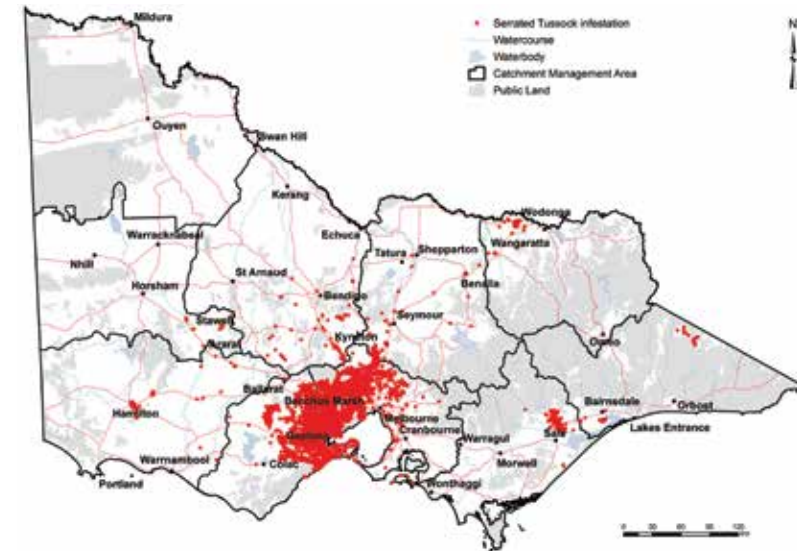


Figure 1: Distribution of serrated tussock in Victoria. (DEDJTR, 2017)

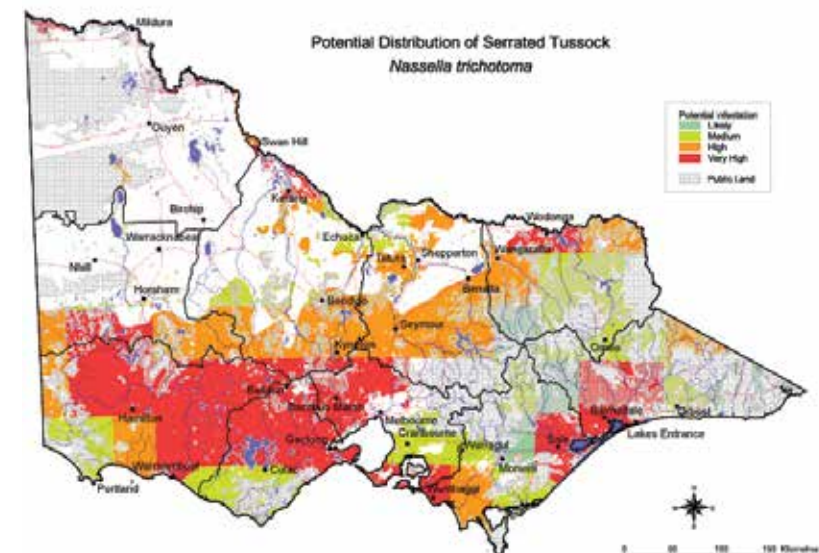


Figure 2: The potential distribution of serrated tussock in Victoria. (CSIRO, 2012)

THE VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) is a community driven group focused on serrated tussock management in Victoria, and an incorporated non-profit organisation. It formed in 1995 in response to community concern about serrated tussock, and has successfully contributed to reducing the spread of serrated tussock across Victoria.

The Victorian Serrated Tussock Program has conducted and/or sponsored a wide range of serrated tussock programs. These include undertaking research into pastures and herbicide technology, production of appropriate extension materials, provision of incentives to land managers and community groups and comprehensive mapping, extension, monitoring and compliance campaigns. A coordinated management program where a combination of control methods is used has shown to be the most effective way of controlling this noxious weed.

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. In 2012, the VSTWP released the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2012-2017.

The Objectives of the strategy are:

- 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.





VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY EXTENSION PROGRAM

The VSTWP has found most effective way to reduce the spread of serrated tussock from the core infestation is through its Extension 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. Where extension efforts are unsuccessful in convincing landowners of their obligations to control serrated tussock, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport, and Resources (DEDJTR) compliance is then recommended to support the sustained action of the majority of landowners.

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 2016/17, our Extension Officers delivered targeted extension projects in:

- Ballan
- Inverleigh North
- Gisborne Stage 2

Providing expert one-to-one advice is recognised to be most beneficial to landholders and forms the foundation of success; personalised advice provides the landholder with the capacity and confidence to successfully achieve long-term control of serrated tussock on their property. The experience and expertise of our Extension Officers and relationships with communities are what makes our extension projects so effective and successful.

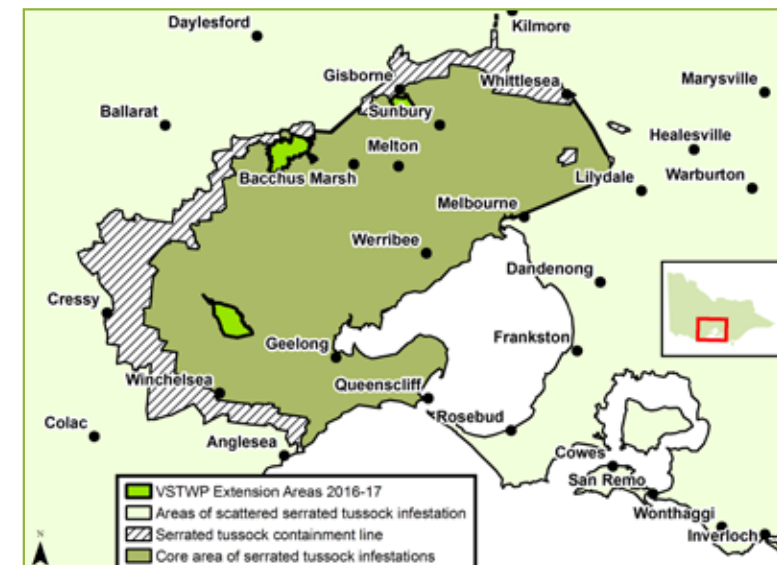


Figure 3: VSTWP Extension Areas 2011-2017. (DEDJTR, 2017)

“IT’S AMAZING WHEN THE COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER. THE COORDINATED AERIAL SPRAYING ALONG THE MOORABOOL RIVER HAS BEEN THE MOMENTUM TO DRAW OTHERS ALONG FOR THE RIDE. IN THE END EVERYONE WINS THROUGH REDUCED RE-INVASION FROM SEED.”

- ROGER MACRAILD, 2017; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER



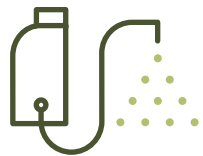
6,600 Ha
of assessed land



104
land managers
engaged



751 Ha
observed with
serrated tussock



600 Ha
treated for
serrated tussock

BALLAN

The Ballan extension area was located south of the Ballan township and included 122 properties ranging from larger agricultural holdings to smaller life-style blocks.

A good response was received from landowners on smaller blocks who were not making their income from their land. There was genuine interest and a willingness to act especially given most had a very low level of infestation. It appears the biggest limitation for this type of property is the tendency for blocks to regularly change hands.

The main challenge was getting landowners to finish the job. As in previous target areas there were several absentee landowners were very hard to reach. These landowners took up an inordinate amount of time for minimal return as infestations were mostly minimal. It was good working with landowners who were willing to act despite sizable infestations.

Moorabool Shire's program is continuing a good standard as the roadsides were treated early and to a very high standard. An asset to me was the ability to promote Landcare as an ongoing avenue for information and support. It was also helpful to have complementary messages from the likes of Grow West and Land for Wildlife.

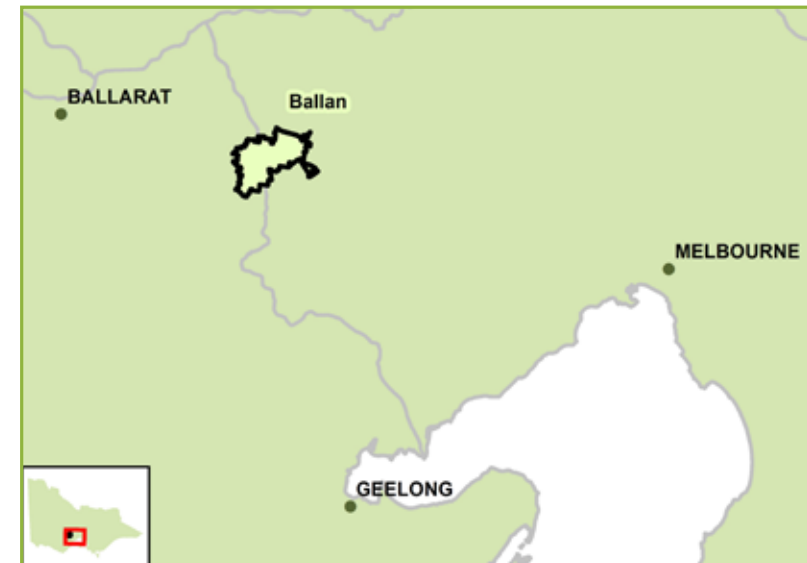


Figure 4: Ballan Extension Area. (DEDJTR, 2017)



“THE LANDCARE COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN LEADING THE WAY IN PROMOTING SERRATED TUSSOCK AWARENESS IN THE INVERLEIGH REGION. IT HAS BEEN GREAT TO CONNECT WITH THEM AND HELP ‘SPREAD THE WORD’ TO THE LARGER COMMUNITY”

– TIM JOHNSTON, 2017; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER



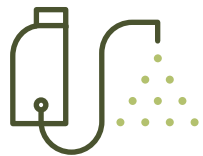
4,926 Ha
of assessed land



80
land managers engaged



176 Ha
observed with serrated tussock



160 Ha
treated for serrated tussock

INVERLEIGH NORTH

The Inverleigh North extension area is bounded by the townships of Inverleigh, Teesdale and Shelford, and covers 6357 hectares. The Inverleigh Flora & Fauna Reserve represent about a sixth of the total project area. The majority of serrated tussock infestations were low in density. Some heavier infestations were located along the Hamilton Highway either side of the Inverleigh township, and along the Native Hut Creek in Teesdale.

Pasture grazing by sheep is the main agricultural land-use on the larger properties, followed by broad-acre grain production. These landowners were aware of serrated tussock and have had good long term control measures in place. Smaller landholders, were scattered around the townships. The majority of these landowners had been in the district for over 10 years, were aware of serrated tussock. Many still appreciated assistance with identification and control strategies.

Difficulty in locating and engaging absentee landholders is one of the challenges in this project area. The rapid spring growth also made inspections and identification challenging as inadequately grazed pastures were often above shoulder height.

The project was well received by landholders. On-going promotion of serrated tussock control over the last two decades by the Geelong Landcare Network and VSTWP extension activities in neighbouring areas contributed to increased awareness of serrated tussock. The larger landholders were appreciative of the VSTWP working in the area.



Figure 5: Inverleigh North Extension Area. (DEDJTR, 2017)



“THIS AREA FEATURED MANY LANDOWNERS WHO HAD NO EXPERIENCE WITH SERRATED TUSSOCK MANAGEMENT, AND WERE KEEN TO LEARN HOW TO BEST IDENTIFY THIS NOXIOUS WEED”

– IVAN CARTER, 2017; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER



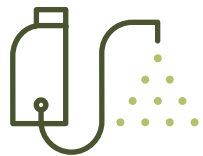
2,095 Ha
of assessed land



190
land managers engaged



59 Ha
observed with serrated tussock



55 Ha
treated for serrated tussock

GISBORNE SOUTH STAGE TWO

This project area was situated in the area to the south of Gisborne, 1 hour north of Melbourne. The area is known for its fertile soil and good rainfall, with the landscape mostly cleared for agricultural and housing purposes and included the tributaries of Jacksons Creek.

Serrated tussock was found scattered throughout most of project area, with higher densities of core infestations along waterways and steep escarpments to the south of the project area. Many landowners were not aware of serrated tussock, mostly due to the changing demographic of the region. There were many issues contacting absentee landowners and situations where landowners were not able to support community action.

Despite these limitations, the project had a high level of voluntarily compliance, with over 90% of landowners completing the works within the projects time frame. The Field Day kicked off events at the Gisborne Further Learning Centre and resulted some pre-inspection bookings. Many landowners learnt how to identify serrated tussock and how to differentiate it from other similar grass species. This task was helped by the extension officer bringing live specimens to each property to assist with the identification process.

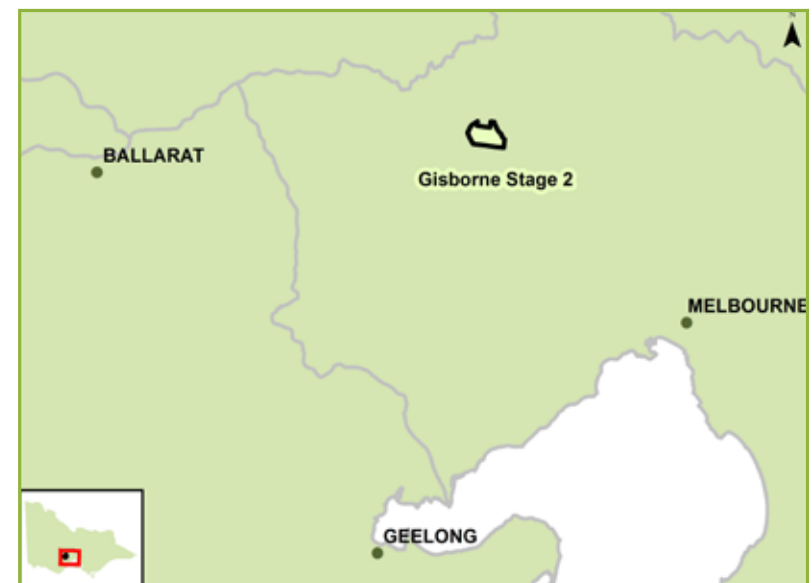


Figure 6: Gisborne Stage 2 Extension Area. (DEDJTR, 2017)

SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2016 – 2017



13,500_{Ha}

assessed for
serrated tussock



2,000⁺

pieces of extension
material distributed



10

community events and
field days attended



9

community radio
station interviews



3,800

video views on the
YouTube channel



16

roadsigns installed in
isolated infested area

Extension program

- Over 13,500 hectares assessed for serrated tussock and 320 landholders provided with educational services.
- 809 hectares treated for serrated tussock throughout the three extension projects.

Engagement

- Over 2000 pieces of extension material distributed through 10 field days, two events, community engagement activities, enquires and extension projects.
- Ten community events and field days attended, including the Times Rural Expo.

Publications

- Production and distribution of four editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, each edition being delivered to over 320 subscribers.
- Control Calendar updated and reprinted for extension purposes.
- The production of three new case studies highlighting successful serrated tussock management from the most recent extension areas.
- The publication of serrated tussock media articles in twelve local government newsletters across the state, and ten community newspapers, promoting the VSTWP.

Promotion

- Ongoing improvements to the VSTWP website including:
 - Biography of all extension officers.
 - Updating of Video Gallery for all videos and the latest TV Commercial.
 - Events updated and promoted.
 - Serrate tussock ID App added to website.
- VSTWP Facebook site launched and linked to website, gaining nearly 200 followers by the end of June 2016.
- YouTube channel updated, featuring new best practice management videos attaining over 3800 views in total.
- Major Radio Network Advertising on the 3AW Network for three weeks, highlighting the services offered by the VSTWP. Website users during this period was an average of 320 users per day.
- Nine Community Radio Station Interviews and Community Service Announcements (CSAs), promoting the VSTWP and our achievements. Over 300 CSAs played on community radio.
- VSTWP TV Commercial produced and aired on the ABC, Prime and Win Networks as a free Community Service Announcement.
- The production and installation of 16 roadside signs in isolated infested area, across eight local government areas, reminding landowners to be persistent in the treatment of serrated tussock.

Strategic Actions

- Review and develop the 2018-23 Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy
- Successful in receiving funds through the Federal Government Ag White Paper, to deliver a variety of innovative projects.
- The second Stakeholder Forum bringing together stakeholders from the core area to collaborate and share ideas for better management of serrated tussock, resulting in agreed strategic actions.

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 local councils, where our extension projects were run:

- Moorabool Shire
- Golden Plains Shire
- Macedon Ranges Shire

The Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

Without you, our serrated tussock extension projects would not be as effective as they are today. We greatly appreciate the time, dedication and interest that has been put towards controlling serrated tussock.



VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY

For more information please visit:

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