



**VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY**  
**Progress Report 2014 – 2015**

## VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY PROGRESS REPORT 2014-2015

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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

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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 2014/15

Peter Lindeman (Chair)  
John Burgess (Vice Chair)  
Virginia Lawrence (Treasurer)  
Wendy Bitans (Community representative)  
John Webb Ware (Community representative)  
Peter Steller (Community representative)  
Margot Galletly (Community representative)

## VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICERS 2014/15

Ivan Carter  
Mandy Coulson  
Roger MacRaid







“THE IMPORTANT ACTION OF SERRATED TUSSOCK CONTROL, WORKS AS A CATALYST FOR LANDSCAPE SCALE CHANGE AND SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED” – PETER LINDEMAN, VSTWP CHAIR

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

On behalf of the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, I thank you for taking the time to read through our many achievements of 2014/15 in this, our Annual Progress Report.

I continue to believe that serrated tussock remains the greatest threat to Victoria's land and resource base. The important action of control, works as a catalyst for landscape scale change and should not be underestimated.

This past year has been a busy one for the VSTWP, with our extension officers working hard over four project areas across Victoria. The continued diligence of the working party members and extension officers, supported by the enthusiasm of many of the landholders we encounter, has led to a successful year with over 200 hectares voluntarily treated for serrated tussock.

It is with some sadness that I announce the departure of one of our extension officers, Mandy Coulson. Mandy has been working for the VSTWP for over 10 years, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work and enthusiasm over the last decade. Mandy has a great knowledge of the serrated tussock problem having also worked for many years in previous Government departments undertaking research and extension before starting with the Working Party. Mandy's ability to convey that knowledge and relate this, along with the trust that she gained from landowners, will be hard to emulate. Good luck to Mandy with her future endeavours.

I would like to thank the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources for continuing to provide funding to the VSTWP, and for their continued support in managing serrated tussock.

I would also like to thank the landholders we have encountered this year, who have heartily taken up the challenge of serrated tussock control. A can-do attitude goes a long way in controlling serrated tussock.

Thank you lastly to the VSTWP members and staff, who continue to provide their time and enthusiasm to this cause. The VSTWP would not exist without you, and I am grateful for all your hard work.

Peter Lindeman, Chair 2014–2015



## SERRATED TUSSOCK

A native to South America, serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) is a perennial plant which can live for over 20 years. It 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 can quickly infest areas of bare ground. A mature serrated tussock plant can produce more than 140,000 seeds in a year, and seeds may remain viable in the soil for up to 15 years. Seed is most often dispersed by wind; however people and animals can be unknowing vectors, with seed being carried on clothing, vehicles or fur and transported over vast distances.

The first known serrated tussock plant in Victoria was documented in 1954 at a site north of Melbourne. Since then, it has gradually spread to the north and west of Melbourne, extending down to and beyond Geelong. Serrated tussock is also found in New South Wales and Tasmania.

The map shows where serrated tussock is currently found in Australia (yellow) and where it has the potential to spread (brown) if not managed.



*Current and potential spread of serrated tussock* Source: "Weed Management Guide Serrated Tussock—*Nassella trichotoma*" 2003. By the CRC for Australian Weed Management and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage



## 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. 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.

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. 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.

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.





## TARGETED EXTENSION PROGRAM

The most effective way the VSTWP has found to reduce serrated tussock spread is through its Targeted Extension Program. The core of this program is its grassroots focus, engaging communities and empowering them to voluntarily achieve high levels of serrated tussock control.

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 2014/15, our Extension Officers delivered targeted extension projects in:

- Riddells Creek
- Winchelsea
- Mt Doran
- Stonehaven

Providing this expert 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 the commitment of communities are what makes our extension projects so effective and successful.





“THE LANDHOLDERS WERE KEEN TO TREAT THE SERRATED TUSSOCK ONCE IT WAS IDENTIFIED, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE GRASSFIRE HAD CREATED AN IDEAL CANVAS FOR NEW SEEDLINGS TO GERMINATE”  
 – IVAN CARTER, 2015; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER

#### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Number of hectares assessed	1459 Ha
Number of land managers engaged	108
Total hectares observed with serrated tussock	33 Ha
Total hectares under treatment for serrated tussock at the time of the project	26 Ha

## RIDDELLS CREEK – STAGE 2

2014/15 saw the second stage of the Riddells Creek project unfold, made possible by funding received through a Caring for Our Country Federal Government grant awarded to us in 2013. Stage 1 was successfully completed in 2013/14, and our Extension Officer Ivan Carter continued to achieve fantastic results for Stage 2 in 2014/15.

The stage 2 project area lies within the Upper Jacksons Catchment, known for its natural temperate grasslands and high ecological values. The project area contains a mix of mostly cleared land and some high-quality grass lands, and has historically been used for agricultural production and hobby farms.

Serrated tussock was found scattered throughout most of the target area, and denser infestations were found along waterways and on steep escarpments. Many landholders were already actively managing serrated tussock, and informed Ivan that the coverage of serrated tussock had decreased substantially over the past few years.

The project was able to provide some important services to landholders who have battled serrated tussock for over a decade, and faced a wild fire just a year before.





“ENGAGING ALL STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN A TARGET AREA ENABLES A COLLABORATIVE AND COHESIVE INTEGRATED WEED CONTROL PROGRAM, BRINGING SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY”

– MANDY COULSON, 2015; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Number of hectares assessed	2044 Ha
Number of land managers engaged	120
Total hectares observed with serrated tussock	12 Ha
Total hectares under treatment for serrated tussock at the time of the project	9 Ha

## WINCHELSEA – STAGE 3

Following on from stages 1 & 2 the previous year, Stage 3 of the Winchelsea project targeted the Moriac, Modewarre and Gnarwarre areas, west of Geelong. The project was located on the outskirts of the ‘core’ infestation of serrated tussock, which surrounds Melbourne and Geelong.

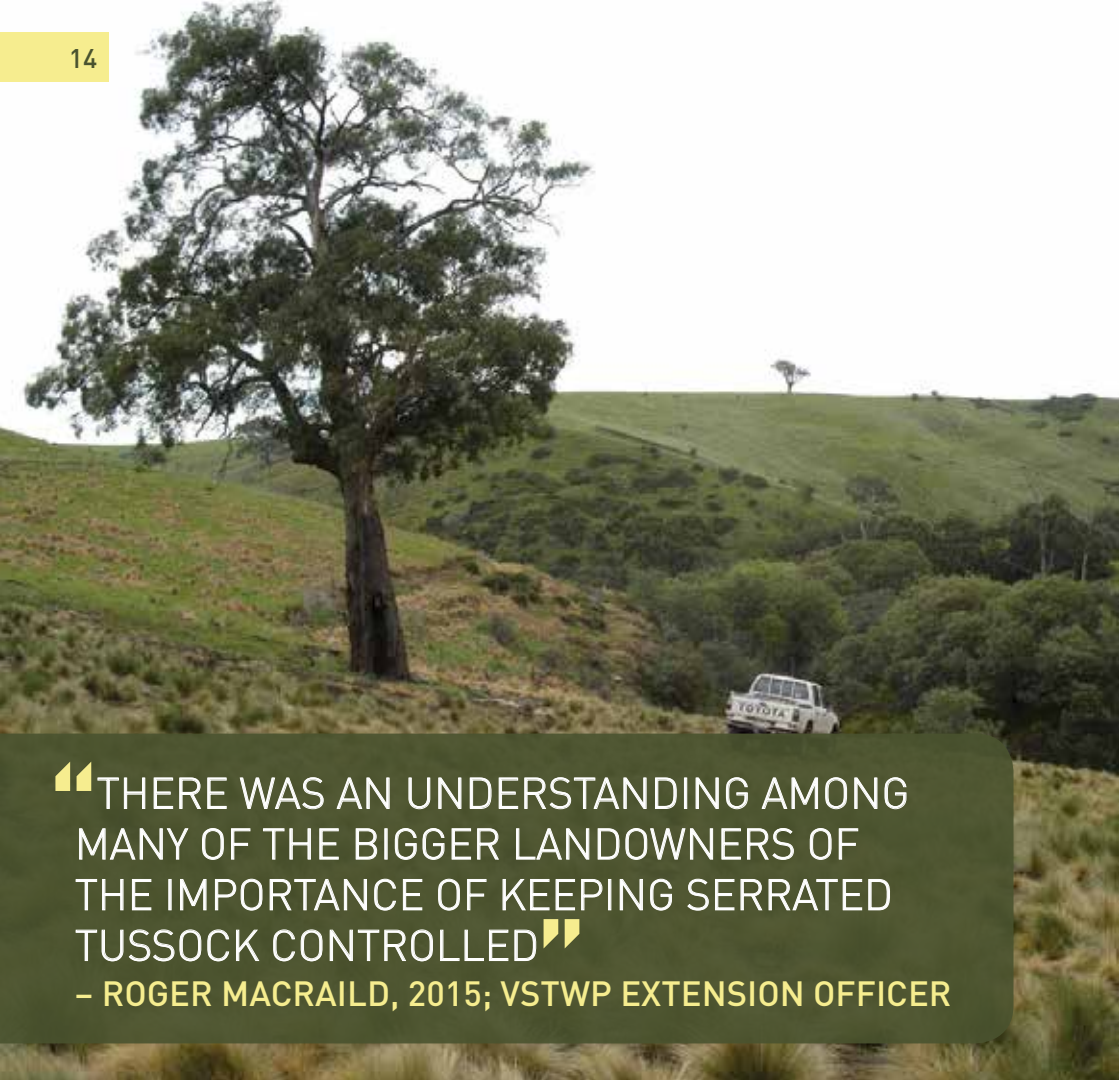
Properties varied greatly in this area, ranging from less than one hectare to three hundred hectares. Once made up of large agricultural properties, today the area consists of mostly lifestyle and township properties, and average sized blocks used for cropping, grazing, olives and horses.

Its close proximity to the Melbourne/Geelong core serrated tussock infestation means the area is under constant pressure of reinfestation. Landholders in this region need to remain vigilant in order to prevent serrated tussock from establishing.

Absentee landholders and steep country along the Barwon River were some of the challenges faced by our Extension Officer Mandy Coulson. However Mandy was well supported by the local Landcare group, which actively encourages an integrated approach to controlling serrated tussock.







“THERE WAS AN UNDERSTANDING AMONG MANY OF THE BIGGER LANDOWNERS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING SERRATED TUSSOCK CONTROLLED”  
 – ROGER MACRAILD, 2015; VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICER

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Number of hectares assessed	5714 Ha
Number of land managers engaged	140
Total hectares observed with serrated tussock	78 Ha
Total hectares under treatment for serrated tussock at the time of the project	62 Ha

## MT DORAN

Extending on from the Meredith extension project in 2013 – 2014, the Mt Doran extension area stretched north south from Mount Doran to Meredith, and east west from Morrisons to Elaine. The project area aimed to protect part of the Moorabool River catchment and part of the Lal Lal State Forest.

The area has a mix of uses, including grazing and cropping. Lifestyle properties and bush blocks make up a portion of the project area, as do tree plantations.

Serrated tussock infestations appeared to be following waterways, particularly along the Moorabool River and Tea Tree Creek. These infestations were more established than those of the previous project area; however they had not yet spread to the agricultural areas. Roadsides were also a hotspot for serrated tussock infestations, which have likely been spread by vehicles and slashing machinery.

A handful of landholders in the target area were slow to become involved in the extension project, and the presence of vacant properties also made engagement difficult. However once contact was made and landholders were visited by our Extension Officer Roger MacRaild, most rose to the challenge and some fantastic results were achieved.







“IT IS DISHEARTENING WHEN ALL THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED BY A COMMUNITY IS COMPROMISED BY AN OBSTINATE FEW”  
– VSTWP REPRESENTATIVE, 2015

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Number of hectares assessed	1500 Ha
Number of land managers engaged	29
Total hectares observed with serrated tussock	252 Ha
Total hectares under treatment for serrated tussock at the time of the project	190 Ha

## STONEHAVEN

In January 2015 the VSTWP introduced its 'Discretionary Complaints Program'. This new program is aimed at supporting communities where the majority of landholders consistently manage serrated tussock, but whose committed efforts are being jeopardised by a small portion of neighbours who are not managing this weed.

Representatives of the Stonehaven community, west of Geelong, expressed interest in participating in this program. The majority of landholders here were and are controlling serrated tussock. The community had become frustrated that a small number of land holders in the area were jeopardising the achievements of the community by not controlling serrated tussock.

A target area was identified, where a VSTWP Extension Officer undertook intensive community engagement and property assessments over a period of eight months. The project was extremely effective with the majority of landholders welcoming the free advice, and a large amount of serrated tussock treatment was undertaken.

Despite the tireless effort of the VSTWP Extension Officer, at the projects end a number of the larger serrated tussock infestations remained untreated. A report on the outcomes of the project has been provided to the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources for follow-up action to be considered.





## SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2014 – 2015

- Community engagement, extension and educational services delivered in four target communities as part of the VSTWP's Targeted Extension Program
- Over 10,000 hectares assessed for serrated tussock and 386 landholders provided with educational services
- 200 hectares treated for serrated tussock throughout the four extension projects
- Production and distribution of four editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, each edition being delivered to over 300 subscribers
- Over 1500 pieces of extension material distributed
- Four VSTWP meetings convened, attended by stakeholder representatives from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Municipal Councils, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, VicTrack, V/Line and the Department of Defence
- Ongoing improvements to the website [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com) including:
  - Adaption of the website to suit Mobile devices, Smart Phones and Tablets. Google Ready
  - Creation of five videos and a YouTube channel embedded into the VSTWP website. Three of the videos are case studies of landholders successful in controlling serrated tussock, whilst the remaining videos focus on the identification of serrated tussock, and history of the VSTWP
  - An increase in the number of high quality images housed in the websites Image Gallery
  - Addition of VSTWP target area maps
  - Details were updated in the "What is being done" section
- A case studies factsheet was created, detailing the success of three landholders in managing serrated tussock
- A radio announcement was broadcast over a four week campaign on the Fairfax Radio Network, to highlight the VSTWP and the services we offer

## THANK YOU

The VSTWP Committee would like to thank the following groups and organisations for their ongoing support:

The large number of Landcare groups who have contributed to the success of our projects.

The following local councils:

- Golden Plains Shire
- Hume City Council
- Macedon Ranges Shire
- Moorabool Shire
- Surf Coast Shire

The Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

Without you, our serrated tussock 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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