



2017 – 2018
**PROGRESS
REPORT**

VICTORIAN
SERRATED TUSSOCK
WORKING PARTY



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 PROGRESS REPORT 2017-2018

Published by:
Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party
Bacchus Marsh Victoria
November 2018

©Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party 2018

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

For more information on the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party visit the website at www.serratedtussock.com

VICTORIAN SERRATED TUSSOCK WORKING PARTY COMMITTEE 2017/18

John Burgess	(Chair)
Lance Jennison	(Vice Chair)
Alan Morton	(Treasurer)
Wendy Bitans	(Community Representative)
Peter Lindeman	(Community Representative)
Margot Galletly	(Community Representative)
John Web Ware	(Community Representative)
Laurie Watters	(Community Representative)
Norman Cameron	(Community Representative)
Many Coulson	(Community Representative)

VSTWP EXTENSION OFFICERS 2017/18

Ivan Carter
Roger MacRaid
Tim Johnston



CHAIR'S REPORT

The 2018/23 Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy is now complete however, due to the unavailability of key government personnel it is yet to be officially launched. The new strategy will provide an innovative approach to the management of serrated tussock core infestations, containment lines and satellite infestations. This approach will focus the efforts of the VSTWP not only towards the west of Melbourne but towards Central Victoria, Gippsland and the Hamilton area.

Effective progress continues to be made in the management and eradication of serrated tussock in Victoria. The endeavours of the VSTWP Extension Officers in delivering the targeted landholder programs at Maude, Bullengarook, Toolern Vale, and Myrning to name just a few, is to be complimented. The sensitive application of the extension program by the Extension Officers is a very important aspect of the VSTWP's role. These dedicated people provide education, support and understanding to each extension area, which at times must be handled in a delicate manner.

As well, the united approach between the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, DEDJTR and AgVic, rural communities, public land managers and local government should not be discounted. The efforts of all parties concerned in the identification and eradication of serrated tussock in Victoria is to be commended.

Since the last report the VSTWP has acquired four new members and the representation of Victorian regional communities is gradually increasing. More new members are being sought so that all rural areas of Victoria affected by serrated tussock can benefit from a coordinated approach to the management of this weed of national significance.

During 2017/2018, the VSTWP communications program focussed on the various serrated tussock areas across Victoria via it's very popular webpage and the quarterly newsletter, Tussock Times.

Television, radio and the social media via Facebook and YouTube were also employed to engage the rural and peri-urban communities. It was noted that the VSTWP webpage hits increased markedly, after the TV and radio programs went to air indicating that the communication packages were reaching the targeted audience. The YouTube video received 1600 hits in a very short time.

The White Paper Delivery Leadership Group representatives Lance Jennison and Alan Morton continue their work. Round one White Paper funding was received and the VSTWP provided Community Grants to three community groups to the total value of \$48,987.

The White Paper round two projects were identified and approved by the DLG, which provided funding for the following: -

- Social Science research – Professor Alan Curtiss of Decoy Marketing provided an intensive research paper aimed at motivating disengaged landowners who are apathetic about serrated tussock control. The research findings were shared with other weed and pest management groups.
- Applied Science research – Singarayer Florentine of Federation University has commenced a two year program which will endeavour to provide improved, alternative and new management practices for control of serrated tussock.
- The effective management of Field Days in the core. A spread sheet of Agricultural Shows and Field Days has been produced by the VSTWP and it is expected that a wide range of venues will be visited in 2019. As well, wherever possible, control and management material supplied by other weed and pest groups will be included in the presentations.
- An effective Communications Plan has been drafted and is in the process of being adopted by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP). The new Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2018-23, requires the VSTWP to provide leadership by promoting a collaborative approach to serrated tussock control. The VSTWP recognises the need to maintain awareness and motivation among stakeholders and build their presence in affected communities.

Three objectives were identified in the Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy 2018-23 which provide a clear focus for the VSTWP over the next five years. These objectives are:

- To build community capability to prevent and manage serrated tussock
- To reduce the current impact of serrated tussock on affected communities
- To restrict the establishment and spread of serrated tussock in Victoria.

The Communication Plan has been developed to ensure that communication and engagement undertaken by the VSTWP contributes effectively to the above objectives.

Finally, thank you to DEDJTR for its continued funding and support of the VSTWP. It is hoped that 2019 will witness a generational change in the VSTWP's structure. I also extend my gratitude to the hard-working members of the Working Party for their commitment to the control of serrated tussock in Victoria, now and into the future.

Kind regards,

John Burgess

John Burgess, Chair
November 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

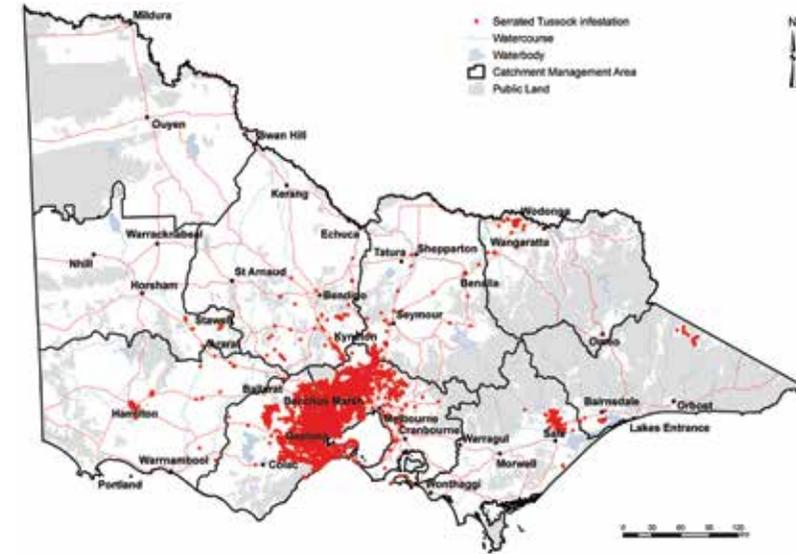


Figure 1: Distribution of serrated tussock in Victoria. (DEDJTR, 2017)

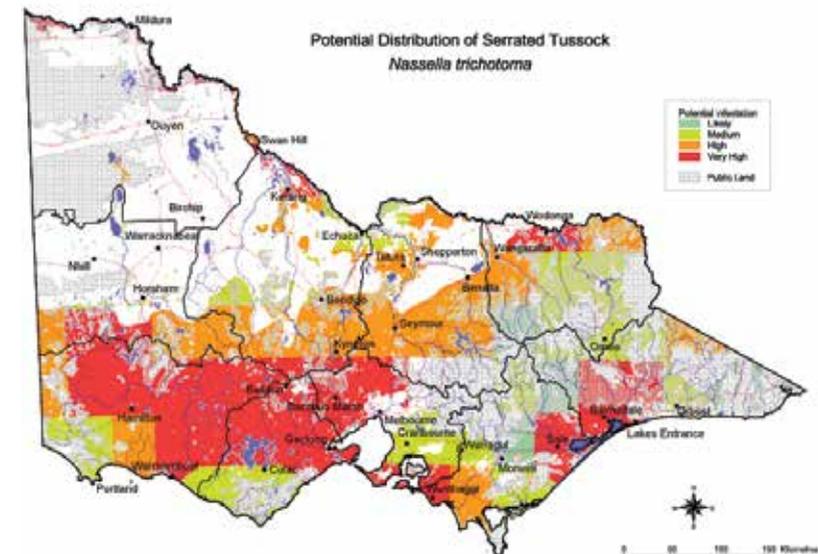


Figure 2: The potential distribution of serrated tussock in Victoria. (CSIRO, 2012)

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 2018, the VSTWP developed a new Victorian Serrated Tussock Control Strategy 2018-2023.

The new strategy 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 increasing collaboration and innovation.

Some key actions of the new strategy include the design of a new extension program for community groups and the co-ordination of land managers (both private and public), as well as industry and government in a bid to reduce the impact of serrated tussock to more manageable levels.

Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) Chair John Burgess said the two-pronged approach represented a commitment to the previous strategy, such as supporting affected local communities in the area known as the core (Melbourne-Geelong-Bacchus Marsh), with the addition of a stronger emphasis on raising community awareness and preparedness across Victoria more generally *“With serrated tussock infestations occurring in isolated areas from north east Victoria through to south western Victoria, the VSTWP will extend its support to other communities, so they are equipped to manage land and spread, and prevent serrated tussock becoming an intractable problem,”* Mr Burgess said.

“Building on the achievements and lessons from over 20 years of community-driven leadership, the VSTWP has prepared its new strategy to guide its work through to 2023.”

Along with a range of awareness raising exercises, the strategy suggests trialling different ways of delivering serrated tussock extension programs, such as using short-term contractors or local government, and outlines its plans to prioritise areas where the weed is most likely to spread, such as linear reserves, through fodder and livestock movement, water movement and wind direction when the weed is seeding.



VSTWP TARGETED 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 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 2017/18, our Extension Officers delivered targeted extension projects in:

- Maude
- Bullengarook/Toolernvale
- Myrning

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 2017/18 (DEDJTR 2018)



Figure 4: Maude Extension Area (DEDJTR 2018)

MAUDE

The Maude project originated in 2017 and was proposed by the Maude and District Landcare Group with support from the Geelong Landcare Network and Golden Plains Shire. The project area was located to the east of Maude township and covered a total area of 1280 ha. It included broadacre cropping and grazing properties, properties designated as conservation areas and smaller hobby farms.

Promotion of the VSTWP project began with a stall at the Maude CFA Trash and Treasure market in May 2017 and this proved to be a valuable activity to engage with those landholders that would normally not attend a field day activity.

Due to past Landcare and DEDJTR activities in the area, many landholders were aware of methods of identification and control of serrated tussock. However, locating and engaging absentee landholders was a challenge.

The majority of high density serrated tussock infestations were located along the steep, rocky escarpments on the eastern side the waterway that dissected the project area. These infestations required aerial spraying of flupropanate for adequate control.

In addition to the difficult terrain, providing management advice on properties with conservation areas that contained the critically endangered Golden Sun moth, also posed some challenges. Recommended control measures needed to minimise the impact on the critically endangered species.

The Golden Plains Shire provided great support with roadsides being managed to a high standard. Also support from the local Landcare group members was greatly appreciated.



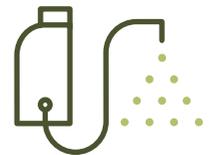
960 Ha
of assessed land



15
land managers
engaged



367 Ha
observed with
serrated tussock



180 Ha
treated for
serrated tussock

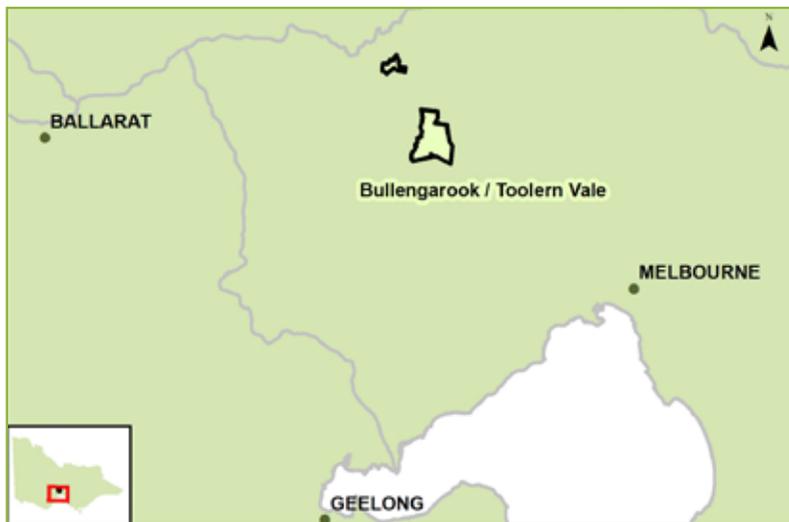


Figure 5: Bullengarook/Toolernvale Extension Areas (DEDJTR)

BULLENGAROOK / TOOLERNVALE

The project commenced in May 2017 in area around the Bullengarook Township and complements recent extension projects in the Gisborne, Riddells Creek and Clarkefield areas. The project area has been extended to include farmland and rural properties around Toolernvale, including the waterways of Toolern Creek.

The project has offered the 216 landholders in the target area the opportunity to attend a serrated tussock information session, receive identification guidance, have their property assessed and mapped for serrated tussock, and be provided personalised treatment advice. All of these services are free and funded by the VSTWP. The success of the Bullengarook Project can be attributed to an active local government and the Bullengarook Landcare Group. There was also less density in the infestations that further east and south. The local landcare group was also successful in spreading the project's key messages and treating the roadside infestations.

The door to door approach was important in contacting landowners who did not respond to the introduction letter, information day or media article, with many successful outcomes from property visits and face to face interactions. However, there were still numerous properties that were unable to be contacted, due to vacant land, absentee landowners, land banking, and landowners not returning calling cards or phone calls after two visits.

Of the 216 parcels in the target area, 189 were assessed for serrated tussock and a total of 65 hectares of infestations discovered. To date, 63 hectares have been treated under voluntary compliance, some pre-inspection, some during the inspection (manual removal of plants) and some after the inspection. There is one landowner who has a significant infestation that is currently untreated, that requires referral to DEDJTR for possible compliance action.

A total of two landowners requested mapping services for infestations on their properties, in order to assist with management plans and control efforts. This was a vital service which allowed landowners to get an understanding of the nature of the infestations and possible spread pathways. Two landowners received rapid appraisals for significant infestations, both of whom will follow the management plans in the appraisals.



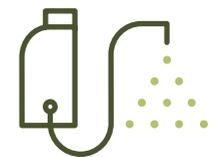
6,600 Ha
of assessed land



189
land managers
engaged



65 Ha
observed with
serrated tussock



63 Ha
treated for
serrated tussock



Figure 6: Myrning Extension Area (DEDJTR)

MYRNING

The Myrning extension area was located between the Werribee Gorge State Park and the Lerderderg State Park, running through Myrning and Korobeit, and including an area of land west of Greendale. In total this area covers 6685 ha of larger agricultural holdings through to smaller life-style blocks. This is an area experiencing a very noticeable shift from the dominance of larger agricultural producers to smaller lifestyle holdings. The tendency for these blocks to change hands has been a complicating factor with six sizeable blocks placed on the market for sale. This has transformed some areas into dormitory localities, meaning landholders are often only around after hours or possibly on weekends.

When contact has been made, landholders have been very receptive to the extension services offered. The receptiveness has been facilitated by the solid work that the Pentland Hills Landcare Group and the Moorabool Shire have been doing in the area for several years. The Shire's roadside treatment works have been timely and undertaken to a good standard, and new areas requiring attention have been included immediately.

Serrated Tussock has been found unfortunately at a number of scenic locations including at the very top of Mt Blackwood and alongside the resident platypus in the Werribee River. Concerningly it was also found extending west beyond the target area into areas of the state that have not been known to have been infested before such as Stone Hut Lane in Bunding and the Western Freeway at Gordon.

The use of a drone has been a good addition to the survey approach this season, allowing treacherous terrain such as that around the W James Whyte Island Reserve to be surveyed quickly from the air reducing the time and risk to the officer.

Down along the Werribee River the scale of the infestations and the nature of the terrain make aerial herbicide application well suited, but there has been difficulty in securing an operator to commit to completing the job done. It is hoped that this control work will occur with support through Landcare early next year.



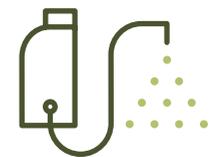
4,000 Ha
of assessed land



78
land managers
engaged

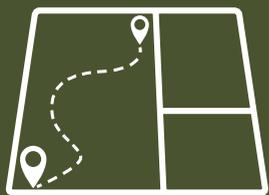


280 Ha
observed with
serrated tussock



80 Ha
treated for
serrated tussock

SUMMARY OF KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2017 – 2018



11,560 Ha

assessed for
serrated tussock



2,000+

pieces of extension
material distributed



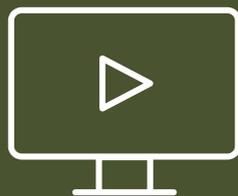
12

community events and
field days attended



9

community radio
station interviews



6,100

video views on the
YouTube channel



16

roadsigns installed in
isolated infested area

Extension program

- Over 11,560 hectares assessed for serrated tussock and 282 landholders provided with educational services.
- 323 hectares treated for serrated tussock throughout the three extension projects.

Engagement

- Over 2000 pieces of extension material distributed through field days, events, community engagement activities, enquires and extension projects.
- Twelve community events and field days attended, including the Maffra Ag Show, Whittlesea Agriculture Show and the Little River Weeds Expo.

Publications

- Production and distribution of four editions of the Tussock Times newsletter, each edition being delivered to over 400 subscribers.
- New brochures on Pathways of Spread and an update to the Best Practice Management Brochure.
- The production of three new case studies highlighting successful serrated tussock management from the most recent extension areas.

Promotion

- Nine Community Radio Station Interviews and Community Service Announcements, promoting the VSTWP and our achievements. ABC Gippsland and South West interviews.
- Major Radio Network Advertising on the 3AW and BayFM Network for two weeks, highlighting the services offered by the VSTWP and how to contact us.
- YouTube channel hits of over 6100 views, including 3100 views of the identification video.
- The production and installation of 16 new roadside signs in isolated infested areas, across six local government areas, reminding landowners to be persistent in the treatment of serrated tussock.
- Ongoing improvements to the website www.serratedtussock.com and a rise of 25% of users.
- Three new videos added to the website and YouTube channel, with permission from NSW Government, on Serrated Tussock management techniques.
- An increase in the number of high quality images housed in the websites Image Gallery.
- Updates to the VSTWP target area maps and achievements on website.
- Successful uptake of the VSTWP Field Day Grants Scheme across the State.
- The Publication of serrated tussock media articles in nine local government newsletters across the state, promoting the services the VSTWP can offer landowners.

Strategic Actions

- Review and develop the 2018-23 Victorian Serrated Tussock Strategy.
- Continued success 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
- Melton City Council

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 TUSOCK WORKING PARTY

For more information please visit:

www.serratedtussock.com

info@serratedtussock.com