

RMCG

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# Review of Community Led Management of Established Pests

Future Directions Report - Final

Agriculture Victoria

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# Executive summary

Established pests represent a significant cost to Victoria in terms of lost agricultural productivity, environmental impacts, amenity, disharmony within communities and increased costs for public and private land owners. Over recent years Commonwealth and State Governments have moved towards a 'community-led approach' to managing established pests. The Victorian Government invests in community-led action on weeds and rabbits and in building collaborative working relationships between government and the community. The four volunteer Community Pest Management Groups (CPMGs) (with their focus on gorse, blackberry, serrated tussock and rabbits) are key examples of this model.

This 'Review of Community Led Management of Established Pests' was commissioned to:

- Assess the social, economic, and institutional value of community-led action on established pests, by reviewing the current models and arrangements for community involvement in place for Victoria
- Provide options to enhance community involvement in established pest management into the future.

The findings and options are presented under four headings:

- Guiding principles for a community-led model
- Purpose and outcomes
- Governance and structure
- Funding models.

## Guiding principles for a community-led approach

The diagram below summarises the five principles that Agriculture Victoria can use to:

- Describe the key characteristics of a community-led approach (without being prescriptive)
- Guide management of established pests
- Monitor approaches to the management of established pests
- Design approaches to address new pest management challenges
- Clarify the government's approach when engaging with community groups.



The first principle, 'support for community-led groups', defines the conditions needed for government to support a community-led approach, namely that there is:

- Evidence of social, environmental and economic impact
- High level of community concern and evidence of sustained effort
- No other body or industry willing and/or able to provide support and governance
- A lack of knowledge about best practice control
- A lack of community capacity to implement best practice control.

### **Purpose and outcomes**

This review proposes that Agriculture Victoria confirm that the aim of the government's established pest management program is to improve the capacity of all land managers to manage invasive pests on their land. Therefore, government investment in established pest management will focus on building awareness, knowledge and skills in the management of those pests. Government's role in established pest management must be clarified, along with the roles and responsibilities of all land managers in managing established pests. To improve the clarity of the program's outcomes, a draft description of the program's short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, in the form of a program logic, has been prepared.

### **Governance and structure**

We are proposing that Agriculture Victoria supports community-led management of established pests by building on the Delivery Leadership Group (DLG) that was convened under the Weeds and Rabbits project. A new version of this group, that brings together government, community and industry, could become the key coordinating body for all government investment in established pest management.

The structure or form of support that Agriculture Victoria offers for community-led management of established pests is also critical. We are proposing that Agriculture Victoria offers three modes of support – support for CPMGs, collaborations with regional communities and industries, and support for local activities. A key role of the renewed DLG would be consider applications for support and to determine the mode that would be most appropriate for each situation.

### **Funding for established pest management**

We are proposing that, over time, a more strategic approach to using the available funds is adopted. This would see the renewed DLG take a lead role in allocating the pool of available funds towards a wide variety of community-led pest management initiatives across the state (i.e. beyond the current focus on four species). This collective approach could extend to influencing and coordinating established pest management funding across all members of the DLG (in particular DELWP and Parks Victoria). The aim of this approach is not to centralise control of funding, but to use the renewed DLG to drive collaboration and coordination of the current investments in established pest management.

### **Executive Officers to the CPMGs**

The Executive Officers for the four CPMGs play critical roles as both support to the CPMGs and as key drivers of the strategic focus for the groups. Agriculture Victoria should consider creating an CPMG Support Team to provide support for the four groups. This pooled approach will mean the groups will have access to the broader set of skills found across the EOs, rather than relying only on the skills of 'their' EO. The future DLG could have input and oversight of the EO role.

## Next steps

There are practical limitations to being able to adopt the changes proposed here. With this in mind, a staged transition would be prudent:

1. Status quo: current financial year (2021/22):
  - a. Maintain current model and level of support
  - b. Plan for the transition to the new model to be in place beginning financial year 2022/23
2. Transition: financial year 2022/23:
  - a. Agriculture Victoria funds the new DLG (operational and executive support)
  - b. Define DLG role in collaborative and coordinated resource allocation
  - c. Refine and confirm modes of Agriculture Victoria support for community-led pest management
3. Longer-term view: financial year 2023/24 and beyond:
  - a. DLG to develop a business case based on the new model to demonstrate the benefits of a community-led model for established pest management
  - b. DLG to explore opportunities to seek co-investment (e.g. joint proposal between DLG and Agriculture Victoria, seeking funding from Australian government).

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 ESTABLISHED PEST MANAGEMENT IN VICTORIA

Established pests represent a significant cost to Victoria in terms of lost agricultural productivity, environmental impacts, amenity, disharmony within communities and increased costs for public and private land owners. Over recent years Commonwealth and State Governments have moved towards a 'community-led approach' to managing established pests, on the basis that this increases the likelihood of successful long-term management. This evolving approach sees government, industry and the community collaborating and sharing responsibility for the management of established pests.

In line with this approach, the Victorian Government invests in community-led action on weeds and rabbits and in building collaborative working relationships between government and the community. The four volunteer Community Pest Management Groups (CPMGs) are key examples of this contemporary model with their participatory and inclusive approach.

Whilst Agriculture Victoria provides significant support to community-led management of established pests, the approach in its current form has both strengths and challenges. These are described in this report along with options for future management of established pests that build on the strengths and address those challenges.

## 1.2 STRENGTHS

Over the course of the 30 plus interviews and analysis completed as part of this project, we have identified some important strengths of the current approach. These strengths are important because they need to be retained and used as foundations for the future program.

Those key strengths are:

- The focus on supporting capacity building and community leadership, rather than (only) using small-scale grants
- The positive role that the CPMGs play in demonstrating community-led approaches for established pest management
- That compliance and enforcement is not used as a first option – rather engagement, information sharing and capacity building are the strong focus across Agriculture Victoria
- The collaborative and cooperative approach that has characterised the Weeds and Rabbits Project – between the CPMGs themselves and between the CPMGs and Agriculture Victoria
- That the Delivery Leadership Group (DLG) assumed significant responsibilities as they delivered the Weeds and Rabbits Project – especially those responsibilities relating to priority-setting, resource allocation, and financial management, which government is usually reluctant to delegate to an external group.

## 1.3 THE CHALLENGE

In addition to identifying these strengths, our interviews and analysis also identified some aspects of the current approach that present challenges. Addressing these challenges has been a key focus for this future directions paper.

Further detail of the key challenges of the current approach is presented next and potential options for addressing these is provided in the following sections of this report.

**Species and geographic coverage** – There are hundreds of established pests across Victoria, some of which are formally declared under legislation and some that are not. Currently established pests are managed using a combination of community led approaches and compliance and enforcement. At present each of the four CPMGs focus on one species each (rabbits, serrated tussock, gorse and blackberry). Whilst the current CPMG model appears to be successful this approach originated from community interest around a particular species rather than a policy direction or from a strategic basis. As a result of this there is no clear guidance or process for others in the community to follow if they sought to establish a new CPMG. There are many established pests, and some (not all) may be candidates for a community-led approach, however, it is not currently possible to determine whether a species is suitable for a CPMG because there is no guidance on what makes a 'good' candidate. This lack of transparency could reduce the chance of more community involvement in established pest management, and it could also be perceived as inequitable provision of government support.

**Clarity on outcomes and measuring the impact of effort** – There is currently no shared understanding about what successful community-led management of established pests looks like. Whilst it is acknowledged that established pests cannot be eradicated, there is no agreement about how successful management of established pests is defined and therefore a lack of measurable indicators to demonstrate success. Currently there is a mix of ideas about how to define and measure success ranging from the distribution of established pests to a focus on community awareness, skills and attitudes. It is important to develop a shared understanding about what success looks like and how to measure it to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of community-led management of established pests and to provide compelling evidence demonstrating the benefits of a community led approach.

**Combining community-led approaches with compliance and enforcement** – The current approach includes community led action (predominately through the CPMGs) in combination with government compliance and enforcement. There is currently a lack of clarity amongst CPMGs and the wider community around the process used to determine when and where compliance and enforcement is used. Whilst there is general agreement across government and community that compliance and enforcement alone is not an effective tool, there are currently very few examples to demonstrate where this tool has been successfully used in coordination with a community-led approach.

Presently there are broader reforms in invasive plant and animal management occurring that will impact how established pests are managed. Whilst there is a need to consider how these changes will influence established pest management, it is important to continue the evolution of best practice community led management concurrently. We anticipate the findings of this review will remain relevant even with these reforms.

## 1.4 THE REVIEW

### 1.4.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Review of Community Led Management of Established Pests* project (the review) was to:

- Assess the *social, economic, and institutional* value of community-led action on established pests, through a review of the *current models and arrangements* for community involvement in place for Victoria
- Provide *options to enhance community involvement* in established pest management into the future.

The findings and future directions from the review will be used to shape the development of a future model and arrangements for supporting community-led action for established pest management in Victoria.

## 1.4.2 APPROACH

The review was delivered over three phases:

- **Phase one:** Understanding of the current model (one-on-one interviews with the project control group and current CPMG leaders)
- **Phase two:** Review and analysis of the current model (literature review, wider stakeholder consultation, review of alternative models – see Appendix 1)
- **Phase three:** Future directions (discussion paper, co-design workshops, future directions report and options assessment).

The review captures the collective views across government and community around community-led management of established pests. These collective views have been considered in conjunction with the findings from our review and analysis of relevant literature and presented in this report in the form of findings, options and future directions for consideration by Agriculture Victoria and the CPMGs.

## 1.5 THIS REPORT

This report presents the findings and options to help shape the future of community led management of established pests in Victoria. This report is presented in four sections:

- Guiding principles for a community-led model
- Purpose and outcomes
- Governance and structure
- Funding models.

These sections reflect the consultations and discussions held through the co-design workshops and other analysis completed as part of the review. The report concludes with options for consideration in the future management of established pests across Victoria.



# 2 Future management of established pests

## 2.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A COMMUNITY-LED MODEL


Commonwealth and State Governments are increasingly seeking to adopt a 'community-led approach' to management of invasive species, particularly established pests. This is, at least in part, a response to a recognition that compliance and enforcement led approaches only have a limited impact, and that community members need to be fully engaged in order to reach long-term solutions to this problem. Government is also responding to community demanding that their on-going efforts at managing invasive pests are recognised and supported.


In line with this approach, the Victorian Government already invests in supporting community-led action on gorse, serrated tussock, blackberry and rabbits through the four Community Pest Management Groups (CPMGs). This approach focusses on building collaborative working relationships between government, primary industries and the community.

The CPMGs represent a valuable example of a community-led approach to management of established pests. The experience with these four groups points to some of the ways that a community-led approach can present significant challenges to government. Among these challenges was the need for government to delegate significant power to the CPMGs. This included giving the CPMGs the authority to set priorities, allocate the available funding and make significant decisions that government would have to implement. The fact that the CPMGs (via the DLG) were given this power and authority was highlighted at one of the key successes of the Weeds and Rabbits Project.

One way to frame these challenges is to consider the range of approaches set out in the IAP2 spectrum (Figure 2-1). A community-led approach is characterised by 'collaboration' and 'empowerment'. As Figure 2-1 suggests this requires government to partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making and to ultimately, implement what the group decides. This devolution of power can be a challenge to government.

The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.



		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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**Figure 2-1: International Association for Public Participation's public participation spectrum**

However, Agriculture Victoria adopted a collaborative approach to the delivery of the Weeds and Rabbits Project, which also included giving the Delivery Leadership Group (DLG) the decision-making power with respect to allocation of the available funds.

Building on this recent history, and the underpinning intent of adopting a community-led approach, a set of principles can be defined. These are shown in Figure 2-2.

### Support for community led groups

- Evidence of social, environmental and economic impact
- High level of community concern and evidence of sustained effort
- No other body or industry is willing and/or able to provide support and governance
- Lack of knowledge about best practice control
- Lack of community capacity (knowledge, skills, awareness, motivation) to implement best practice control



**Figure 2-2: Principles for community led management of established pests**

### APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES

These principles can be used by Agriculture Victoria to:

- Describe the key characteristics of a community-led approach (without being prescriptive)
- Guide and re-shape current management of established pests e.g. use these principles to design approaches/projects
- Monitor approaches to the management of established pests e.g. test whether an approach is consistent with these characteristics as a measure of how well it reflects a community-led approach
- Design approaches to address new pest management challenges as they emerge in future
- Clarify the government's approach when engaging with community groups
- Provide a tool or resource for community groups to use.

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY-LED APPROACHES

The five points listed under the first principle, 'support for community-led groups', are particularly significant for Agriculture Victoria. Taken together, they define the conditions needed for government to support a community-led approach. That is, government should support a community-led approach when:

- There is clear evidence of a social, economic and environmental impact from the invasive pest
- There is a high level of community concern about the pest species, and this has led to sustained management efforts by the community
- There is no other body (e.g. an industry group or organisation) willing or able to provide support
- The community has a gap in their awareness, knowledge, skills or ability to organise in order to address the invasive pest, and/or
- Best practice control methods are not readily available.

## NEXT STEPS

Immediate:

- Refine the principles by engaging with community groups and other government agencies
- Review current projects that are seeking to take a community-led approach to managing established pests and adjust them accordingly.

Medium-term:

- Formally adopt these as the principles that will underpin Agriculture Victoria's future approach to management of established pests in Victoria
- Apply these principles across all invasive species management.

## 2.2 PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

### 2.2.1 CURRENT APPROACH

There is currently no clear description of what successful community-led management of established pests looks like. While the compliance and enforcement work delivered by Agriculture Victoria and the work of the CPMGs is significant, there is no consensus on the end goal for that work.

The current CPMGs focus on four species of interest – gorse, serrated tussock, blackberry and rabbits. Individual CPMGs do have strategies that describe their own aims and visions for success, however these strategies reflect the goals of that group rather than a shared vision between community and government for established pest management. This species focus is based on the high level of community interest shown in these particular species (with one indicator of this interest being the volume of ministerial correspondence seeking action), rather than a statewide strategic analysis of established pests management needs. The strategic policy rationale for supporting work on these four particular species, when there are many more established pests that have significant impacts across Victoria, is not transparent. Similarly, there is no process or guidance on how community can access support for established pest management (via for example, a CPMG type of approach), nor is there guidance on the cessation of support for existing groups.

This lack of clear purpose and outcomes for the state's management of established pests creates uncertainty for both government and the community in many different areas:

- The level of resourcing that government dedicates to established pest management – without clear goals it is not possible to know what the appropriate level of resourcing is
- Priorities among the many established pests are not clear – the absence of clear outcomes means that it is not possible to determine why one species should have higher priority than another
- The rationale for using compliance or enforcement is unclear
- Community members are unclear when they can expect support from government because they are unable to be certain that they have shared goals with government
- Government's support for the four particular species only (through the CPMGs) could create the impression that government does not support integrated pest and landscape management (i.e. approaches that address all threats in coordinated ways)
- Make a case for community-led management if the purpose, outcomes and benefits are not clearly stated.

### 2.2.2 FUTURE DIRECTION

Future management of established pests must be based on a clear and shared purpose. This shared purpose should have a strong focus on:

- Collaboration and shared responsibility between government and community
- Opportunities to engage with industry and to clarify their role in established pest management
- Ensuring those with responsibility to manage established pests have the knowledge and skills to do so
- The needs and priorities in different locations and different communities (e.g. each region's priorities will be unique to their environments, people, land uses etc.).

The premise of a shared purpose that supports a community-led approach is that if land managers have the knowledge and capacity to manage their invasive species, and ways in which to collaborate with neighbours, with governments and across communities, then this will lead to actions that will reduce impacts from pest species.

To address the current lack of clear outcomes and purpose an agreed set of long-term outcomes for management of established pests in Victoria need to be developed. Along with these clear outcomes it is critical to define how progress towards these outcomes should be measured. For example, the shared purpose described here means that measures like area of land affected by weeds or number of pest animals present would not be appropriate because they do not reflect capacity building and collaboration. Table 2-1 presents a set of potential long-term outcomes with their associated monitoring.

**Table 2-1: Potential long-term outcomes for management of established pests in Victoria**

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	HOW WILL AGVIC KNOW IF IT HAS ACHIEVED THIS OUTCOME?
The economic, environmental and social impact of established pests is reduced.	Measures of the impacts of established pests will stabilize and decrease over time.  Data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic – Industry estimates of impacts</li> <li>• Environmental – State of the Environment Reporting on impacts of pests on critical native species and habitats</li> <li>• Social – Community conflict and disquiet relating to established pest management issues.</li> </ul>

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES	HOW WILL AGVIC KNOW IF IT HAS ACHIEVED THIS OUTCOME?
<p>Government actions support community- and industry-led management of established pests.</p>	<p>Government support is directed to community- and industry-led projects and activities, that show clear collaboration, and build capacity of industry and communities to manage established pests.</p> <p>Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of community-led projects supported</li> <li>• Changes in capacity of community members that participate in those projects</li> <li>• Number of industry-led projects supported</li> <li>• Changes in capacity of the participating industries.</li> </ul>
<p>Communities and industry are empowered and supported by government to manage established pests.</p>	<p>Communities and industry seek support from government to build their awareness, knowledge and skills in managing established pests.</p> <p>Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of projects building awareness, knowledge and skills among community and industry</li> <li>• Measures of changes in awareness, knowledge and skills among participating groups and industries</li> <li>• Feedback from key community and industry groups on the relationship with government (are they supported, empowered?)</li> </ul>
<p>Communities (groups and individuals), government and industry are undertaking their own management of established pests.</p>	<p>Communities and industry understand their roles and responsibilities (and those of government) with respect to established pest and, based on this, initiate and lead their own projects and activities to manage established pests.</p> <p>Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examples of community- and industry-initiated and led projects</li> <li>• Awareness and understanding of roles and responsibilities among community and industry</li> <li>• Change in attitudes towards responsibility for management of established pests.</li> </ul>

**NEXT STEPS:**

- Refine the long-term outcomes proposed here by engaging with industry and community representatives
- Refine the performance measures for each outcome.

**2.3 GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE**

**2.3.1 CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS**

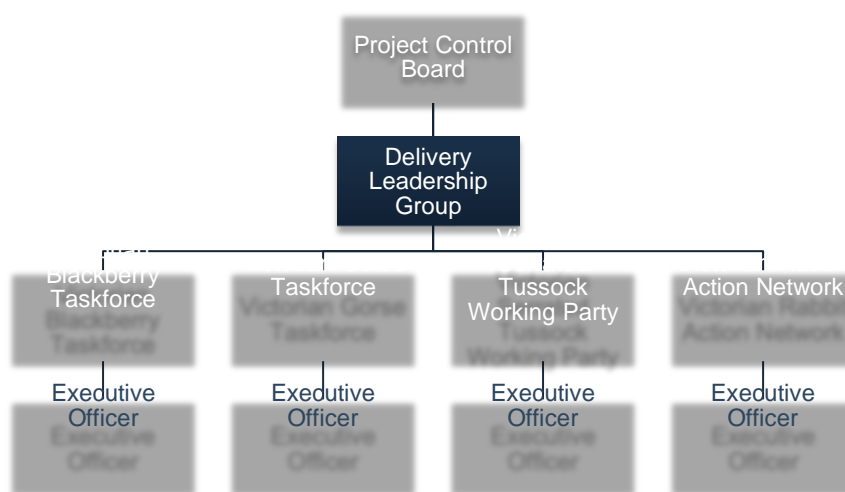
The government's investment in established pest management in Victoria is managed and delivered through two channels. The majority of government investment occurs through the state biosecurity program. This includes approximately \$3.7 million per annum to support approximately 29 FTE biosecurity officer positions that deal with established pest compliance and enforcement, but also a large range of other compliance and related issues, e.g. regionally prohibited species, emergency response, etc.

The second channel is the Community Pest Management Groups. Over recent years, there has been \$1.25 million per annum invested by Agriculture Victoria and the Australian Government to support the four CPMGs and the Delivery Leadership Group (DLG). This funding supports four executive officers and one project manager (4.6 FTE positions), a community engagement officer (in Gippsland (1.0 FTE)), as well as operational activities of the groups.

The DLG has played an important role in recent years. It was comprised of eight community leaders, drawn from the four CPMGs and an independent chair. The independent chair of the DLG reported to a Project Control Board (PCB) led by Agriculture Victoria.

The DLG was a product of the White Paper funding for the Weeds and Rabbits project which was focussed on capacity building. Now that the White Paper funding has concluded, there are no formal arrangements in place to continue the DLG. There is a risk of the benefits of the DLG, particularly the connections between the CPMGs, being lost.

An overview of the current governance structure is provided in Figure 2-3.



**Figure 2-3: Governance structure for the Weeds and Rabbits project**

### Executive Officers to the CPMGs

The Executive Officers for the four CPMGs play critical roles as both support to the CPMGs and as key drivers of the strategic focus for the groups. They act as a broker or conduit between community (as represented by the CPMG members) and government, building mutual understanding of the needs and priorities of communities and of Agriculture Victoria.

Under the current arrangements, there is a lack of consistency and clarity around the responsibilities of the EOs with the EO performing slightly different tasks within each group. There appear to be two distinct components of the role which require different skills sets: the administrative role and the more strategic role of building partnerships and lobbying for funding depending on the direction the CPMG wants to take. The role requires someone with excellent project management skills, who is good at relationship building while also being comfortable to work with the CPMG and Agriculture Victoria when goals do not align. This is a complex and diverse set of skills.

### GOVERNANCE IN THE WEEDS AND RABBITS PROJECT

The recent Weeds and Rabbits Project, funded by the Australian government, provides an example of an alternative governance arrangement for established pest management. The Delivery Leadership Group formed for this project, were given responsibility for managing the funds, determining priorities for allocation of those funds and reporting on the impact of the project – all roles that are normally retained by government. A project control board (PCB), consisting of four staff from Agriculture Victoria and the independent chair of the DLG, provided oversight for the project. This arrangement saw Agriculture Victoria delegate significant power and responsibility to the DLG – far more than had previously been the case.

### **2.3.2 FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

Across Agriculture Victoria and the CPMGs, there is the strong support for continuing the DLG in some form. A renewed DLG could act as the key governance group that oversees management of all established pests across Victoria. This should include pests on both public and private land, particularly given the frequency of issues arising at the interface. The responsibilities of this group could include:

- Establishing priorities for supporting community-led established pest management
- Determining allocation of funding for established pest management across Victoria
- Providing an interface between the community and government relating to pest management
- Ensuring investments in established pest management are consistent with the principles (Section 2.1)
- Monitoring progress towards the agreed outcomes for established pest management in Victoria (Section 2.2)
- Providing advice on best practice in established pest management.

The membership of a renewed DLG should include government, community and industry – all parties with interests and responsibilities for management of established pests. The membership should include (at least):

- Community representatives from the four CPMGs
- Community representatives from other organisations with an interest in established pest management (e.g. Victorian Farmers Federation, Landcare Victoria, the Victorian Environment Friends Network)
- A representative from Agriculture Victoria who has management responsibility for biosecurity services
- Public land managers (particularly Parks Victoria and DELWP as major investors in the management of established pests).

A renewed DLG would provide a critical link between government, community and industry. The group would be a source of invaluable insight for government – a direct and on-going connection to community members who can give government firsthand perspectives on invasive pests. They would also play a key role as advocates for shared responsibility for the management of invasive pests, a role that the current members of the DLG have embraced.

To ensure its effectiveness the renewed DLG would need to be formally linked to a senior manager within the Biosecurity Division of Agriculture Victoria – the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO). This link is critical to ensuring there is a true connection to the government, which gives the DLG its authorising environment, and therefore, the ability to influence policies and programs. This link needs to be formalised and could take a form similar to the PCB for the Weeds and Rabbits Project, e.g. a group that consists of the DLG Chair, the Agriculture Victoria representative on the DLG, and 2–3 members of the DLG meeting regularly with the SRO.

### **EXECUTIVE OFFICERS SUPPORT TO CPMGS**

Support for the CPMGs is critical to their successful operation. This support has two distinct forms:

4. Secretarial and administrative support
5. Strategic support.

Under the current arrangements each Executive Officers (EOs) provides both types of support to their respective group, though to varying degrees across the different groups. While both types are needed, the strategic support offered by the Agriculture Victoria staff offers greater value for the overall program and is more commensurate with their level of skills and knowledge.

Under future arrangements, the secretarial and administrative requirements of the CPMGs should be minimised. This may require direction from Agriculture Victoria to the CPMGs regarding things like formal meeting record keeping and administrative requirements. Agriculture Victoria should consider creating an CPMG Support Team to provide support for the groups, rather than assigning a single officer to each group. This pooled approach will mean the groups will have access to the broader set of skills found across the EOs, rather than relying only on the skills of 'their' EO. It could also allow secretarial and administrative support to be managed differently e.g. engage an administrative assistant to provide this support across the groups. The future DLG could have input and oversight of the EO role.

## SUPPORTING REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

Many contributors to this review felt that the future approach needed to have a strong regional focus. For instance, a group of landholders could come together to focus on a specific geographic area. They would identify the issues, formulate a plan and then seek support for implementing that plan. The focus of the plan would be defined by the group itself rather than by whether a species is listed under the CaLP Act or declared in some particular category. These groups can also set their local standard for land management, therefore determine what actions might be supported versus those that are part of normal expectations of land managers.

Additional benefits to this pooled approach include sustained or more consistent levels of support across groups both when some EOs are deployed to biosecurity emergency response duties and when there is staff turnover.

## STRUCTURE OF ESTABLISHED PEST MANAGEMENT

As described earlier, the current model for managing established pests has some deficiencies (e.g. does not cover all problem species, does not provide clear support for communities who are seeking to manage their invasive pests). There was however, strong support for the view that if a community was not engaged and motivated to address an invasive pest, then government should not invest resources there. That is, government's focus should be on complementing community action. With this in mind, a future program could deliver more comprehensive support through three modes:

1. Community pest management group support
2. Regional community collaboration
3. Local support.

These modes could provide greater clarity to community with respect to the support they can expect from government. This approach recognises that different approaches are required for different species and in different communities around the state. Using this 'modes of support' approach, it would be possible to address a number of situations that are currently not supported:

- A regional focussed group who are seeking to manage a range of pests found in their area (integrated landscape management)
- A local group who are aiming to address a single species that is causing particular problems in their area who need some assistance to deal with a landholder who is uncooperative
- A widespread species (outside the four CPMG species) that would benefit from a large-scale coordinated approach
- A species that is not listed under the CaLP Act but presents a significant threat to a local community, industry or environmental asset.

Table 2-2 describes these modes in more detail, including the rationale and type of support that would be provided for each.

## NEXT STEPS

Some of the key features of these modes have been suggested in Table 2-2. This could be used as a foundational framework that guides the level of support a community can expect from Agriculture Victoria. The mode selected should be the most effective option considering the context of the community and the species of interest. A more detailed description of each mode and the type of support that is appropriate to each would



be defined in the framework. This needs to include defining the specific characteristics or conditions that would justify the creation of the CPMG, which is not apparent in the current model. Similarly, the characteristics of a 'regional community collaboration' and 'local support' would need to be more specifically defined.

**Table 2-2: Three modes of support for community-led pest management for consideration based on community and species context**

MODE OF SUPPORT	SITUATION	RATIONALE FOR SUPPORT	TYPE OF SUPPORT	CURRENT EXAMPLE
Community pest management group	<p>Widespread pest that has significant social, economic and or environmental impacts.</p> <p>Community members are engaged and committed to addressing the pest.</p>	<p>Without action, there will be widespread impacts on agriculture, the environment and on community harmony.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple-years of funding (e.g. four-years) to support operation of the group (secretarial)</li> <li>• Funding commitment reviewed and renewed periodically (every two-years)</li> <li>• Liaison officer (AgVic employee) support (strategic).</li> </ul>	<p>Rabbits, blackberry, gorse serrated tussock.</p>
Regional community collaboration	<p>Pest is regionally significant.</p> <p>Community members are engaged and seeking support to drive action across their region.</p>	<p>Without action, there will be regional impacts on agriculture, the environment and on community harmony.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term project funding (e.g. max. Two-years)</li> <li>• Community engagement to build awareness and knowledge</li> <li>• Strategic plans and coordination of community actions.</li> </ul>	<p>Ragwort in Strzelecki Ranges.</p>
Local support	<p>Pest is locally significant.</p> <p>Community members are engaged but actions required are modest and the community is supportive.</p>	<p>A low level of support will help to drive community action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low level of funding to support strategic actions. E.g.:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information and advice</li> <li>- Access to technical expertise.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Wheel cactus in North Central Victoria.</p>

## 2.4 FUNDING MODELS

### 2.4.1 CURRENT APPROACH

Recently, funding for established pest management in Victoria has comprised:

- \$1.25 million p.a. from Agriculture Victoria and the Australian Government to collectively support the four CPMGs and the DLG (the Australian Government funds, which ended June 2021, were dedicated to VRAN and the DLG). This funding supports the four executive officers and one project manager (4.6 FTE positions) and a community engagement officer in Gippsland (1.0 FTE), as well as operational activities of the groups.
- \$3.7 million p.a. from Agriculture Victoria to support approx. 29 FTE biosecurity officer positions that deal with established pests compliance and other compliance and related issues, e.g. Regionally Prohibited species, emergency response, etc.

In the main, there is agreement that each of the CPMGs operate in ways that provide reasonable to good value for money. It was reported that the groups are very careful in decisions about how they spend their budget and seek to operate as efficiently as possible. The contribution made by the community volunteers on the committees is also very significant.

*Funding is not the answer! Tried incentives- they did not work very well. Funding to engage a project officer was brilliant (blackberries), not going out to do blackberry control, but hooked up and link into other resources – awareness, education and providing a conduit into where landholders might look to seek support or funding to do the work.*  
~ interviewee

### 2.4.2 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The history of dedication and effective work by the volunteer members of the four CPMGs needs to be central to future funding models. Given that a key aim of the overall program is to support community-led management of established pests, it would be damaging to this long-term goal to withdraw support for the current four CPMGs, since they embody that community-led approach.

Suggestions on the funding model for future management of established pests that have been provided here are strongly linked to the governance and delivery models described in Section 2.3. Collaboration and coordination between government and community, in order to strategically plan pest management and to better understand where resources are allocated, should be the foundation of a future funding. Ideally a future funding model would see the renewed DLG given a strong voice in guiding resource allocation across established pest management (i.e. not just for particular species but across all established pests). Such a comprehensive and coordinated approach to established pest management across Victoria would also provide a very strong basis to seek additional funding. This role of the renewed DLG is consistent with the principles set out in Section 2.1 and the governance and modes of support described in Section 2.3.

It should include Agriculture Victoria's funding for:

- Executive officer support to CPMGs
- Discretionary funding for three of the four CPMGs
- Established pest compliance.

It should also include consideration of other government funding:

- Parks Victoria's invasive pest control works on PV estate
- DELWP (CMAs and biodiversity programs) invasive pest control works as part of biodiversity projects
- local government weeds and pest animal control programs (e.g. roadside management).

The rationale for including these investments by other government agencies is that their investment is very significant (more than Agriculture Victoria's) and there are significant opportunities for coordination between all of these agencies. This collaboration and coordination would increase the impact and effectiveness of the available funds for both community and government.

## **NEXT STEPS**

We recognise that there are practical limitations to being able to take this collaborative and coordinated funding approach, including the impact that it could have on support for the CPMGs. With this in mind, a staged transition would be prudent. These stages are described here:

4. Status quo: current financial year 2021/22:
  - a. Maintain current model and level of support
  - b. Plan for the transition to the new DLG governance model to be in place beginning financial year 2022/23 (renewed membership and terms of reference – section 2.3.2)
5. Transition: financial year 2022/23:
  - a. Agriculture Victoria funds the new DLG (three core components funded: operational, executive support and running the DLG)
  - b. Define DLG role in collaborative and coordinated resource allocation
  - c. Refine and confirm modes of Agriculture Victoria support for community-led pest management (Table 2-2)
6. Longer-term view: financial year 2023/24 and beyond:
  - a. DLG to develop a business case based on the new model to demonstrate the benefits of a community-led model for established pest management
  - b. DLG to explore opportunities to seek co-investment (e.g. joint proposal between DLG and Agriculture Victoria, seeking funding from Australian government).

### 3 Conclusions

In this chapter we have summarised the future directions for management of established pests in Victoria that have been identified in this review.

This review has identified four key reforms to the current approach that would address the challenges presented by the current model and, ultimately, improve support for community-led management of established pests in Victoria. Those four reforms are summarised here, with more details provided in the descriptions in Section 2 of this report.

The first area relates to clarifying the aims of established pest management. We are suggesting that Agriculture Victoria should confirm that the aim of the government's established pest management program is to improve the capacity of all land managers to manage invasive pests on their land. Therefore, government investment in established pest management will focus on building awareness, knowledge and skills in management of those pests across the community and government. This includes ensuring government's role in established pest management is clearly articulated and understood, and helping all land managers understand their roles and responsibilities for management of established pests.

One way to further improve this clarity would be to prepare a detailed description of the program, documenting the short-, medium- and long-term outcomes, in the form of a program logic. We have prepared a working version of such a logic (Figure 3-1) in order to illustrate how the activities like capacity building, partnerships and collaboration can flow through to program level outcomes. This logic could be used to develop a monitoring framework that would identify the data that could be collected to track progress towards these outcomes. An example of the data that should be collected to monitor progress towards the suggested long-term outcomes is shown in Table 2-1. A full monitoring plan would identify the data that should also be collected to track progress towards the short- and medium-term outcomes.

The second key area of reform relates to governance and leadership. We are proposing that Agriculture Victoria supports community-led management of established pests by building on the Delivery Leadership Group (DLG) that was convened under the Weeds and Rabbits project, and creating a new version of this group that will take a lead role in established pest management across the state. This group could become the key coordinating body for all government investment in established pest management. It would have a central role in directing Agriculture Victoria's investments in community-led approaches to established pest management. Another key role of the group would be to bring together government, community and industry to increase coordination and collaboration in established pest management.

The third area of reform relates to Agriculture Victoria's support for community-led management of established pests. We are proposing that this support is delivered in three modes – by supporting CPMGs, by collaborating with regional communities and industries, and by supporting local activities. A key role of the renewed DLG would be consider applications for support and to determine the mode that would be most appropriate for each situation. This approach would create more varied types of support that can be offered to communities, which is more versatile and adaptable than the current model.

The final area relates to funding. The proposed reform here is that, over time, a more strategic approach to using the available funds is adopted. This would see the renewed DLG take a lead role in allocating the pool of available funds towards a wide variety of community-led pest management initiatives across the state (i.e. beyond the current focus on four species). This collective approach could extend to include strategic influence and coordination of established pest management funding across all members on the DLG (in particular DELWP and Parks Victoria). The aim of this approach is not to take control of funding allocations away from other members, but to use the renewed DLG to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the current investments in established pest management.

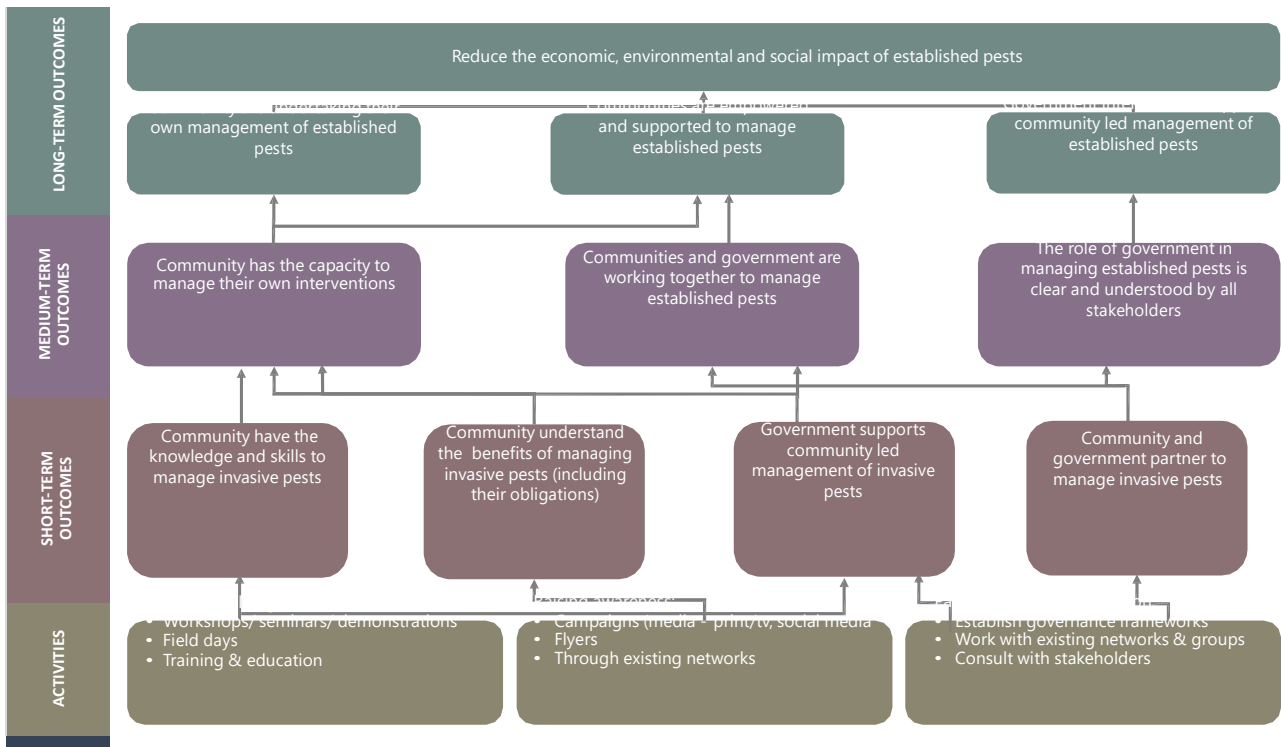


Figure 3-1. Working version of a program logic for the government's established pest management program

# Appendix 1: Other approaches to established pest management

## ALTERNATIVE MODELS

It is well known that management of established pests is a significant challenge across state borders and internationally. This review includes an assessment of other models of community led management of established pests and provides key insights that could be beneficial for Victoria. Alternative models across the eight Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand were considered in relation to the three key focus areas for the review. A summary of the similarities and differences is provided here along with further descriptions of the models and their key features.

Fourteen pest management programs across nine jurisdictions that involved some degree of community led management of established pests have been reviewed here. Key features of these programs were compared across the three key focus areas of the review<sup>1</sup>. The common features across the programs that considered useful for consideration in the future development of the Victorian model were identified and are highlighted in Table A1-1. The key features that are currently part of the Victorian community led model are in *italics*.

## OTHER APPROACHES

**Table A1-1: Key common features across program for consideration in the Victorian context**

COMMON FEATURES
<p><b>Purpose and outcomes</b></p> <p>Strong, clear policy direction and good alignment to legislation <i>Focus on advocacy, awareness, education and capacity building</i> Work in partnership with other</p>
<p><b>Funding models</b></p> <p>Programs administered at a regional level <i>Government funding provided</i> Land managers pay a levy</p>
<p><b>Governance and structure</b></p> <p>Regional management and oversight Multi-species focus Clearly articulated and documented roles and responsibilities Tenure blind Shared government and community priorities</p>

There are three approaches that are useful candidates for further consideration in shaping Victoria's approach to community led management of established pests:

- New Zealand – Regional Pest Management Plans
- New South Wales – Regional Weed Management Committees and Regional Pest Animal Committees
- Western Australia – Recognised Biosecurity Groups.

<sup>1</sup> More details on the programs that were reviewed is available in a separate report.

These approaches are described below along with their key features. There is no one approach considered appropriate to model the Victorian approach on, however the key features highlighted are considered useful to consider in shaping the future of community led management of established pest in Victoria.

## **NEW ZEALAND – REGIONAL PEST MANAGEMENT PLANS**

There are 16 Regional Pest Management Plans (RPMP)<sup>2</sup> aligned to each local council region across New Zealand. The plans are key regulatory tools to support the delivery of each council's strategic direction for pest management. The plans set outcomes and objectives for specific pests and outline roles and responsibilities for management. Requirements for land occupiers and agencies to fulfil their responsibilities is underpinned by rules within the RPMPs. The *Biosecurity Act (1993)* provides the rules and framework for implementing the requirements for pest management within each region.

### **Purpose and outcomes**

The outcomes are regionally specific however are all strongly focused on a model of shared responsibility for pest management. The plans assist council to take a tenure blind approach to pest management and are committed to supporting communities in the management of established pests through leadership, awareness, education, and capacity building. There are strong linkages to community groups and other stakeholders.

The plans seek to reduce the impact and area (density and distribution) of all pest species, however, there is a strong recognition that this will only be achieved through a coordinated approach with community.

At a higher level the plans are connected and aligned to the national policy direction and legislation which governs the management of all pests including established pests.

*Key consideration:* Focus on shared responsibility and building capacity.

### **Funding models**

Funding for each RPMP is provided through regional council programs. There are four key program areas including eradication, exclusion, progressive containment, and sustained control. These categories are based on definitions in the *Biosecurity Act (1993)*. Each pest is listed under one of the program areas (established pests are listed under sustained control). Funding is provided to land occupiers and community groups to support them to take action.

Funding is sourced from cost recovery (inspections and control for non-compliant landowners, section 135 of the *Biosecurity Act (1993)*), through a general rate levy for private landowners and government allocation.

*Key consideration:* Cost share model and regional administration.

### **Governance and structure (including coverage of community issues)**

The roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in pest management are defined and documented in the RPMPs. The *Biosecurity Act (1993)* provides a set of rules and an operating framework to support the achievement of pest management outcomes for each region. The RPMPs take an integrated approach to pest management covering all species in a region listed under the *Biosecurity Act (1993)*.

*Key consideration:* Integrated pest management, direction on roles and responsibilities, regional management, and oversight.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bionet.nz/library/national-and-regional-plans-and-strategies/regional-pest-management-plans-or-strategies/>.



## NEW SOUTH WALES – REGIONAL WEED AND PEST ANIMAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

There are 11 Regional Weed Management Committees and 11 Regional Pest Animal Management Committees within each of the Local Land Service Regions. Each committee develops a local management plan to outline the priorities for that region and guide implementation of actions to manage weeds and pest animals.

### **Purpose and outcomes**

The Regional Weed Management Committees<sup>3</sup> are responsible for the development of a five-year Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan. The plans are based on local knowledge, research and technology and a strict assessment of the biosecurity risks posed by weeds. The plans clarify how each region will work together to identify, minimise, respond to and manage high-risk weeds, supporting the idea of shared responsibility under the new biosecurity legislation. The plans aim to reduce the impact of established pest plants, through sustained and coordinated control efforts across land tenures.

The Regional Pest Animal Committees<sup>4</sup> facilitate tenure neutral strategic planning and coordination for priority pest animal management programs in each Local Land Services region. The committees promote land manager and general community involvement in detecting and reporting sightings of new or 'unusual' animals in the local area as well as managing established pest animals. The committees play an important role in the ongoing periodic review and adaption of the Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans.

*Key consideration:* Focus on shared responsibility, coordination of effort.

### **Funding models**

The committees are funded through state government and local council programs. The strategic plans provide guidance on priorities for investment. The plans set out the framework and key principles to implement successful, effective, and efficient pest plant and animal control efforts at a regional level.

*Key feature:* Regional administration.

### **Governance and structure (including coverage of community issues)**

The roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders are documented in the regional strategic plans for both weeds and pest animals. The plans are tenure blind and developed by a committee that includes landholder representation. Both the weeds and pest animal committees take a multi-species approach and weeds of community concern (not listed under legislation) are included in the weed management strategic plans. Oversight and reporting on progress against the regional plan are the responsibility of the regional committees for weeds and pest animals.

*Key consideration:* Multi-species approach, clear direction on roles and responsibilities, shared community and government priorities, regional management and oversight.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/help-and-advice/pests,-weeds-and-diseases/weed-control/regional-strategic-weed-management-plans>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.lls.nsw.gov.au/help-and-advice/pests,-weeds-and-diseases/pest-control/regional-strategic-pest-animal-management>.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA – RECOGNISED BIOSECURITY GROUPS

Recognised Biosecurity Groups (RBGs)<sup>5</sup> are community-based groups formally recognised under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007* (BAM Act). They operate within a prescribed geographic area. There are currently 14 RBGs in Western Australia, with their combined areas covering most of the State.

### **Purpose and outcomes**

RBGs enable landholders, both public and private, to control declared pests. They build awareness, deliver training and information, hire out equipment, provide on-ground resources and other materials needed for pest management. RBGs organise coordinated activities such as community baiting days and fox shoots, and build partnerships with other RBGs, industry and agencies to control pests that require large-scale regional efforts, such as wild dogs and feral pigs.

*Key consideration:* Focus on shared responsibility, encourage local ownership and accountability for pest management, build awareness and capacity.

### **Funding models**

Under the BAM Act, formal recognition of RBGs enables a Declared Pest Rate to be raised within each RBG area, which enables the group to attract matched funding from the State Government. These funds provide RBGs the ability to focus on long-term outcomes.

*Key consideration:* Cost share model and regional administration.

### **Governance and structure (including coverage of community issues)**

RBG committees are managed by local volunteers and regional representatives. They help landholders fulfil their legal obligation under the BAM Act to control declared pests on their properties, and to reduce the impacts of declared pests in their communities. RBGs focus on implementing long term strategic approaches that inform and involve both private and public landholders.

*Key consideration:* Multi-species approach, shared community and government priorities, regional management and oversight.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/bam/recognised-biosecurity-groups>.

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