



COMMUNITY
BLACKBERRY
ACTION GROUP
START-UP KIT

IS THE COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH RIGHT FOR YOU?

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) is a committee of landholders, public land managers and the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) whose role is to provide input into Government strategies for the management of blackberry.

The important thing to know is this approach is for communities who want to take control of the management of blackberries. It will need community action and community ownership of action. Are you ready to do this?



VIDEO
LYN

This project is funded through the Established Pest Animals and Weeds initiative, part of the Australian Government's Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the government's plan for stronger farmers and a stronger economy.

“

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce has produced this kit in response to many requests from community groups for more information about our community-led blackberry control programs.

LYN

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE
CHAIRPERSON

IS THE COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH RIGHT FOR YOU?

The VBT supports communities to establish local Community Blackberry Action Groups. The groups identify ways they want to manage blackberry, and this ensures management matches local needs and priorities.

If you think this approach might be of interest to your community, this resource kit helps you understand more about setting up Community Blackberry Action Groups and some of the resources you might find useful.



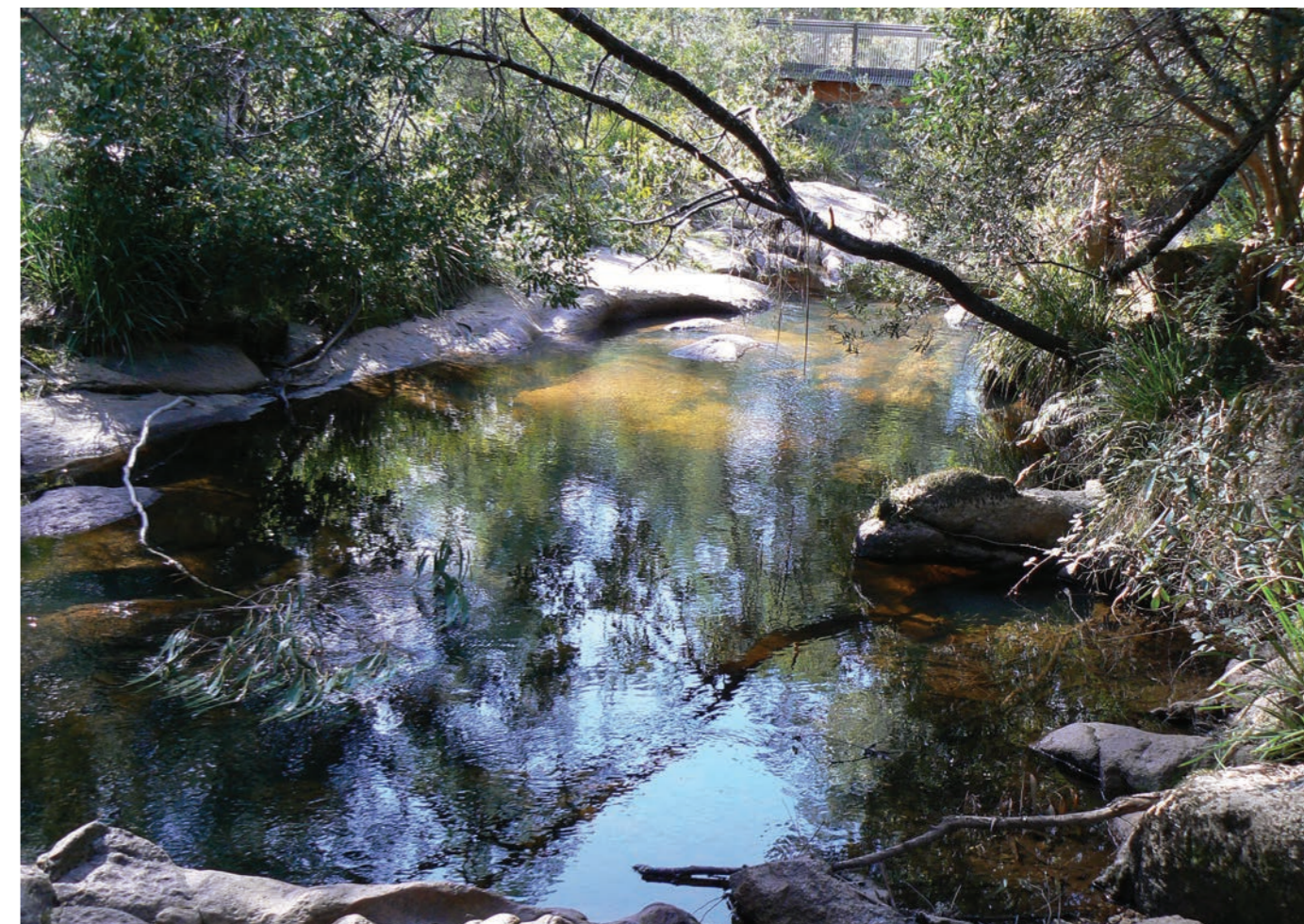
USING THE KIT

This kit is a resource for you and your group. Here you will find:

- Information about establishing a group – the hows and the whys.
- A set of resources that groups find useful.
- Links to important sites for further information.

You will also find excerpts of interviews from people who are involved in groups. They share their experiences of their Blackberry Action Groups.

These video interviews are activated by simply clicking on the video image. A video controller is visible when you rollover the playing video. The controller features pause, stop and scrub forwards or backwards actions.



THE KIT

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Getting people involved in the group's activities makes sure they recognise they are able to achieve a better outcome in blackberry management for themselves, and for their communities and regions.



01 WHY A COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH

Is your community concerned about blackberry in your area?

Under legislation, landholders are responsible for their blackberry management. This doesn't mean that landholders are alone because the community blackberry action approach is focused on landholders and their communities.

One of the most important things about Community Blackberry Action Groups is the ways they can support community activities and also extend the possibilities of people working together in blackberry control. This means communities are able to make sure their programs work best for them and they can become less reliant on government action.

Getting people involved in the group's activities makes sure they recognise they are able to achieve a better outcome in blackberry management for themselves, and for their communities and regions.



“

...a sense of common purpose, that it's achievable and that they have the means to do it - they can make it happen.

DAVE
LENEVA
LANDHOLDER

VIDEO
DAVE & TERRY
LENEVA LANDHOLDERS

01 WHY A COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH

The VBT supports communities to establish local Community Blackberry Action Groups. These groups identify the ways they want to manage blackberry, and this ensures management matches local needs and priorities. Once local needs and priorities are identified, the group develops a strategy for management. This strategy needs to meet the relevant national and Victorian policies and priorities, but how this is to occur is up to the group, who is also responsible for its implementation.



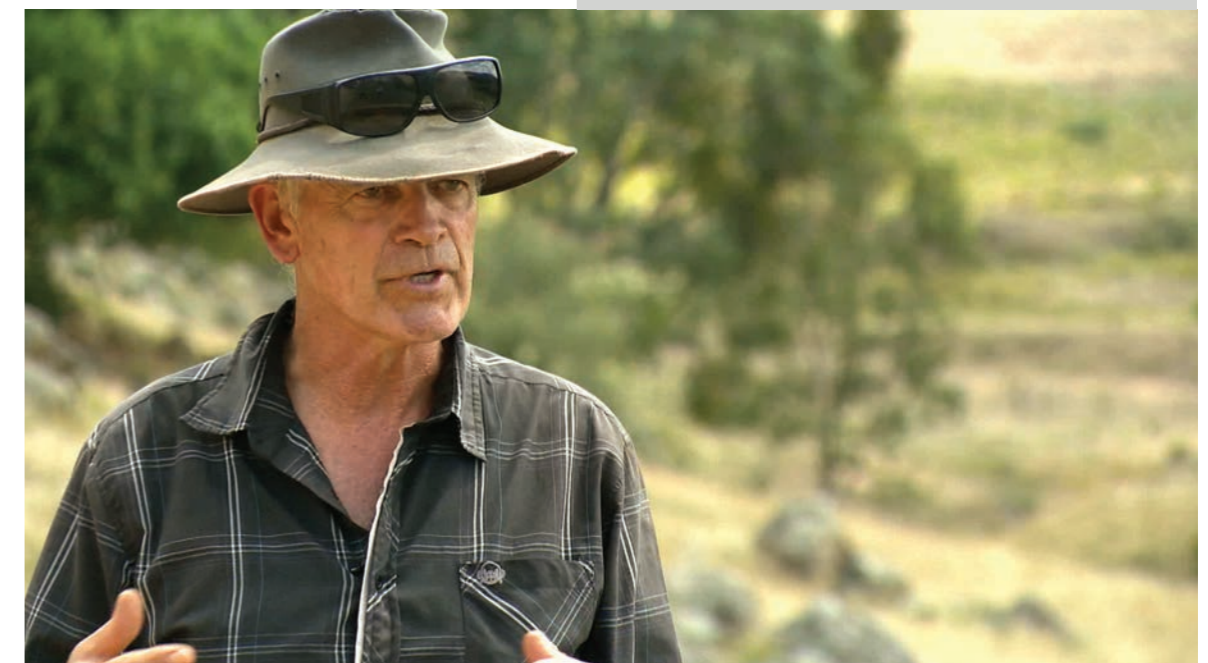
VIDEO
SANDY
NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
COMMITTEE MEMBER

“

...allowing them to own their own success and find their own pathway is a very important aspect of being successful.

CHARLES

NORTH EAST
BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



VIDEO
CHARLES
VBT CASE STUDY - ASSET BUILDING AND CAPACITY

02 GETTING STARTED

PARTNERSHIPS

→ identify land managers in your area

MEETING

→ invite them to a meeting

BLACKBERRY

→ identify the problem

ACTION PLAN

→ develop a simple action plan

STEERING COMMITTEE

→ develop a simple action plan

STEERING COMMITTEE

→ organise a project steering committee

VBT

→ contact the VBT to meet with your group

vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

Does this sound right for your community?

The ways to get going are very dependent on your local community. This is a strength of the approach – things reflect what your community wants.

However, experience tells us that there are some important steps to getting a group going:

- Identify people responsible for managing land and invite them to a meeting. They may include other networks and groups such as Landcare, CMAs, local council, public land managers and large local land managers (for example, plantation managers in some communities).



VIDEO
MICHAEL

“

...it's the people on the ground who should be in charge of designing the project. Who know what the on-ground realities are.

MICHAEL

FORMER EXECUTIVE OFFICER
VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

02 GETTING STARTED



- Ensure there is support for the approach from the meeting. This allows people to discuss the issues and the opportunities from their own perspectives.
- Develop an action plan for the group - this ensures the group has a focus and a shared set of ideas about what is to be achieved and by when.
→ [view an example of an action plan](#)
- Identify goals. It is important to undertake goal-setting as part of the process. Most people suggest it is important to set realistic goals to ensure they are achievable and won't leave the group or individuals feeling frustrated if they are not achieved.
- Appoint a project manager (see section 04).



VIDEO
LYN & TERRY
NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP COMMITTEE

“

...in our action plan, we would include 'reduce the growth and spread of blackberries'. We thought if we could do that, we were probably achieving what we could achieve. Anything above that was probably unrealistic.

LYN
NORTH EAST
BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

02 GETTING STARTED

Here is a set of tools and processes used by our groups across the state. There are some real benefits to acting and planning locally, especially since each community is likely to have different needs and priorities. After all, you are best placed to understand your own areas.

So the Community Blackberry Approach emphasises the importance of things like:

- developing longer term action plans;
- attracting funding which reflects local priorities (rather than having funding dictate local priorities);
- supporting on-ground works by groups and landholders;
- taking a long term view;
- land management after blackberries are controlled.

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...getting together and issuing a challenge, to those people who have got land, to endeavour to do something about blackberry. It's actually community-based and community driven.

SANDY

NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
COMMITTEE MEMBER



VIDEO

SANDY & TONY
NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

03 HOW DOES IT WORK: STEP BY STEP

Some of the methods used by community blackberry groups across the state include:

1. **employ a project officer** to visit the landholder to discuss the reasons for the uncontrolled blackberry on the property;
2. **introduce the program** to the community;
→ [view sample letter](#)
3. **map the blackberry** and the boundaries on the property;
4. **negotiate 3 year blackberry management agreements** with landholders;
→ [view management agreement example](#)
5. **consider incentives** – if funding allows, consider incentives which will lead to more longer term sustainable outcomes, such as providing access tracks rather than grants for chemicals;
6. **the steering committee is responsible** for running the project. The project manager reports to the steering committee which is ultimately responsible for decisions.



VIDEO
DAMIAN

“

...we can then start working on how do we get around this problem? How can we start planning for the future?

DAMIAN

FORMER NORTH EAST
BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
PROJECT OFFICER

04 MANAGING YOUR GROUPS ACTIVITIES

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Plans and strategies have to be implemented. Landholders need to be consulted and their individual strategies developed. Reporting requirements need to be met and communication between group and landholders needs to be supported.

Does this sound like a lot of work? The community-led approach certainly means local groups are very involved in their blackberry management. The roles of the Group's committee and the Project Manager are important in managing the Community's activities.



VIDEO
DARYL
VBT CASE STUDY - POWER BY NUMBERS



“

...the project officer was fantastic, there is a limit to how much voluntary time you can put in.

DARYL

BARKERS CREEK
BLACKBERRY & GORSE ACTION
GROUP - COMMITTEE MEMBER

04 MANAGING YOUR GROUPS ACTIVITIES

PROJECT MANAGERS

The project manager is employed by the group. So the group is able to develop the role in such a way as it works for them. In this way, the local group has the flexibility, and the responsibility, of developing the shared expectations of the role, and identifying the important characteristics of the person who fills it.



VIDEO
DANIELLE
VBT CASE STUDY - MAKING A PLAN

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...a three year management agreement has 3 sections, what they are capable of doing in the first year and what they hope to do in the second and third year.

DANIELLE

NORTH EAST
BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
PROJECT OFFICER

The project manager is the group's familiar face – the person most landholders will know. Part of the role is ensuring that project managers facilitate landholder awareness of technical issues, and to develop a local landholder plan for management of the blackberry. So the appointment is an important one. Some groups find it better if the project manager comes from outside the area. It can be easier to talk about issues with someone you don't know.

GOVERNANCE

Privacy Issues

The project officer will be collecting private data from individual landholders. It is important that the group understands their obligations in collecting this data, and the importance of maintaining a level of privacy within the executive committee.

→ www.privacy.vic.gov.au

Probity

Although hard to define, probity ensures that the groups are accountable for their decision making process. This can be achieved through fair and robust process, and maintaining confidentiality of certain issues. For example, following project recruitment principles ensures transparency in selecting a project officer.

→ [view project manager selection report template](#)

Record Keeping

Keeping up-to-date records and information is key to ensuring good project management and providing information for reporting to funding bodies. The VBT currently has a state-wide electronic database called BADIS that groups can use to ensure their records are up to date.

→ www.essolutions.com.au/badis/login.asp

05 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

The VBT supports both the establishment and the on-going activities of community-led blackberry groups. Its role is to support community action and community-led strategies and priorities in their blackberry management.

The VBT also acts to lobby DEDJTR on issues of blackberry management. Because the issues are often raised by local groups, the VBT acts to ensure local issues are heard within DEDJTR.

The reasons many of the VBT's activities are possible is because of the partnerships they have with local action groups, and within DEDJTR.



VIDEO
LYN & MICHAEL



“

...the groups are not alone, they are not operating in isolation. They plug into a wider institution of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce. They are part of something bigger and there are other groups across the state.

MICHAEL

FORMER EXECUTIVE OFFICER
VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

05 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Building partnerships are also a very important part of the community group's activities. These partnerships are often with local land management agencies, such as DELWP and Parks Victoria, CMAs, other local groups such as Landcare, or important local organisations such as local government or rural industries.

Partnerships do a number of things:

- you can influence other agencies to work together on blackberry infestations;
- you can get support for funding opportunities through partnerships;
- you extend your networks across a wider part of your region.



VIDEO
TONY
NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
COMMITTEE MEMBER

“

...The advice was the biggest thing ...to me it looked like a bigger problem than it was. So, having the advice, broke it down into a really manageable level. I noticed as different people were able to get control of the blackberries on their land, the neighbours started to become far more interested - people started to believe it was possible.

ANGIE

NORTHERN YARRA
BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
COMMITTEE MEMBER



VIDEO
ANGIE
VBT CASE STUDY - TAKING CONTROL CATCHES ON

06 CHALLENGES

The community-led approach has challenges. Things don't always go according to plan, and different stakeholders sometimes have different priorities in the community. Sometimes, challenges are positive – a group working through how to bring together these different priorities for example, often strengthens the group's activities.

Some challenges groups may face include:

- change is slow - keeping the momentum is sometimes difficult;
- agencies can have different ideas about how to manage blackberries and these need to be worked through;
- not all landholders are part of the community-led approach - some are absentees, others are not interested in getting involved which may ultimately mean interventions from other agencies;
- three year management agreements with landholders provide time to work through many issues, but they do take three years to implement;

“

...I think that if you live in an area you should try to put something back into it ...most of the people I know want to leave things in a better state than they found them.

ROD

NORTHERN YARRA
BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
COMMITTEE MEMBER



VIDEO

VBT CASE STUDY - NORTHERN YARRA
BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

06 CHALLENGES

- if something is needed, the group has to do the work;
- there can be disagreements about what is needed, or what a problem is;
- engaging everyone at some level is important but a challenge - not everyone necessarily wants to be involved and isolation can make involvement difficult.



VIDEO
PENNY

“

...it's actually really difficult, in terms of time, travel & costs, for communities to be committed to a really broad program.

PENNY

LANDCARE
COORDINATOR



“

Community Partnerships are an inspiration to those who have yet to start their journey to bring blackberry under control and use the recovered land for productive or conservation purposes. The participants demonstrate that no matter how difficult or daunting the task, having a goal and support is the key to success.

07 PROJECTS

The community-led approach to blackberry management is occurring in areas across Victoria. If not already, we hope your community will soon be another.

To see where community-led blackberry groups are working in Victoria visit the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce website for a list of current VBT Community Partnerships.

www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/community.html



“The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce strives to promote the principals of community engagement, inclusion in decision-making, representation and deliberation within Community Partnership projects.”

08
RESOURCES

Here you will find lots of resources which might be useful for community groups. They include templates useful for a range of the group’s activities, to internet links for groups and individuals.

TEMPLATES

These templates provide a starting point for many group activities. They have been adapted from a range of sources – government, established Blackberry Action Groups, and anywhere else that is helpful. Use these as you need, but remember that not all community groups need the same kinds of things, so adapt them as necessary for your own group.



TEMPLATE LINKS:

- Project Officer - Position Description
- Selection Report - Project Officer Position
- Blackberry Introduction Letter
- Blackberry 3YR Work Plan



WEBSITE LINKS

- Victorian Blackberry Taskforce
www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au
- Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources
economicdevelopment.vic.gov.au
- Weeds of National Significance Blackberry Control Manual
www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/publications/blackberry-control-manual-complete.pdf
- Agriculture Victoria - Chemical Use
agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/farm-management/chemical-use
- Information on Blackberry Bio-Control
www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/managebb/biological_control01.html
- Privacy Information
www.privacy.vic.gov.au

09 WITH THANKS

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE
**LYN COULSTON, ALEX ARBUTHNOT, DAWN PARKER,
ROBIN ADAIR, TERRY HUBBARD, DAVID SMITH,
BEN FAHEY, TONY JARVIS, SHANE O'LOUGHLIN,
NIGEL AINSWORTH**

NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
SANDY HILL, TONY JARVIS & TERRY O'KEEFFE

BARKER CREEK BLACKBERRY
AND GORSE ACTION GROUP
DARYL COLLESS

NORTHERN YARRA BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP
ANGIE LLOYD & ROD THOMAS

MICHAEL REID
FORMER EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

DANIELLE CLELAND

TERRY DARMODY

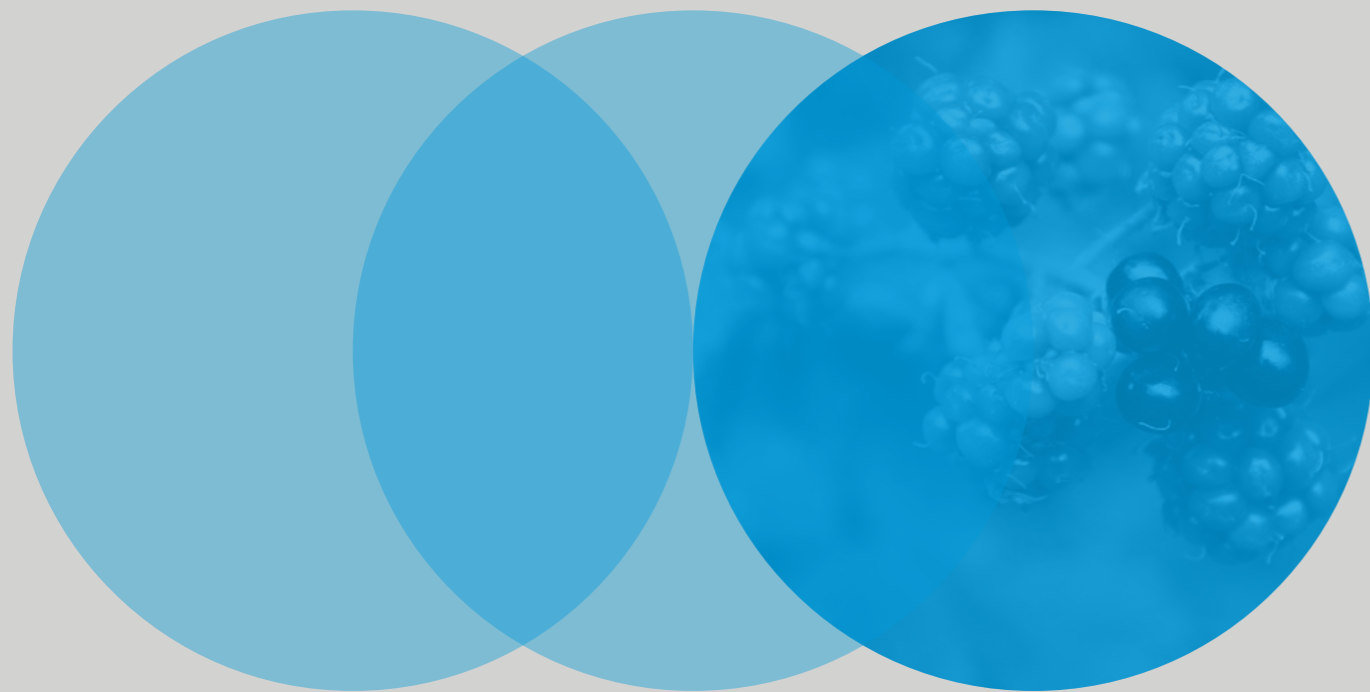
PENNY GRAY

CHARLES KIDD

DAVE O'DONNELL

DAMIAN WALL





Victorian Blackberry **Taskforce**

COMMUNITY BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP **START-UP KIT**

MULTIMEDIA EDITION

The attached USB drive contains a multimedia PDF version of the Community Blackberry Action Group Start-Up Kit. This multimedia version of the Start-Up Kit includes video content, supporting documents and website links.



CONTROLLING THE VBT START-UP KIT VIDEOS

The videos included in the multimedia version of the Start-Up Kit are a collection of encoded MP4 files. The videos play within the PDF version of the Kit when you select the video image. A video controller is visible when you rollover the playing video. The controller features pause, stop and scrub forwards or backwards actions.



www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

