

PROGRESS REPORT

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

2024-2025





PROGRESS REPORT

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

2024-2025

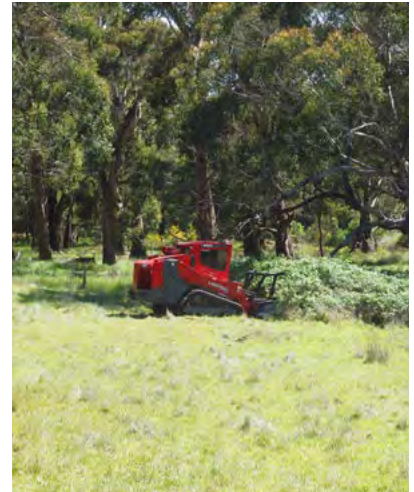


VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY **TASKFORCE**



COVER IMAGE:

Friends of Kangaroo Creek, Wheatsheaf Blackberry Control Demonstration Day



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT 2024-2025

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) is a community-based organisation established to prepare the Victorian Blackberry Strategy and oversee its implementation. The VBT's goal is to reduce the growth and spread of blackberries across Victoria.

The VBT's emphasis is on education, advocacy and providing accessible information and support for public and private land managers to control blackberries on their land.

The key to achieving the VBT's objective is by supporting all land managers to implement control programs on their properties, provide reliable information in various formats and make sure that everyone has the tools to decide which control methods are most suitable for their situation.

Resources to make these decisions are available through the education and information material available on the VBT website and with demonstration sessions in local communities to showcase best practice methods of control.

The VBT has a focus on ensuring online resources support communities and individuals to decide the best options for treating blackberries on their properties. Engagement is the key to communicating and forming partnerships with land managers across all land tenures to encourage neighbouring land managers to work together for best results.

The VBT welcomes enquiries about blackberry-related issues. Emails will be responded to promptly or please visit our website to browse the extensive resources available.

I would like to thank Agriculture Victoria for funding support for the VBT. I also thank our partnership groups, communities, and public land managers for their contribution of knowledge and experience in implementing the Victorian Blackberry Strategy.



Lyn Coulston OAM
Chairperson

BLACKBERRY

ONE OF VICTORIA'S WORST WEEDS

Left unchecked, blackberry can rapidly infest entire local landscapes.

On private land, it costs millions of dollars in lost agricultural productivity.

On public land, it hinders recreational and commercial activities and severely impacts biodiversity and environmental values.

Blackberry can alter water flows and cause soil erosion, harbour pest animals, out-compete native plants and reduce biodiversity.

Blackberry is a serious issue in Victoria and is recognised as a weed of national significance and one of Australia's most noxious weeds.



THE VICTORIAN **BLACKBERRY** TASKFORCE

One of four Victorian Community Pest Management Groups, the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce encourages and supports community grass-roots action, with partnerships and collaboration a key focus.

This approach has reinvigorated blackberry control efforts across Victoria, and public and private land managers are working together to reduce blackberry and protect economic and environmental values.

The Taskforce comprises ten members, including six community members, a research scientist and representatives from Parks Victoria and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. Taskforce members oversee implementation of the Victorian Blackberry Strategy and provide state-wide leadership in blackberry management.

The Taskforce's Community Partnership Program supports communities to motivate local land managers to work together to manage blackberry across landscapes.

The Taskforce also provides feedback to policy makers on successful community approaches to blackberry control and helps drive research and innovation in blackberry control measures.

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE ACTION

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

COMMUNITY PEST
MANAGEMENT OFFICERS

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

PARKS VICTORIA

RESEARCH SCIENTIST

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY,
ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE ACTION

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GROUPS



Demonstration of Cut and Paint Method,
Wheatsheaf Blackberry Control Demonstration Day

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE **HIGHLIGHTS** 2024-25

- Supported hundreds of Victorians to reduce blackberry infestations in their local area.
- Assisted seven communities to deliver blackberry control demonstration days.
- Supported one Partnership Group to undertake a second year of Blackberry engagement activities and two new groups to achieve first year objectives.
- Visited ten communities to understand their blackberry issues and support them in developing effective community-wide control programs.
- Produced and broadcast three new community service announcements on WIN TV during spring.
- Provided blackberry control Information to 41 landholders in response to enquiries.
- Published a newsletter to highlight community success stories in blackberry management and to promote demonstration sites.
- Concluded a research project on the extent of Queensland Fruit Fly breeding in blackberry in eight Local Government areas across Victoria and published a report.

VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce is the principal source of reliable information for the community on blackberries as a weed, prevention measures and management options.

The success of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce is attributed to its engagement with land managers in diverse ways that enable people to learn through the communication methods that best suit them. These include demonstration days, partnerships with local groups and online communication tools.

PHEASANT CREEK BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP



The Pheasant Creek Blackberry Action Group continues to work with the Horticultural Industry, Parks Victoria, Agribusiness Yarra Valley and Murrindindi Shire Council. Thirty-two properties are participating in the project.

FRIENDS OF KANGAROO CREEK, WHEATSHEAF



The Friends of Kangaroo Creek initiated a new project to control blackberries on public and adjoining private land along Kangaroo Creek at Wheatsheaf, in partnership with Hepburn Shire and North Central Catchment Management Authority.

WODONGA GOLF CLUB, FELLTIMBER CREEK



Wodonga Golf Club commenced a project to control blackberries using managed goats along Felltimber Creek in West Wodonga.

NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP



The North East Blackberry Action Group continues to support communities in the Upper Murray area to tackle blackberries in a coordinated manner following the 2020 Black Summer fires.

BLACKBERRY CONTROL DEMONSTRATION DAYS



Seven blackberry control demonstration days were held across Victoria with over 300 people attending. These events provided an opportunity for landholders to visualise 'best practice' blackberry control measures and interact with experts.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PHEASANT CREEK PROJECT

BERRY GOOD EFFORT

Four berry growers are among the 32 landholders working with the Pheasant Creek Blackberry Action Group which, supported by the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, is tackling blackberry infestations in the Kinglake area.

Pheasant Creek BAG was established in 2022 and works with key partners including Murrindindi Shire Council, Parks Victoria, Kinglake Landcare Group and Agribusiness Yarra Valley. The Pheasant Creek project area covers Kinglake Central, Pheasant Creek and Kinglake West, a region characterised by horticultural enterprises and rural bush properties.

Partnering agencies have been vital in assisting private landowners' efforts to control blackberry.

Parks Victoria hired Graze Away, a business

which trains and manages goats, to contain blackberry infestations in Kinglake East Bushland Reserve, especially in more inaccessible areas, with spot-spraying to control regrowth. They provided support through the Good Neighbour Program, a State Government initiative to help landholders and community groups control the spread of invasive species on public land. Community planting days were held to revegetate the site.

Murrindindi Council targeted blackberry on municipal roadsides and parts of unused road reserves, with the Pheasant Creek BAG prioritising works.

Biik Land Management, a team dedicated to caring for Taungurung Country, was engaged to conduct blackberry control works on one property.

Kinglake Landcare Group continued to play an important role in blackberry control, offering the use of a spray rig and backpack equipment to landholders. Pheasant Creek BAG provided a 50 per cent rebate on herbicides and chemicals.

Pheasant Creek BAG is encouraging VicRoads/ Regional Roads Victoria to manage blackberry on road reserves.



Pheasant Creek Blackberry Action Group -
Blackberries before and after control.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

KANGAROO CREEK PROJECT

LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Friends of Kangaroo Creek formed in 2023 in response to rampant blackberry growth following storms that damaged tree canopies. Landholders were intimidated by the scale of the blackberry infestation in their midst but realised the best approach to achieve control was to join forces.

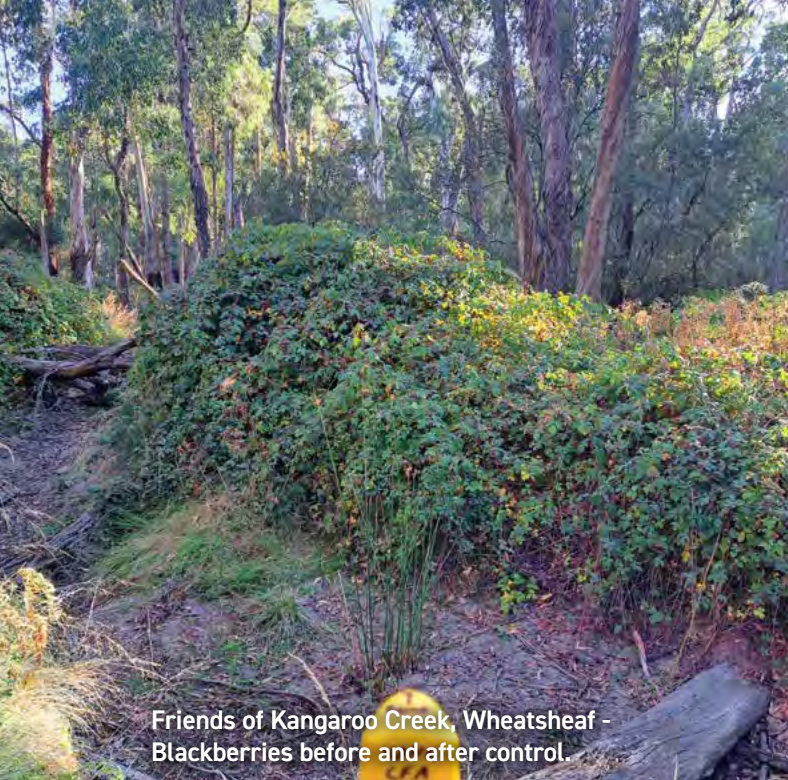
They engaged help from the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce and attribute their rapid success to a shared goal of tackling the weed across public and private land. The group has controlled a major blackberry infestation along Kangaroo Creek.

Friends of Kangaroo Creek in Wheatsheaf, Central Victoria, obtained multiple grants to treat the council reserve along Kangaroo Creek and a 30-metre buffer zone on adjoining private properties. Initial contract works removed blackberries along a 2.6-kilometre length of the creek adjoining Wombat Forest.

Many landholders live on rural lifestyle properties and some felt they didn't have the knowledge to control blackberries on their land. Friends of Kangaroo Creek and the VBT inspired them to control the weed to protect native bushland, home to many threatened and rare species.

The VBT provided vital information, along with a grant, and is supporting the development of management plans for individual landholders. Friends of Kangaroo Creek engaged eight landholders and aims to control almost 20 hectares of blackberry. Participants are determined to maintain controls along the creek to prevent blackberries from encroaching onto their land.

The group plans to extend its works to the whole of Wheatsheaf and neighbouring Coomoora, particularly targeting infestations along the myriad intermittent creeks in the area. It also proposes to conduct working bees to share skills and knowledge.



Friends of Kangaroo Creek, Wheatsheaf -
Blackberries before and after control.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FELLTIMBER CREEK PROJECT

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, in partnership with Envirograze and the Wodonga Golf Club, is supporting a blackberry management demonstration project at Felltimber Creek in West Wodonga.

Felltimber creek, which runs through the Wodonga golf course, is infested with blackberries, which are providing habitat for rabbits. The creek's environmental values are severely impacted and intervention is necessary to protect remnant vegetation and enable suppressed native vegetation to regenerate.

The goats and most of the fence panels used to contain them are owned and managed by Envirograze, a business that provides vegetation management services using goats to maintain and restore natural landscapes. Golf club volunteers assist Envirograze to move

the fencing (and the goats) along the riparian zone so all sections can be grazed in turn. After a few months resting, to allow the blackberries to reshoot, the goats are returned to browse further, depleting the weed's energy reserves, or the regrowth is treated with herbicide to kill the weeds.

The control of blackberries with goats is a successful tool, provided the goats are well managed and visited frequently. It is crucial to ensure the goats remain contained, and are removed once all blackberries have been browsed and before the goats can have significant impacts on native species.

Managed goats eating their way through a blackberry infestation along
Felltimber Creek, West Wodonga



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

North East Blackberry Action Group has run a community involvement program in the Upper Murray, North East Victoria, since 2006.

The group's connections to community have been invaluable since the 2019/20 bushfires in enabling direct communication with fire-affected landholders and offering assistance with treatment of both new and regrowing blackberry infestations.

Over the past five years, since an intense bushfire swept through the Upper Murray area, the North East Blackberry Action Group blackberry control program has been ongoing, as the germination of blackberry seed and

regeneration from rootstocks has proven to be challenging, especially on steep country.

A demonstration day was held on a property at Berringama in April 2025, with a drone used to show how effectively herbicide can be applied on steep slopes. Attendees were shown how targeted spraying can minimise spray drift and protect off-target species.

A mulcher was also used to demonstrate the efficiency (both time and cost) of reducing the biomass of large infestations, which can then be sprayed when regrowth reaches about one metre in height.

A follow-up field day will be undertaken on the property in 2026 to assess the results of both techniques.

Demonstration of a drone spray unit and a mulcher at a field day hosted by Northeast Blackberry Action Group at a property in Berringama.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BLACKBERRY CONTROL DEMONSTRATION DAYS 2024-2025

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce co-hosted seven blackberry control events with communities. These events demonstrated 'best practice' blackberry control methods, including physical, chemical, and organic control techniques.

Demonstration days enabled landholders to visualise action on the ground and interact with experts in blackberry management, as well as neighbours and fellow community members to learn from each other and develop connections to tackle blackberries in their area in a more coordinated manner.

Physical control demonstrations included the use of larger machinery, such as mulchers. Chemical control demonstrations included backpacks and larger spray units, as well as the cut and paint technique. All six events demonstrated a spray drone in action, which created much interest.

Signs of blackberry biocontrol agents, such as blackberry rust on leaves and stems, were also shown to participants.



20 SEPTEMBER 2024
BUNYIP BLACKBERRY CONTROL
DEMONSTRATION EVENT

Hosted by Western Port Catchment
Landcare Network

15 attendees



16 OCTOBER 2024
NARINGAL BLACKBERRY CONTROL
DEMONSTRATION EVENT

Hosted by Warrnambool Coastcare
Landcare Network

40 attendees

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BLACKBERRY CONTROL DEMONSTRATION DAYS 2024-2025



26 OCTOBER 2024
WHEATSHEAF BLACKBERRY CONTROL
DEMONSTRATION EVENT

Hosted by Friends of Kangaroo Creek

30 attendees



17 FEBRUARY 2025
YAMBUK BLACKBERRY CONTROL
DEMONSTRATION EVENT

40 attendees



27 FEBRUARY 2025
HEATH HILL BLACKBERRY CONTROL
DEMONSTRATION EVENT

Hosted by Western Port Catchment
Landcare Network

24 attendees



2 APRIL 2025
BERRINGAMA BLACKBERRY CONTROL
DEMONSTRATION EVENT

Hosted by North East Blackberry
Action Group

30 attendees

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BLACKBERRY CONTROL DEMONSTRATION DAYS 2024-2025

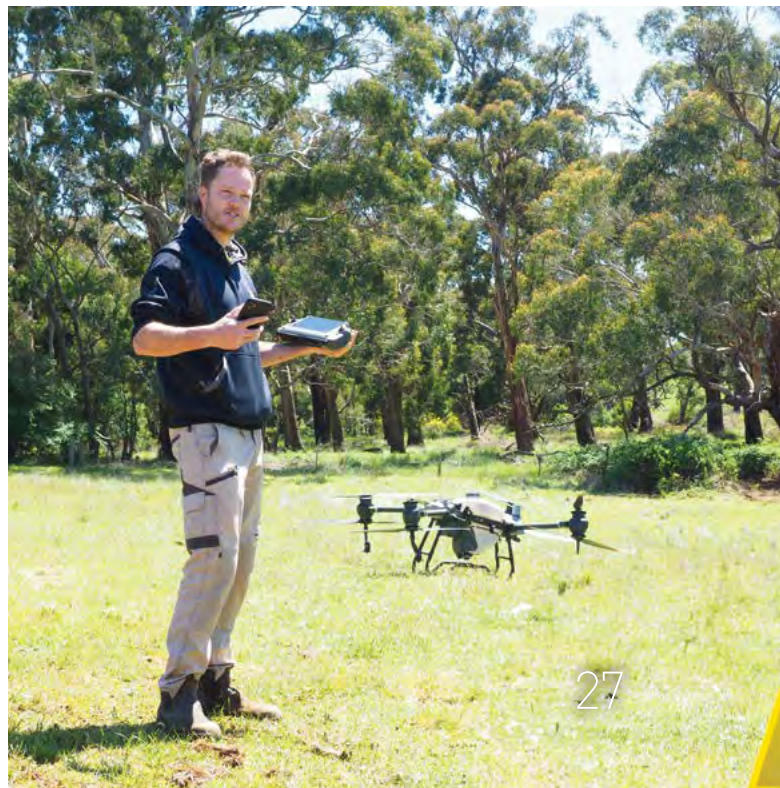


3 MAY 2025

ROKEBY BLACKBERRY CONTROL
DEMONSTRATION EVENT

Hosted by Latrobe Catchment Landcare
Network

150 attendees



LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP GROUPS SUPPORTED BY THE VBT'S COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM: 2005-2025

Years	Community Partnership Group	Other Partners
2005-ongoing	Northeast Blackberry Action Group	Upper Murray Landcare Network, DPI, DSE, PV, HVP, Towong Shire, NE CMA, Vic Roads.
2005-09	Three Creeks Landcare Group	Bass Coast Landcare Network, Bass Coast Shire, DPI
2005-08	South Gippsland Landcare Network focus Landcare groups	South Gippsland Landcare Network
2007-21	Mitta Mitta Blackberry Action Group	Mitta Valley Landcare Group, North East Blackberry Action Group, HVP, DSE, DEPI, PV, Towong Shire, NECMA
2008-11	Far East Gippsland Community Blackberry Action Group	Seven landcare groups, EGCMA, PV, DPI, DSE
2009-17	Central Gippsland Woody Weed Action Group	Local Community, Latrobe Catchment Landcare Network, Latrobe City Council, HVP, VicRoads
2011-13	Barkers Creek Blackberry and Gorse Action Group	Barkers Creek Landcare Network, NCCMA, V/Line, City of Greater Bendigo, Mount Alexander Shire, PV, DSE, Connecting Country
2010-13	Mudgegonga and District Blackberry Action Group	Community representatives, DSE Good Neighbour Program
2011-15	Upper Campaspe Blackberry Gorse Action Group	Upper Campaspe Landcare Network, Ashbourne Landcare Group, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, DPI, VGT
2011-23	Northern Yarra Blackberry Action Group	Northern Yarra Landcare Network, PP&WCMA, Yarra Ranges Shire, Melbourne Water, DSE, PV, VicRoads, Conservation Volunteers Australia, Federal government
2012-17	Corner Inlet Blackberry Taskforce	Wonyip (Yarram Network), Agnes River and Franklin River Landcare groups (South Gippsland Network), South Gippsland Shire, PV, Toora Lions Club, Friends of Agnes Falls, Communities for Nature funding for Ramsar site
2012-15	King Parrot Creek Blackberry Action Group	Murrindindi Shire, Strath Creek Landcare Group, King Parrot Creek Environment Group, GBCMA, PV
2012-16	Merton to Cathkin Blackberry Action Group	Merton and Home Creek-Spring Creek Landcare Groups, Mansfield Shire, Murrindindi Shire
2012-16	Triangle Blackberry Action Group	South Cathedral Landcare Group, PV, DPI/DELWP, Murrindindi Shire, GBCMA

Years	Community Partnership Group	Other Partners
2012-16	Up2Us Landcare Blackberry Alliance Group	VFF, Mansfield Shire, Ancona, Delatite, Howqua Valley and Upper Broken River Landcare Groups, GBCMA, DEPI, PV
2012-18	Wellington District Blackberry Taskforce	Local Community, Wellington Shire, Southern Rural Water, Vic Roads
2014-16	Sandy Creek Woody Weed Action Group	Sandy Creek and Maldon Urban Landcare Groups, Tarangower Cactus Control Committee, Connecting Country, PV, Mount Alexander Shire, Loddon Prison (Landmate), DELWP, Maldon Primary School
2015-19	Creightons Creek-Gooram Blackberry Action Group	Creightons Creek Landcare Group
2015-17	Dabyminga Blackberry Action Group	Community representatives, Strath Creek Blackberry Action Group, Mitchell Shire, Southwest Goulburn Landcare, DELWP
2016-20	Moorabool Blackberry Action Group	Moorabool Landcare Network, PP&WCMA, Moorabool Shire, Corangamite CMA, Greendale-Wombat Landcare Group, VicRoads, Melbourne Water, DELWP, Central Highlands Water Authority, PV, VicTrack
2017-22	Whittlesea and Surrounds Blackberry Action Group	City of Whittlesea, Kinglake Landcare Group, Melbourne Water, VicTrack, PV, DELWP, Upper Goulburn Landcare Network, Whittlesea Landcare Group, Landcare Australia Ltd, Scouts Victoria – Warringal Scout Camp, Regional Roads Victoria
2018-21	Eden Park Blackberry Action Group	City of Whittlesea, Kinglake Landcare Group, Melbourne Water
2018-19	West Strzelecki Blackberry Action Group	Mount Worth and District Landcare Group
2019-21	Silvan Blackberry Action Group	Wabbit Action Group Silvan, Yarra Ranges Shire, Melbourne Water
2019-21	Strath Creek Blackberry Action Group	Strath Creek Landcare Group, King Parrot Creek Blackberry Action Group, Murrindindi Shire
2022-25	Pheasant Creek Blackberry Action Group	Agribusiness Yarra Valley Fruit Fly Group, PV, Murrindindi Shire, Kinglake Landcare Group
2025-	Friends of Kangaroo Creek, Wheatsheaf	Hepburn Shire, NCCMA
2025-	Wodonga Golf Club	Enviro Graze

Acronyms

CMA: Catchment Management Authority, **DELWP:** Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, **DEPI:** Department of Environment and Primary Industries, **DPI:** Department of Primary Industries, **DSE:** Department of Sustainability and Environment, **HVP:** Hancock's Victorian Plantations, **EGCMA:** East Gippsland CMA, **GBCMA:** Goulburn-Broken CMA, **NCCMA:** North Central CMA, **NECMA:** North East CMA, **PP&WCMA:** Port Philip and Westernport CMA, **PV:** Parks Victoria, **VFF:** Victorian Farmers Federation, **VGT:** Victorian Gorse Taskforce.

RESEARCH

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce plays a key role in promoting research to better understand the impacts of Blackberry and opportunities to achieve more effective control. It also helps disseminate the lessons from research to the community.

Biocontrol

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce has been advocating for further Government investment in research to identify effective biocontrol agents for European blackberry since 2012.

In 2008 previous investment resulted in the release of eight rust strains in localities with suitable climatic conditions. Over time, the releases have demonstrated that warm and wet summers allow the rust to spread and reduce the biomass of blackberry plants by limiting the number of daughter plants produced.

Blackberry rust won't kill the host, however the wet summers 2021 to 2023 were ideal for the rust to severely deplete foliage and reduce fruit

production across Victoria. Affected blackberry plants were weakened, although regrowth occurred during the 2024-25 summer.

Queensland Fruit Fly

In 2023/24, the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce commissioned research that confirmed that European Blackberry is a host for Queensland Fruit Fly in Victoria, particularly in residential and fruit-growing areas of the state. The report is now being used as a tool to engage with land managers, local government and sectors of the horticultural industry.

Other Research

At the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce Forum in Melbourne in 2023, researchers were invited to present on opportunities and challenges for future blackberry control methods. Feedback from attendees indicated that further research into biocontrol methods and gene editing should be pursued to identify future options. The VBT has subsequently sought input from the University of Melbourne on the direction research could take to enable more effective control methods to be developed.

Recordings from the conference can be found in the Resources section of the VBT website: <https://www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au/>.

VBT **KEY TELEVISION AND ONLINE** ENGAGEMENT 2024-2025

Television advertisements are a key tool for reminding regional communities throughout Victoria of the need to control blackberries over the warmer months of the year. Two new 15-second advertisements were produced this year, one highlighting the broad range of control options available, the other highlighting the link between blackberries and fruitflies.

Social media and other online content continue to be vital tools in helping the VBT reach landholders, with key messages delivered via our Facebook page, website and YouTube channel. While email is the main form of communication from the public, some Facebook enquiries are also received. The VBT will seek to improve and refresh online engagement in future to better engage with a wider section of the community.

WIN TV Promotional Advertisements

- 3 advertisements broadcast on WIN TV
- 6 weeks in October/November

VBT YouTube Channel

- 2,556 views across 45 videos
- 10 new subscribers

VBT Facebook

- 438 followers (49 new)
- 13 posts
- 41 likes

VBT Website

- Sessions: 7,900 (Total)
- Users: 6554 (Total) | 5039 (Australia)
- Average time: 1.40 minutes/session.
- Average pages visited: 3.88 pages/session.



TOP 10 VIEWED WEBSITE PAGES

- 01 VBT Home page - 15825
- 02 Managing blackberry - herbicide helpful tips - 1526
- 03 Managing blackberry - 1445
- 04 Controlling Blackberry - 1017
- 05 Resources - 919
- 06 Goats can offer an effective tool in weed control - 600
- 07 Managing blackberry herbicides at a glance - 431
- 08 Managing blackberry biocontrol - 429
- 09 Managing blackberry herbicides - 335
- 10 Community Partnership - 292

TOP 9 WEBSITE LANDING PAGES

- 01 VBT Home page
- 02 Managing blackberry: herbicide helpful tips
- 03 Controlling blackberry
- 04 Goats offer an effective tool in weed control
- 05 Managing blackberry
- 06 Managing blackberry: biocontrol
- 07 Managing blackberry: physical control
- 08 Resources
- 09 Managing blackberry: herbicides

Blackberries. Let's take action together.

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce continues to provide support, information and resources for successful blackberry control.



VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY **TASKFORCE**

Website www.vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au

Facebook [facebook.com/VictorianBlackberryTaskforce](https://www.facebook.com/VictorianBlackberryTaskforce)

YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/@victorianblackberrytaskfor6575>

Email vbt@vicblackberrytaskforce.com.au



Members of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce

