

NORTH EAST BLACKBERRY ACTION GROUP

UPPER MURRAY



**Victorian
Blackberry
Taskforce**

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**BLACKBERRY CONTROL
ACTION PLAN**

MARCH 2005

Background

On the 27th March 2005 the North East Blackberry Action Group – Upper Murray facilitated a workshop to identify what it was going to do to address the issues of blackberry infestation in the area and develop a plan of action for the short to medium term. Outcomes from the workshop are presented below.

What Is The Problem?

The community has identified that there is an increasing need to address blackberry management in the Upper Murray Landcare Network area. The Network comprises 8 groups that cover the areas of Burrowye, Walwa, Tintaldra, Biggara, Nariel/Thoughtla, Cudgewa Valley and Koetong, while the Upper Murray Farm Tree Group is a whole of catchment group.

The main concerns of the Group include:

- Rate of spread of blackberry;
- Lack of control currently occurring (public/private);
- Decreasing capacity to manage the increasing problem;
- No Government Catchment Management Extension Officers to liaise with farmers; and

Specifically there is a need for a significant increase in farmer/ landholder/ manager/government awareness that there is a problem.

Why Is There A Problem?

- Life cycle and capacity for spread of blackberry
- Location of blackberry limits control options / incentive (steep /gullies/low productive land)
- A lack of awareness among a large number of land managers, including absentee owners, about their responsibilities for control.
- Limited capacity by some land managers to undertake control works ie age, fitness, limited knowledge of chemical treatment rates and timing
- Incomplete understanding of current extent (mapped distribution)
- Significant non-compliance with existing legislation (major infestations)
- No resources to undertake compliance and extension activities
- Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of public land managers (Good Neighbour Program)
- Limited knowledge, use and effectiveness of biocontrol methods.

Why Do We Need To Address The Problem?

The community has identified that blackberry is threatening the values of environmental, social and economic assets in the region.

The impact of blackberry needs to be reduced in order to:

- **Protect our assets**
Blackberry is having a negative impact on:
 - Agricultural land
 - Biodiversity
 - Use of the natural environment
- **Reduce the economic impact on communities**
Blackberry is affecting the viability and profitability of agricultural enterprises in the region by:
 - Increased management expense, impacting on enterprise viability
 - The devaluation of agricultural land
 - Impacting on agricultural production
- **Decrease the area of feral animal harbour**
- **Minimise the social impacts of**
 - Neighbours being forced to play an adversarial role to protect their assets.
- **Reduce the degradation of native vegetation and biodiversity values and the impact of control measures on water quality and remnant vegetation**

What Do We Need To Do?

- Complete up to date mapping of blackberry infestations (1)
 - Landcare groups will map blackberry locations in their areas
 - Assets areas – area of land infested / threatened potential
 - Land manager identification and contact list (database)
- Pilot a Voluntary Compliance Program similar to Serrated Tussock
- Develop a landholder information kit
- Undertake targeted extension activities with all land managers
- Liaise with Public Land managers to improve Good Neighbour process
- Inform and enlist the support of Politicians and Policy Makers
- Communication/liaison – spread information.

- Seek Sponsorship
 - Chemical Company Support for newsletter
 - Field days (KTRI)
- Pursue other funding opportunities
 - National Landcare Program
 - Envirofund
 - VIC Blackberry Taskforce
 - Tackling Weeds on Private Land (Vic State)
 - Defeating the Weed Menace (Federal)
 - DSE/DPI
- Convene regular meetings
- Develop and publicise a schedule of events
- Develop an evaluation plan (Bennett's Hierarchy)
- TALK TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE

How Will We Know If We Are Achieving Our Aims?

- 1) See a measurable continued reduction in area of infestations (evaluation plan goal)
- 2) Increased capacity of land managers to manage blackberry (improved skills and knowledge)
- 3) Implementation of extension program in the Upper Murray
 - Action Group Extension Officer – 2 days/week
- 4) Clarification of DPI/DSE/CMA/Action Group partnership roles
 - Clear path for steps in the process

1 —————> 2 —————> 3

Information —————> Extension —————> Compliance
- 5) Increased community Information and awareness will result in an increased area of control
 - Coordinated communication effort
 - Awareness of what this group is doing
 - Expansion of internal and external networks

What Are The Risks To Achieving What We Need To?

- Slowing down of momentum
 - Funding (continuity/reduction)
 - Economic (Agriculture downturn)
- No incentives/support available
 - Innovations
 - Contractors (access)
- Access/knowledge of funding opportunities
- Failure to engage partner organisations ie DPI, DSE, Parks
- Changes in land use (reduced stocking rates/less sheep/plantations)
- Demographic (age limitations)
- Public Land Management - decreased intervention
- Chemical resistance developing.

Who are key communication contacts?

Media

- ABC Rural Report / Country Hour (Radio)
- Radio Upper Murray
- Corryong Courier
- The Weekly Times (Kim Woods)
- Country Mail
- Walwa World
- Landcare
- NSW Murray Catchment CMA
- TV Commercial
- Inserts in Newspapers/Other

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