



Communications and Engagement Strategy



2018-19

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Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- Inform key stakeholders and land managers about the adverse impacts of gorse and best practice management strategies.
- Build community capacity to effectively manage gorse across the landscape.
- Promote the benefits of community-led action in managing gorse at a landscape scale.
- Demonstrate the success of VGT programs that have supported and continue to support the community to effectively control gorse throughout Victoria.

Introduction

Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) is an introduced plant from Europe that is now endemic in southern Australia, and one of the region's most invasive and costly weeds. It was classified as Weed of National Significance (WoNS) in 2000 under the National Weeds Strategy due to its invasiveness, potential for spread and effects on socioeconomic and environmental values.

The invasiveness of gorse is due to its high seeding capacity per plant per year, and the ability of seeds to remain viable for up to 25 years. Gorse is spread across 23 million hectares of Australia and infests up to one million hectares, with its potential range being 87 million hectares.

Impacts of gorse include:

- reduced paddock carrying capacity, as well as restricting stock and human access
- harbour for feral animals
- reduced land value
- formation of dense monocultural stands, threatening the integrity of riparian zones and reducing overall biodiversity in native environments
- increased fire risk
- interference with access, seedling establishment and harvesting in forestry practices.

Effective management of gorse relies on an integrated approach including physical removal, application of herbicide, revegetation and biological control to prevent spread.

The VGT was formed in 1999 and launched a community-led integrated approach to reducing gorse across the landscape. VGT members include local people who have successfully controlled gorse on their properties, as well as natural resource management, agricultural, pest management and other experts.

The VGT provides best practice management advice and sources funding from across government for community-led activities to assist the community to reduce gorse in local areas. The VGT works with local land owners and public land managers such as the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, local councils and catchment management authorities. The VGT also works with researchers exploring innovative ways to tackle gorse.

Goals

Victorian Gorse Taskforce Vision

The community accepts responsibility for gorse control and contributes to on-going protection of social, environmental and economic assets, with no further increase in gorse distribution in Victoria.

Victorian Gorse Control Strategy

The Victorian Gorse Control Strategy 2014-2019 outlines the following nine goals and key directions:

1. Provide leadership in community-led invasive plant control.
2. Achieve an accurate knowledge of the extent and threat of Gorse in Victoria.
3. Promote Best Practice Management for Gorse control in Victoria.
4. Prevent the spread of Gorse into new areas of the state.
5. Achieve a reduction in the core infestations of Gorse across Victoria.
6. Reduce infestations and the spread of Gorse in and along corridors.
7. Increase the community's capacity to be actively engaged in long-term Gorse control.
8. Ensure communities are aware of their statutory obligations to control Gorse.
9. Ensure effective monitoring and reporting of the Victorian Gorse Control Strategy.

Communications and Engagement Strategy

1. To raise awareness about the detrimental agricultural, economic, social and environmental impacts of gorse.
2. To build community capacity to effectively manage gorse.
3. Provide current information on integrated, best practice gorse management strategies to land managers and key stakeholders.
4. To communicate current VGT, government, industry and community efforts to minimise the impact of gorse.
5. To communicate and promote success stories, research outcomes and achievements of the VGT to motivate stakeholders and land owners and encourage future funding.

Stakeholders and Target Audience

| Category | Key stakeholders |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Primary Stakeholders | |
| Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agriculture Victoria • Department of Environment, Land Water and Planning (DELWP) • Parks Victoria • Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's) • Local Government • Federal Government – WoNS program, grant programs • Country Fire Authority (CFA) |
| Community Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landcare Networks • Landcare Groups • Friends of Groups |
| Private land managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landowners and managers affected by, or with potential to be affected by, gorse |
| Peak Bodies and Industry Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) • Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC) • Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) • Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) • Forestry, Agribusiness, Mining • Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV) |
| Utility Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Authorities • Electricity distributors • Gas distributors |
| Linear Reserve Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VicRoads • V/Line • VicTrack |
| Victorian CPMGs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party • Victorian Blackberry Taskforce • Victorian Rabbit Action Network |
| Research Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSIRO • Agriculture Victoria • Arthur Rylah Institute • Centre for Invasive Species Solutions |
| VGT staff and internal stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Officer • Committee Members • Communications, Community Engagement and Extension Officer |
| Secondary Stakeholders | |
| Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interstate governments – state, territory and local |
| Traditional Owner Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered Aboriginal Parties • Aboriginal Victoria |

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| Supporters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herbicide manufacturers • Farm/rural supplies stores |
| Educational Institutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities • TAFEs • Primary and Secondary schools |
| Specialised | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Consultants • Environmental Services Contractors |

Key Messages and Methods

| Stakeholder | Outcomes | Key Communication Messages | Communication channels |
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| Agriculture Victoria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate the work of the VGT • Continue to support the VGT with funding • Continue to support the VGT through staff participation / involvement at VGT meetings • Maintain declaration for gorse as a noxious weed • Maintain enforcement duties around gorse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting • Annual report • Meetings • Quarterly newsletter • Website |
| DELWP and Parks Victoria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively control gorse on managed land • Role model for responsible land management • Land is managed through methods that prevent the spread of gorse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Quarterly newsletter • Meetings |

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| CMA's | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMA's include gorse as a high priority in their invasive plant / catchment strategies • CMA's include a link to VGT website on weed information webpages • CMA's continue to support communities to manage gorse through community grants programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Quarterly newsletter • Meetings • Social media • VGT Best Practice brochure |
| Local Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively control gorse on council managed reserves and roadsides • Role model for responsible land management • Land is managed through methods that prevent the spread of gorse • Councils to work collaboratively with private land managers across reserve and roadside boundaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) • Successful gorse control is possible, but requires a long-term commitment • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Quarterly newsletter • Meetings • Councillor briefings • Radio and print media • Social media • Ag show attendance • VGT Best Practice brochure |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and demonstration in correct ID of gorse (for contractors) • Local Government funding for Roadside Weeds and Pest Management Program | |
| Federal Government | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support communities to manage gorse through grant programs and/or alternative funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements • Successful gorse control requires a whole of land manager/owner approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Quarterly newsletter • Annual report |
| Community Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate the work of the VGT • Continue to coordinate community-led management of gorse • Apply for funding to manage gorse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Successful gorse control is possible, but requires a long-term commitment • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital • Advice and demonstration in correct ID of gorse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Quarterly newsletter • Annual report • Meetings • Social Media • Radio and print media • Field day attendance • VGT Best Practice brochure |

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| Private land managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively control gorse on their properties • Understand how to identify, prevent and use best practice techniques to manage gorse infestations • Increase awareness of others in the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) • Successful gorse control is possible, but requires a long-term commitment • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital • Advice and demonstration in correct ID of gorse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Quarterly newsletter • Social Media • Radio and print media • Ag show attendance • VGT Best Practice brochure • Mailout in extension areas • Email/meetings in extension areas |
| Utility Managers and Linear Reserve Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively control gorse on managed land • Understand how to identify, prevent and use best practice techniques to manage gorse infestations • Land is managed through methods that prevent the spread of gorse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Meetings • Quarterly Newsletter • Website |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful gorse control is possible, but requires a long-term commitment • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital • Advice and demonstration in correct ID of gorse | |
| Industry Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage members to actively control gorse • Encourage members to manage gorse through methods that prevent spread | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Meetings • Radio and print media • VGT Best Practice brochure |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and demonstration in correct ID of gorse | |
| Victorian CPMGs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate the work of the VGT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Quarterly newsletter • Annual report • Website • Social Media • Meetings • Attendance at field days • VGT Best Practice brochure |
| Research Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers continue to see the merit in research projects on gorse control • Research outcomes and recommendations are shared | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The VGT sees research as critical to successful and continued gorse management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Newsletter |
| VGT staff and internal stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate the work of the VGT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email • Annual report • Meetings • Website |
| Interstate Government – state, territory and local | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government continues to support communities to manage gorse through community grants programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Newsletter • Annual report • VGT Best Practice brochure |
| Traditional Owner Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate the work of the VGT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage community to actively control gorse • Encourage community to manage gorse through methods that prevent spread | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Successful gorse control is a possible, but requires a long-term commitment • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter • Annual report • Social Media • Radio and print media • VGT Best Practice brochure |
| Supporters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate the work of the VGT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Newsletter • Annual report • Social media • VGT Best Practice brochure |

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| Educational Institutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate students about WoNS, and the legislation and responsibilities for managing WoNS in Victoria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) • Successful gorse control is possible, but requires a long-term commitment • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital • Advice and demonstration in correct ID of gorse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom talks • VGT Best Practice brochure • Attendance at field days • Website |
| Specialised | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate the work of the VGT • Encourage community to actively control gorse • Encourage community to manage gorse through methods that prevent spread | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on VGT achievements • Gorse is an aggressive weed affecting agriculture, natural environment and urban areas • Duty of care for land managers to control gorse as required by the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (CaLP Act) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email • Newsletter • Annual report • Social Media • Radio and print media • VGT Best Practice brochure |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful gorse control requires a commitment from all land managers/owners • Successful gorse control requires integrated management • Successful gorse control is a possible, but requires a long-term commitment • Prevention of gorse seeding each season reduces years of persistence • Gorse seeds can be spread by slashing, vehicles and equipment, therefore good hygiene practices are vital | |
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Communication Action Plan

| Action | Channel | Responsibility | Timing | Cost \$ |
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| 1. Attend key events VGT to attend key events, field days and forums to raise awareness about the detrimental impacts of gorse and integrated, best practice gorse management among key stakeholders and the community. | | | | |
| Attendance at regional agricultural shows | Agricultural show attendance | Communications Officer Committee Members to provide support | 12 per year spread across gorse affected areas of Victoria | \$15,000 |
| Attendance at local Landcare field days (i.e. Pest Plant and Animal) as appropriate | External field days | Communications Officer Executive Officer Committee Members to provide support | As required based on location and availability of VGT representative | |
| Ensure representation at key forums and / or media opportunities around gorse management | Forums Media events around gorse | Executive Officer Committee Members to provide support Communications Officer | As required based on location and availability of VGT representative | |
| 2. Media Produce media content to keep key stakeholders and the community updated on VGT programs, resources and achievements. | | | | |
| Run existing VGT Community Service Announcement video on television | Regional television Website | Executive Officer | Dependent on budget - aim for 1x per year at a minimum | \$5,500 per campaign |

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| Create new Community Service Announcement video – infographics style | Regional television Website | Executive Officer | Biennial | \$3,000 |
| Write media releases for print articles on relevant topics – i.e. grants program, achievements, extension services | Newspapers LG/CMA newsletters Landcare magazine | Communications Officer Executive Officer | 2 per quarter (8 per year) | |
| Source radio interviews and Community Service Announcements on relevant topics to promote VGT programs, achievements and news. | ABC radio Local radio | Communications Officer Executive Officer | Ongoing | |
| 3. Online promotions Produce online content to keep key stakeholders and the community updated on VGT programs, resources and achievements. | | | | |
| Keep VGT website updated – news, resources, achievements, grants, community projects | Website | Executive Officer Communications Officer | Monthly | \$3,000 per year (based on 2017/18 operating costs) |
| Respond to enquiries in a timely manner (preferably within 24 hours) | Email | Communications Officer Executive Officer | Daily | |
| Create VGT Facebook page | Facebook | Communications Officer | February 2018 | |
| Ensure regular social media presence with sharing of VGT news, updates and stakeholder stories. | Facebook Instagram | Communications Officer Executive Officer | At least 1 post per week on each platform | |

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| Investigate presence on other online networks (i.e. LinkedIn) | Online networks | Communications Officer Executive Officer | Ongoing | |
| Source partner website pages to link to VGT website on appropriate partner pages (i.e. CMAs, Pest Smart, herbicide manufacturers, farm supplies stores, contractors). | Online | Executive Officer Communications Officer Committee Members | Ongoing | |
| Create automated email marketing account and templates for program updates, communicating with grant recipients, sending out quarterly newsletter. | Online | Communications Officer Executive Officer | February 2018 | |
| 4. Printed and promotional materials (any resource brochures can also be available as download on VGT website) Produce and update printed materials to ensure key stakeholders and the community have access to a variety of up-to-date best practice management advice. | | | | |
| Create VGT Best Practice Management brochure | Printed Website | Communications Officer Executive Officer | June 2018 | |
| Keep VGT Best Practice Management brochure updated with current information | Printed Website | Communications Officer Executive Officer | Yearly review | |
| Create ID guide with lookalikes as VGT business card | Printed | Communications Officer Executive Officer | June 2018 | |
| Review and create other marketing materials as needed – i.e. gazebo, branded pens, USBs, lanyards, bumper stickers, control calendar | | Communications Officer Executive Officer | June 2018 | |

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| Create VGT letterhead for extension services | | Communications Officer Executive Officer | March 2018 | |
| Create new quarterly newsletter and distribute to key stakeholders, email subscriber list, upload on website and Facebook. | Printed Website Facebook Email | Communications Officer Executive Officer | Bi-annually 2018 Quarterly 2019 and beyond | |
| Create and distribute signs for properties that undertake gorse control as part of Community Grants Program | | Communications Officer Executive Officer | Yearly | |
| 5. Communicating to internal and external stakeholders To build capacity of staff and committee members to ensure key messages are consistently communicated to key stakeholders and the community around the objectives and achievements of the VGT. | | | | |
| Create annual report to communicate achievements of the VGT, including the Community Grants Program. | Email Print Website | Executive Officer | Yearly | |
| Hold quarterly meetings for committee and internal stakeholders to discuss progression of deliverables of Victorian Gorse Control Strategy 2014-2019, and other VGT projects such as White Paper funding. | Internal meetings | Executive Officer Communications Officer Committee Members | Quarterly | |

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| Hold AGM to elect committee for the following 12 months, and to communicate VGT achievements and deliverables of Victorian Gorse Control Strategy 2014-2019 to other key stakeholders. | Public meeting | Executive Officer Committee Members | Yearly | |
| Run two pilot extension services to promote and encourage active gorse management in two communities – aim for 15-30 private property visits, as well as support from Local Government municipalities, local Landcare groups, local Parks Victoria staff and local CMA staff. | Mailout Meetings Private property visits | Communications Officer | Yearly | |
| Report VGT achievements, extension project update, news and research outcomes to State Government Managers involved in funding the VGT | Internal meetings | Executive Officer | As required by funding bodies | |

Evaluation

| Question Linked to each deliverable | Evaluation Method | Evidence |
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| 1. Attendance at key events To what extent did we promote best practice gorse management at key events, field days and forums? | Engagement tally at key events. | Number of events attended. Number of people spoken to at field days. Number of attendees at Landcare field days. |
| 2. Media To what extent did we promote the VGT in the media? | Media release monitoring portal. Monitoring of LG, CMA and community group publication of VGT. | Number of media articles published. Number of radio interviews. |
| 3. Online promotions To what extent did we increase VGT website use to promote resources and achievements? | Monitor website traffic through Google Analytics. Monitor video view count on YouTube. Monitoring number of downloads of resources. Monitor social media engagement via Facebook analytics. | Number of views of website, including length of time engaged on each page. Number of views on each VGT video. Number of Facebook and Instagram followers, and number of post likes, shares, engagements. Number of subscribers to email marketing and analytics on opens, clicks etc. |
| 4. Printed and promotional materials To what extent did we create new materials and to what extent did we distribute printed promotional materials? | Monitoring of number of printed resources distributed. | Number of existing promotional materials. Number of promotional materials updated. Number of new promotional materials produced. Amount of new promotional materials distributed (hard copies only and rounded to nearest 10). Number of VGT signs distributed. |

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| <p>5. Communicating to internal and external stakeholders</p> <p>To what extent did we deliver effective and informative key messages to internal and external stakeholders?</p> | <p>Feedback and structured surveys of VGT committee members to ensure they understand and align with VGT key messages.</p> <p>Feedback and structured surveys of external stakeholders about availability of, access to and relevance of VGT resources and programs.</p> <p>Feedback and structured surveys of participants in extension services about availability of, access to and relevance of VGT resources and programs.</p> | <p>Number of VGT presentations and briefings.</p> <p>Number of printed Annual Reports distributed.</p> <p>Number of items announced via VGT e-newsletter/website.</p> <p>Number of attendees at AGM.</p> <p>Number of properties extension services were delivered.</p> <p>Number of respondents to external surveys.</p> <p>Number of primary stakeholders engaged with.</p> <p>Number of primary stakeholders met with.</p> |
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