



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

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
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

CMAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMAs include gorse as a high priority in their invasive plant / catchment strategies CMAs include a link to VGT website on weed information webpages CMAs 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

		<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

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

		<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

		<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

	<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

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

		<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 \$
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

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	

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	

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	

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

<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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