



**Victorian Rabbit Management  
Collaboration Initiative**  
Lisa Adams, National Rabbit Facilitator



Department of  
Environment and  
Primary Industries





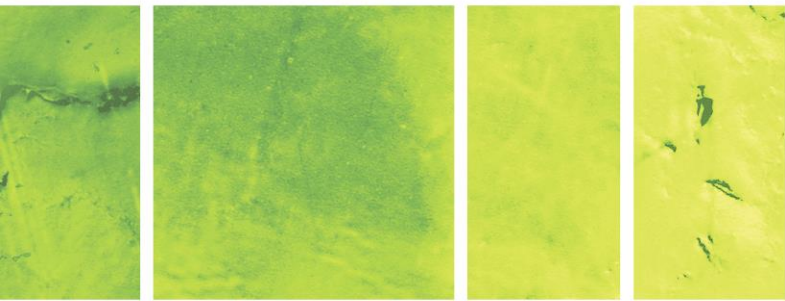


# Victorian Rabbit Management Collaboration Initiative

Lisa Adams, National Rabbit Facilitator

2014  
*An Invasive Animals CRC Project*





*Victorian Rabbit Management Collaboration Initiative.*

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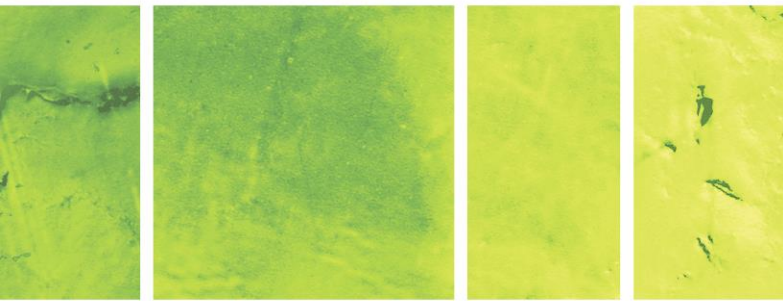
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## Executive Summary

Rabbits are Australia's most costly vertebrate pest animal causing more than \$200 million in agricultural production losses each year. Less than one rabbit per hectare can prevent the successful regeneration of native vegetation which is vital for biodiversity and farm productivity.

As part of ongoing efforts to manage the damage caused by rabbits, the Victorian Rabbit Management Collaboration Initiative (Initiative) is to commence in October 2014. The Initiative is the result of a collaborative project between the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IA CRC) and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI).

The Initiative is resourced for two years with combined sponsorship of \$100,000 cash and \$200,000 in-kind from the IA CRC and DEPI. It will be led by a Steering Group of community, industry and government leaders with the support of the National Rabbit Facilitator.

The Initiative will support community-led action for more sustainable and effective rabbit management in Victoria. The Initiative recognises the importance of all land holders, land managers and groups with rabbit management responsibilities to coordinate their effort around clear short and longer-term goals; that this already occurs in many communities across Victoria; and the considerable community, industry and government interest to further support and enable community leadership and action on rabbits.

The Initiative will roll out six strategies that target skills, learning and network development and community-based innovation. The Initiative will support pro-active groups to work together to plan, resource, and coordinate their effort towards more sustainable and effective rabbit management. The strategies are:

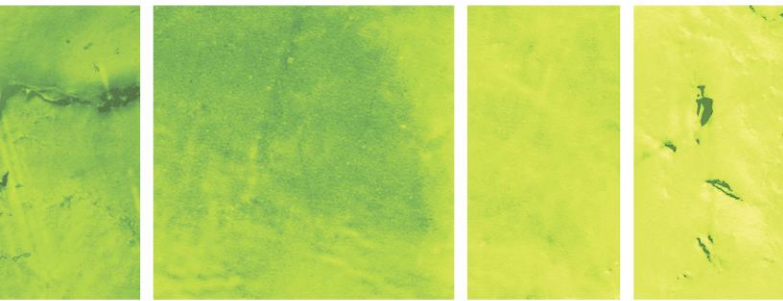
- i. A 12-month training, mentoring and learning network program to develop the next generation of rabbit management experts, with trainees from all regions of Victoria.
- ii. A small grants and workshop program to improve coordination across groups involved in rabbit management, including mapping and networking capability.
- iii. Support for Blackberry Action Groups in Victoria to extend their focus to rabbits.
- iv. Facilitation of opportunities to improve warren ripping quality assurance.
- v. Facilitation of opportunities to better understand and target funding flows for more effective community-led action on rabbits.
- vi. Promotion of stories that communicate what can be achieved through community-led action on rabbits.



The Initiative was developed by the National Rabbit Facilitator in collaboration with people and groups involved in rabbit management from across Victoria's 'rabbit management system'. Systems-thinking was used to understand how rabbit management works from a range of perspectives, test assumptions, and to develop and test strategy ideas. People learned from each others' knowledge and experience of rabbit management. Some of the key messages about what was learned that guided the development of the Initiative and its strategies are:

- For rabbit management to be effective, it is essential that all people and groups with rabbit management responsibilities work together to coordinate their effort towards short and longer-term goals.
- Many communities have a respected 'go to' person for advice and leadership on rabbits. These people champion the need for all land holders and managers to understand their responsibilities and work together. They often provide an important bridging role between the community and the government authorities that enables knowledge exchange and coordinated effort. The number of 'go to' rabbit experts is diminishing in Victoria and many communities don't have ready access to expertise to guide their efforts.
- DEPI's asset-based protection policy framework for established invasive species and the associated rabbit compliance program are important influencers of peoples' decisions and actions on rabbits. They are integrated with a range of Victorian Government funding flows and long standing cooperative arrangements.
- Across Victoria there are pro-active community groups and networks involved in rabbit management that have innovative ideas and plans for how to improve how people coordinate and focus their efforts.
- Mapping is a hot topic as it is proving to be a useful rabbit management tool. People from the community, government and private sectors use a range of mapping tools for a range of purposes and can see the benefits of coordinated approaches to mapping.
- There is interest to develop web-based platforms to share rabbit management plans and information among community groups and between community and government organisations to enable more effective, coordinated action on rabbits.
- There is interest in the use of community-based strategic plans for rabbit management to focus and coordinate effort towards short and longer-term goals, make best use of the available resources, and to encourage and enable co-investment among interested parties.
- Finding ways to promote and support these ideas and plans will likely improve how people coordinate and focus their rabbit management efforts in communities across Victoria.

*For updates on the Initiative, the contact details of the National Rabbit Facilitator and information on rabbit management, please visit [www.depi.vic.gov.au/rabbits](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/rabbits). The PestSmart Toolkit also provides comprehensive, science-based information on rabbit management - [www.feral.org.au/pestsmart](http://www.feral.org.au/pestsmart).*



## Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to the Initiative - people working in Landcare, pest control and environmental consulting companies, agribusiness and associated industry organisations, Catchment Management Authorities, local government, and state government agriculture, environment and science agencies. Their knowledge and insights were instrumental to understanding how rabbit management works as a state-wide system in Victoria, and formulating the Initiative and its strategies. Their willingness to share information is gratefully acknowledged. These people are listed in Attachment D.

The project vision came from the IA CRC's Community Engagement Program. The Program team, led by Paul Martin from the University of New England and Ted Alter from Penn State University, provided valuable teaching, mentoring and support. Strong support and the 'authorising environment' were provided by DEPI, led by John Burley, Andrew Woolnough and John Matthews. Thank you to Andrew and John Matthews, and also to Lyndal Thompson and Kylee Carpenter from the IA CRC, and Gabrielle Vivian-Smith and Lewis Hill from DEPI, for their input into this publication.

The endeavour of all these people is at the heart of the Initiative.





# 1. Introduction

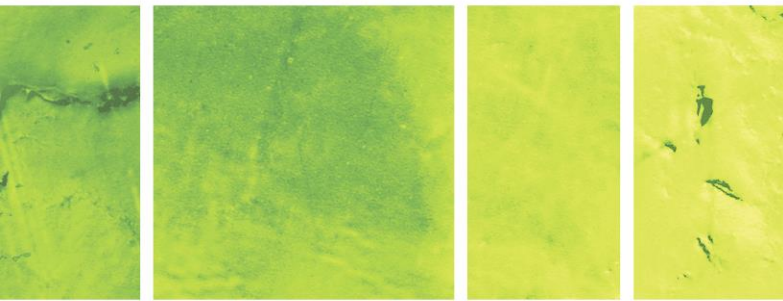
The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (IA CRC) and the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) in Victoria appointed a National Rabbit Facilitator in 2013 to lead a project to facilitate community-led rabbit management in Australia. A project aim was to develop strategies to support more sustainable, effective community-led action on rabbits in Victoria and to extend the approach to other jurisdictions. The aim evolved to become the 'Victorian Rabbit Management Collaboration Initiative' (Initiative).

Information on the Initiative; how and why it was developed, and the associated strategies and how they will be progressed, is provided as a record and to assist the implementation of the Initiative. It is hoped that the information, and with reference to the approaches, concepts, principles and tools that were applied, might also assist people involved in the management of invasive species, and the development of natural resource management strategies focussed on systems-strengthening and community-led action.

For updates on the Initiative, the contact details of the National Rabbit Facilitator and information on rabbit management, please visit [www.depi.vic.gov.au/rabbits](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/rabbits). The PestSmart Toolkit also provides comprehensive, science-based information on rabbit management - [www.feral.org.au/pestsmart](http://www.feral.org.au/pestsmart).

# 2. Background

1. Rabbits are Australia's most costly vertebrate pest animal causing more than \$200 million in agricultural production losses each year. Less than one rabbit per hectare can prevent the successful regeneration of native vegetation which is vital for biodiversity and farm productivity.
2. Institutionally based facilitation approaches have been used to manage rabbits and other established invasive species since the beginning of Australia's land care movement in the mid 1980's.
  - a. An ongoing challenge for facilitation is to better integrate community and institutional leadership, skills and effort to enable constructive system-wide reform in invasive species management.
  - b. A related challenge is to better integrate biophysical science and social science to focus on the human dimensions of rabbit management: the factors that influence peoples' decisions and actions on rabbits and how people work together; and appropriate strategies to support action which enables longer-term, effective rabbit management.
  - c. Rabbits are a socio-cultural-ecological problem requiring management strategies and approaches that draw on social, cultural and ecological science, knowledge and capabilities. The IA CRC affords a unique opportunity to pilot new approaches that bring together transdisciplinary science expertise with rabbit management practitioner and policy expertise at a state-wide 'whole-of-rabbit-management-system' scale. The expertise involved in this project is listed in Appendix D.



3. The project aim, to support community-led action for more sustainable and effective rabbit management in Victoria, recognises that:
  - a. Community-led rabbit management is already taking place and that there is considerable community, industry and government interest to extend this approach to improve how groups collaborate and coordinate their efforts.
  - b. All groups involved in rabbit management, from the community, industry and government sectors, bring valuable perspectives and expertise to the task. Purposeful, committed, cooperative effort among these groups is essential to longer-term, successful rabbit management.
  - c. Collaboration, co-learning and co-investment among the groups involved in rabbit management will enable longer-term, effective rabbit management in Victoria.
4. A systems-strengthening, democratic, participatory approach was used to develop strategy options towards the achievement of the project aim. The approach assumes that:
  - a. It's useful to conceptualise rabbit management as a complex system and the opportunities to influence the system towards the achievement of the goal.
  - b. Cooperative effort is best served through a level playing field of dialogue and deliberation that promotes respect and learning.
  - c. How the strategy options are implemented is important. Two check lists were developed to guide decision making on the 'how' and these are in Attachments A and B. A useful public policy information resource is referenced in Attachment C.
  - d. Strategies should be focussed where there is sufficient ownership and capacity to progress and where the approaches could not otherwise be progressed, and where there is support among the participating groups and stakeholders.
  - e. People who have contributed to the Initiative are listed in Attachment D.

### 3. How the Initiative was developed

1. **The National Rabbit Facilitator investigated how the rabbit management system works across Victoria.**
  - a. Twenty three interviews were undertaken to learn what decisions people take specific to community-led action on rabbits, and what influences these decisions.
  - b. The enquiry focussed on how individuals, groups and institutions influence peoples' decisions and actions on rabbits, and associated information and resource flows.
  - c. Extracts from the interview transcripts were collated into a report to communicate how rabbit management works from a range of perspectives.
2. **Ten broad strategy options were identified, along with agreed principles and requirements for successful community-led action on rabbits.**
  - a. The people who were interviewed plus a few more were invited to a workshop to review the report, think about community-led rabbit management as a complex

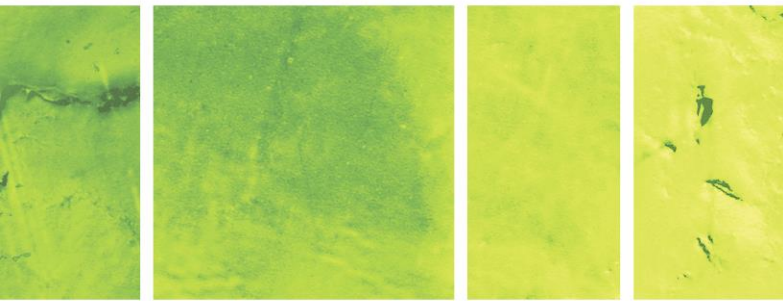


system, and consider options to influence and strengthen the system.

- b. The 26 people involved identified topics that they could agree on to consider in more depth at the workshop using a systems mapping task and facilitated discussion.
3. **The strategy options were prioritised and refined.**
    - a. A workshop discussion record was created along with a short briefing paper.
    - b. People provided feedback on the briefing paper via an on-line survey, and group and one-one-one meetings across Victoria. The consultation involved people who participated in the interviews and workshop, and others who expressed interest having been notified of the project through Regional Landcare Coordinators employed by Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's) and other communication networks.

## 4. What was learned

1. **There are many types of groups and institutions involved in rabbit management.**
  - a. Landcare and other community based groups and networks, local government, CMA's, Parks Victoria, DEPI, VicRoads, VicTrack, water authorities, environmental consultants, pest controllers, research groups and more.
2. **Different groups have different concerns, motivations and goals for rabbit management.**
  - a. Reduce rabbit numbers or prevent numbers getting too high.
  - b. Mitigate rabbit impact on agriculture, environment and social amenity.
  - c. Protect 'physical assets' such as crops, pasture, native vegetation, wildlife habitat, waterways, gardens, buildings.
  - d. Build 'community social assets'.  
For example a motivation for community baiting programs is to raise community interest in land care issues and inspire increased involvement.
  - e. Private and public interest goals often combine to inspire and motivate community leadership and action.  
The community-led program to bait rabbits which raises community interest in land care also assists individual landowners to manage rabbits on their property.
3. **For longer-term, effective rabbit management it is essential that the many groups involved coordinate and focus their effort around clear short and longer-term goals.**
  - a. Lack of group capacity or willingness to engage in collaborative and coordinated effort is a significant constraint for rabbit management.
  - b. Time and money will be wasted if the short and longer-term goals are not clear.
    - i. If the goal is to protect physical assets, the important question is not how many rabbits are killed but how many rabbits remain. Other important



questions include: What is the appropriate maintenance level for rabbit numbers to address community concerns? What is the desired level of protection to prevent rabbit populations ‘bouncing back’ in the short and longer-term? What combination of rabbit control options is available and what are the associated costs, benefits and risks for the community in the short and longer-term? What is the evidence around best practice rabbit management and how should this be applied?

- ii. To manage rabbits to very low levels, the right people and groups need to be involved and committed, the time horizon for action needs to extend beyond ‘this season’ to many years, the right combination of control methods need to be used at the right time, back up compliance support will likely be required at some stage, and efforts need to be monitored and adjusted over time.

**4. The advice of trusted and respected peers, be they neighbours or colleagues, strongly influences peoples’ rabbit management decisions and actions.**

- a. Relationships and networks influence how people filter information, learn, form opinions, collaborate and coordinate effort.
- b. Many communities have a respected ‘go to’ person for advice and leadership on rabbits. These people champion the need for all land holders and managers to understand their responsibilities and work together. They often provide an important bridging role between the community and the government authorities that enables knowledge exchange and coordinated effort.
- c. The number of ‘go to’ rabbit experts is diminishing in Victoria and many communities don’t have ready access to expertise to guide their efforts. Generational change, organisational capacity and access to expert knowledge are important emergent issues. Internet-based information resources are an insufficient substitute for local, trusted knowledge and expertise.

**5. The way the groups interact and operate is dynamic.**

- a. The governance and operating arrangements of Landcare groups and networks are evolving and this impacts on how rabbits are managed. There is interest to learn about the different Network arrangements and how they are being developed.
- b. State government agriculture agencies across Australia provide limited extension services for invasive species management and these services are likely to further diminish. There is increasing government focus on compliance and cross-system facilitation to support cooperative approaches to invasive species management.
- c. DEPI resourcing of 68 facilitators aligned to Landcare groups or networks, known as the ‘F68 Program’, has strengthened community capacity to undertake rabbit management in areas where rabbits are a priority community concern.<sup>1</sup>

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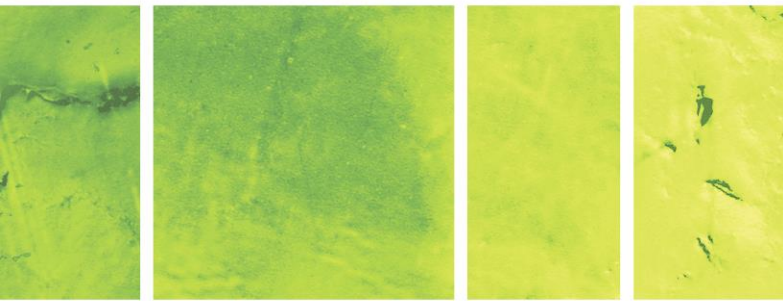
<sup>1</sup> This initiative is a three year Government commitment that commenced in 2012.



- d. An attempt has been made to describe the groups and the relationships in a one page summary in Attachment E.
- 6. DEPI's asset-based protection policy framework for established invasive species and the associated rabbit compliance program are important influencers of peoples' decisions and actions on rabbits. They are integrated with a range of Victorian Government funding flows and long standing cooperative arrangements.<sup>2</sup>**
- a. The Victorian Government is committed to supporting land managers who are active in managing rabbits in cooperation with their neighbours and the wider community. This commitment recognises that effective management of invasive species relies on the combined effort of the community, industry and Government.
  - b. The policy framework and compliance program are integrated with Victorian Government funding flows and long standing collaboration and coordination arrangements between DEPI (and including the Arthur Rylah Institute for science inputs), Parks Victoria, CMAs, and Landcare Groups and Networks.
  - c. DEPI's policy and operations framework supports community-led action through the involvement of CMA's in determining high priority rabbit management areas and the scope of DEPI's compliance program to reinforce community action in these areas.
  - d. DEPI officers work with people in the CMA's and Landcare Groups and Networks in the twelve months leading up to the implementation of a compliance program to raise awareness of the need and community and legal expectations for compliance, the options for land managers to meet their obligations, and the available community-based support systems.
  - e. A range of funding flows support the collaborative arrangements such as:
    - i. the Victorian Landcare Grants system which resources facilitation and on ground works through CMA's in the twelve months leading up to DEPI implementing compliance programs in high priority rabbit management areas;
    - ii. the Good Neighbour Program which encourages collaboration across public and private land in designated high priority areas;
    - iii. state government grants to local government agencies to manage rabbits and weeds on roadsides; and
    - iv. Communities for Nature grants, which resource community groups to do on-ground works.
  - f. The collaborative arrangements, and the associated significant capacity created for longer-term, effective rabbit management to protect identified high priority

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<sup>2</sup> Information on the policy framework is at [www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/pests-diseases-and-weeds/protecting-victoria-from-pest-animals-and-weeds](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/agriculture-and-food/pests-diseases-and-weeds/protecting-victoria-from-pest-animals-and-weeds)



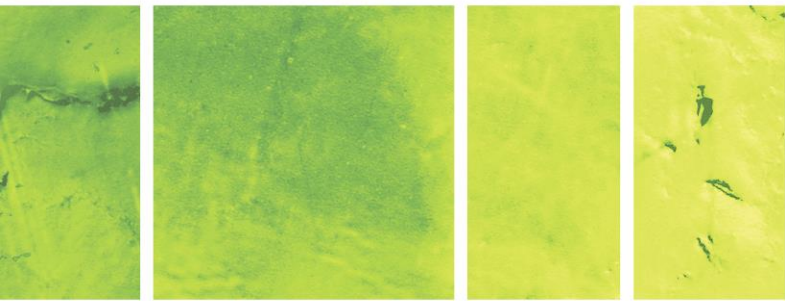
assets at a landscape scale in Victoria, are unique and unprecedented in Australia.

**7. Many pro-active groups and networks have innovative ideas and plans to improve how people coordinate and focus their rabbit management efforts.**

- a. There is growing interest in strategic planning approaches to rabbit management.
  - i. Strategic planning is seen as a useful pathway to bring community groups together with government and private organisations to prioritise and focus their efforts, determine achievable short and longer term goals, leverage and make best use of their resources, coordinate action and monitor progress
  - ii. Landcare groups are seeking funds from foundations to provide training in strategic planning. Communities recognise the risk that DEPI resourced Landcare facilitators come and go due to short term contracting arrangements, that Landcare Group and Network members are generally stable community resources, and so it makes sense to invest in the training of community group members in addition to government resourced facilitators.
- b. There is growing interest in web-based platforms for mapping and information management and how these platforms can be used by groups to coordinate their rabbit management work in more time and cost effective ways.
  - i. For example by consolidating the various pest control plans and policies and procedures in one place using an information portal, or by developing more consistent approaches to mapping and sharing data to better understand and manage a rabbit problem.
- c. ‘Mapping’ is a hot topic among many groups involved in rabbit management.
  - i. People from Landcare groups and networks, environmental consulting businesses, CMA’s, local government, DEPI, ARI, and Parks Victoria use a range of mapping tools for a range of rabbit management purposes, are interested and motivated to improve how they use mapping, and see benefit in coordinated approaches to mapping.
  - ii. There isn’t a clear mechanism to coordinate rabbit management-related mapping at a regional or state-wide level.
  - iii. Mapping is used to:
    - understand and communicate a rabbit problem,
    - motivate groups to get involved in rabbit management,
    - decide the what, where and how of rabbit management and coordinate effort across land tenures and groups,
    - monitor rabbit control efforts and decide follow up action (e.g. active warren openings or transect count data can be mapped to assess the effectiveness of control measures, indicate the level of current and future rabbit-related damage, and understand progress and considering the goals that are motivating and guiding peoples’ efforts),



- monitor landscape change over time, and
  - apply for and report on land management grants.
- d. There are a range of motivations and drivers behind the ideas and plans of the community-based groups involved in rabbit management.
- i. Better focus, prioritise and extend capability.
  - ii. Support larger scale rabbit management programs and trials.
  - iii. Support projects in neighbouring regions to be delivered concurrently.
  - iv. Create an easy format for groups to view works completed in an area, and to decide where to target future effort and resources.
  - v. Support all stakeholders to be engaged, and informed of rabbit control in their area.
  - vi. Improve the quality of on-ground reporting and works.
  - vii. Improve the quality of project governance.
  - viii. Find more efficient ways to share information resources and communicate among the groups involved.
  - ix. Attract and motivate volunteers and groups to participate.
  - x. Connect using social media, smartphones and tablets.
  - xi. Attract co-investment from private, not-for-profit and public institutions.
  - xii. Strengthen relationships and communication among private and public land managers.
  - xiii. Build a platform for government to connect and communicate with local communities when conducting compliance works.
  - xiv. Build community support for and participation in compliance works.
- e. Being able to identify, share and test these ideas and plans at a state-wide level will likely lead to improvements in how people coordinate and focus their rabbit management efforts at the regional and community level.



## 5. What was learned and the public policy context

1. In a public policy context, the results of the enquiry reaffirm that rabbit management has all the features of a ‘wicked problem’.
  - a. The rabbit problem is difficult to define. People and groups define and understand the problem in different ways. Often rabbits are viewed as part of a broader issue or concern for a land manager or community.
  - b. Rabbit management issues and concerns are not stable - they change over time.
  - c. There are no clear or easy solutions to managing rabbits. The solution does not reside within the responsibility of one group or organisation. Rabbit management relies on many interdependencies among people and groups. The solutions are socially complex and involve changing behaviour.
  - d. Traditional approaches to influencing behaviour (e.g. legislation, regulations, sanctions, subsidies, taxes) may be limited without additional tools and understanding of how to engage citizens in cooperative behavioural change. The active involvement and cooperation of citizens is required.
2. Public policy responses to wicked problems can involve authoritative, competitive and collaborative strategies.

The messages and quotes in the passages below on wicked problems are from an Australian Government, Australian Public Service Commission report, “*Tackling Wicked Problems: A public policy perspective*”<sup>3</sup>. An extract from the report’s conclusions is in Attachment C.

- a. Authoritative strategies give the problem to a group who takes on the problem-solving process while others agree to abide by its decisions. The group establishes its authoritative power through its knowledge and expertise, organisational position in the hierarchy, information or coercive power, and legislative power. Advantages of authoritative strategies include their efficiency and timeliness. Disadvantages include: “potential disregard for important issues and considerations, as authorities and experts tend to search for solutions within their narrow bandwidth of experience, and the lost opportunity for learning. If problem-solving is left to experts, especially in a democratic society, then citizens can become further distanced or alienated from the important issues of their time” (Australian Public Service Commission, p. 9). In Victoria, part of the solution to managing rabbits is the use of an authoritative strategy: an enforcement-backed, cross tenure, compliance program focussed on asset-based protection in regions that are highly susceptible to rabbit damage. The strategy is managed by DEPI with

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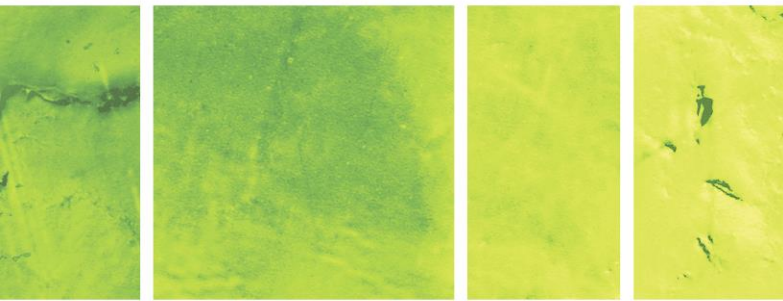
<sup>3</sup> See [www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/archive/publications-archive/tackling-wicked-problems](http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/archive/publications-archive/tackling-wicked-problems)





input from Parks Victoria and CMA's to ensure cross-organisation coordination of rabbit-related initiatives and funding programs. In practice this authoritative strategy is integrated with other competitive and collaborative strategies.

- b. Competitive strategies have a win-lose outcome and “the search for power, influence and market share” at the core, with advantages being “the creation of new ideas and innovation and the provision of choice” and disadvantages being when “conflict and stalemates occur when stakeholder have enough power to block one another but not enough power to achieve their agenda. Competition can also consume resources that could be spent on problem-solving” (*Ibid.*, p.10). The Victorian Communities for Nature Grants are an example of a competitive strategy.
- c. Most of the public policy literature advocates a collaborative approach to wicked problems, particularly where part of the solution to the problem involves sustained behaviour change by many stakeholders and/or citizens. Collaborative strategies place win-win at the core of problem solving and include for example partnerships, joint ventures and joined up government. Advantages of collaborative strategies include “higher stakeholder commitment, more comprehensive and effective solutions, and fewer resources having to be used by any one stakeholder” (*Ibid.*, p.10). Disadvantages include “increased transaction costs (these costs can be significant), and the fact that skills of collaboration are in limited supply. In worst cases collaboration can end poorly - dialogue can turn to conflict, hardened positions and stalemate” (*Ibid.*, p.10). The Good Neighbour Program and Victorian Landcare Grants Program are examples of a joined up government program that also involves competition among groups competing for the grants. The grants enable coordination of rabbit management programs across private and public land managed by Parks Victoria or DEPI.
- d. Some public policy literature emphasizes the need for public service organisations to become more adaptive and flexible in dealing with wicked problems. This requires:
  - i. Policies and programmes to be informed by on-the-ground intelligence about operational issues and the views of stakeholders, and to be modified based on feedback about what works and what doesn't work.
  - ii. A focus on sharing the learnings and experiences across organisations and groups.
  - iii. Assessing complex policy problems needs and sharing the learnings across networks.
  - iv. An institutional focus that recognises the need for continuous learning, adaptation and improvement.
  - v. Flexible and creative thinking with a willingness to think and work in new ways and pilot new innovative approaches.
  - vi. Broad acceptance and understanding, and including from governments and Ministers.



- vii. A level of tolerance to the uncertainty around the solutions to wicked problems and to occasional failure or need to adjust approaches.
- viii. Patience, time and resources.

## 6. The strategies and how they will be progressed

### 6.1 Victorian Rabbit Management Collaboration Initiative

1. The work of the National Rabbit Facilitator, in collaboration with people and groups involved in rabbit management from across Victoria's 'rabbit management system', has led to the establishment of a new collaborative initiative.
2. The Victorian Rabbit Management Collaboration Initiative (Initiative) will commence in October 2014 with combined sponsorship of \$100,000 cash and \$200,000 in in-kind support from the IA CRC and DEPI over two years.
3. The Initiative will support community-led action for more sustainable and effective rabbit management in Victoria. The Initiative recognises the importance of all land holders, land managers and groups with rabbit management responsibilities to coordinate their effort around clear short and longer-term goals; that this already occurs in many communities across Victoria; and the considerable community, industry and government interest to further support and enable community leadership and action on rabbits.
4. The Initiative will be led by a Steering Group of community, industry and government leaders with the support of the National Rabbit Facilitator. Successful delivery of the Initiative will require the willing participation of the different groups involved in rabbit management across Victoria. The Steering Group will have an important role to champion the vision to enable this, and to provide strategic oversight.
5. The Initiative will roll out six strategies that target skills, learning and network development and community-based innovation. The Initiative will support pro-active groups to work together to plan, resource, and coordinate their effort towards more sustainable and effective rabbit management.
6. Input and support from the Community Engagement Program team of the IA CRC has been instrumental in the development of the Initiative. This support will continue during the implementation phase.
7. The IA CRC has identified from a selection of overseas strains of rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus, a suitable candidate strain to field trial as a potential new biological control for wild rabbits. A field trial in autumn 2016 may be possible depending on the timing of regulatory processes to approve the release of the strain. The opportunity to undertake the field trial as part of the Initiative could be considered in due course.



## 6.2 The strategies

### 1. Establish a 12-month training, mentoring and learning network program to develop the next generation of rabbit management experts, with trainees from all regions of Victoria

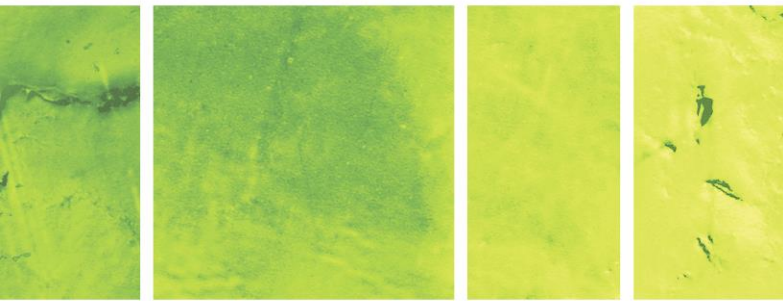
- Target: 10-15 participants drawn from across Victoria to complete the Program. The opportunity exists to include participants from Tasmania and the ACT.
- Participants may be involved in rabbit management through a Landcare or other group or network (community, industry or environment focussed), Catchment Management Authority, or local government agency.
- The Program would involve field-based training, participation in a learning network focussed on the management of established invasive animals and community engagement, and supervision from mentors.
- Mentors would have expertise in managing invasive animals and community engagement, and be from the government, community or private sectors. Recruitment would be through expressions of interest.

### 2. Establish a small grants and workshop program to improve coordination across groups involved in rabbit management, including mapping and networking capability

- The small grants program will support the development of:
  - community-led strategic planning;
  - new types of collaboration and partnership arrangements;
  - web-based platforms to support collaboration for example around information management, mapping, and coordinating rabbit control works; and
  - learning networks.
- Small grants to be awarded (funding rules to be determined and could involve resourcing expert input and learning or training opportunities).
- Host a state-wide mapping workshop to:
  - create awareness of the available tools and how they are being used; and
  - provide a rich forum for learning, dialogue, networking and collaboration.

### 3. Support Blackberry Action Groups in Victoria to extend their focus to rabbits

- The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, established in 1999, facilitates and supports the development of projects under its Community Partnership Program. These projects empower communities to tackle blackberry on their own terms within the guidelines of the program. Community partnership projects are geared towards providing community with greater ownership of blackberry management by developing joint projects between community and government and promoting local solutions. The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce promotes the principles of community engagement, inclusion in decision-making, representation and deliberation within these projects. It focuses on partnership and relationship development using a collaborative approach to encourage community capacity building.



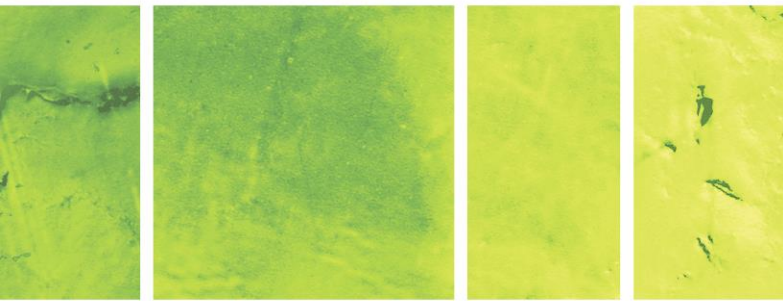
- An important opportunity exists to build on the work and leadership of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, and extend the principles and approaches to rabbit management.
  - For marginal added cost, the capabilities of groups that have achieved success in managing blackberries could be extended to rabbit management.
  - The National Rabbit Facilitator will support the Blackberry Action Taskforce to leverage additional resources to enable this (note resourcing isn't guaranteed).
- 4. Facilitation of opportunities to improve warren ripping quality assurance**
- Draw on networks to assess quality assurance standards and facilitate agreement on pathways to improve standards among the relevant groups.
  - Advocate for quality assurance measures and including making contract management tools and codes of practice available to groups who commission warren ripping.
  - It is envisaged that this initiative will be resourced through in-kind contributions from the participating groups.
- 5. Facilitation of opportunities to better understand and target funding flows for more effective community-led action on rabbits**
- Consultations have identified issues and opportunities related to how funding flows support community-led action on rabbits.
  - Feedback from the different groups involved in rabbit management will be synthesised and provided to groups involved in deciding the funding flows for rabbit management. The aim is to determine if and where there is scope to better target the funding to support community-led action towards more sustainable, effective rabbit management.
- 6. Promotion of stories that communicate what can be achieved through community-led action on rabbits**
- Stories and narratives are powerful tools for communicating, learning and charting a vision for the future. Understanding what is possible guides peoples motivations and actions.
  - Creative ways to gather and share stories and narratives will be explored.



## Attachment A: Check list of principles and requirements for successful community-led action on rabbits

The following checklist was developed at a Victorian Rabbit Management System Workshop (see Section 3.2).

1. Leadership with empowered community groups.
2. A community owned vision, philosophy, purpose and narrative.
3. A partnership approach among the institutions and groups involved in rabbit management, with joint decision making, responsibility, action and resourcing.
4. Coordinated planning and action guided by a strategy, with understanding of:
  - a. Community concerns and motivations that are generating interest in rabbit management
  - b. What the community seeks to achieve and can realistically achieve - short and longer-term
  - c. Current management practices  
*adaptive natural resource management, integrated pest management, consideration of longer-term options to reduce rabbit impacts which goes beyond a focus on reducing rabbit populations, consideration of regulation and compliance requirements, consideration of options to assess and monitor a rabbit problem and rabbit impacts, consideration of the short and longer-term benefits and costs of different control options*
  - d. The available resources and tools that can assist community planning, action, learning, awareness, education, leadership development and innovation
  - e. How best to navigate institutional arrangements that affect community capacity and action on rabbits
  - f. How best to focus resources and effort.
5. Demonstration and celebration of results and success linked to the community's vision and purpose.
6. Government support for compliance.
7. Recognition that community-led action and collaborative strategies involving all groups with rabbit management responsibilities is critical for success.



## Attachment B: Check list of paradigm choices to guide the development and implementation of strategy options

- The following check list was used to guide decisions on the development of the Initiative and its strategies.
- Choices may be better viewed as a continuum rather than as ‘either or’ dichotomies.
- The list could also be used to assess “where we are at now and where we aim to be in two years’ time”.
- The checklist could be further developed using feedback on their meaning and usefulness.
- Note ‘community-led’ and ‘government-led’ in the table below are not subheadings.

<i>Paradigm choices for developing and implementing strategy options</i>	
Community-led	Government-led
Joint decision making involving impacted groups (e.g. on investment principles, guidelines)	Consultation involving impacted groups
Long-term vision	Short term vision
Evolving process	Traditional or prescriptive process
System focus	Problem focus
Outcome orientation	Prescribed activity orientation
Grass roots	Hierarchical
Complexities acknowledged	Narrow focus, e.g. on efficiency
Holistic e.g. STEEEP <sup>4</sup> factors	Single dimension focus e.g. technical
Multi or transdisciplinary	Single discipline or specialisation
Proactive	Reactive
Interdependent	Independent or dependent
Other?	Other?

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<sup>4</sup> STEEEP refers to Social, Technical, Economic, Environment, Ethical and Political factors

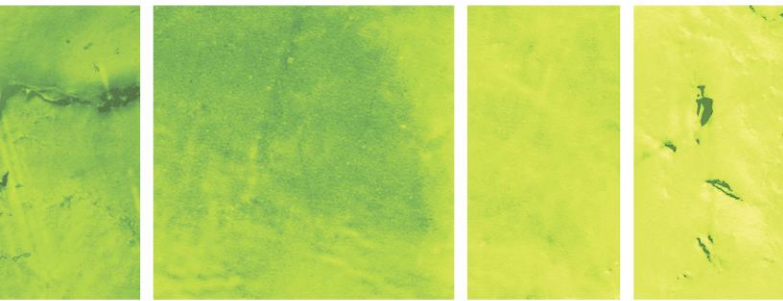


## Attachment C: Extract from the conclusions of the Australian Government, Australian Public Service Commission Report, “Tackling wicked problems: A public policy perspective”.

The full report and the extract below is available at [www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/archive/publications-archive/tackling-wicked-problems](http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/archive/publications-archive/tackling-wicked-problems).

“Tackling wicked problems is an evolving art but one which seems to at least require:

- *holistic, not partial or linear thinking*. This is thinking capable of grasping the big picture, including the interrelationships between the full range of causal factors underlying the wicked problem. Traditional linear approaches to policy formulation are an inadequate way to work with wicked policy problems as linear thinking is inadequate in encompassing their complexity, interconnections and uncertainty. There is an ever present danger in handling wicked issues that they are handled too narrowly. The shortcomings of traditional approaches to policy making are also due to the social complexity of wicked problems—the fact that a true understanding of the problem generally requires the perspective of multiple organisations and stakeholders and that any package of measures identified as a possible solution usually requires the involvement, commitment and coordination of multiple organisations and stakeholders to be delivered effectively.
- *innovative and flexible approaches*. It has been argued that the public sector needs more systematic approaches to social innovation and needs to become more adaptive and flexible in dealing with wicked problems. Ways that have been suggested to achieve these ends include investing resources in innovation similar to private sector research and development (R&D), blurring the traditional distinction between policy development and programme implementation as one way of making it easier to modify policies in the light of experience about what works and what doesn't, and focusing on creating learning organisations.
- *the ability to work across agency boundaries*. Wicked problems go beyond the capacity of any one organisation to understand and respond to, and tackling them is one of the key imperatives that makes being successful at working across agency boundaries increasingly important. This includes working in a devolved way with the community and commercial sectors.
- *increasing understanding and stimulating a debate on the application of the accountability framework*. It is important that pre-set notions of the accountability framework do not constrain resolution of wicked problems. The accountability framework needs to be applied in a way that can meet the goal of maintaining acceptable levels of accountability while minimising as much as possible any barriers to innovation and collaboration. Internal governance arrangements also need to support this goal.
- *effectively engaging stakeholders and citizens in understanding the problem and in identifying possible solutions*. Because wicked problems are often imperfectly understood



it is important that they are widely discussed by all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure a full understanding of their complexity and interconnections. If a resolution of a wicked issue requires changes in the way people behave, these changes cannot readily be imposed on people. Behaviours are more conducive to change if issues are widely understood, discussed and owned by the people whose behaviour is being targeted for change.

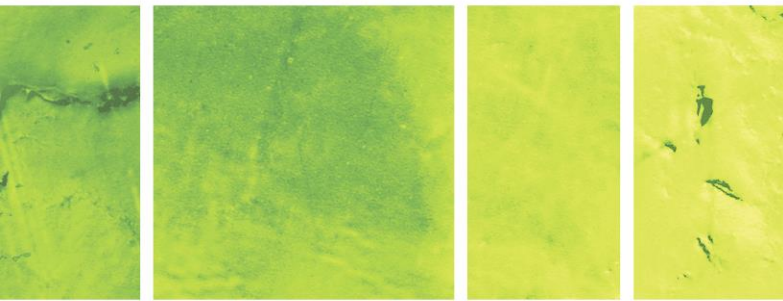
- *additional core skills.* The need to work across organisational boundaries and engage with stakeholders highlights some of the core skills required by policy and programme managers tackling wicked problems—communication, big picture thinking and influencing skills and the ability to work cooperatively. Traditionally, more weight has been placed on high-level analytical, conceptual and writing skills and traditional project management skills. While these skills are still fundamental parts of the policy toolkit, they are not sufficient. A multi-disciplinary team approach is a practical way to garner all the required skills and knowledge for tackling wicked problems.
- *a better understanding of behavioural change by policy makers.* This needs to be core policy knowledge because behavioural change is at the heart of many wicked problems and influencing human behaviour can be very complex. The traditional policy tools such as legislation, punishments and regulations, taxes and subsidies will generally form a core part of the overall strategy to achieve widespread, sustainable behavioural change. However, their effectiveness can be limited without some additional tools and understanding of how better to engage citizens in cooperative behavioural change.
- *a comprehensive focus and/or strategy.* Successfully addressing wicked policy problems usually involves a range of coordinated and interrelated responses given their multi-causal nature and that they generally require sustained effort and/or resources to make headway.
- *tolerating uncertainty and accepting the need for a long-term focus.* Successfully tackling wicked problems requires a broad acceptance and understanding, including from governments and Ministers, that there are no quick fixes and that levels of uncertainty around the solutions to wicked problems need to be tolerated. Successfully addressing such problems takes time and resources and adopting innovative approaches may result in the occasional failure or need for policy change or adjustment. “





## Attachment D: People who contributed to the development of the Initiative

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation (employee, member or affiliate) and Role</i>
April Wilkins	Facilitator, East Gippsland Landcare Network Inc.
Alex Arbuthnot	Private Land Manager, Victorian Farmers Federation Landcare Committee
Allistair Stephen	Project Manager, Invasive Plants and Animals, Project Platypus, Stawell
Andrew Woolnough	Principal Policy Officer - Invasive Animals, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Ben Fahey	Program Leader, Biodiversity and Invasive Species, Parks Victoria
Bill Shuffstall	Community Engagement Program -Educator & Practitioner, IA CRC, Penn State University
Bill Whiteside	Rabbit Action Facilitator, Woody Yaloak Landcare Group, Private Land Manager
Brad Spears	Environmental consultant and rabbit control contractor, Enviro Vic 2000 P/L
Brett Harrison	Biosecurity Operations Manager, Department of Environment and Primary Industries,
Caleb Hurrell	Biosecurity Leader, Department of Environment and Primary Industries,
Calum Walker	Manager, Environmental Planning, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Cam Nicholson	Executive Officer, Woody Yaloak Landcare Group
Cathy Mulligan	Rabbit Action Facilitator, Bellarine Landcare Group
Elodie le Gal	Community Engagement Program Research Fellow, IA CRC, University of New England
Emma Camilleri	Facilitator, Bellarine Landcare Group
Emma Orgill	Far East Regional Landcare Facilitator, East Gippsland
Erin Raggatt	Senior Environment Officer, Swan Hill Rural City Council
Geoff McFarlane	President, Bellarine Landcare Group
Gerald Leach	Private Land Manager, Victorian Farmers Federation Landcare Committee
Heidi Kleinert	Project Officer, North Central CMA
Jacob McElwee	Senior Policy Advisor Land management, Victorian Farmers Federation
Janet Hagen	Facilitator, Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative - Landcare Network
Jodie Odgers	Regional Landcare Coordinator, North Central Catchment Management Authority
Joel Boyd	Regional Landcare Coordinator, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority
John Burley	Director, Invasive Animal and Plants Program, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries



<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation (employee, member or affiliate) and Role</i>
John Matthews	State-wide Rabbit Operations Manager, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Katherine Schneider	Environment Program Manager, Mallee District, Parks Victoria
Kaye Rodden	Chair, Barrabool Hills Landcare Group, Victorian Landcare Council
Kevin Chaplin	Regional Landcare Coordinator, Mallee CMA
Kim Cross	Consortium Facilitator, Eastern Mallee Landcare
Lachlan Marshall	Policy Officer, Victorian Farmers Federation
Leonie North	Environmental consultant, Sunraysia Environmental P/L
Lisa Adams	National Rabbit Facilitator, IA CRC, Dept Environment & Primary Industries
Lyndal Thompson	Community Engagement Program Research Fellow, IA CRC, University of New England
Lyn Coulston	Chair, North East Catchment Management Authority and Victorian Blackberry Taskforce
Malachy Tarpey	Pest Plant and Animal Sub-committee, East Gippsland Landcare Network
Matt Stephenson	Community Pest Plant & Animal Program Officer, Bass Coast Landcare Network
Michael Reid	Policy Officer, Invasive Plants, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Nicole Gammie	Environmental Projects Officer, Port Philip & Westernport CMA
Paul Martin	Community Engagement Program Leader, IA CRC, University of New England
Phil McGarry	Regional Landcare Coordinator, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
Phil Pegler	Conservation Program Manager, Parks Victoria
Ray Turnley	President, Steels Creek Landcare Group
Sharyn Williams	Biosecurity Operations Manager, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Stefan Kaiser	Invasive Species State-wide Coordinator, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Steve Erlandsen	Environmental consultant, Sunraysia Environmental P/L
Steven Field	Senior Chemical Standards Officer, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Susan Campbell	Private land manager
Tamara van Polanen	A/Policy Officer Invasive Animals, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries
Ted Alter	Community Engagement Program Leader, IA CRC, Penn State University
Tim Bloomfield	Projects Coordinator, Port Philip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
Tom Croft	Regional Landcare Coordinator, North East Catchment Management Authority
Walt Whitmer	Community Engagement Program -Educator and Practitioner, IA CRC, Penn State University
Will de Milliano	Principal Policy Officer Invasive Species, Dept of Environment and Primary Industries



## Catchment Management Authority Regional Landcare Coordinator Network

Amanda Bartkowski	East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
Brendon Kennedy	North East Catchment Management Authority
Doug Evans	Port Philip Westernport Catchment Management Authority
Jodie Odgers	North Central Catchment Management Authority
Karen Brisbane	Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
Kevin Chaplin	Mallee Catchment Management Authority
Phil McGarry	West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
Tom Croft	North East Catchment Management Authority
Tony Kubeil	Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
Tony Lithgow	Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
Tracey McRae	Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
Rod Taylor	Department of Environment and Primary Industries
John Robinson	Department of Environment and Primary Industries
Joel Boyd	Wimmera Catchment Management Authority

## Landcare group and network members and facilitators

Mallee region	Janece Stayner, Jody Elford, Kate Nichols, Kate Wilson, Kim Cross, Shirley Pratt
Goulburn Broken region	Andrea Montgomery, Barry Noye, Cathy Olive, Charlie Sexton, Chris Coburn, Janet Hagen, Janice Mentiplay-Smith, Jude Watts, Kerri Robson, Kerstie Lee, Lanie Pearce, Megan Buntine, Melanie Addinsall, Michael Kopanica, Neil Devanny, Simone Ulstrup, Sonia Sharkey, Susan Sleight, Terry Hubbard

# Attachment E: Rabbit management stakeholder and system analysis for Victoria

<i>Land managers</i>	<i>Land manager groups</i>	<i>Land manager networks</i>	<i>Private services Local &amp; Regional</i>	<i>Public &amp; NFP services Local &amp; Regional</i>	<i>Public &amp; NFP services State</i>	<i>Public &amp; NFP services National</i>
<p><b>Pastoral</b></p> <p><b>Broad acre cropping grazing</b></p> <p><b>Horticulture &amp; Forestry</b></p> <p><b>Hobby farms &amp; periurban, urban</b></p> <p><b>Local govt land reserves</b></p> <p><b>State govt land reserves</b> <i>DEPI, VicRoads, Victrack, Water Authority</i></p> <p><b>National land reserves</b> <i>Parks Victoria</i></p> <p><b>Private land reserves</b></p> <p><i>Responsible for rabbit management under CaLP Act. Plan&amp; undertake on ground works Contract services Monitor &amp; map Subsidy recipients</i></p>	<p><b>Landcare Groups</b></p> <p><i>Plan, coordinate &amp; undertake on ground works Bait distribution Contract services Surveys Mapping &amp; data collection Monitoring Education &amp; awareness</i></p> <p>Group leaders and rabbit program facilitators</p> <p>Subsidy recipients - GNP, VLC, CFN, CMA - CFOC/BG BG, VicRoads, VicTrack, Local Govt</p> <p>Fact sheets, flyers, posters, meetings, field days, SMS</p> <p><b>Grower groups</b></p> <p><b>Conservation groups</b></p>	<p><b>Regional landcare networks</b></p> <p><i>Plan &amp; coordinate grants Longer-term strategic plans Plan&amp; coordinate on ground works Contract services Mapping &amp; data collection Monitoring Education &amp; awareness</i></p> <p>F68 facilitators CFOC facilitators Network leaders &amp; coordinators</p> <p>Subsidy recipients - CFOC BG CFN GNP CMA Vic Roads, Local Govt Private reserves</p> <p>Fact sheets, flyers, posters, meetings, field days, SMS, internet</p> <p><b>Grower networks</b></p> <p><i>Bait distribution</i></p> <p><b>Conservation networks</b></p>	<p><b>Pest control advisors, contractors, suppliers</b></p> <p><i>Map warrens Plan and do on-ground works - warren ripping, baiting, fumigating contractors, fencing, shooting, trapping Supply equipment &amp; bait Provide technical advice Develop NRM plans Fee for service Websites factsheets</i></p> <p><b>Ag. &amp; environment consultants</b></p> <p><i>Technical, business &amp; financial advice Develop short &amp; long-term rabbit management &amp; NRM programs Provide technical advice Fee for service Websites factsheets</i></p> <p><b>Private reserve managers</b></p> <p><i>Develop short &amp; long-term rabbit management &amp; NRM programs Contract services Fee for service</i></p>	<p><b>CMA's x 10</b></p> <p><i>Regional strategies &amp; pest management plans Contract services? Regional &amp; technical assessment panels Plan &amp; coordinate grants Data &amp; information management Education &amp; awareness Regional Coordinators F68 &amp; CFOC facilitators (as an employing agent) Grants &amp; investment: GNP CFOC -BG VLCC: Private Investment Websites factsheets publications field days</i></p> <p><b>DEPI Biosecurity Division</b></p> <p><i>Compliance operations asset based protection &amp; where landscape scale community action Data &amp; information management Education &amp; awareness</i></p> <p><b>Local government</b></p> <p><i>Policy ops, contract services Compliance &amp; GNP areas Data &amp; information management Implement roadside grants</i></p> <p><b>DEPI - State reserves</b></p> <p><b>Water authorities</b></p> <p><b>VicRoads, Victrack</b></p> <p><b>Parks Victoria</b></p> <p><i>Policy, ops, contract services compliance &amp; GNP areas Data &amp; information management Implement regional priorities</i></p> <p><b>Membership based groups</b></p> <p><i>eg BCG Mallee Sustainable Farming Services NFP research managers Friends of...groups</i></p>	<p><b>DEPI Biosecurity Division</b></p> <p><i>Regulation and compliance Policy strategy resourcing Data &amp; information management Grants &amp; investment: F68 facilitators, GNP, CFN, VLCC, Other State Govt Grants: Roadside Grants Websites factsheets publications</i></p> <p><b>State Councils</b></p> <p><i>CMA CEO Forum, VLC Information Gateway</i></p> <p><b>Not For Profits</b></p> <p><i>Farm tree &amp; Landcare Association Policy advocacy information Newsletter Victorian Farmers Federation Policy advocacy information Newsletter</i></p> <p><b>Research services</b></p> <p><i>Universities, ARI Applied research Publications</i></p> <p><b>Victorian Municipal Association</b></p> <p><i>Policy, information</i></p> <p><b>DEPI State Reserves</b></p> <p><b>Water Authority</b></p> <p><b>VicRoads, Victrack</b></p> <p><i>Policy strategy resourcing Data &amp; information management</i></p> <p><b>Parks Victoria</b></p> <p><i>Manage public land, Policy strategy resourcing Data &amp; information management Website publications newsletter</i></p> <p><b>Ad hoc policy groups</b></p> <p><i>1080, Rotonators, managing rabbits on roadsides</i></p>	<p><b>DA, SEWPAC</b></p> <p><i>Regulations compliance policy Data &amp; information management Grants: CFOC - BG &amp;, SAG Websites factsheets publications</i></p> <p><b>AVPMA</b></p> <p><i>Vet chemicals regulations Websites factsheets publications</i></p> <p><b>Industry Organisations</b></p> <p><i>AWI, MLA etc Industry QA, Advocacy, Education Websites newsletters publications</i></p> <p><b>Conservation organisations</b></p> <p><i>e.g. Conservation Volunteers Australia Advocacy, education Websites, newsletters</i></p> <p><b>Research organisations</b></p> <p><i>IA CRC CSIRO RDC's RD&amp;E Websites, newsletters, publications</i></p> <p><b>Cross govt committees</b></p> <p><i>Vertebrate Pest Committee National Biosecurity Committee Animal Health Committee Policy ID Priorities Websites, newsletters</i></p> <p><b>Cross industry groups</b></p> <p><i>MLA, AWI, Sheep meat Council State biosecurity facilitators Websites, newsletters</i></p>

## Acronyms

State Government Grants: CFN - Communities for Nature, GNP - Good Neighbour Program, F68 - DEPI Facilitator funding, VLCC - Victorian Landcare Council Grants

Commonwealth Government Grants: BG - Biodiversity Grant, CFOC - Caring for our Country, CFOC facilitator funding, SAG - Sustainable Agriculture Grant

Organisations: ARI - Arthur Rylah Institute, AVPMA - Australian Veterinary Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, AWI - Australian Wool Innovation, CMA - Catchment Management Authority, DA - Australian Government Department of Agriculture, DEPI - Department of Environment and Primary Industries, IA CRC - Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre, MLA - Meat & Livestock Australia, PV - Parks Victoria, SEWPAC - Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, VLC - Victorian Landcare Council

Other:NFP - Not-for-profit, Ops - operations, Govt - government



