



VICTORIAN BLACKBERRY TASKFORCE

Modernising Australia's approach to managing established pests and diseases of national significance- Discussion paper

Consultation questions

On the management of established pests and diseases of national significance:

- 1) Are the proposed policy principles appropriate and practical?
- 2) Are the proposed policy principles sufficient

- **the management of established pests and diseases is a shared responsibility between landholders, community, industry and government**

During the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce's (VBT) 10 years' experience we are satisfied this approach leads to ownership of the problem leading to better management.

- **to achieve asset-based protection, government gives priority to supporting industry and community leadership and actions**

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce believes adequate support from government is essential for communities to achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of blackberry control. The level and nature of support should be a negotiated decision by the community and government.

- **governments will work with stakeholders to support innovation for more effective pest and disease management**

It is important to recognise the contribution made by communities to innovative control options tailored to local needs. Effective chemical control of wide spread weeds is expensive and has undesirable long term impacts on soil and water. Support for research and development of biocontrol agents and alternative control techniques is essential in achieving sustainable control methods.

The Taskforce agrees that Community groups and Government take a lead role in supporting research into management of established pests and diseases. But the lack and limited access of funding is concerning to our group and urgently needs addressing. If the government and community are to for fill their roles and responsibilities outlined in this discussion paper, adequate support is needed.

- **enforcement intervention should be the minimum necessary to achieve the desired result**

The meaning of 'minimum necessary' is not clear. After 10 years the VBT through its community groups working with individuals on 3 year partnership plans, have found the results of 3 year government enforcement work has been underwhelming in long term weed control. The Taskforce believes there needs to be an understanding of the purpose of the enforcement and an evaluation of how enforcement is conducted.

- **where there is a national interest to intervene, established pests and diseases assessed as being nationally significant will have an associated national management plan or strategy**

The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce's purpose is to implement the current Victorian Blackberry Strategy, which provides strategic direction for five years. We believe that the National Blackberry Strategy should be updated to be current and effective and used to create links with other state wide blackberry programs.

Consultation questions:

On the management of established pests and diseases of national significance:

- 3) Should listing of established pests and diseases of national significance be for a defined period or open ended?
- 4) What form of review should be required to maintain the listing of a pest or disease as an established pest or disease of national significance?
- 5) What is an appropriate time for such a review?

3. The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce believes that listing of established pest plants should initially be open ended as wide spread pests are beyond eradication.

4. A review of wide spread pest plant lists should focus on whether the threat from wide spread pests, including blackberry is reducing. This would be achieved through government consultation with community and industry.

5. The taskforce believes 10 years is a sufficient time frame to review the listing of established pests such as blackberry.

Consultation questions:

On the management of established pests and diseases of national significance:

- 8) What are the issues with establishing and maintaining effective collective action?
- 9) How can the coordinated approach be best implemented across the various stakeholder groups?
- 10) How do you see yourself (or your interest/industry/organisation) contributing?

- 8. The Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT) considers community drive and government support a major factor in establishing and maintaining collective action. In addition to private benefit there is a high level of public benefit in community led weed programs which also attract volunteer support and in kind contributions. Public/private interface is often a beneficiary of the leveraging of public funds, such as Good Neighbour in Victoria, with targeted contributions on private land. However, without Government support good will quickly diminishes. When determining the nature and level of this support consideration should be given to legislation which identifies the responsibility of the landholder (important as it is the starting point for action); desired mutual outcomes (Government and community); community enablers; sustainable outcomes (if community does this Government will support with that).

The following are observations from ten years of collective action with community blackberry management and what is necessary to encourage and maintain uptake .

- Clarity for both community and Government around roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Government support for communities driving local action programs (this may be initial enabling support and a commitment to intervention after a defined period, if necessary)
- Recognition of the role local knowledge, skills and expertise plays in sustainable blackberry (weed) management and the factors contributing to non compliance.

9. A diverse and localised steering committee representing the main Land managers in a target area is important in implementing a co-ordinated approach. All blackberry Action groups under the auspice of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce are encouraged to engage public land managers, private landholders, industry (eg plantations), Local Government, linear reserve managers and others to participate on the project steering committee to better co-ordinate community action.

10. The VBT's role is to provide leadership through support, education, discussion and connections to communities and Government. The overall purpose is to oversee the implementation of the Victorian Blackberry Strategy and reduce the growth and spread of Blackberry in Victoria. This is impossible to achieve without active involvement of communities and so the engagement of people is a priority.