

Tackling roadside weeds proves a win-win

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Two years ago the list of weeds infesting the shire roadside near David Jamieson's farm was almost as long as his arm.

The native vegetation was choked by blackberry, St John's Wort, English broom, briar, honeysuckle, Paterson's curse and bridle creeper.

Today, the Strathbogie prime lamb producer cites a vastly different scene.

A co-operative partnership between regional landholders and the Strathbogie Shire Council to tackle roadside weeds and pest animals has delivered significant benefits for the entire community.

In 2012, the State Government provided \$150,000 in funding over three years to local government to control weeds on their roadsides.

Landcare groups within the shire were keen to ensure the community received the best value for money so approached Council to form a partnership.

Granite Creeks Landcare group chair Neil Devanny, Landcare project officer Kerri Robson and committee member David Jamieson developed a unique strategy.

"Council holds the funds and employs the contractors, who have been approved by Landcare groups," Ms Robson said.

"Representatives from the Landcare groups identify target areas, liaise with contractors and make sure the work, including GPS mapping of treated areas, is carried out properly.

"The Landcare groups are responsible for the sign off before the contractors are paid in full."

Strathbogie Shire is believed to be the first Victorian council to form an effective partnership with Landcare.

"In the past, roadside responsibility was a grey area as landholders expected councils to look after significant roadside vegetation," David Jamieson said.

"Under this new legislation, council roads are clearly council responsibility but landholders also have a responsibility for their side of the fence."

Mr Jamieson, a member of the Strathbogie Tablelands Landcare group, said tackling blackberry had been a priority on his local road, given the area was a catchment for Seven Creeks.

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“We are into the second stage of the program now and you’ve just got to drive along the roads to see the difference – the amount of St John’s Wort alone now dead is amazing,” he said.

“It is important that follow up work continues after this program is complete.”

Granite Creeks Landcare Group chairman Neil Devanny said a side benefit had been rabbit control works on roadsides, including fumigation, where needed.

“We now have a history of activity and co-operation between the shire and Landcare groups working as a team – this is a real model,” Mr Devanny said.

“The project has enabled us to get leverage on removing the invasive Chilean needle grass from roadsides.

“Contractors were asked to engage with landholders about spraying infestations on fence lines to give a more effective outcome – this meant a win-win for all.”

Ms Robson said a regional database on areas treated and spray application timings were now being built.

“Whether it is a hobby farmer or the whole community, weeds impact on everyone so there is a need to work as a team,” she said.

“It’s all about tapping into that local knowledge and working from the ground up.”

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