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Victorian Rabbit Action Network

Reclaiming the rabbit problem with Australia's communities

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“ Rabbits are a community problem and only sustained community action will provide long term outcomes. VRAN is working with the communities that have the problem to empower them to provide that long term outcome. ”



GERALD LEACH
Victorian Rabbit Action Network Committee, Chair
Community member



“Community engagement for integrated rabbit management is vital in all communities who are trying to tackle the rabbit problem. It starts with a community education program about rabbits, showing them the techniques of rabbit control and then involving them in doing the on ground works themselves. This all takes time, and then you need to do it again! It reminds me of Benjamin Franklin’s quote, ‘Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn’.”

GEOFF MCFARLANE

VRAN Mentor

Member of Leaps and Bounds, Learning Network



“ We are working together in collaboration with a whole lot of groups, and getting stuck into it together. You have to get on with your neighbours. The government, councils and road and rail authorities all have to work together. They need to sit down and talk and work across the fence. This is happening in the north east of Victoria and its very exciting. ”

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SUE CAMPBELL

National Rabbit Project Steering Committee, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre
Community member



“ Community-led action is a new concept, and a new way of looking at a wicked problem. It’s about the community understanding what the issue is, understanding the values of people within the community, and working together collaboratively. ”

JOHN MATTHEWS
VRAN Mentor & Former Biosecurity Manager, Agriculture Victoria



“ Engaging people in invasive species management is important. We have a generation of people, many whom don’t understand the threat posed by rabbits, and on-going engagement will be imperative. We are also witnessing a decline in government funding for managing invasive species, and we need to support community with their role around rabbit management. If we don’t engage, then we are less likely to make the right decisions, both community and government. ”

NICHOLAS NEWLAND
Former Rabbit Free Australia, Chair

“ Genuine cooperative involvement in rabbit management can change the game by providing the opportunity for local skills and expert knowledge to be accepted as the best way to work. The VRAN, as a facilitator of the community driven, Government supported approach, which is very successful in other areas of pest management, is trusted by communities to keep them involved as partners. ”



LYN COULSTON
Victorian Rabbit Action Network Committee
Community member

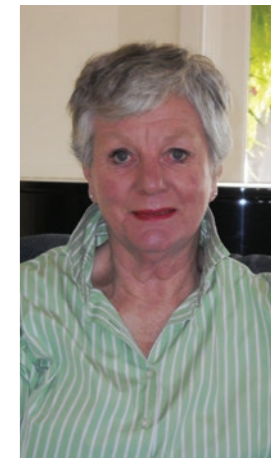


“ I definitely learned that collaboration with landholders across the landscape is the most important part of rabbit management. So that’s where we’re concentrating a lot of our time - getting community members involved in doing their own works on their own land to run alongside our programs. The more people involved, the more success we’re going to have. ”

CASSANDRA BORG
Hume City Council’s Rural Environment Officer
Member of Leaps and Bounds, Learning Network

“ Any on-ground program that affects private land requires a community led approach. Action to remove pest animals like rabbits is no different. The reasons are simple ...the economic value add provided by volunteers, the intellectual capital and experience provided by generational land managers, the ‘ownership’ of outcomes resulting in commitment to project management, ‘outside the contract’, and often beyond the terms of professional staff. Finally, the opportunity to build programs across property boundaries to achieve landscape outcomes. ”

“ The VRAN espouses the principle of community engagement and participatory planning of rabbit action. It looks to support the building of the community capacity to plan and manage community rabbit management programs. A true grass roots approach. That is why I am involved. ”



KAYE RODDEN
Victorian Rabbit Action Network Committee
Community member



“ When an integrated rabbit control program is led by the community, because of the contiguous nature of the treated area, it inevitably affects the broad geographical landscape. It also builds a collective culture of community responsibility and action. In doing so, we have seen that there is a greater willingness to act and this has led to fewer gaps in the landscape than if the impetus were from an external force. ”

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NEIL DEVANNY

Victorian Rabbit Action Network Committee
Community member

OPPOSITE: Neil Devanny (left) and Prof. Ted Alter (right)

“ The fundamental principles underpinning any collaboration have to do with the parties having respect for each other, trusting each other, and being open to new ideas, suggestions and insights that come from different places. For example scientists will have a perspective on how to control rabbits. But the landholder working on his or her place is going to have local experience with the rabbit problem. That experience and perspective needs to be respected as well and brought into the discussion with the perspective of the scientist. ”

“ The intersection of differing perspectives, in a respectful environment can lead to creative and meaningful solutions in a particular locale to manage the rabbit issue. ”



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PROF. TED ALTER
Penn State University

OPPOSITE: Dr Tanya Howard (left), Lauren Hull (middle) and Prof. Ted Alter (right)



“ As I reflect (on my involvement with the Learning Network), I find that every time we meet, I come away feeling very motivated and inspired by what we learn and share with each other. That last rabbit is the important one ... This is the rabbit that you are going to know the longest during your rabbit management program. This is the rabbit that is trying to out smart, out breed and break your spirit during your rabbit management program. This is the rabbit that you are going to use every method of control on to eradicate it. This is the rabbit that is going to cost you the most to control. ”

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PETER BARNES

Ned's Corner, Property Manager, Trust for Nature & VRAN Mentor
Member of Leaps and Bounds, Learning Network

“ Real landscape scale conservation is most possible when driven through community led action. It links and influences factors that empower landscape level activity, including political interest, government support and the identification of common goals across land custodians. If community are not a part of driving conservation effort, including rabbit management, broad social and environmental outcomes are not likely to be achieved. ”

“ The Victorian Rabbit Action Network has enabled a new generation of land managers to access history and perspective on rabbits and their management in our landscapes. The network provides a vehicle to build a stronger and equitable knowledge base in rabbit management, and in doing so contributes to intergenerational equity in knowledge and importantly improved land management for future generations. ”



BEN FAHEY

Victorian Rabbit Action Network Committee
Parks Victoria



“ People ask me, ‘What are you doing about the rabbits?’, I say, ‘What are WE doing about the rabbits?’ A rabbit problem can make you feel alone and isolated, but with strong community engagement and networks such as VRAN and Leaps and Bounds, we realise we are not alone and can work together. ”

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BEAU FAHNLE

Former Ranger Phillip Island Nature Park
Member of Leaps and Bounds, Learning Network

“ The management of established pest animals is most often a ‘people issue’ rather than a ‘biological issue’. Strategies, tools and techniques are generally available to control established pest animals but it takes people to make them work. This is the case for rabbits, and the VRAN provides the focal point for people to be involved. If communities don’t ‘own’ the rabbit issue, then no one will. Rabbits will always be an issue for all Australians, but it is important to recognise that they affect individuals and local communities differently. ”

“ There is strength in local communities coming together to take action. It needs to be recognised that this strength of communities comes from the collective. Community-led action needs to be continually built upon, fostered and supported, particularly when the role of government is changing and changing quickly. ”



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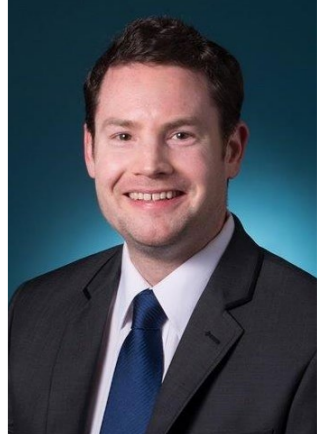
ANDREW WOOLNOUGH

Former Principal Officer Invasive Animals, Agriculture Victoria

National Rabbit Project Steering Committee Chair, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre



“ Receiving a United Nations Public Service Award is global recognition of the innovative work of the Victorian Rabbit Action Network to bring together government and communities to truly collaboratively build capability and capacity. Invasive species management is a shared responsibility, and only by working effectively together can we make a real difference. VRAN’s award is testimony to that thinking and approach. ”



MICHAEL ROSIER
Acting Executive Director, Biosecurity Services



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