



Victorian
Rabbit Action
Network

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/2023





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acknowledgement Of Country

VRAN acknowledge the Aboriginal Traditional Owners within Victoria, their rich culture and their spiritual connection to Country. We also recognise and acknowledge the contribution and interest of Aboriginal people and organisations in the management of natural resources.

Victorian Rabbit Action Network acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as traditional custodians of the land. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.





Victorian Rabbit Action Network Inc.

Annual Report 2022/23.

This report has been written by the Victorian Rabbit Action Network (VRAN) Incorporated with sponsorship from Agriculture Victoria. VRAN would like to thank all those who supported VRAN and participated in their programs. VRAN thank all the photographers who kindly donated their images.

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this report is accurate. The Victorian Rabbit Action Network does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind and therefore disclaims all liability for error, loss or other consequence that may arise from relying on any information in this report.





TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT US	2
OUR FOCUS	3
CHAIR'S REPORT	4-5
FINANCES	6
PROGRAM: BOOTCAMP 2022	7
PARTICIPANT MAP BOOTCAMP	8
CASE STUDY ONE	9
PROGRAM: BIIK	10
CASE STUDY TWO	11
PROGRAM: VIRTUAL EXTENSION OFFICER	12
AWARDS	13
VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS	14

ABOUT US

The Victorian Rabbit Action Network (VRAN) was established in 2014 to promote community-led action for more sustainable and effective rabbit management in Victoria. Under the direction of a Board, VRAN operates as a partnership between community representatives, industry and government agencies.

VRAN's goal is to be a catalyst for change in how rabbit management occurs in Victoria. By 'helping people, help the land', VRAN wants to create a strong collaborative culture in Victoria whereby local communities can successfully manage rabbits in their area.

VRAN pursues this goal by acting as a facilitating institution that enables the full participation and recognition of community, First Nations, government, scientific and industry groups that have a stake in the problems caused by rabbits, and the co-design and delivery of initiatives and programs which can address the problems.



OUR FOCUS

Five Objectives

VRAN is focused on identifying and responding to opportunities to support communities and institutions to be knowledgeable and capable to deal with rabbits wherever they occur across Victoria.

VRAN is guided by five objectives:

1. Increase land managers' awareness and use of best-practice rabbit management information.
2. Increase the level of community participation and effectiveness in on-ground rabbit control across Victoria.
3. Establish a state-wide network of community, industry, science and government participants with rabbit control expertise.
4. Build state-wide leadership and expertise in sustained integrated rabbit control.
5. Be a well-governed and resourced organisation.



CHAIR'S REPORT



PARTNERSHIP AGAINST PESTS

From the very beginning, Agriculture Victoria has been supporting VRAN by providing funding as well as executive and project officer support. I'd like to welcome Nicole Garfi, Martin Deering, Barton Roberts and Paul Major who will be helping VRAN to implement our strategic initiatives in 2023/24.

The Executive staff at Agriculture Victoria, Sharyn Williams, Katherine Clift and Matt Lowe continue to provide opportunities for community to sit at the table and co-design programs and help make decisions. Their leadership in delivering the new Partnership Against Pests program and establishing the Biosecurity Reference Group and the new Victorian Invasive Pests Advisory Board, of which VRAN is a member, is an example of this democratic work.

FINANCIAL SECURITY

This year, we have made some small progress towards becoming financially sustainable and will continue the process of achieving charity status.

It's worth remembering that as a not-for-profit organisation, we don't deliver training to generate a profit; rather, we generate a small profit to deliver more training. More training in collaboration and best practice equals more impact in our communities and landscapes.

Gerald Leach Chair

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

This year the four Community Pest Management Groups – Victorian Rabbit Action Network (VRAN), Victorian Blackberry Taskforce (VBT), Victorian Gorse Taskforce (VGT) and Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) were winners of an Australian Biosecurity Award in the 'community' category.

As VRAN Chair, I attended the award ceremony in Canberra alongside Lyn Coulston Chair of VBT, Ron Cosgrove Chair of VGT and Lance Jennison Chair of VSTWP.

The Australian Biosecurity Awards (ABAs) recognise individuals, groups and organisations that have shown a commitment to supporting and promoting Australia's biosecurity and the systems that uphold it.

The four community pest management groups thank Agriculture Victoria, who have been long term partners of the four community groups for the award nomination.

VRAN would like to congratulate all the award recipients who work tirelessly to champion biosecurity projects. With them our biosecurity is in safe hands.

YEAR AHEAD

We are now moving to a more mature business with proven initiatives, established partnerships, and growing our programs.

Looking ahead at next year, there will be a focus to continue to deliver our existing programs, whilst analyzing whether we can deliver them more effectively and looking for new opportunities to generate community led action on rabbit management.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Thank you to the VRAN Board for their invaluable guidance as we have progressed through the year. I look forward to continuing to build VRAN into a valuable partner for community, government and industry, whilst empowering community-led action.

The Board members, Lisa Adams, Lyn Coulston, Neil Devanny, Geoff McFarlane and Simon McGuinness, who volunteer their time, are to be congratulated for their spirited enthusiasm in ensuring that VRAN continues to operate strategically at the high level to which we have become accustomed.

Thank you also for the ongoing support from our government representatives, Chelsea Vercoe, Heidi Kleinert, Nicole Garfi (Agriculture Victoria), Vanessa Lucy & Damien McMasters (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action) and Jess Cox (Parks Victoria) who provide valuable insight into community and established pest government programs and help raise awareness of VRAN's work across the state.

Also, thank you and congratulations to the VRAN Mentor team – Tim Bloomfield, Brad Spear, Neil Devanny, Geoff McFarlane, Tom Miller, Peter Barnes and John Matthews who help members and stakeholders from across community, industry, not for profit groups and government with a wide range of enquiries on collaboration and integrated rabbit management. Every year the team continue to reach different areas of a very complex rabbit system and the VRAN initiative would not be successful, and we wouldn't be able to have the impact we do in community without their dedication and perseverance.

The VRAN Mentors are comfortable when they are working at the grass roots level, walking paddocks and searching for the last rabbit warren. They contribute to valuable scientific research and journals, to continue to raise awareness of the impact of Australia's most invasive pest species. They also support and mentor many to design the best management program to ensure efficiency, humanness and sustainability. Most importantly they are inclusive and will work with anyone who also wants to see change in our nature landscape for the better.

I also thank the friends of VRAN, Ted Alter, Andrew Woolnough, Michael Reid and Lauren Hull, who continue to advocate for democratic practice and a community-led approach to managing rabbits. Their dedication to the cause and work behind the scenes continues to be impressive and we are always grateful.

To work every day with likeminded people, working towards a common vision of working together and ridding rabbits in our landscape is a pleasure and I am grateful as Chair for the opportunity.

OUR REACH

Our annual training program continues to build new relationships, confidence and knowledge for people working in the field of pest management. We have delivered two Rabbit Bootcamps in 2022, held at Macedon and Queenscliff. To continue providing support to participants after the course the VRAN Mentors also delivered several learning network sessions. These sessions provide an interactive platform where people can continue to exchange knowledge and ideas and grow relationships.

In 2022, we also formed a new partnership with Biik, who are the NRM team of Taungurung Land and Water Council. VRAN Mentors and Biik codesigned an engaging professional training program to increase the knowledge of their team and their participation of their organisation in rabbit management to help assist in the caring and healing of Taungurung country.

This project also provided an opportunity for VRAN and Biik to collaborate with other community groups working to protect and conserve the natural and agricultural landscapes and included Cathedral Landcare group, Granite Creek Landcare and Euroa Arboretum. VRAN look forward to continue working with the Biik team in 2024.

FINANCES

We have great support from our partners.

For the period ending 30 June 2023:

Revenue received \$132,392.43

Total Expenditure \$63,963.60

The financial report of the Victorian Rabbit Action Network Incorporated has been audited by Surfcoast Taxation Services Pty Ltd, ACN 097 406 472. The full audit report is available on request.

VRAN secured investment funding from Agriculture Victoria to support our annual operations, as well as a Community Pest Management Officer.

This investment will assist VRAN in building on the legacy of all our projects and we look forward to this partnership continuing in 2023/24.

VRAN are currently focusing on securing investment in 2023/24 for the following programs:

- Leadership in Rabbit Management - Rabbit Bootcamp
- Learning Network Program
- Mentoring Program
- Educational Resources
- Community Grants
- Partnership Programs

Geoff McFarlane
Treasurer



PROGRAM: **BOOTCAMP 2022**

Our Leadership in Rabbit Management training program held in Queenscliff 2022.

Key Figures

- 11 individuals trained through the program
- 8 organisations
- 4 Landcare staff members
- 2 Local Government Councils
- 1 Point Leo Foreshore Park and Reserve staff member
- 2 Parks Victoria staff member

Classroom Topics covered:

- About VRAN and its role
- Rabbit Biology & Ecology
- Rabbit Impacts
- Best Practice Rabbit Management
- Developing a program - Planning Cycles
- Framework for Pest Management
- Case Studies: Local Government, Community and the Power of Community Champions and
- Community Led Action & Collaboration

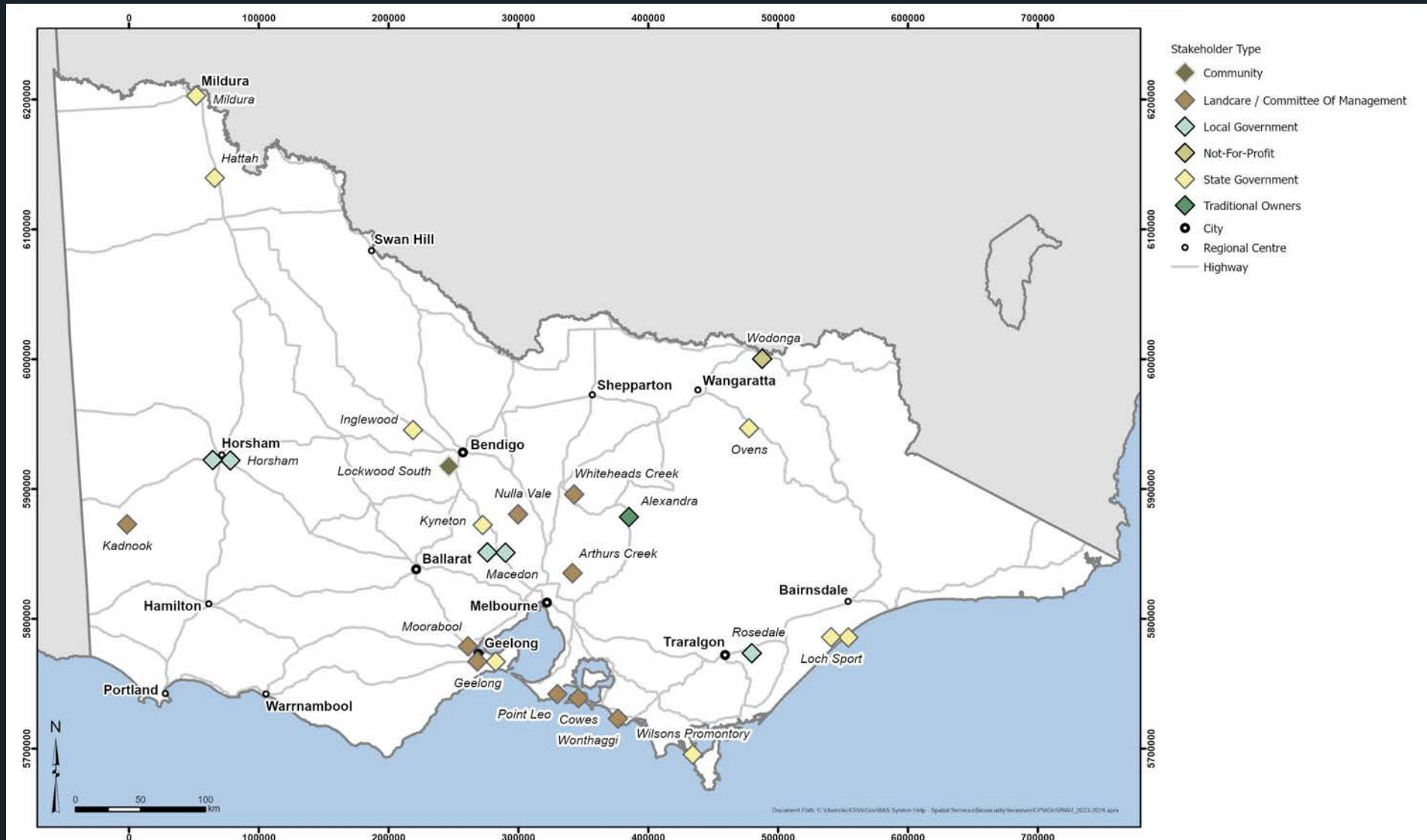
Field Topics covered:

- Assessing Rabbit Impacts
- Rabbit Management techniques
- Peri-Urban Rabbit Control
- Monitoring



Participant Map

BOOTCAMP 2022





CASE STUDY ONE

BOOTCAMP 2022

What did you like about the Bootcamp program?

"I like that I have new knowledge to be a better land manager regarding rabbit control"

"The engagement and combination of theory and practical work to give a comprehensive cover of rabbit management"

"I liked the sharing of information from mentors to students"

"I like the format of the program. It's well thought out with regard to understanding behaviour of rabbits, control methods and addressing challenges with landscapes and engaging community"

What were your key takeaways from the course?

- improved knowledge of best practice integrated rabbit management.
- my new knowledge will improved how my organisation manages rabbits
- build networks in this area of NRM

Will your experience at the VRAN Bootcamp change how you collaborate with others?

84% - YES - I will collaborate more



PROGRAM:

BIIK PROGRAM

This program was delivered on Taungurung Country. It was co-designed for professionals working in NRM roles for First Nations enterprises.

SNAPSHOT

- Aim: Biik want to increase their rabbit management knowledge and improve their practices that will benefit Country for all.
- Partners: Biik & VRAN
- Timeframe: 2022-2023
- Funding Partner: Biik and Agriculture Victoria
- Taungurung locations: Alexandra, Buxton, Euroa, Gooram and Taggerty.

Biik is the Taungurung word for Country.

Biik is an enterprise established by Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLWC), to provide cultural and natural resource management (CNRM) services right across Taungurung traditional country.

Together VRAN and Biik co-designed, a fun and engaging course with a mix of classroom and field sessions held on Taungurung Country.

We shared and exchanged knowledge on best practice rabbit management, cultural heritage and what it means to read, heal and care for Country.

The VRAN mentors continued to provide peer support to five Biik staff for 12 months. Sessions focused on hands on learning, mentoring and community engagement.

The course also increased engagement opportunities with First Nations enterprises. Biik networked and collaborated with Cathedral Landcare, Granite Creek Landcare, Alexandra Historic Railway, Michael Kaponica and Euroa Arboretum.

VRAN would like thank everyone involved in the program.





CASE STUDY TWO

BIIK PROGRAM

What did you think about the program?

"Our Biik crew found the course very informative and well facilitated" – Caring For Country Team

"This course has been a great way to get on the job training whilst working on Country. VRAN have provided industry – relevant skills, that natural resource managers highly value. It's been an absolute pleasure to work with Biik – VRAN Mentor"

"Working in this program I was able to experience two-way learning. Biik built my understanding of Taungurung culture, and I helped them learn about rabbit management and the impacts of feral animals on Country and Culture" – VRAN Mentor

What are your key takeaways about Rabbit Impacts or rabbit management?

"You need to do harbor control, not just rabbit population control"

"How important monitoring and follow up rabbit programs are"

"The speed of the damage and how rabbits can adapt to their environment"

"How much better the land can be without rabbits"

PROGRAM: VIRTUAL EXTENSION OFFICER

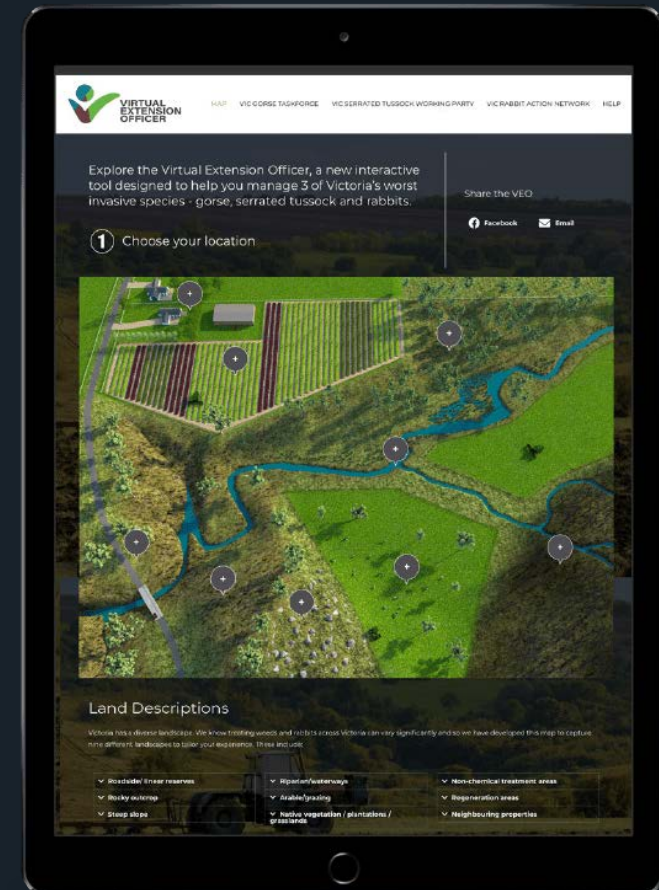
Virtual Extension Officer is an interactive website created by three community pest management groups for land managers. It provides a trusted source of general information and lived experience around weed and rabbit management

Snapshot

- Tailored information based on species, landscape and control type
- Easy to understand information
- Includes 'how to' Videos

If you need support managing rabbits, serrated tussock or gorse the Virtual Extension Officer can help in 4 easy steps:

- Step 1 – select property location
 - Step 2 – select pest species
 - Step 3 – select size of infestation
 - Step 4 – select type of control
- Visit veo.com.au



AWARDS:

Australian Biosecurity

Award - 2022

This award recognises individuals, groups or organisations within the community that have demonstrated a significant contribution to maintaining Australia's biosecurity integrity.

VRAN share this award with Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, Victorian Gorse Taskforce and the Victoria Serrated Tussock Working Party.

As collective, we were recognised for our contribution to Agriculture Victoria's 'Weeds and Rabbit Project' 2016-2021, which aimed to raise awareness and build community capacity of Victorians to manage pest species.



VOLUNTEERS AND PARTNERS

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR VRAN PROGRAMS

- The three Victorian Community Pest Management Groups; Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, Victorian Gorse Taskforce and Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party
- Biik Environmental
- Landcare Victoria Inc
- Rabbit Free Australia
- Agriculture Victoria
- Centre for Invasive Species Solutions
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Department of Primary Industries NSW
- First Peoples – State Relations
- Local Government partners
- Parks Victoria
- Victorian Traditional Owners
- Ashbourne Landcare Group
- Arthurs Creek District Landcare Group
- Bamgambie Meredith & District Landcare
- Bass Coast Landcare Network
- Bellarine Landcare Group
- Blampied-Kooroocheang Landcare Group
- Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network
- City of Greater Geelong
- East Gippsland Landcare Network
- Geelong Landcare Network
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Hughes Creek Catchment Collaborative
- Hume City
- Macedon Ranges Shire
- Middle Yarra Landcare Network
- Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group
- Mornington Peninsula Shire
- Mundarra and Kadnook Landcare Groups
- Murrayville Landcare Group
- Nulla Vale Pyalong West Landcare Group
- Point Leo Foreshore Park and Reserve
- Surf Coast and Inland Plains Landcare Network
- Upper Barwon Landcare Network
- Warragul & District Urban Landcare Network
- Wellington Shire Council
- All the friends of VRAN



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