



## Rivers to Ranges project

**Government agencies working together to protect biodiversity on public land from the impact of weeds north-east of Melbourne.**

### **Peri-urban Weed Management Partnerships**

Rivers to Ranges is one of seven collaborative conservation projects funded through Peri-urban Weed Management Partnerships (PWMP).

In the last four years, the Victorian Government provided \$572,385 for weed control and a project coordinator.

Funding concludes in June 2020. More funding is needed to protect this significant area from weeds and maintain the partnership.

### **Project Partners**

- Nillumbik Shire Council (lead agency)
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- City of Whittlesea
- Manningham Council
- Parks Victoria
- Melbourne Water
- Trust for Nature

### **A Hotspot of Biodiversity**

The project focuses on a 16,000 hectare network of public land to the north-east of Melbourne including:

- Kinglake National Park
- Warrandyte to Kinglake Habitat Corridor
- Parts of the Yarra River and adjacent land
- Plenty Gorge Park and Plenty River

This area contains a rich diversity of plants, animals and habitats. This biodiversity hotspot:

- connects native habitats from the Yarra River to the Kinglake Ranges
- contains a multitude of rare native orchids found nowhere else, including endangered Rosella Spider-orchid and Charming Spider-orchid
- supports a key population of threatened Brush-tailed Phascogales
- forms a vital migratory stepping stone for Critically Endangered Swift Parrots

## Approach

The project applied the following approach:

- Landscape-scale Strategic Planning – Plan for strategic biodiversity conservation at a landscape scale to make the most of limited resources. Improve the impact of works at a local scale by seeking opportunities to work across tenures.
- Effective Project Working Group – Establish shared decision making, foster strong relationships between project partners and harness the capacity of the member groups to benefit all partners.
- Creative Project Coordinator – Coordinate and facilitate the project to respond to emerging threats and opportunities in the project area.
- Adaptive Processes and Accountability – Develop and apply processes to:
  - gather and share information
  - ensure the accountability of project partners and contractors
  - adapt to emerging weed issues

## Project Achievements

### Weed Control

- Strategically targeted weed control funding following the biosecurity approach (protecting the highest value assets at the greatest risk first)
- Directly treated over 52 different environmental weed species in 11 reserves covering more than 2,862 hectares of critical habitat:
  - Reduced weed cover from an average of 15.7% to 2.8%
  - Removed 279 hectares of weeds
- Contained the spread of *Oxalis micrantha*, a weed never before found in Victoria/Australia.

### Resourcing

- Allocated and spent \$572,385.
- Project Partners delivered complementary weed control and other on-ground works across the 120 reserves and 16,261ha of public land in the project area
- Supported the leveraging of about \$1.7 million of additional funds

### Collaboration

- Developed and maintained relationships with the 7 project partners and 3 additional participating

agencies through the Rivers to Ranges Network (Project Working Group)

- Ran 13 Rivers to Ranges Network meetings, including presentations, 2 site tours and 4 major planning workshops
- Coordination with Conservation Futures project including shared meetings and works plans
- Maintained a relationship with the Nillumbik Landcare Network (NLN) including contributing the NLN Nillumbik Conservation Action Plan
- Drove and supported cross-tenure collaboration across the project area
- Collaborated with or supported other landscape scale projects, networks and strategies in the Port Phillip and Westernport region
- Developed collective strategies for the control of 21 new and emerging weeds

### Knowledge

- Developed and reviewed project Operational Plan and AMPR plan, and reserve Works Plans
- Each year produced mid-year and annual reports
- Applied and further refined the Environmental Works Toolkit – a works planning system
- Supported and contributed to biodiversity and threat monitoring, in particular the PMWP weed monitoring program.

### Community Engagement

- Developed a range of education and engagement materials including project signage for reserves, festival banners, fact sheets, articles and videos
- Ran a Land Management Mini-Expo providing land management advice to over 50 attendees
- Ran a campaign for the control of emerging weed, South African Weed Orchid – including factsheet mail out to 1950 properties and social media video post (8.8K views and 88 shares)

### The Future

The project finishes in June 2020. The Network is seeking funding to maintain and expand on these significant achievements.

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