



The Hon. Greg Hunt MP

Minister for the Environment

Mr Jason Wood MP

Federal Member for La Trobe

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$1.2 million to fight weeds and pests in Dandenong Ranges

Over \$1 million is now on offer for local groups in the Dandenong Ranges to tackle weeds, pests and reduce bushfire risks, and an extra \$200,000 has been provided for research on biological controls to reduce wandering trad.

Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt and Member for La Trobe Jason Wood met with local groups today and inspected an infestation of wandering trad at Belgrave Lake Park in Victoria.

“This round of Dandenong Ranges Environmental and Bushfire Fuel Reduction Community Grants is funded through the National Landcare Programme as part of a 3-year, \$3 million commitment the Australian Government made to the Dandenong Ranges,” Minister Hunt said.

“This funding will help local groups and partnerships here in the Dandenong Ranges to improve native vegetation and habitat for native species by managing weeds and pest animals, while reducing bushfire risk.”

Mr Wood encouraged interested local groups to apply for grants, to be coordinated by the Port Phillip & Western Port Catchment Management Authority, for small, medium or large projects.

“The Dandenongs are a vital part of Victoria’s tourism industry with a thriving community,” Mr Wood said.

“This programme aims to address some of the fire risk issues that concern visitors and locals, while improving the biodiversity of the Dandenongs.”

Announcing \$200,000 for further research on wandering trad as part of the National Environmental Science Programme, Minister Hunt noted the weed had a significant impact on biodiversity in Victoria and across many parts of the country.

“The project is a great example of the programme’s collaborative, practical and applied research that informs action on the ground. A leaf beetle and a leaf pathogen (a type of smut fungus that causes disease in the weed) will undergo risk assessment in quarantine conditions,” Minister Hunt said.

“This is an important step prior to release into test areas to ensure that Australian native and commercially important plants will not be affected by the Tradescantia leaf beetle and leaf-smut agents.”

Mr Wood said the research had great potential to reinforce on-ground weed management actions already underway in the Dandenong Ranges.

“The community is already putting in a massive effort to reduce the impact of wandering trad on the incredible biodiversity of the Dandenongs,” Mr Wood said.

“The National Environmental Science Programme connects scientists and communities to deliver research that will provide practical solutions.

The research is being led by CSIRO, with \$200,000 funding from the Australian Government’s National Environmental Science Programme, in addition to co-investment by the research partners.

The project will be in collaboration with the Victorian Government and builds on earlier CSIRO work as part of the former National Environmental Research Program.

For more information on the Dandenong Ranges Environmental and Bushfire Reduction Community Grants, or to apply, visit <http://www.ppwcm.vic.gov.au/funding-grants/dandenong-ranges-wildlife-recovery-weed-management-and-fuel-reduction-programme/grants.aspx>

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