



Jason Wood MP
Federal Member for La Trobe

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 23rd May 2016

\$2.4 MILLION BOOST FOR THE DANDENONG RANGES ENVIRONMENT

Local communities across the Dandenong Ranges will share in more than \$1 million in funding for fuel reduction and key revegetation projects.

Grants to 23 local groups – including \$230,000 to StopPitt to control the spread of Sweet Pittosporum in the ranges – were announced by Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, and the Federal Member for La Trobe, Jason Wood, during a visit to Menzies Creek today.

The Port Phillip & Westernport Catchment Management Authority will deliver the grants under the Australian Government's three-year \$3 million Dandenong Ranges Environmental and Bushfire Reduction programme, a key 2013 election commitment under the National Landcare Programme.

"This funding means we have now delivered in full on our 2013 election commitment to the Dandenong Ranges," Mr Hunt said.

"It is satisfying to see the difference this programme has already made across the ranges. The removal of weeds and excess fuel loads has made many local areas safer for residents."

"And the planting of native shrubs and removal of pest animals has created a supportive environment in which native species can flourish."

Mr Wood said the projects would improve life for many of the communities in the Dandenong Ranges including Sassafras, Emerald, Cockatoo, Belgrave, Gembrook, Clematis and Ferry Creek.

"The Dandenong Ranges are a vital part of Victoria's tourism industry with a thriving community. These projects will help to protect that industry, whilst improving biodiversity and reducing the bushfire risk to visitors and residents," Mr Wood said.

Mr Hunt also announced that a re-elected Turnbull Government would provide a further \$1 million funding package for the Dandenong Ranges environment under the Improving Your Local Parks and Environment programme for projects focused on the biological control of

bushfire-promoting weeds such as ivy and sycamore, and the removal of other weeds, such as onion weed.

Further works to be funded under the package include the re-vegetation of key areas with low fire risk native plants.

In addition to this, a re-elected Turnbull Government will provide \$400,000 for two new Green Army projects in the Dandenong Ranges, with a special focus on threatened species:

- The Helmeted Honeyeater Habitat Restoration Project will aim to increase habitat to protect the 130 remaining individuals of the Critically Endangered species. Participants will engage in seed collection, plant propagation, fauna surveys, revegetation and weed control.
- The Leadbeater's Possum Protection Project will help protect Victoria's critically endangered fauna emblem through revegetation at Yellingbo Nature Conservation Reserve. Participants will engage in fauna surveys, revegetation, nest box construction, seed collection and plant propagation.

“The Dandenong Ranges is a very special place that is dear to the hearts of many Melburnians. I am committed to doing all that I can to help local residents care for this beautiful region,” Minister Hunt said.

“Jason Wood is a great local member who recognises the benefits of looking after and improving the local environment. He should be congratulated for advocating so strongly for these projects.”