



# Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

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*Cover Photograph: Rip Curl staff volunteering for Planet Day 2015 weeding at Moonah Woodlands*

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## Executive Summary

### Council's Commitment

Surf Coast Shire Council is committed to improving pest plant and animal management in the shire, in partnership with local Landcare and community groups, other land managers and local landholders. Development and implementation of this Strategy supports Council's purpose to help our community and environment to thrive and Council's organisational direction, in particular that Council will be an innovative and flexible leader and a constructive partner, who values the strengths of others. Delivery of the Strategy also supports Council's *Towards Environmental Leadership Program*,<sup>1</sup> in particular the *Land Use and Wildlife* theme. The *Towards Environmental Leadership Program* is a joint Council and community initiative, which aims to recognise and build on existing environmental achievements across the shire, and to set future directions.

### The Scale of Problem

Pest plants and animals have major economic, environmental and social impacts in Australia, causing damage to natural landscapes, agricultural land, waterways and coastal areas. Invasive species impact negatively on our economy, environment and society. Weeds in agriculture cost the Australian economy about \$4 billion per annum. Their effect on nature conservation, tourism and landscape amenity cost a similar amount. The national economic impact of pest animals is conservatively estimated to cost between \$720 million and \$1 billion annually.<sup>2</sup>

### A Shared Responsibility

To be effective, responsibility for pest animal prevention and management must be shared - landholder partnerships and coordination are essential to success. This is especially true in Surf Coast Shire, as Council only owns or manages about one per cent of the land area.

### An Ongoing Problem

Generally pest plant and animal control cannot be achieved by a single treatment. Managing invasive species requires a 'proactive approach, continuous investment and strategic action by a wide range of stakeholders'.<sup>3</sup> This often involves coordinated use of multiple approaches by various individuals and groups over a sustained period. Examples of persistent pest plants and animals in Surf Coast Shire include rabbits, woody weeds like Gorse (seeds can survive in the ground for decades) and grassy weeds like Serrated Tussock (seeds can last 10 – 15 years).

### The Local Context

Many pest plants and animals are already widely established in Surf Coast Shire eg Serrated Tussock, Blackberry, Boneseed, rabbits and foxes - and we do not have the resources or tools to eradicate them. Realistically then, to manage these and other widely established species we should focus our resources where the benefits of management/return on investment will be greatest.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Towards Environmental Leadership Program* is a digital program available at <http://scsenvironmentalleadership.com/>

<sup>2</sup> For consideration of the impact of pest plants and animals in Australia, see *Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017 – 2027* and *Australian Weeds Strategy 2017 – 2027*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid Australian Pest Animal Strategy* at p. 2; *Australian Weeds Strategy* at p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Invasive Species Action Plan 2015*, Nillumbik Shire Council at p. 2.

## **Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022**

Council will:

- focus on a shire-wide view of pest plant and animal management
- implement a 'biosecurity approach' focusing on prevention, eradication (where possible), containment and asset protection
- prioritise preventing new and emerging species from establishing in the shire
- protect high value assets first when tackling established pest plants and animals.

We will manage pest plants and animals in the shire in partnership with the community, Landcare & other conservation groups and land managers.



*Red Fox*

## Vision

*In the Surf Coast Shire, all landholders work effectively together to eradicate or control pest plants and animals.*

## Goals

The five goals of this Strategy are to:

1. prevent new and emerging pest plant and animal infestations within Surf Coast Shire
2. minimise the impact of established pest plants and animals on land owned or managed by Council, which is of high ecological, social or economic value
3. ensure that Council meets its legal obligations when managing pest plants and animals
4. work with community groups and land management agencies to manage pest plants and animals
5. support Landcare and community pest plant and animal management initiatives and capacity building.

## Principles

The following principles will guide Council's pest plant and animal management work:

### **1. Prevention**

Prevention and early intervention so that new pest plants and animals do not establish is generally more cost-effective than ongoing management of established pest plants and animals.

### **2. Shared Responsibility**

Landholders, community, industry and government share responsibility for effective pest plant and animal management. Each landholder is legally responsible for pest plant and animal management on land they own or manage.

### **3. Community Partnerships**

Council will continue to promote and support active involvement in pest plant and animal management by the community, Landcare and conservation groups.

### **4. Coordination**

Whenever possible, Council will collaborate and coordinate with other land managers, to manage pest plants and animals effectively.

### **5. Asset protection**

When managing established pest plants and animals, Council will focus its efforts on protecting the high value assets (environmental, social and economic) that it owns or manages.

### **6. Harm Minimisation**

Control methods for pest animals should be humane and limit impact on non-target species. Humane, safe and effective control practices go hand in hand. Weed control should target specific plant types, be effective, and minimise effects on the wider environment.

### **7. Ongoing commitment**

Because pest plant and animal management is most effective where resources can be sustained over a prolonged period, Council will only invest in pest plant and animal management work it can continue to maintain



## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

### Annual Action Plan and Progress Report

Council will prepare an annual Action Plan, documenting the key pest plant and animal management actions it will undertake. Early in each financial year, Council officers will report on progress towards implementing the Action Plan. Council will invite local Landcare and community groups working with it on pest plant and animal management to include their key proposed actions in the annual Action Plan and to report on their achievements in the annual Progress Report. Council will circulate copies of both the Annual Action Plan and the annual Pest Plant and Animal Management Progress Report to key Landcare, community and agency stakeholders by email and will also post both documents on Council's website.



*Fumigation of rabbit warrens – Council roadside*

## About the strategy

### Introduction

- Pest plants and animals have major economic, environmental and social impacts in Australia, causing damage to natural landscapes, agricultural land, waterways and coastal areas.
- Invasive species impact negatively on our economy, environment and society. Weeds in agriculture cost the Australian economy about \$4 billion per annum. Their effect on nature conservation, tourism and landscape amenity cost a similar amount. The national economic impact of pest animals is conservatively estimated to cost between \$720 million and \$1 billion annually.<sup>5</sup>
- The *Surf Coast Shire Pest Plant & Animal Strategy 2019-2021* (the Strategy) has been developed to guide on ground pest plant and animal management on Council-owned and managed land. The Strategy replaces the *Surf Coast Shire Pest Plant & Animal Action Plan 2002*.
- The Strategy is driven by legal requirements, community expectations and Council's commitment to pest plant and animal management and to environmental leadership
- The Strategy will help ensure that Council:
  - meets its legal requirements and aligns with national and state government policy for pest plant and animal management
  - implements 'best practice' in pest plant and animal management on Council owned and managed land
  - maximises opportunities to partner and collaborate with community groups and other land managers on pest plant and animal management
  - continues to build on existing environmental leadership achievements across the shire by Council and the community.

For purposes of this Strategy:

- A **weed** or **pest plant** is a plant that requires action to reduce its negative effects on the economy, the environment, human health and amenity.<sup>6</sup>
- A **pest animal** is an animal that is, or has the potential to become, a serious threat to primary production, Crown Land, the environment or community health in Victoria.<sup>7</sup>
- An **invasive species** is a species occurring, as a result of human activities, beyond its accepted normal distribution and which threatens valued environmental, agricultural or other social resources by the damage it causes. Invasive species include pest animals and weeds as well as diseases, fungi and parasites, insects and other invertebrates and introduced marine pests.<sup>8</sup>

**(NOTE: this Strategy only considers pest plants and animals when referring to invasive species.)**

<sup>5</sup> For consideration of the impact of pest plants and animals in Australia, see *Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017 – 2027* and *Australian Weeds Strategy 2017 – 2027*.

<sup>6</sup> *Australian Weeds Strategy 2017-2027* at p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 Vic*, ss 64 – 67.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Department of Environment and Energy website <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive-species>



## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

### Council's Purpose and Organisation Direction

Development and implementation of this Strategy supports Council's purpose to 'help our community and environment to thrive' and Council's organisational direction, in particular that Council will be an innovative and flexible leader and a constructive partner, that values the strengths of others.

### Towards Environmental Leadership

*Towards Environmental Leadership* is a joint Council and community initiative, which aims to recognise and build on existing environmental achievements across the shire, and to set future directions<sup>9</sup>.

The program focuses on three themes:

- renewable energy
- local and sustainable food
- land use and wildlife.

Community and Council activities will continue within other environmental themes and these will also be captured by the program.

Surf Coast Shire Council is recognised, both regionally and nationally, as an emerging leader for its work on sustainable and environmentally friendly practices. Developing and implementing this Strategy supports Council's delivery of the *Towards Environmental Leadership* 'Land Use and Wildlife' theme.



Rabbit Field Day – Barrabool Hills Landcare Network – Event Co-sponsored by Council

<sup>9</sup> *Towards Environmental Leadership Program* is a digital program available at <http://scsenvironmentalleadership.com/>

# The problem - pest plants and animals in Surf Coast Shire

## Negative Impacts of Pest Plants and Animals

Pest plants and animals have major economic, environmental and social impacts in Australia, causing damage to natural landscapes, agricultural land, waterways and coastal areas. The negative impacts of invasive species are economic, environmental and social.<sup>10</sup> The total cost of invasive species on private land in Victoria is estimated at over \$1 billion a year. The cost to native biodiversity is incalculable.<sup>11</sup>

Key invasive species that have had, and continue to have, negative impacts in Surf Coast Shire include rabbits, foxes, new & emerging weeds like Chilean Needle Grass, Texas Needle Grass, Cape Tulip, African Weed Orchid as well as established weeds like Gorse and Serrated Tussock.

## Surf Coast Shire Landscape

The Surf Coast Shire is located in south west Victoria, 120km from Melbourne and south of Geelong. It covers an area of 1,560 kilometres. The shire is bordered by the City of Greater Geelong in the north east, Golden Plains Shire to the north, Colac Otway Shire to the west and the rolling waters of Bass Strait to the south.

The physical landscape includes heathlands, wetlands, grasslands, bush, coastal and marine environments – from the coastal strip, its immediate undulating hinterland, to the steep forested ranges of the Otways and the flat inland plains. These environments support a variety of diverse ecological systems and native flora and fauna, as well as large areas of mostly grazing and agricultural land.

Council owns or manages just under one percent of land in the shire, so it is critical that Council partners and collaborates with other land managers and the community on pest plant and animal management.

## Pest Animals in Surf Coast Shire

Pest animals can cause significant damage to crops and seriously impact livestock industries by preying on stock and competing for pasture. Pest animals can also cause land degradation by promoting soil erosion, stream turbidity and the spread of weeds. They can threaten native plants and animals through competition, habitat destruction and predation.<sup>12</sup>

Pest animals of concern in the shire include the European Rabbit, the Red Fox and feral cats.

At times native animals can become 'problem' wildlife, damaging property, farmland or the environment and sometimes posing a threat to human safety. Examples of problematic behaviour include Cockatoos and Corellas damaging crops or buildings and Masked Lapwing (Plovers), Magpie-larks and Australian Magpies sometimes swooping pedestrians and cyclists. Kangaroos can cause damage to farm fences and also reduce the amount of grazing land available to livestock.

Wildlife is legally protected under the *Victorian Wildlife Act 1975* and in some instances also under the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Anyone wishing to control wildlife in Victoria must be authorised by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

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<sup>10</sup> For consideration of the impact of pest plants and animals in Australia, see *Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017 – 2027* and *Australian Weeds Strategy 2017 – 2027*.

<sup>11</sup> *Control of Invasive Plants and Animals in Victoria's Parks* (2010), Victorian Auditor General's Office

<sup>12</sup> *Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017-2027* at p. 7.



## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

### Pest Plants in Surf Coast Shire

Highly invasive plant species such as Gorse, Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle Grass pose significant risk to agricultural land in the Shire, outcompeting native and introduced pasture, reducing livestock carrying capacity and increasing the risk of stock injury.

Numerous pest plant species threaten biodiversity assets in the shire, with a suite of woody weed species like Boneseed, Broom and Sweet Pittosporum able to out-compete our indigenous plants, radically altering the structure of native vegetation communities. Other vigorous weed species such as Blue Periwinkle, Bluebell Creeper and Bridal Creeper smother native groundcover species, impacting on ecosystem processes and habitat for native flora and fauna.

Weed species, especially woody weed species like Coast Tea-tree, can significantly increase bushfire risk by adding to fuel loads around dwellings and contributing to fire intensity.

While indigenous to Australia, native plants growing outside their natural habitats can become environmental weeds, including the Giant Honey-myrtle, Sallow Wattle, and Bluebell Creeper.



*Planting Day – Mt Moriac Primary School – Greenfields Reserve*



## The regulatory framework – land owner obligations

### Legal Obligations for Landholders

In Victoria, all landowners and land managers, including Council, are legally required under the *Catchment & Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) to manage pest plants and animals on their land. Key obligations for landholders under CaLP Act include a requirement to:

- eradicate regionally prohibited weeds
- prevent the growth and spread of regionally controlled weeds
- prevent the spread of and as far as possible eradicate, established pest animals.

Other relevant legislation and policy applicable to pest plant and animal management is included in Appendix 3.

#### Weeds

Landholder obligations for weed management vary depending on the legal classification of weed. All weeds declared under the CaLP Act are collectively known as 'noxious' weeds.

Under the CaLP Act there are four categories of noxious weeds, based on their level of invasion:

- *State prohibited weeds* – weeds that either do not occur in Victoria but pose a significant threat if they invade or weeds that are already present, pose a significant threat and can reasonably be expected to be eradicated. None are currently known to exist in the shire. The state government is responsible for their control.
- *Regionally prohibited weeds* – weeds that are not widely distributed in a region but that are capable of spreading further. It is reasonable to expect that these weeds can be regionally eradicated. None are currently known to exist in the shire.
- *Regionally controlled weeds* – weeds that are usually widespread and considered important in a particular region. To prevent their spread, control measures are required. Examples of regionally controlled weeds in Surf Coast Shire include Paterson's Curse, Wild Watsonia, Cape Tulip (one-leaf), Ragwort and Sweet Briar.
- *Restricted weeds* – weeds that pose an unacceptable risk of spreading in the state or other parts of Australia if they were to be sold or traded in Victoria, and are a serious threat to another Australian state or territory. Trade in these weeds and any parts from which they can be propagated (either as plants, seeds or contaminants in other materials) is prohibited. Examples in the shire include Willow, Prickly Pear and Hawthorn.

In addition to noxious weeds listed under the CaLP Act, Council also seeks to control Weeds of National Significance (WoNS). These are weed species recognised by the Australian government as a priority current and future threat to Australia, requiring coordinated and strategic management. There are currently 32 weed species listed as WoNS, including African Boxthorn, Blackberry, Boneseed, Bridal Creeper, Broom species, Gorse, Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle Grass, all of which are present in Surf Coast Shire.

#### Pest Animals

Landholders are legally required under the CaLP Act to take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of, and as far as possible eradicate, 'established pest animals'. An animal may be declared under the CaLP Act as an 'established pest animal' if:

- it is established in the wild in Victoria,
- is a serious threat to primary production, Crown land, the environment or community health in Victoria
- it should be eradicated or controlled or its spread in the wild should be prevented.

## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

Established pest animals found in the shire include the European rabbit, Red fox, Feral cat (on Crown land managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning and Parks Victoria) and the European hare. Most of Council's pest animal management work focusses on rabbit management, which Council conducts in accordance with its Rabbit Management Policy.

### Additional Obligations for Local Government – Municipal Roadsides

In addition to the obligations all landowners and land managers have under the CaLP Act to manage pest plants and animals, councils have legal obligations relating to managing pest plants and animals on municipal roadsides. They are obliged to prepare, implement and publish a *Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Management Plan*. Priorities for the Plan are generally set by the state government (Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources) in consultation with councils.

Council manages about 1,500 km of municipal roadsides, including about 513 km of "high conservation value" roadside. Council receives limited funding from the state government to implement the Plan (about \$24,000 annually or \$16/km).

Council's current *Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Management Plan* is available on our website<sup>13</sup>.



*Rabbit Field Day – Winchelsea Land & Rivercare & Upper Barwon Landcare Network – Event Sponsored by Council -Winchelsea*

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Environment/Natural-environment/Injured-wildlife-and-pest-animals>



## Roles and responsibilities - who does what

### Overview

To be effective, pest plant and animal prevention and management needs to be a shared responsibility between landholders, the community, industry and government. All levels of government and all landholders have a role to play, together with regional bodies like the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, industry and community groups.<sup>14</sup>



*Rabbit Field Day – Surf Coast Rabbit Action Network – Warren ripping demonstration - Mt Moriac*

<sup>14</sup> Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017-2027; Australian Weed Strategy 2017-2027.



## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

Figure 1: Context for Management of Pest Plants & Animals in Surf Coast Shire<sup>15</sup>



<sup>15</sup> This table is a modified version of the roles and responsibilities table listed in the *Australian Weed Strategy 2017-2027* at p. 12 and the *Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017-2027* at p. 11.

## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

### Council's Roles and Responsibilities

*What we do regarding pest plants and animals:*

- control pest plants and animals on land we own and manage, including nature and recreation reserves and municipal rural roadsides, in accordance with CaLP Act obligations
- coordinate with other landholders on pest plant and animal management, including coordinating works on Council owned or managed land where possible/appropriate
- assist Landcare and community groups with pest plant and animal management public education and outreach activities, events, field days, mail-outs eTc
- support and build public awareness about pest plant and animal management issues – website and weed publications, event sponsorship, customer enquiries etc
- represent/advocate on behalf of community interests in pest plant and animal management
- assist with data collection and information exchange.

*What we don't do regarding pest plants and animals:*

- enforce CaLP Act obligations for pest plant and animal management on private land
- control wildlife on private land eg cockatoos, kangaroos, corellas
- relocate wildlife eg kangaroos - see Victorian government responsibilities below
- provide funding or rebates for landowner pest plant and animal management on private land
- manage pest plants and animals on private land or land managed by other agencies.

Pest plant and animal management work is delivered by various areas within Council including Environment, Open Space Operations, Local Laws and Planning.

### Victorian Government

In Victoria the lead agency for management of pest plants and animals is the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources (DEDJTR). Key responsibilities for DEDJTR regarding pest plants and animals include:

- **information and advice** on the prevention, management and treatment of invasive pest plants and animals and plant and animal diseases
- **enforcement** of CaLP Act requirements – generally focused on high priority invasive species
- **oversight and approval** of local government roadside weed and pest animal management plans.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) also has a role to play as the agency responsible for managing native wildlife in Victoria. Wildlife can sometimes cause damage to property, farmland or the environment and sometimes pose a threat to human safety.

Native animals are legally protected under the Victorian *Wildlife Act 1975* and in some instances also under the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. It is an offence to kill, take, control or harm wildlife under the *Wildlife Act 1975*. Anyone wishing to control wildlife in Victoria must have an authorisation from DELWP.

## Management approach

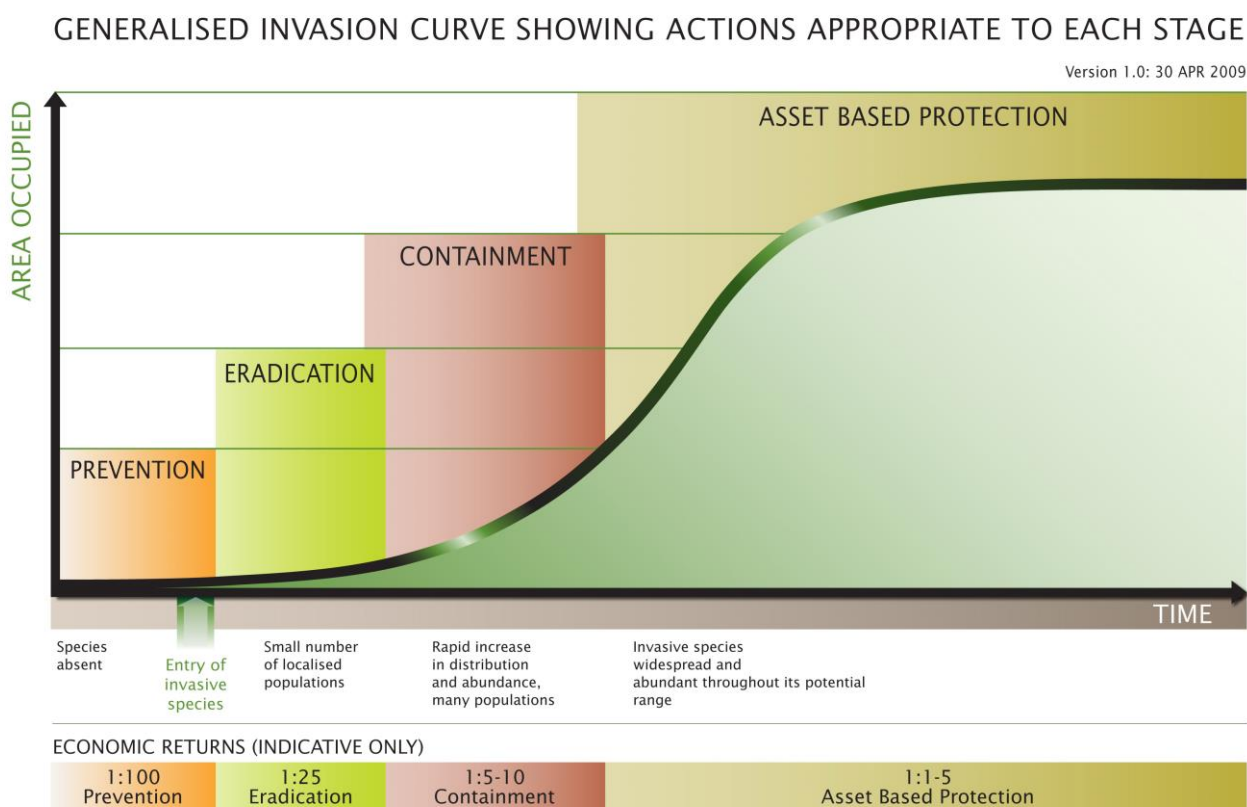
### A Biosecurity Approach (“Prevention is Better than Cure”)

Biosecurity underpins the Australian and Victorian Governments’ approach to pest plant and animal management. This uses a risk-based strategy with four cascading key responses:

- prevention
- eradication
- containment
- asset protection.

(Illustrated in the pest invasion curve in Figure 2 below)

Figure 2



Council also uses this “prevention is better than cure” biosecurity approach when managing pest plants and animals on Council owned and managed land.

This approach ensures that Council makes best use of its limited resources and capacity. When managing invasive species, the return on investment is much higher if Council aims to act when the plant or animal infestation is new or small - compared to the cost of trying to remove a species once it has become widespread and established.

So preventing any new pest plants and animals from establishing on Council land is the highest priority, then eradicating any new or emerging pest plants and animals and small infestations. The fall-back position from this is to contain more established and widespread species.

If a pest becomes so widespread that containment is no longer possible, management efforts focus on strategic protection of higher value assets (eg high conservation areas, popular recreation reserves, Council reserves in productive agricultural areas) to minimise economic, environmental and social impacts.



## Pest Animal Management

### European Rabbit

#### Rabbit Management Policy

The rabbit is the main focus for Council's pest animal work. Council controls rabbits on land it owns or manages according to its Rabbit Management Policy, available on our website<sup>16</sup>. The Policy also governs how Council interacts with the community to achieve best practice rabbit management across the Shire.

Under the Policy, Council has developed a prioritised list of rabbit 'hotspots', in partnership with the community, Landcare groups and land management agencies. On Council owned or managed land, hotspots are assessed against agreed criteria and prioritised. Council officers then develop a rabbit management plan for each prioritised site in partnership with relevant community groups, landholders and land management agencies. Where appropriate for the site, officers will obtain independent expert advice. They will stage the development of rabbit management plans according to available resources.

Council has developed, and is currently implementing, rabbit management plans for seven hotspot sites on Council owned or managed land, in partnership with relevant stakeholders. These plans are reviewed annually with stakeholders and informed by independent assessment of rabbit management actions.

Local Landcare groups play a key role in rabbit management in the Shire, conducting field days, coordinating community baiting programs and warren removal works and doing education and outreach with landholders. Council works closely with Barrabool Hills Landcare Group, Surf Coast Rabbit Action Network, Surf Coast & Inland Plains Network, Winchelsea Land & River Care Group, and the Upper Barwon Landcare Network to support their community rabbit management programs.

#### Rabbit Scan

RabbitScan is a free resource for landholders and the community to record and map online any rabbit activity, warrens, damage, and control activities in their local area. RabbitScan can also be used to record rabbit numbers and evidence of disease, and create online groups for landholders to record rabbit information. Data can be recorded directly online at [www.rabbitscan.org.au](http://www.rabbitscan.org.au) and/or through a free mobile phone app.

Council is using RabbitScan to record and map rabbit warrens and warren management work on Council owned and managed land.

#### Feral Cats

Feral cats were declared an established pest animal on specified Crown land in Victoria under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* in July 2018. Feral cats have **not** been declared an established pest on private land, meaning Council, farmers and other private landholders will not be required to control feral cats.

In response to the negative impact of domestic cats on native animals and the nuisance value of wandering animals, Council has a cat curfew, under which cats must be confined to their owners' premises between 8pm and 6am daily. This cat curfew does not apply in areas zoned rural in the planning scheme.

#### Red Foxes

Managing foxes on Council owned and managed land in an urban environment is difficult. Foxes are cunning and difficult to trap. Other control methods are impractical due to the risks to the community and domestic animals. Council's fox management includes fumigating active dens, den destruction and collaboration with land managers like the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee to support the Hooded Plover protection program.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Environment/Natural-environment/Injured-wildlife-and-pest-animals>

## Weed Management

To ensure that Council allocates its resources effectively and in accordance with the goals and principles of this Strategy, it prioritises weed management on Council owned and managed land in two ways:

- **Weed species type and characteristics** – we give the highest priority to new and emerging weeds, ‘noxious weeds’ under the CaLP Act and Weeds of National Significance (WoNS). We also consider the size of the weed infestation, the invasive properties of the species and the likelihood of the weed becoming a greater problem (see Appendix 1 Weed Species Prioritisation).
- **Site /Asset Values** – we place the highest priority on high value assets, consistent with our biosecurity approach to asset protection (see Appendix 2 Site Prioritisation – Weed Management). When we determine asset value, we consider:
  - **ecological values** – bioregional conservation status and the presence of significant flora and fauna species and/or flora communities
  - **recreation values** – the impact the pest plant or animal is having, or could have, on the use or value of public amenity and recreational assets
  - **location of asset in broader landscape** – proximity to waterway, wetland or high conservation area, Crown land or land managed for conservation, productive agricultural land or an urban area where the invasive species is widespread on private land
  - **community involvement** – the length of time the community has been involved in pest plant and animal management at the site/in the area, the management practices used by the community and whether the community is committed over the long term to ongoing pest plant and animal management at the site/in the area.
  - **public risk** –if left uncontrolled, could invasive species present an unacceptable level of risk to community use of the site.

### Integrated Weed Management

Council’s Open Space Operations staff have been developing an integrated weed management program for Council owned and managed parks and open space that includes:

- Reducing chemical use for the management of weeds by alternative horticultural practices, including mulching out areas to suppress weeds, brush cutting around fence lines and bollards and hand weeding.
- Targeted and timely application to ensure that the least amount of chemical is used for the control of the specific weed.
- Limiting the use of glyphosate by the use of other herbicides where appropriate.

### Weed Mapping

We periodically record weed outbreaks on Council reserves, using data from our contractors, the community and council staff. On our municipal roadsides, weed data is captured generally when weeds are being controlled. (This is more efficient when managing 1500km of roadsides.)

We assess the collected weed data using both a weeds species decision-tree and site prioritisation (see Appendices 1 & 2) before grouping weeds under various treatment programs, to ensure they are treated at the correct stage of growth and optimum time of the year.

## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

### Environmental Weeds *(plants out of place)*

Land owners and managers are not legally obliged to control all weeds.

'Environmental weed' is a general term/classification used to describe a broad range of plants that can become weeds. These plants are not legally regulated under the CaLP Act, but should be controlled in particular settings. Many are popular garden plants in urban environments. However their capacity to 'jump the garden fence' and make a home in natural environments – to the detriment of native flora and fauna – makes them environmental weeds in that setting. Common environmental weeds in Surf Coast Shire include Sweet Pittosporum, Agapanthus, Gazania, Freesia and Arum Lily.

While not legally classified as a 'noxious' weed, environmental weeds can be quite invasive at some sites. In general, under Council's two-step prioritisation approach to weed management, we will only manage environmental weeds at sites of high conservation value

### Community Weed Removal and Revegetation Work

Local schools, businesses, community and Landcare groups play a key role in weed management and revegetation works in the shire. They work in partnership with Council to conduct weed removal working bees and planting days and deliver education and outreach on weed species identification and control to landholders. Some groups, like ANGAIR, are also involved in propagating and selling locally indigenous plants. Council works closely with groups like ANGAIR, Torquay Landcare, Surf Coast & Inland Plains Network, Upper Barwon Landcare Network, local schools and businesses like Rip Curl and Quiksilver in delivering weed management and revegetation works in the shire.

### Pest Plant and Animal Management in Urban Areas

Council can only manage invasive species throughout a landscape successfully if everyone works together across different land tenures.

In urban areas, invasive species can be quite widespread and established across many properties, with many different land managers, so it can be difficult to achieve effective control.

Council will generally support community or land manager led programs where a target weed species in an urban area is threatening local ecological values. Support may include controlling the target weed species on council managed land to prevent spread or promoting the target species through council media channels



## **Monitoring, evaluation and reporting**

### **Annual Action Plan & Progress Report**

Council officers will prepare a pest plant and animal management Action Plan each July, outlining Council actions for the next 12 months, reflecting the five goals of this Strategy. These are to:

1. prevent new and emerging pest plant and animal infestations within Surf Coast Shire
2. minimise the impact of established pest plants and animals on land owned or managed by Council, which is of high ecological, social or economic value
3. ensure that Council meets its legal obligations when managing pest plants and animals
4. work with community groups and land management agencies to manage pest plants and animals
5. support Landcare and community pest plant and animal management initiatives and capacity building.

Early in each financial year, officers will give Council a pest plant and animal management progress report, commenting on what was achieved from the previous year's plan.

We will invite local Landcare and community groups that are working with Council on pest plant and animal management to include their key proposed actions in the annual Action Plan and to report on their progress in Council's Annual Pest Plant & Animal Management Report.

We will circulate copies of both the annual Action Plan and the Pest Plant and Animal Management Progress Report by email to key Landcare, community and agency stakeholders and post them on Council's website.

### **Rabbit Management Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement**

Under Council's Rabbit Management Policy, we review management plans for rabbit 'hotspot' sites on Council owned and managed land with key stakeholders each year. Independent assessments inform these reviews. Assessment includes spotlight counts of rabbit numbers and a 'rapid rabbit assessment' at each site, both before and after management works. The rapid rabbit assessment measures and monitors rabbit abundance and activity, and the level of damage caused by rabbits in a specified area.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See [https://www.pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/BRS\\_Rabbit\\_Booklet\\_lr.pdf](https://www.pestsmart.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/BRS_Rabbit_Booklet_lr.pdf)

## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

### Pest Plant Management – Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement

As weed species are so varied and dynamic, monitoring is an important step in Council's weed management programs. Monitoring identifies any new and emerging weeds, rates how effective any weed control measures have been and evaluates overall progress. If objectives are not being met, programs are revised (within budget constraints) until the desired improvements are realised.

Key objectives include:

- All regionally prohibited weeds are eradicated (to our knowledge, there are none currently growing in the shire)
- New and emerging weeds which have been identified as high priority are eradicated or control measures are implemented with the aim of eradication
- The impacts of Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) and Regionally Controlled weeds on strategic high priority assets are reduced
- Weed impacts on strategic high priority natural assets/biodiversity are reduced or avoided
- Sources of weed invasion are identified and managed (where possible)

Council officers monitor nature reserves and recreation facilities at regular intervals throughout the year.

Roadsides which are vulnerable to weed invasion with the frequent movements of vehicles and machinery, water run-off into open table-drains, and exposure to any adjoining 'unmanaged' properties are monitored several times per year as part of the programmed roadside work targeting woody/grassy/bulbous weeds.

Independent assessments of the effectiveness of the weed program for a small random selection of high conservation nature reserves and key roadsides will be conducted annually and form part of the monitoring, evaluation and improvement program under this Strategy.

(Refer to Appendix 1 Weed Species Prioritisation and Appendix 2 Site Prioritisation – Weed Management)

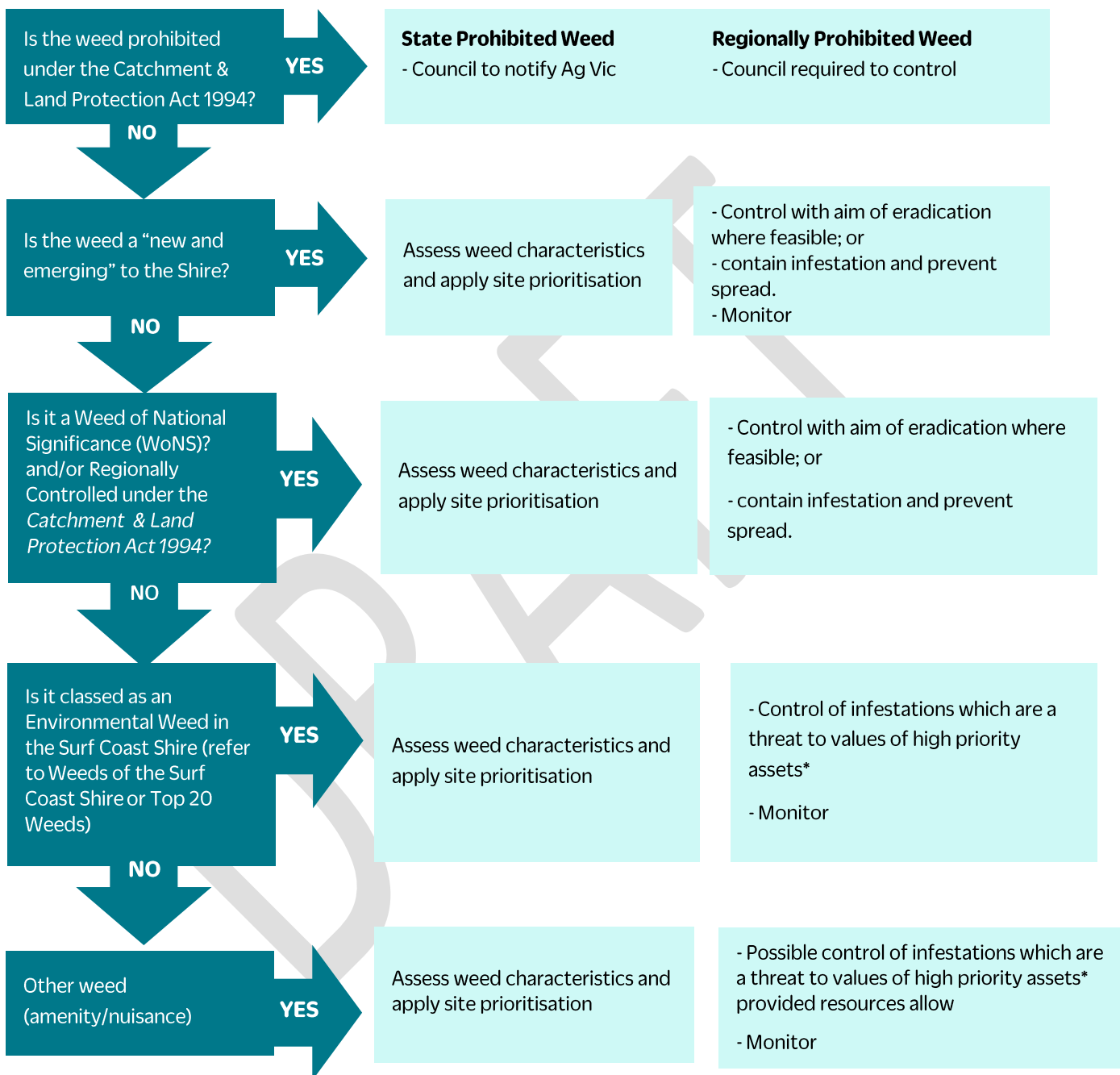
### Strategy Review

We will review this strategy every three to four years, with the first review due by December 2022

**Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022**

**Appendix One - Weed Species Prioritisation – Council owned/managed land**

Note: **Invasive Plant Classifications** - the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) defines four categories of noxious weeds for each catchment region in Victoria: State Prohibited Weeds; Regionally Prohibited Weeds; Regionally Controlled Weeds; Restricted Weeds. Refer to Figure 2 Biosecurity/Invasion Curve approach



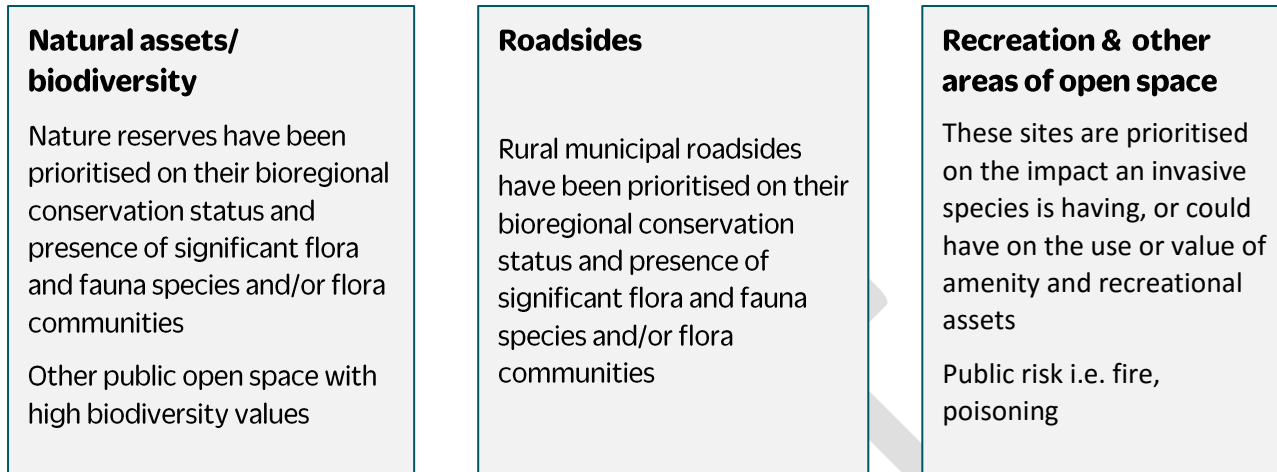
**Weed characteristics:**

- Rate of plant growth, tolerance to environmental conditions such as drought, flooding
- Mode of reproduction – seed, vegetative or both
- Length of time for plants to reproduce
- Quantity of seed produced, method of seed dispersal, distance seed is able to travel
- Seed survival – how long does the seed remain viable in the soil until conditions are favourable

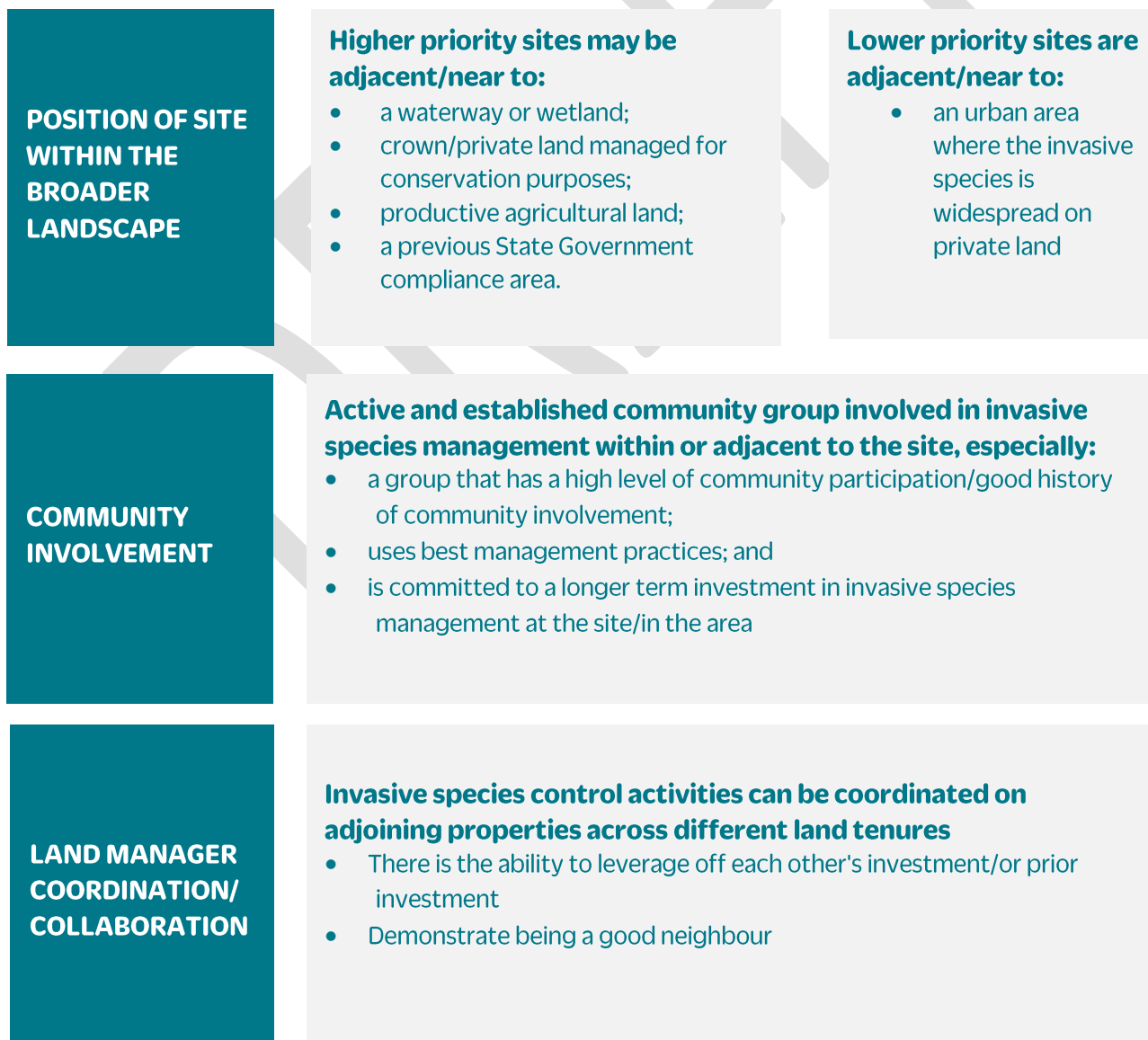


**Appendix Two: Site Prioritisation of Council owned/managed land – Weed Management**

To help identify those sites where control of weeds will be most beneficial



**Other considerations**



## Pest Plant and Animal Strategy 2019 - 2022

## Appendix Three – Legislation and Policy Applicable to Council's Pest Plant &amp; Animal Management

Relevant legislation and policy applicable to pest plant and animal management includes the following<sup>18</sup>:

Level	Legislation	Strategies, Plans & Policies
<b>Federal Australian Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environment Protection &amp; Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Australia's Biodiversity Strategy 2010 – 2030</li> <li>Australian Weeds Strategy 2017 – 2027</li> <li>Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017- 2027</li> <li>Weeds of National Significance National Alert for Environmental Weeds</li> </ul>
<b>State Victorian Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catchment &amp; Land Protection Act 1994</li> <li>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</li> <li>Planning &amp; Environment Act 1987</li> <li>Local Government Act 1993</li> <li>Environment Protection Act 1970</li> <li>Environment Protection Act 2017</li> <li>Coastal Management Act 1995</li> <li>Marine &amp; Coastal Act 2017</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invasive Plants &amp; Animals Policy Framework 2010</li> <li>Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation 2017</li> <li>Victorian Coastal Strategy 2014</li> <li>Strengthening Victoria's Marine &amp; Coastal Management – A Proposed Transition Plan 2017</li> <li>Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Corangamite Catchment Management Authority</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corangamite Catchment Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-2020</li> <li>Corangamite Invasive Plant &amp; Animal Strategy 2010</li> </ul>
<b>Local Surf Coast Shire Council</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council Plan 2017-2021</li> <li>Towards Environmental Leadership Program</li> <li>Rabbit Management Policy</li> <li>Roadside Weeds &amp; Pests Program Control Plan 2017-2019</li> <li>Rural Roadside Management Prescriptions for High and Medium Conservation (2004)</li> <li>Rural Roadside Management Strategy (2003)</li> </ul>

<sup>18</sup> Table developed with reference to *Native Vegetation & Weed Action Plan 2015-2020*, Great Ocean Road Coast Committee