

## THE GOOD NEIGHBOUR PROGRAM

Steven Burke

Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Pest and Animal Management Team, 5/250 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002, Australia

Public land management and Landcare are strongly linked, especially if public land is to be managed within the context of integrated catchment management.

As principle manager of public land in Victoria, the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment considers itself a landholder and partner in the Landcare movement.

The effects of public land management policies and actions should be considered not only for the land, water and environmental resources within the public domain, but also for the possible impact on neighbouring private land and effects distant from the public land in question.

Control of pest plants and animals on public land has long been a contentious issue in Victoria. Landholders have frequently claimed that they are adversely affected by pests encroaching from neighbouring public land.

The Good Neighbour Program is a major Victorian State Government Initiative which protects private land from pest plants and animals by improving the management of adjoining public land. Under the program, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment works in partnership with the community to tackle shared problems along common boundaries.

The Good Neighbour Program aims to:

- **Enhance** the productivity of agricultural enterprises through the control of pest plants and animals.
- **Consult** extensively with landholders, community groups and other stakeholders to ensure that pest management on public land takes account of their priorities and actions.
- **Integrate** pest plant and animal control with other natural resource management objectives, including:
  - revegetation
  - protection of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna
  - protection of catchment values
  - forest production
- **Achieve** long-term outcomes for pest management problems based on ecological principles.

The initiative is composed of the following priorities:

- **Good Neighbour projects on public land**
- **Co-operative roadside projects.** The Good Neighbour Program has been particularly effective in the co-operative management of roadside pests. These are generally the responsibilities of adjoining landholders, however some perceptions exist that this is not equitable. By providing some material support in high priority areas for landholders to fulfil these responsibilities, effective control of roadside pests has markedly improved in many areas.
- **Group facilitators projects.** Community-based facilitators to co-ordinate integrated private and public land pest management works.

In summary, the two most compelling features of the Good Neighbour Program are its integrated strategic approach to dealing with pest management issues, irrespective of land tenure, and community empowerment regarding priority setting for pest management on public land.