

Summary of WGR online forums and site visit

This document summarises discussions had across the two-week program of 3 online forums and two site visits. It covers:

- Results of the Feedback Survey handed out at the end of Site Visit 2
- A condensed summary of the Workshop held at the end of Site Visit 2
- A summary of next steps to take put forward by attendees of Site Visit 2
- A longer listing of the key issues put forward by participants the Workshop held at the end of Site Visit 2
- Summary of discussions held at Site Visit 2, in the field and at the Little River Mechanics Institute Hall
- Summary of discussions held at Site Visit 1, in the field and at the Melbourne Runabout and Speedboat Club
- Detailed Workshop listing of key issues

We had 93 people register for the events.

Links to details of the events program, and recordings of the online forums can be found here:
<https://grassyplains.net.au/wgr-management-and-vision/>

Feedback Survey

We had a good cross-section of participants (31) respond to the Survey at Site Visit 2, including land holders, government, council, ecologists and associated professions, land managers and community.

Participants were almost entirely in agreement that events were informative, the content important and that they were able to raise issues they thought were important. Participants generally thought such events should be held annually from now on.

Most participants were not confident of the current management leading to a good result. They were only a little more confident that future management would lead to a good result.

Other comments included that DELWP and PV staff were open and willing to answer difficult questions, and that there was considerable goodwill present.

Full survey results can be found at the end of this document.

Workshop summary

Action is urgently required.

The following were considered important: Seed production, more effective incentives for private land management, a strong engagement focus with a show-piece site, increased Traditional Owner engagement.

Management needs to be outcome-focussed for defined areas, with a triage approach. High-quality Themeda areas should be prioritised. Management must be on a block by block basis (or smaller), with multiple contractors trying a range of approaches across the WGR. These actions need to be funded on a multi-year basis. Cropping and grazing are important tools to consider. DELWP and Parks Victoria staffing needs to be increased.

The role of contractors received a lot of comment, with the industry in need of some overview in terms of training and career pathways, contract arrangements, and information sharing.

Overall WGR governance models were questioned. Greater input by a range of experts was felt to be important. Prioritisation, capacity building, vision were also important.

The need for a targeted research program was also highlighted.

Fire management needs a large-scale strategy and the capacity to be flexible across seasons.

A fuller listing of key issues can be found at the end of this document

Next steps

Discussion provided several potentially fruitful next steps.

- A debriefing workshop or event, looking at consensus
- Repeating this event series, but with a focus on the 36 Conservation areas
- Holding a similar event that focuses on a single block to sharpen responses to the complex management requirements of the most challenging paddocks, e.g. weeds, Themeda and C3 intertwined across a landscape including stony rises, e.g. Forsyth North block
- Focussed events on urban grasslands
- Consideration of upcoming Western Plains Grassland Action Statement when that is eventually put for public comment

Summary of discussions held at Site Visit 1

At the first stop

- The overwhelming presence of weeds, with some native veg still present, presents a huge management problem. It really makes you ask what is the threshold for this to be considered grassland? To effectively manage it will mean lots of spraying that will cause loss of native veg in the short term but lead to better outcomes in the longer term. Where we were standing was had been highly disturbed by the construction of a high-pressure gas pipeline.
- Block has good patches, just not where we were standing!
- WGR is 15,000 hectares in size because that was the size of the offset calculated as needed to offset the native veg removal in the growth zones of the MSA.
- James Neill spoke about the new contract between PV and DELWP that should provide greater resources and better adaptive management outcomes with more flexible allocated funds
- DELWP presented a difference between the extent of works necessary to meet commonwealth obligations (offset requirements) and the extent of works needed to meet a National Park standard. The offset requirements are a pretty low bar for what could be achieved. They asked how much restoration needed to be done? One attendee said all of it, given that we have lost native veg of the 60,000 hectares of the growth corridors.
- We heard that each block will get 10 years of intensive management. But that there might be some flexibility in defining when that 10 years begins, and also some possibility of works extending beyond ten years. Management has to be able to get costs down so PV can afford to manage it.
- James Neill said the future funding would be from two sources: the recurrent PV budget, e.g. The bucket of money all parks draw from, and from specific grant requests to make and implement a management plan (note that such grants are not guaranteed to be granted, or the funds may be insufficient for good outcomes)
- DELWP said there are some specific targets the Commonwealth has set that require improvements, not just non-degradation. The commonwealth government, in a nutshell, wants the threatened species that live in this environment to have stable populations. DELWP suggested that in more urban areas populations of species could be more variable, going up and down, and suggested that was an argument for the scale of the WGR.
- DELWP have estimates of costs to set the levy
- James Neill pointed out that there is a great deal of differing opinion on how to prioritise management and juggle funding across blocks of varying quality
- 30% of the Reserve is in very poor state, highly weedy and disturbed.
- DELWP mentioned protecting remnant and moving out from there as a good strategy
- DELWP said the offsetting setup creates the opportunity, it acquires the land, which has some good values on it.
- DELWP said the question is What meets national park standard?
- One attendee: "You've got to fix the lot. It's not a matter of which bit do we do and which bit don't we do, you've got fix the lot".
- Ben Nam said 4000 hectares of the best bits were kept in the growth corridors, the lower quality bits were allowed to be cleared.
- Ben said you can't just acquire part of the parcel, you have to acquire the whole of the parcel, hence the acquisition of low conservation quality land.
- On the 36 Conservation Areas:
 - The funding stream for the 36 conservation areas is also the same funding stream as the WGR. The levy has six different components for different species. Same goals as the WGR.

- James said the CAs that parks Victoria will be managing are in the same funding agreement as the WGR patches PV manages.
- Questions about the inner urban grasslands that are going backwards. No money at all. James completely agreed and said it is an identified threat to those grasslands.
- James said GPN will be very useful in getting community on board, politicians to listen, spend money.
- One attendee raised the point about community not having access to a lot of the urban grasslands, that it is not possible to get any stewardship or engagement when you are effectively locked out. James suggested the cause for that was the Crown Land Reserves Act, which says what can and can't occur on such reserves. Maybe, he said, we need to review that legislation, what should the correct categorisation be? There's no perfect answer. NCRs at least stop pipelines and other infrastructure being put through them. He understands community engagement is vital
- James told us about the property down the road with the sign "Government officials will be shot":

At Magpie, the scrape and sow site

- Lotus australis popped up in multiple locations after 60 years lying dormant in cropped land.
- We learnt that the scrape and sow cost \$20,000 for 0.8 ha, which was quite cheap. Excluding the cost of the seed. The costs were low partly because the soil was not transported off site but pushed to the side. That had the unintended consequence of altering the hydrology, making a wet patch by blocking a drainage line.
- Scrape by Greening Australia (Rod White) took a year and a half to take off (and James had to apologise to Rod White!), and coverage was still sparse, but in future years should provide a robust area that would have lower maintenance costs because of low weed presence.
- Management costs small because we are back to standard grassland management, cheaper and easier. But being a clean high-value, James would want to put more into it. Still C3 dominated, when C4 thicken up, this will be when costs really come down.
- Scrape also protects the important Themeda remnant. A ring around it. Though effects of altered hydrology remain to be seen.
- Ben talked about DELWP, over the next year, looking at how much of such scrape and sow will be needed. At what quality too. Some might be cheaper version that just replaces the weeds. Maybe rely on natural recruitment. Some of the survey data is helping answer the question of how much can we rely on natural regeneration. Or do we need to completely intervene. It is going to be a real learning experience. Big question of how much scalping we can do.
- Scalping not good for trying to protect the natural heritage values. The advice is just to leave it, don't disturb it. So scalping has a question mark on it for DELWP. But they are not really sure what other options there are.
- In reply, James noted that scalping is not flat-out banned. But a cultural heritage plan has to be made and followed. It's a matter for discussion with the RAPs, so for instance we can demonstrate that scalping is a good means of returning the country to a form of a natural state. so that is a communal goal that we'd be meeting. But we have to be respectful. An ongoing conversation.
- In terms of what do do with scraped soil: One option suggested was to make a new mountain. Another attendee suggested dumping it in the quarry. James noted the high costs of transporting soil. A third attendee noted that there is money in providing clean fill for estates, to raise them up over flood levels. James noted that possibly he may need a mineral extraction permit to sell government soil.
- Ben noted that Melbourne Uni is doing work on trialing covering rather than scraping, using

clean fill / sand, at Royal Park.

- The site was receiving translocations (*Senecio macrocarpus*, few hundred *Pimelea spinescens* up on the hill, from Rail Projects Victoria work near on Griegs Road) which perhaps attests to the scrape's success. Note those translocations not yet on VBA etc., poor following of proper process by RPA. Also note that in other sites mortality 5 years after translocation has been 70-80%, about 70% is considered normal, so we should wait and see!
- Across the road from Mount Cottrell Properties Pty Ltd
- Site burnt last year.
- Everyone well informed about what scalping was: good audience!
- Wet areas across WGR possibly not very surveyed for GGF
- James has been harvesting Silky Blue (*Dichelachne sericea*) at the site, for the greater good, some damage to other species from the harvesting process.
- Highly variable results from burning: two adjacent paddocks burnt on the same day: one paddock got weeds, one had good grasses come back. Highly variable appearance month to month too.

At the roadside site

- High-quality remnant with *Pimelea spinescens* population
- Dumping is a constant problem. Lack of communication with Council clean-up crews was also causing damage when clean-up occurred. Cameras and signs failed to stop the dumping. Closing entire road was the only good option. Took years to do, complex internal council processes.
- Finding and identifying these locations is critical, and the survey work being done is vital in establishing that.
- Good spread into adjacent property. Luckily, Council have established a good working relationship with land owners. Clean site, good for seed collection.
- Rock walls are all heritage listed across Wyndham.
- Council incentive schemes:
 - Melton and Wyndham have different approaches to providing incentives on privately owned land. Melton gives land owners a rate rebate if conservation works occur. That may appeal to land bankers and other absentee owners, but does not benefit the farmer. Wyndham gives funds to the land manager to undertake works, up to 75% of the costs for weed management etc.
 - Wyndham's program doesn't allow for multi-year works, which can be a problem for strategic planning of works.
 - Wyndham thinks land protection grant better than rate rebate.
 - Landholders get better pasture by removing weeds.
 - PAO had very negative impacts on land holder incentives. They feel burnt.
 - Geelong and Moorabool have stakes in WGR, with different systems for rebates.
 - Melton spends more money than Wyndham in rebates / incentives.
 - In Wyndham, getting farmers to pay even 25% of works is increasingly difficult with inflation.
 - While in Melton, the rated value goes up with ever-increasing property prices, meaning land owners get more money back. Incentives for owners rather than farmers
 - AgVic has given up on this area because it is too far gone with weeds and enforcement of CaLP Act.
 - Wyndham upgrading a local law to allow a small fine of their own. But that will be

prioritised, e.g. if you are next to an NCR.

At the Speedboat Club

- The importance of using vivid concepts / phrases, e.g. "old growth" grasslands, "rarer than rainforests" to promote grasslands. Is "grassland" appealing compared to: meadows, plains, prairie, savannah?
- The importance of charismatic fauna species to drive engagement
- The vastness is a drawcard in itself. With the distant city views, it creates a sense of I am here, all that city stuff is over there far away
- The grassland is only in flower for a couple of months. How to make it appealing in the other months? Wetlands will provide year-round attraction.
- The scale of the park, and the extent of degradation in some areas, means it can be used by many user groups, just like the You Yangs, which has horse riding, mountain biking.
- Recognising that the reserve's future has to be rolled-out in stages as acquisition occurs over a challenging 20-year acquisition timeline
- The Reserve needs to be linked to the adjacent places of environmental significance, To the You Yangs, the Western treatment Plant, mount Rothwell. Ben Nam said it was unlikely land between the north and the south portions of the Reserve would be purchased, but that the Werribee River, which edges both portions, is a link, and it has beautiful sections that will work as places of engagement as well.
- The Werribee River Association, and Riverkeeper, will be an important stakeholder.
- Feral animal control is being undertaken. James Neil noted rabbits and foxes are a problem, but that much bigger management problems (i.e. weeds, are present. Cats too. These species are concentrated along the creek lines.
- Some efforts are being made a Wurdi Youang to produce commercial grassland crops (e.g. grass seed for bush food. Given the fact there is a lot of ploughed land that needs to be managed, expanding Indigenous food crop production would be a good way forward. Many other good bush food crops, e.g. tubers, herbs. The Reserve needs to be more than a money sink.
- Other economic benefits could include considering the capture sequestration benefits of grassland. One speaker commented grassland could capture 90% as much carbon as forest. Ben Nam said DELWP had not looked into that, but it might be difficult receiving further income from land that was an offset already.
- The problems managing the WGR are highlighting larger issues: the lack of a native seed industry, the need to reconsider the training pathways for land managers (e.g. an apprenticeship scheme, some way of increasing on-ground training for grassland recovery and management), the role Landcare could play in urban areas.
- The need for flexibility in approach in management given uncertainties of 21st century.
- Also, we need to adaptively manage the idea of adaptive management. Our whole management approach (e.g. governance) needs to be able to change and adapt.
- Volunteer engagement should focus on the nearest parts of the Reserve. Taking people out to some distant paddock will be pointless. Activities could in fact focus on the more urban grasslands (e.g. Truganina South, that are not part of the Reserve. They become a staging post for interest in the larger Reserve.
- Currently there is no designated block in WGR as a volunteering pathway / community revegetation program (e.g. Landcare as engagement)
- Who are we engaging and why? Is it just to build up advocates? Or to build a group of volunteers who provide a labour source?

- One speaker notes that community engagement has not necessarily led to better actual grassland conservation outcomes. To that extent, engagement practices in grassland conservation have effectively failed. The question then becomes how to convert engagement (e.g. artists, schools) to actual benefits for grasslands?
- The constant tension between allowing access to areas with good conservation values and protecting those areas from the damage that can be caused by visitation.
- Incorrect to assume CALD communities "don't know what a grassland is". There is considerable solidarity with Indigenous groups through a shared sense of belonging / allegiance to land and waterways. As an example, Karen Landcare workers are highly adaptive to new landscape
- DELWP are appointing a community engagement person as part of MSA operations
- Important to push for having First Nations rangers focused on cultural interpretations of WGR
- The WGR, with all its aspirations, governance, scale and complexities, may be unique for Australia and potentially internationally. This could be a real point of distinction, just how unprecedented, ambitious, legacy-setting it is

Summary of discussions held at Site Visit 2

Stop 1: Little Raven

James Neil reported:

- Came to crown 5 or 6 years ago
- A typical example in many ways of the C3 dominated grasslands that make up 70% of the WGR
- Boom of Flupropanate used at a selective rate to keep natives (1.2 l/ha)
- Fed Uni doing management plots on spot spraying, seed sowing, burn, exclusion of grazing
- No management last couple of years because of funding agreement
- Grooming of boxthorn. Groomer head on positrack followed by glyphosate. Other options are pulling out with Boxthorn and brute force labour option
- Strips missed by boom spray, manual driving of broom using foam as marker. Patches followed up with glyphosate spot spray. There is some loss of natives.
- Native collateral inevitable at high densities of weed.
- Steve Sinclair asked: How do you distinguish herbicide resistant Serrated Tussock? Whole area treated with Glyphosate, and resistant individuals identified.
- Q: What happened with native forbs? Not many forbs were present. Bindweed “not susceptible to management”, e.g. very common
- Q: Rainy years means quicker loss of Flupropanate in soil. Also soil moves along drainage lines.
- Level of biomass affects effectiveness of Flupropanate. Results can be highly variable. Can depend on time of year, shading and foliage heights,
- Looking at preferencing C4 grass areas
- Flupropanate showing promise
- Spring burning to promote Redleg Grass.
- If you leave it for 2 years without management, what happens? Trying to work out how and when to reintroduce Themeda. Red leg shorter lived C4, Flupe doesn't touch it, first grass to return, good initial cover, but goes to background with return of c3 grasses. Chloris, Dichanthium can transition it more to Themeda.
- Is there a case for more research? Absolutely! All the label rates for herbicides are for agricultural uses. If you can gain a 10% efficiency over the whole cost of the management program, that is a very significant saving and a business case right there.
- Rate of Flupropanate being used doesn't affect Chilean. Are we pushing the system towards Chilean and a more difficult management situation?
- Stipa more from rootstock, Wallaby might be more blown in.
- Presence of African Weed Orchid. Present for a couple of years. Not a priority.
- African Thistle is a new and high threat weed. Perennial. Gazania not much of a problem, perhaps because of high biomass. Galenia suppressed by sward height too. Balancing solutions with consequences of their outcomes very much the issue in the WGR.

At roadside near on Live Bomb Range Road, Vanessa Hutchins spoke

- Forsyth North had Flupropanate in 2016, continued to be grazed, Serrated Tussock returned, no native seed coming back
- At Glengowrie, after Flupropanate, a wildfire just after herbicide burnt down fences so no grazing thereafter, and big germination of native seed, very good outcome.
- Good roadside, similar qualities to block called Cowies.

- Themeda on roadside as we were coming in is a good recoverable patch to work from. And that's what we are doing, when we get the data from the rapid assessment surveys (contractors doing that all day every day, every 40 metres). Also, thick Themeda resilient to weeds.
- Question on what has happened to all the Themeda on Live Bomb Range Road, Vanessa notes that parts of Live Bomb Range Road signposted as conservation areas and looked after by Wyndham and contractors, and generally whole roadside is in good condition, with lots of native annuals.
- Ben Nam: Forsyth North, 500 ha currently being acquired, compulsory acquisition. Negotiations on surrounding land also taking place, may take another 3-4 years. Compulsory Acquisition of Forsyth North completed in another 9 months from now. Get the land, then sort out the money, so different to negotiated settlements. Owner was going to sell it on the market and MSA intervened to stop that, to prevent a waste of money.
- Ben Nam: Once the block is acquired for hand over to Parks Victoria it takes about a year to get all the administrative things in place, set-up contracts etc. At Forsyth North MSA will work with existing leaseholder to keep some grazing going for management in the transition period. Same with weed control as well.

Red Gum Swamp, Vanessa Hutchins speaking

- Threats: grazing, trampling, plug holes from cattle, farmer not willing to fence it because it provides shade and shelter for cattle. Abandoned feral pigs, feral goats too. Also illegal firewood removal.
- Seasonal water, every five years maybe
- Will be purchased in 3-4 years.
- Talking to TOs to protect and manage cultural values in interim management. Cows pugging up ground.
- Fencing the best option. Need to change incentives to farmers to get that happening, incentives need to be fit for purpose.
- Paddock we walked through burnt a year ago, now thick with grass after only a year.
- Biggest Red Gum swamp in the WGR
- A hidden gem. That rocky rise has Red Leg and Themeda, and nearby, Blue-grass Lillies, one Milkmaid. Lots of cropping in this part of WGR.
- Comment about the details of the lava flows and how they have caused this depression, call for greater effort to map the volcanics and their elevations.
- Property changes ownership next week.

At Little River Mechanics Institute Hall

- Question about whether WGR can be treated as a special case with regard to what management actions can take place under Parks Victoria
- Question from Andrew Booth: What are Parks Vic and DELWP looking to achieve in the recently acquired highly weedy Argoona Road Block? What is realistic? James responds that it is about program outcomes after 10 years, do you go by the federal legislation, or do we aim for higher, something that is more sustainable and robust in the long term, that's what he is aiming for. That's the goals. We also have to consider what is practical in the time that we have got, and how that fits in to the landscape as well. We would be expecting an

improvement, it won't be weed-free, it is hard to quantify. Talking about outcomes allows you to work out what to aim for.

- Steve Sinclair follows up with suggestion that it would be good to follow up these WGR events with one focussed on a specific parcel to focus the discussion. It is very hard to talk about 15000 ha in general, the local context is so important.
- James says the approaches to these blocks are not a "management plan" as such but more of an ecological guide.
- Ben Nam: We don't have the answer. There are a lot of trials we have to do, we have to tap in to the people
- One attendee notes that the management to date seems so haphazard, so much science has been done that doesn't seem to be being applied. Steve Sinclair agrees, but also notes that every site is different, ecology is a messy science, lots of variability. It's not a farming monoculture, it is something much more complex. Too many factors to control scientifically.
- Ben Nam: does it come down to not being able to apply traditional small-scale methods of grassland management to such a big site?
- One attendee comments that in a small grassland you can aim to get rid of every *Nassella tussock*, that's not possible in WGR.
- One attendee comments that we need to think about what are the conditions that allow *Themeda* to spread and how can we go about creating those conditions and what timeframe do we need to do that?
- Bruce McGregor: We need to shift the conditions in our favour.
- One attendee comments that we have a railway authority, can we have a WGR Authority where the buck stops. Ben Nam replies that that has been talked about, and the idea is around broad arrangements for management. Whether we have a single authority or several working together, the question is whether they can do the things that they need to do. He thinks it would work better as an alliance, different organisations have different skills, so that's the way things are heading. The discussions should be on how to bring those organisations together.

Final conservation on what should be the next steps?

- Adrian Marshall notes we need to summarise and distribute what we've spoken about. We will need to meet to debrief, discuss. There are a couple of big things we haven't touched upon: seed production, what to do with the cropped areas?
- One attendee says: Speaking to local land owners. Vanessa agrees that it is useful use of Wyndham's time to speak to land holders.
- Jono Wilson suggest a similar series of events but focussed on the 36 Conservation Areas.
- Community-focused events, touching on the urban grasslands we already have, get the community behind it.
- Ongoing public events
- Event focussed on one grassland block, as per Steve Sinclair's suggestion
- WGR grassland-specific brochure, including fauna, moths etc.
- Ben Nam: follow-up debrief to see what consensus, see what opportunities there are
- Action Statement for Basalt Plains Grassland: early days, but it could form the basis for some ongoing discussions, actions, especially with respect to governance.

Detailed Workshop listing of key issues

Restoration

- Move on from weed control at best site(s) to adding forbs and orchids (some threatened species)
- Woody species restoration at large scale: easy, visible, engaging, may help weeds
- Identify places for trees / shrubs, Allocasuarina, banksia etc: diversify habitat
- Consider the ploughed land for seed production and high diversity restoration
- Revegetation of trees and shrubs on stony rises across the WGR (look at historical records): Bulloak, Drooping Sheoak, Banksia, Acacia, "Friends of Forgotten Forests:"
- Use some funds for threatened species introduction, e.g. rare orchids and put into fenced areas

Seed production

- Urgent need for native seed production supply and restoration strategy
- Seed production (professional) 1: Grasses (broadscale, esp. Themeda) 2: Many other spp. (intensive)
- Source as much Themeda seed ASAP and spread Themeda seed ASAP

Private land

- Engage more with WGR land owners and adjacent land owners
- Have more control of private land
- Incentivise private owners to manage weeds: Landcare grants; simplify process; offset rates and land tax; workshops on weed management
- CoGG needs to engage with DELWP to access funding and funnel through to landowners. No funds from CoGG for weed control. Wyndham model extended to CoGG?
- Effective incentives for land bankers

Engagement

- Give it a better name: Volcanic Plains national Park. Have a naming ceremony
- People power: organise a friends group and capitalise on them, people provide resources and capacity
- Open-up usable public space, including early visitor hub somewhere... interpretive centre, destination. Investigate other funding streams for this, partner with councils
- Public engagement very important. This site will cost a lot. Will need public support for funding long-term. May become unpopular if seen as unsuccessful
- Install good signage
- Make grasslands sexy
- Engage more people to care and appreciate the work, e.g. workshops, videos
- Focal activities and publicity... engage community on the land, planting days
- WGR wildlife birds etc brochures
- Charismatic wildlife publicity
- Engage community more via councils, which already have pathways.
- Volunteer engagement

- Landcare: No Landcare group worth looking at north of the You Yangs, no Landcare group in area
- Why do we need community engagement? Start defining community engagement and expectations
- Positive publicity

Demonstrating the vision

- Develop a really good show-piece grassland(s): an aspirational example to demonstrate the vision
- Restore stony rises, good drawcard for people
- Acquisition and conservation of Red Gum swamp

Traditional owners

- Indigenous ranger network needed
- Traditional owners: engage, undertake cultural heritage assessment of whole of WGR; bring TOs into management planning early
- Regulatory constraints on management (PV): Need arrangements with TOs, get Cultural heritage Assessment done
- Engage with Wurdi Youang for on-ground works... get something going... sort out structural issues between government and first nations so work can happen... need a win-win situation not a lose-lose; Overlay removed on Wurdi Youang

On-ground management

- Segmented approach to management, e.g. outcome-focussed management for defined areas
- Triage for management effort
- Identify best areas and increase management there: more inputs: “flagships”
- Concentrate on the good bits and work out slowly
- Manage “small reserves” rather than being overwhelmed by scale
- Focus management on blocks with Themeda patches close together
- Cropping and grazing must be considered as management tools
- Explore private sector opportunities for grazing/cropping in the degraded areas
- Work out low cost management options for weedy-C3 grassland
- Properly funded, multi-year plans
- Understand long-term goals for each land parcel and set clear activities to achieve
- Multiple managers trying different things in different paddocks
- Prepare strategy for 2, 5, 10 years and then 50 years
- 10-year plan too short: needs to be 20-200 years
- Increase workforce in Parks, DELWP. Local gov, contractor. Increase staffing and funding within the Reserve. No point acquiring land if it will never be feasibly managed:
- Staffing resources: right people right job
- Up-scaling of works
- Larger-scale techniques required
- Develop an evidence-based management manual
- Increasing government interests and investment in the Reserve
- Time lags: overarching rules delay responsiveness in management

- Road access: existing, future
- Find flupropanate
- Less science and more on-ground management, more action
- Try to shift the idea that “management” is only weed removal. Management also need to consider introducing natives and returning landscape function
- Install depots for reserve management

Contractors

- Establish pool of skilled workers
- Review traineeships for contractors
- Avoid competitive quoting and prevent under-quoting and burnout. Model realistic contractor costs over 10 years
- Longer contracts provide greater continuity and better career opportunities
- Develop career pathways to retain knowledge and experience, upskill
- Variability of work, not doing same task
- Traditional Owner induction for contractors to increase understanding
- Payment needs to reflect real cost to retain staff
- Provide shared, specialised equipment
- Forum for WGR contractors
- Run workshops with annual spraying routines and provide resources

Governance

- Identify and solve major program bottlenecks
- To what extent are budget, workforce and commitment, rather than management, the major constraints?
- Need a visioning conference
- What happens after 10 years?
- Not using science: is the science available?
- Complete survey of WGR
- Costings, including for restoration, to be done and make public / transparent
- High biodiversity sites to councils to manage. They have continuous funding streams and people for management and community engagement
- Provide clarity on governance
- Whole of Victoria (or VVP) approach to grasslands
- New Action Plan for VVP
- Research on governance models
- Committee of management (CoM)
- Weed clearing authority
- Transition model
- Master planning with councils
- Broader and finer-grain input by expert community. Consultation beyond DELWP/PV on management of WGR and MSA Conservation Areas
- Better ways to connect expertise at all stages: vision, planning, management, monitoring
- Streamlined administration: burning; traditional owners, Parks Victoria, DELWP
- Sort out smooth flow of \$ to allow responsive management

- Identify continuous funding stream: private investment fund, philanthropy?
- Management trust? To source more \$
- Solving issues around industry capacity and ability to scale-up
- Prioritise conservation management reserves to higher quality areas, including in growth corridors
- Grassland management skills development
- Government role in investing in industries, jobs, outside MSA\$?
- Focus on connectivity
- Focus on Kororoit Regional Park as precursor to WGR
- Hydrological study to look at restoring wetlands and waterways through the WGR
- Speed up acquisition
- Perhaps think about whether 1300+ ha is actually feasible? Should size be reduced to allow more intense management?

Research

- Research actively funded by DELWP
- Targeted, broadscale, long-term management research
- Encourage university research
- Identify indicator species (all trophic levels) for rapid management
- Develop and refine techniques to maximise seed germination and growth
- Research of novel techniques at scale
- Biological control of Nassellas?
- Develop technics for seed spreading
- Remote sensing of all major weed species

Fire

- Need fire strategy
- Flexibility in burning needed: spring and summer burns, frequency
- Dedicated burning team

Other

- Think about global interest: money, research, experiences
- Act now or today is wasted

Summary of Feedback Survey

	Don't know	No	A bit	Mostly	Yes
Were the site visits informative?	2	0	0	6	23
Were the online Forums informative?	3	0	0	2	24
Were the issues discussed important?	1	0	1	6	23
Were you able to raise the issues important to you?	0	1	3	4	23
Did you understand what the speakers were saying?	0	1	2	7	21
Are you confident that the current management of the Western Grassland Reserve will lead to a good result?	3	14	8	4	1
Do you think that the future management of the Western Grassland Reserve will lead to a good result?	3	6	14	4	3
Was the event well organised?	1	0	0	3	26

2. Which events did you attend (either in person, online, or through watching the recorded proceedings)?

19 Online forum 1: Introducing the Western Grassland Reserve

21 Online forum 2: Managing the Western Grassland Reserve

20 Online forum 3: Monitoring the Western Grassland Reserve – and future priorities

16 Site visit 1: Experiencing the Western Grassland Reserve (Sunday 27 November)

30 Site visit 2: Managing grasslands (Sunday 4 December)

3. How often should this type of event be held?

0 Never

25 Every year

6 Every two years

0 Other

5. Do you own or manage any grasslands?

6 No

25 Yes

6. Which of the following best describes you?

5 Farmer

7 Government staff

2 Council staff

5 Ecologist

5 Volunteer

4 Contractor

4 Community member