

# Major Funding Success for the Environment Department

Shire of Donnybrook Balingup 25 January 2024



The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup is proud to announce that funding has been received via the State Natural Resource Management Program (State NRM) in collaboration with the Shire of Collie.

In December 2023, the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup was informed that it was successful in receiving \$409,656 via the State NRM Program, which will go towards the Collie Donnybrook Balingup Natural Resource Recovery Program.

Community Stewardship Grants provided via the State NRM Program contain six (6) priorities, all of which our Project aims to achieve. They are as follows:

- Priority 1: Sustainable management of land resources.
- Priority 2: Maintain and enhance water assets.
- Priority 3: Project and enhance the marine and coastal environment.
- Priority 4: Conserve and recover biodiversity.
- Priority 5: Enhance skills, capacity, and engagement.
- Priority 6: Deliver high quality planning that leads to effective action.

Funding for this program was sought by both Shires in response to the identification of blackberry as a significant pest across the landscape, and to increase the benefit of previous projects to control blackberry. In 2020, the Shires of Donnybrook Balingup, Collie and Dardanup were successful in obtaining Federal funding to carry out blackberry control across the three local government districts. This previous project proved highly successful, resulting in approximately 600km of waterways being mapped for the presence of blackberry and 1,200 hectares of blackberry controlled over a 12-month period. All landowners who registered their interest had treatment carried out using local contractors.

Without funding, a large proportion of landowners will continue to struggle to control this weed of National Significance on their properties, and the benefits of the previous project would be lost. Therefore, the Shires of Donnybrook Balingup and Collie hope to increase the ongoing benefits of previous Shire efforts through this project, which aims to benefit the community through:

- Increased Collaboration between the Shire and the Community through landowner agreements for blackberry control and rehabilitation and revegetation works.
- Increased capacity for landowners to manage blackberry across the landscape.
- Increased land values for agricultural, conservation and community purposes
- Increased water quality and capacity through the reduction of pest species
- Increased community understanding of appropriate and effective land management practices.
- Increased connection and values of the community to our local waterways.



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These project objectives will be met by:

- A devolved grant process: allowing private landowners in each shire able to enter into a landholder agreement to receive up to 50% of costs for on ground works to reduce or reverse the negative impacts of blackberry on their land. Approximately 150 properties in each Shire will be able to access funding on an annual basis for on ground works, such as:
  - Fencing.
  - Revegetation.
  - Erosion control.
  - Weed Control (mechanical or chemical).
- Controlling blackberry on waterways where significant effects to the wider community has been identified.
- Two community workshops per year, in each Shire, to facilitate increased capacity to manage blackberry on Private lands and develop skills to effectively rehabilitate areas impacted by blackberry.
- One cultural event per Shire in association with our significant waterways, such as river walks.

Key outcomes will include improved river health and water quality, reduced weed impacts, increased land capacity and water availability (particularly for our local farmers), economic assistance for landowners, employment opportunities for local businesses and related organisations, increased knowledge and awareness of weed control, revegetation techniques and land management planning, and an enhanced connection to the cultural and social history of the local river systems.

The Shires of Donnybrook Balingup and Collie will be focusing primarily on properties that are adjoining to perennial rivers with known infestations of blackberry. We also intend on making the educational portion of the program as accessible to the wider community as possible, to increase our engagement with our residents to increase awareness in the environmental and cultural values of the region. We are proud to provide this program to our communities and to collaborate with local recognized biosecurity groups and not-for-profit landcare agencies.

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Comments from Vivienne MacCarthy, President for the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup:

*“The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup is proud to have made this achievement alongside the Shire of Collie. One of our key areas outlined in the Council Plan 2022-2032 revolves around our Planet, where we focus on leaving each place we touch better than we found it. The works that will come from this Program will also aid in our shared commitment to sustainability, as well as allows us to help our local farmers and agricultural businesses.”*

Comments from Ian Miffing, President for the Shire of Collie:

*“The Shire of Collie relies on this further funding opportunity to assist in the education around pests and on-ground mitigation works for our community.”*

As this project continues, we will update the community on the timeline as well as continue working to share educational content surrounding our environment.

**ENDS.**

