

media release

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BURKE CARRIES THE BATON

Australian Government Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke officially launched the 'Defeating the weed menace' project in Albany this morning handing over a time capsule and cheque for \$80,000 to South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc. Board Chairman Alex Campbell.

"West Australians can again be proud of their record of keeping invasive pests out of WA." said Minister Tony Burke.

"First it was Starlings, and the ongoing battle to keep cane toads out of the north and now supported by the National Gorse Taskforce, South Coast NRM Inc. has accepted the challenge and responsibility to eradicate the weed gorse from Western Australia."

"The National Gorse Taskforce has secured this agreement as part of its focus on the eradication of outlying infestations Nation wide" Chair of the National Gorse Task Force Ian Sauer said.

In a ceremony held at Oyster Harbour near Albany, the Minister presented South Coast NRM Inc. Chair and community representative Chris Gilmour with the National Gorse Taskforce 'Gorse Baton' - a time capsule in which, maps of the infestations and a 25 year Memorandum of Understanding are housed.

The Memorandum pledges to maintain treatment of any further reinfestation which might occur for 25 years. This will guarantee the eradication of Gorse from Western Australia and thus move the containment line 1800km to the Clare Valley in South Australia.

South Coast Regional NRM Inc. has joined forces with private landholders, government and community groups to pledge commitment to eradicate gorse in the Region for the next 25 years. Every landowner with an infestation is involved. This project is of major significance to Australian Weed management.

"This is another feather in the cap for rural Western Australians" said Minister Burke.

"Regional communities like the people in and around Albany can be proud of their efforts to keep their state safe from the potential spread of this invasive species."

Around Australia Gorse infests 23 million hectares of land and has the potential if not managed to invade 87m hectares. The infestation of gorse around the Albany area represents one of the 20 Weeds of National Significance or WoNS as they are known.

In Western Australia there are 7 WoNS and this project is going to completely eradicate one species from the state.

Mr Burke said that if this infestation were to escape as it has done in the eastern states, the cost to agriculture could reach many millions of dollars in lost production.

The WoNS program is a federally funded initiative and is strongly supported by the Australian Government, and will continue to be supported under the new Caring for Our Country Program.

South Coast Natural Resource Management Inc. is the regional group for natural resource management on the South Coast of WA. Funding is provided by the Australian Government and the Government of Western Australia.

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CONTACT Wendy Cooke
Media and Communications Manager
0428 928 536
wendyc@southcoastnrm.com.au