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MEDIA RELEASE

Funding Secured for Groundbreaking Blackberry Management Research

The Murray Region Forestry Hub (MRFH) is proud to announce the approval of funding from Forest and Wood Products Australia (FWPA), with support from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), for a critical research project aimed at tackling one of Australia's most costly and invasive weeds – Blackberry.

The project, "Novel and Targeted Biological Control of Blackberry Invasions in Forest and Tree Plantations", will be led by Dr Rae Kwong in collaboration with the University of Melbourne and the University of the Sunshine Coast. The research will focus on blackberry genomic mapping, a vital step toward the development of an effective and targeted biological control.

Blackberry is a Weed of National Significance, causing millions of dollars in lost productivity and management costs annually. The MRFH has been instrumental in preparing the advice to government which led to multi-organisation collaboration supporting research to deliver long-term, landscape-scale solutions for forestry, plantations, and the wider community.

This announcement follows the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's recent statement highlighting the government's commitment to innovation in forestry, including \$8.6 million over three years to expand and strengthen the work of Australia's Regional Forestry Hubs under *A Better Plan for Forestry and Forest Products*.

Dean Anderson, Chair of the Murray Region Forestry Hub, welcomed the announcement: "This funding represents a significant step forward in our fight against Blackberry. The genomic mapping research led by Dr Kwong will provide the foundations for developing a targeted biological control that can be deployed across landscapes for long-term impact. It's a prime example of how the Hubs can connect industry needs with innovative science."

Carlie Porteous, Hub Manager of the Murray Region Forestry Hub, added: "The approval of this funding highlights the power of collaboration – between research institutions, government, industry, and the Hubs – to tackle persistent challenges. We're proud to have played a key role in bringing together the right people and expertise to make this project a reality."

The MRFH extends its sincere thanks to Forest and Wood Products Australia for considering and approving the application, and to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for funding this much-needed research.

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