



**Australian Government**

**Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **SHIRE PAYS OUT FOR ROAD CLEARING**

The Colac-Otway Shire Council must pay \$250,000 over the next three years to help protect native grasslands and recover two nationally protected species after clearing important habitat during roadworks.

The payment is part of an enforceable undertaking negotiated by the federal environment department under the national environment law as an alternative to taking the matter through the courts.

The enforceable undertaking also requires council to remediate the affected area at a cost of \$180,000 and carry out training and awareness about nationally threatened species, costed at \$260,000.

Department spokeswoman Rose Webb said the undertaking was made under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

“This is a negotiated outcome which avoids lengthy and adversarial court action and gets a good outcome for the environment—that’s the main priority,” Ms Webb said.

Ms Webb said the undertaking related to the council hiring a contractor to carry out the roadworks in April-May 2008 on the Cressy-Shelford Road near Cressy, about 60km west of Geelong.

A departmental investigation found the roadworks, which had no federal government approval, affected more than four hectares of important habitat for the critically endangered spiny rice flower and vulnerable striped legless lizard.

As part of the undertaking, the council must pay \$250,000 to the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment for conservation and recovery of the affected species. It must also remediate the 4.07ha area and monitor the species’ populations.

The council has already started training and educational programs to raise awareness of grassland protection within the council area.

Ms Webb said any actions or developments likely to have a significant impact on nationally protected species or native grassland ecological communities, needed approval from the federal government.

For more information, visit [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/approval.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/approval.html)

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