

# *Comesperma defoliatum*



*Comesperma defoliatum*.  
Tasmanian Herbarium specimen.

**FAMILY:** POLYGALACEAE

**BOTANICAL NAME:** *Comesperma defoliatum*,  
F.Muell., *Pl. Victoria* 1: 189 (1862)

**COMMON NAME:** leafless milkwort

**COMMONWEALTH STATUS:** (EPBC Act) Not  
Listed

**TASMANIAN STATUS:** (TSP Act) rare

## Description

A perennial undershrub with a woody rhizome (underground stem). **Stems:** The stems are erect, simple or slightly branched, rigid and slender (sometimes thread-like) and grow to between 30-60 cm tall. **Leaves:** The few leaves are narrow and linear-shaped, sometimes reduced to scales. **Flowers:** The flowers are borne in succession along the stem, with the oldest flowers at the base. They are deep blue in colour and between 3-4 mm long. Flowering occurs between November and May. **Fruit:** The fruit is a winged capsule between 7-11 mm long. It is roughly oval in shape (broader towards the tip) with a long, narrow base (description from Curtis and Morris 1975, Harden 1992). Herbarium specimens have been collected from November to March.

The name 'milkwort' is associated with the polygala due to the common European *Polygala vulgaris*, which was supposed to have the power of producing a flow of milk in nurses.

## Ecology and Management

Bees are the most likely pollination vector for this species (A. Hingston pers. comm.).

## Conservation Status Assessment

There is no immediate need for reassessment of *Comesperma defoliatum*.

## Further Information

- Curtis, WM & Morris, DI 1975, *The Student's Flora of Tasmania*, Part 1, Government Printer, Hobart.
- Harden, GJ ed 1992, *Flora of New South Wales*, Volume 3, Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, Sydney.

- Walsh, NG & Entwistle, TJ eds 1994, *Flora of Victoria*, Volume 2, Inkata Press, Melbourne.

**Preceding text last modified 19/1/2004.**

**Following updated 21/9/2016.**

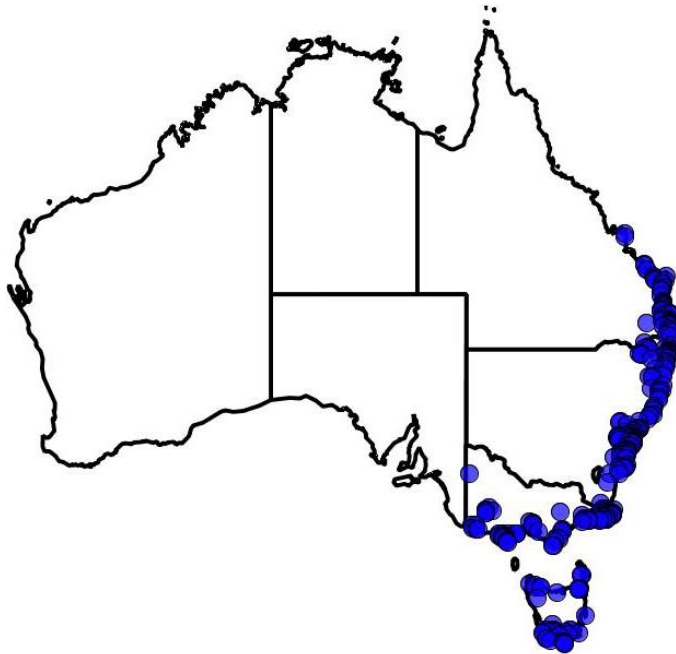
**Survey Time and Habitat Guide** (*black = best, dark grey = possible, light grey with slash=poor time to survey, as guided by collection dates of specimens and records*)

<i>Comesperma defoliatum</i>	Spring				Summer				Autumn				Winter											
leafless milkwort	S	S	O	O	N	N	D	D	J	J	F	F	M	M	A	A	M	M	J	J	J	J	A	A

- Flowering of this undershrub occurs between November and May. Plants often produce a flush of flowers after disturbance (e.g. fires). Fresh flowers are necessary to identify this species as the petals become detached when picked. In Tasmania, most herbarium specimens have been collected in January and February.
- The habitat of this species includes wet heathland/sedgeland, buttongrass moorland, coastal low scrub and on the crests of dunes. It has also been recorded from flat alkaline pans. The predominant substrates include peat, quartzite and sand.

**Distribution**

(Atlas of Living Australia 15/9/2016)

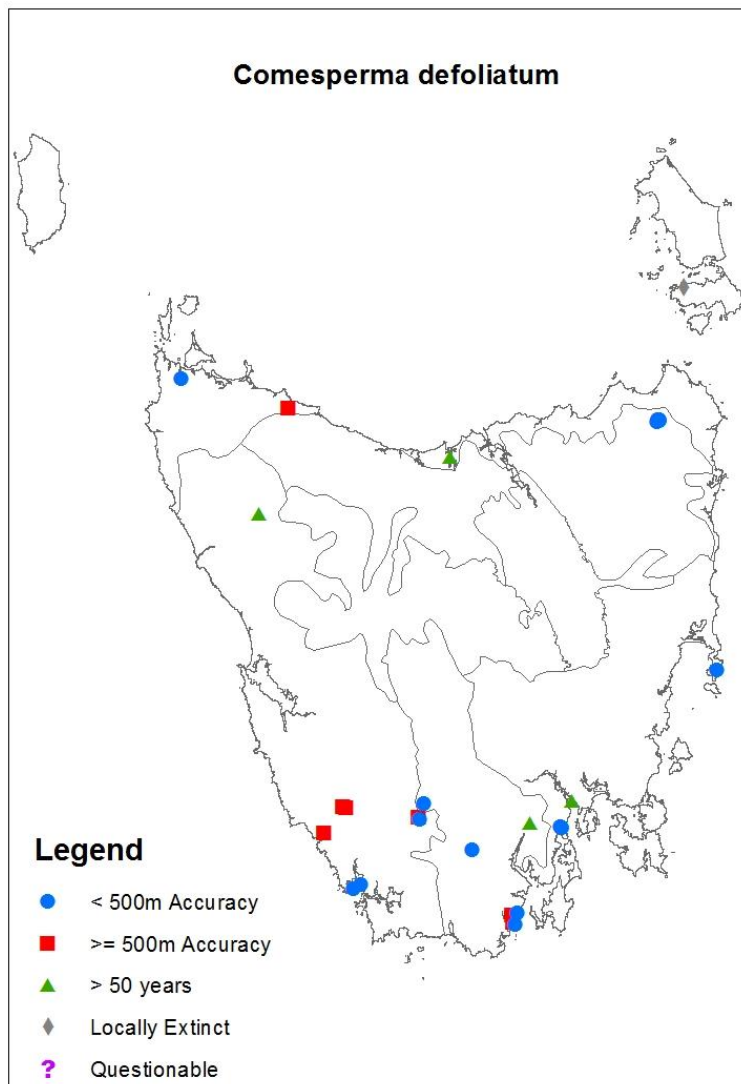


**Known Reserves**

Reserved in in the Freycinet National Park, George III Monument Historic Site, Burnett Point Conservation Area, Dip Range Regional Reserve, Peter Murrell State Reserve, Picton River Conservation Area and the Southwest National Park.

## Tasmanian Distribution

(Natural Values Atlas May 2015)



### Cite as:

Threatened Species Section (2016). *Notesheet for Comesperma defoliatum (leafless milkwort)*. Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, Tasmania.

### View

<http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/threatenedspecieslists>

### Contact details

Threatened Species Section, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, GPO Box 44, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, 7001. Phone (03) 6165 4340.

### Permit

It is an offence to collect, disturb, damage or destroy this species unless under permit.