



Australian Network for
Plant Conservation Inc

Weed Management Review
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
SYDNEY, NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

Re. Submission to the NSW Weed Management Review from ANPC Inc.

The Australian Network for Plant Conservation Inc. (ANPC – www.anpc.asn.au) is a non-government, not-for-profit association dedicated to the conservation of Australia's native plant species and vegetation systems. Our membership encompasses more than 350 individuals and organisations, half of whom reside in NSW. We specialise in exchange of knowledge and practical experience between scientists, land managers, and conservation practitioners. We run courses and workshops for on-ground native vegetation conservation and rehabilitation, facilitating interchange of latest findings from research and practice. We publish the quarterly Australasian Plant Conservation, and run biennial national conferences and forums. We produce manuals and guidelines on plant conservation techniques. Our Management Committee includes leading conservation scientists and practitioners.

In relation to the Weed Management Review in NSW, the ANPC recommends the following:

Prevention of new weeds should be the highest priority. According to the Invasive Species Council an average of seven new plants establish in the wild in NSW each year.

Risk assessment should be undertaken for all new introductions and only low risk species should be permitted. However, we can't always get that assessment right, so there should be circumstances/localities where even low risk plantings should be discouraged (perhaps the only safe 'low risk' plants would be sterile hybrids with no vegetative means of spread).

A **'safe list'** should be established to regulate plants that can be sold and moved within NSW.

Surveillance and early response capacity should be improved to respond quickly to

new weed incursions. Anything that is promoted as self-seeding should be a species of concern.

Sleeper weeds should be a consideration in the risk assessment and surveillance processes. As climate change progresses or plants acclimatise to their local environment there will be species that have not naturalised despite being in the country for a long time which one day will (for example the Canary Island Date Palm which was present in the Illawarra for a very long time without naturalising but since the early 1990's has become a weed issue). This can also happen as weed pollinators and seed dispersers expand territory, and as plants requiring cross-pollination to spread succeed.

Give high priority to environmental weeds to reduce the impact on NSW's biodiversity. According to a 2006 study, weeds threaten at least 341 vulnerable and endangered species (40% of those listed in NSW in 2006) and 64 endangered ecological communities (89% of the total). Weeds account for 52 (43%) of the 120 most widely distributed plant species in NSW.

The extent and impacts of NSW's environmental weed problems should be documented and meaningful reporting standards for weed impacts and management developed.

A high level '**solutions forum**' should be established to develop new policy approaches to high priority weed challenges, including ecological, social and economic aspects.

The distinctive challenges of environmental weed management and their links to other environmental threats (such as land clearing, fire, nutrients) should be recognised and the need to develop more effective ecological approaches to management. Post-disturbance management needs to be included in plans of management for national parks, state forests, property vegetation management plans, private native forestry activities etc. This will be particularly important with the legislative reviews that have changed the Native Vegetation Act, and the proposed changes to the Rural Fires Act where clearing would be allowed 1-50m from houses without approval.

An agency, community and industry authority should be developed to coordinate action on weeds and feral animals based on the successful bushfire statewide and regional committee model. Equally involve the environmental and primary industry agencies.

Control of weed invasions should be a shared responsibility. Many weed invasions are preventable and result from people failing to take responsibility due to thoughtlessness, ignorance, or a presumed lack of consequence.

Effective weed management needs smart (realistic) regulation, strong economic and social incentives, and community education to motivate responsible action.

Everyone should exercise a **general biosecurity obligation** to take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent and minimise biosecurity risks.

A **tenure-neutral approach** to weed management should be implemented and require public and private land managers to abide by the same weed laws.

The **effectiveness of enforcement** of weed laws should be reviewed and compliance mechanisms strengthened.

Hold risk generators to account, under the ‘polluter pays’ principle, by requiring, for example, bonds and levies to cover costs of monitoring and control of high risk species used commercially. This could also apply to adding new species to the safe list, even for low-risk plants (people may be more reluctant to bring in a plant that could be a weed if they have to pay for its removal from the state).

Require disclosure about the weed status of **properties for sale on s149 certificates** (Environmental Planning and Assessment Act) so that buyers are aware of their legal liabilities for weed control, and to promote linkages between property value and weed status. However, as this cannot be subsequently removed from these certificates, it is recommended that when a landholder eradicates a weed, a subsection should be added to the s149 certificate that demonstrates this change in the weed status.

Targeted education programs should be developed and implemented to focus on high-risk pathways and improving weed hygiene (eg. with vehicles, clothes, footwear and soil, as well as in nurseries).

A **more systematic approach to weed listings** should be undertaken to ensure they reflect their assessed environmental priorities for eradication, containment and control. Noxious weed listings play an important role in determining priorities and actions but should be tailored to ensure they promote practicable outcomes.

A **catchment approach to aquatic weeds** should be adopted by assigning management responsibility to an appropriate body/agency.

The responsibilities of **Local Land Services** should include coordinating and monitoring environmental weed programs, closely involving local councils and OEH.

Funding should be increased for both prevention and early action as well as long-term control of environmental weeds. Weed management is a long-term challenge and so needs long-term funds. Higher levels of funding are justified by the extremely high environmental and economic costs of weeds (weeds are NSW farmers’ most expensive natural resource management problem).

Funding should be determined based on a ‘**standards of cover**’ approach (applied to bushfires) that include measures for impacts on biodiversity and determines a fair level of contribution from governments, landholders and businesses/industries.

New sources of long-term funding should be investigated for weed management programs, including levies from risk creators and beneficiaries, to maximise the potential for success.

Funding for research on high priority weeds and long-term solutions should be increased. There is much we don't know about the impacts of weeds (particularly on threatened plant species and Endangered Ecological Communities) and how to manage them effectively. Research is critical to understanding both widespread weeds and emerging and potential weeds. Recent cuts to funding and closure of bodies such as the Weed Management CRC has seen environmental weed research capacity severely depleted.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the review. The Australian Network for Plant Conservation would be interested in providing further comment on this process if further public consultation periods are envisaged – please add us to your stakeholder list accordingly.

For contact with the ANPC, please phone our national office on (02) 6250 9509 or email anpc@anpc.asn.au

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