

Submission to: Inquiry into the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland

For the past five years I have been working to control the spread of fireweed across Tamborine Mountain.

Tamborine Mountain is a 28 square kilometre plateau (8 km long by 4 km wide) with an elevation of 560 metres and is in the Scenic Rim Regional Council in South East Queensland

The Scenic Rim Regional Council (SRRC) does little to control fireweed, which is evident by the widening spread along Scenic Rim roadsides throughout the Shire over the winter months.

On the Mountain the most affected areas are roadside verges, empty residential blocks and acreage with absent landlords. When the Council is notified of properties harbouring weeds there is a six week process to notify the owner and hope they react. Everything has gone to seed by then.

The SRRC issues a press release once a year to the local paper - without an image - reminding land holders of their responsibilities in controlling fireweed, advice the council does not seem to follow.

I have been told by council employees that the SRRC will not support or endorse my efforts to control fireweed because they may be expected to do something about it.

I have been told that fireweed is rampant on the mountain (it isn't) and that I am wasting my time.

I have been told that the powers that be have been waiting 20 years for a miraculous biological control. Didn't happen.

Many people I have spoken to on Tamborine Mountain think fireweed is a very pretty little plant but they have no idea what it is. Tamborine Mountain is an unusual mix of rural, semi rural and suburban centres and is home to over 7,000 people.

Twenty years ago there was a poster in the old Tamborine Mountain Library with clear pictures and information about fire weed. I recalled that poster when fireweed started appearing in Eagle Heights five or six years ago. I have been hand clearing fireweed since then from verges, parks and vacant blocks in Eagle Heights and more recently on roadsides across the escarpment. In many cases it is an isolated plant or two. This certainly works to stop the spread of fireweed to unaffected areas.

My hope is to eradicate fireweed from Tamborine Mountain, which I believe is possible with a little cooperation from the Council. Think of it as an experiment.

I have spoken to a council representative about an education programme for the mountain and was promised a meeting but the chap I was dealing with no longer responds to my emails. I was told several times that the Council CEO? would need to give permission for anyone to talk to me, and this obviously hasn't happened.

I believe the SRRC is reluctant to support my efforts on the Mountain because it would put pressure on them to do something about the rest of the shire. A very expensive something in all probability, but it's not going to get any cheaper waiting for a scientific breakthrough.

If, rather than waiting 20 years for a miracle cure, a real efforts had been made towards controlling the spread of fireweed the problem would certainly not be what it is today.

One council representative told me that for primary industry workers to combat fireweed they would have to spray continuously throughout the season. Hand weeding and mowing to encourage thick healthy grass coverage works on the small scale and I know studies have been done to establish best practice for managing fireweed on a large scale, that don't rely on spraying. These ideas are useless without a firm commitment to prevent fireweed from spreading any further.

I realise the weed solution will be intensive and expensive but you must start somewhere, draw a line. Perhaps it will take a small army of people to succeed. People could well be the biological control that conquers fireweed, and many other weeds. I can think of worse jobs.

The failure of SRRC to effectively manage fireweed, allowing it to spread throughout the shire and beyond, is negligent.

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