



GYMPIE & DISTRICT LANDCARE GROUP INC.

Submission No. 032

A.B.N. 19 435 450 683

Postal: PO Box 695
GYMPIE Q 4570

Nursery: Cnr Groves & Old Maryborough Rd
Gympie, Queensland

Email: admin@gympielandcare.org.au

Web: www.gympielandcare.org.au

Phone: [REDACTED]

16 Jan 2016

Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House QLD 4000

Dear Sir/Madam

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

Gympie & District Landcare Group Inc is a community based group active in the Gympie Region. The Group mass rears biocontrol agents for Cats Claw Creeper and Madeira Vine, fosters awareness of environmental and economic weeds and assists with weed control works both as volunteers and on a contract basis. The Group's President is the local member of the State Herbarium's Weed Spotters Network.

TOR1: the responsibilities of local governments in relation to the control of prohibited, restricted and invasive plants imposed under s.48 of the Biosecurity Act 2014 are reasonable, and local governments are meeting those obligations

and

TOR2: programs for the control of weeds on Crown land administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines are effective

- Control of well established weed infestations is expensive and time consuming, and can exceed the capacity of local governments, state departments and private landholders. Council in our locality are unable to meet the responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act 2014, especially where it applies to control of invasive weeds near areas of high conservation value.
- Private landholders lose motivation to respond to weeds when constant re-infestation (e.g. lantana, GRT, Cats Claw Creeper, Madeira Vine) is likely from the weeds present in adjoining road reserves, parks and conservation areas. Similarly Authorities find it hard to manage weeds if they are not also managed in adjacent private land.
- New and emerging weeds (often garden escapees) could be controlled easily & cheaply at an early stage of naturalisation, or prevented from naturalising, but tend to receive scant attention until they have become a serious and extensive problem. e.g. the initial Prickly Acacia plants in the Tiaro district could have been readily controlled, but already the weed is spreading and forming thickets. The initial infestation of Parthenium was in the head waters of Wide Bay Creek and the Council failed to respond immediately. After a flood Parthenium is now spread the entire length of Wide Bay Creek.
- Resources available at Council or State level are often fully committed to those weeds that are classified as Prohibited under the Biosecurity Act 2014 to the detriment of weeds that have actual worse effects in the region.
- The recognition and listing of species as weeds lags behind their actual naturalisation and spread. There needs to be a more timely process for recognising new and emerging weeds.
- Local Councils often fail to list important new weeds for their regions, in part because they do not have capacity/ resources to act upon them and in part because they do not wish to offend local gardeners or other parties.

- There are inadequate controls on the introduction and distribution of potential and environmental weeds by the horticultural agency.
- Lack of community recognition of many significant weeds undermines efforts to control many problematic weeds, even weeds that are on the Prohibited list or the List of Weeds of National Significance.

Given these points, Gympie & District Landcare encourages greater emphasis on coordination, education and early intervention, and systematic approaches to control work (e.g. control in the headwaters of a catchment before working downstream; control close to areas of high conservation value before areas of lesser value).

TOR3: Biosecurity Queensland's weeds programs, including biological controls and new technologies, are adequately funded and effective at controlling weeds

- Biocontrols do not eradicate weeds but are a long term means of reducing the vigour of established weeds that do not have pathogens, parasites or insect pests in the Australian environment. Illogical and outrageous budget constraints imposed on Biosecurity Queensland in recent years has totally undermined the Agency's capacity to identify, research and trial new biocontrol agents for the range of weeds it would be beneficial to target, and to provide effective post-release support. Lack of budget security and security of tenure for technologically competent staff exacerbate the situation.
- In several States the relevant Government Agencies maintain long-term involvement in the mass rearing and public release of biocontrol agents. In comparison, with the insects raised by Gympie Landcare, Biocontrol Queensland's rearing programme closed a few years after species introduction.

Gympie Landcare Group has struggled to raise funds to mass rear these insects, and by trial and error developed suitable mass/field rearing practices. It is more appropriate for these capacities to be developed by Biosecurity Queensland or DAF in a coordinated and less *ad hoc* manner, and with a budget surety of a decade rather than an occasional short term community grant.

Facilities for effective mass rearing of insects are expensive to construct and operate. Efficiencies of scale make it appropriate to rear insects at a regional level, perhaps similar to the facility in Gympie from which several Councils source a weevil for *Salvinia*.

- As with *Parthenium* the identification of appropriate biocontrols is challenging and requires long term commitment. It is disappointing to see Biosecurity Queensland have to submit short term funding proposals for components of a GRT biocontrol research programme. Biocontrol research and deployment is worth doing and it is worth doing well.

Biosecurity Queensland and other Government agencies should be given the funding and mandate to more adequately and effectively research and establish biocontrol agents.

TOR4: environmental programs administered by Department of Environment and Heritage Protection impact favourably on weed control programs administered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and local governments

- It appears that the progressive withdrawal of funding from the DEHP, despite a huge increase in the land they are responsible for, has prevented DEHP from effectively responding to and containing weeds in areas for which they are responsible

TOR5: Federal, State and Local Government weeds programs are coordinated to maximise their achievements and to have a whole of government approach.

- Over recent decades there seems to have been a poorly considered transfer of responsibility from federal or state government agencies to local governments or the public. This adversely impacts on regions that have low populations and rates bases and large areas of land.

- Gympie & District Landcare is actively involved in programmes combating Madeira Vine and Cats Claw Creeper. These are both recognised by the Federal Government as Weeds of National Significance. They have traditionally been labelled environmental weeds in Queensland receiving lesser control than many less invasive weeds. Cats Claw Creeper is now recognised as an economic weed.
- *Koelreuteria elegans* is on the Federal Government's Alert List for Environmental Weeds but is not listed as a restricted plant in Queensland.
- Weeds which have been recognised for control by one Council, may still be widely planted in other areas e.g. *Koelreuteria* spp., Tulip Tree
- Gympie Landcare is pleased to see the Wide Bay Burnett Organisation of Councils establish an Invasive Species Committee, to foster greater cooperation and consistency between neighbouring Councils.

These examples are typical of the inadequate cooperation on environmental weeds. It is only prudent that species that have been identified on Federal lists receive similar level of recognition at a State & Local level, and weeds with primarily environmental impacts be treated similarly to weeds with comparable agricultural impacts at a State and Council level.

Thank you for this opportunity to lodge comment.

Yours sincerely

Ernest Rider
President