

J & M Barrow

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15 January 2017

**Mr Glenn Butcher MP
Chair Agriculture and Environment Committee's Inquiry - invasive plants (weeds)
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
Brisbane Q 4000**

Dear Mr Butcher,

My wife and I own two properties in the Scenic Rim Regional Council. One is located at Peak Crossing and the other at Mt Edwards. We also lease a property at Peak Crossing. We breed Santa Gertrudis beef cattle on these properties. We are enthusiastic about controlling pest and weeds and we do our best for biosecurity. We treat our cattle regularly on a needs basis for tick and buffalo fly without going overboard. We accept that such things are a part of our lives. Prior to this past winter we had been able to control fireweed on properties we own and lease solely by pulling plants, drying in bags and then burning in forty four gallon drums. Some of our neighbours are very diligent and do their best to control fireweed, others not so diligent. This past season we had to resort to chemical sprays as well as pulling to control fireweed. The increased work and financial burden caused by the uncontrolled spread of fireweed is something that we find unacceptable because it appears that the Queensland government and the local council have not done enough early enough to check the spread of fireweed.

We wish to submit the following comments for your Committee's Inquiry into the impacts of invasive plants, in particular fireweed. We have made comments against the Inquiry's terms of reference as detailed below:

- 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
 - I have no expertise in legal matters, however s. 48 requires local government to ensure that biosecurity matter in their area are managed in accordance with the Act. It appears to be clear enough to me, however to remove any doubt perhaps s.48 could be reworded to achieve the desired result. Please note that my wife and I own two properties in the Scenic Rim Regional Council area and lease one and it is our observation that the council does little to assist the control of invasive weeds.****

- The Scenic Rim Regional Council's website does not refer to the Biosecurity Act 2014 but instead refers to the previous legislation. Perhaps this is an indicator that there needs to be a stronger effort by the Queensland government to inform local governments. Websites of nearby councils, Ipswich and Lockyer, also refer to the previous legislation, Land Protection (Pest and Stock Route Management) Act 2002, and this is a further indication that the Queensland government may need to do much more to engage with local government. The communication failure together with the rapid, unchecked spread of fireweed is an indication that there is a serious breakdown in combating fireweed and other weeds in Queensland.
- Programs for the control of weeds on Crown land administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines are effective
 - We have a neighbour that rents a property from the Queensland government that was purchased from previous owner after the gazettal of the Southern Freight Rail Corridor. As this property borders our property we found it in our best interest to assist the neighbour in controlling fireweed and in doing so helped to prevent additional infestation of our property.
- Biosecurity Queensland's weeds programs, including biological controls and new technologies, are adequately funded and effective at controlling weeds
 - I welcome the possibility of biological control especially for fireweed which is proving very difficult to control. I am not able to provide any assessment on the adequacy of funding, however I note that the Queensland Audit Office is conducting audit which will assess the effectiveness of Queensland's agricultural pest, weed and disease management programs as part of their performance audit program for 2016-2019. The outcome of the audit may provide useful information for your Committee.
- 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.
 - No comment.
- Federal, state and local government weeds programs are coordinated to maximise their achievements and to have a whole of government approach.
 - There is no obvious activity indicating that weeds programs are being put into practice in my locality on government land or on private land. My wife and I are conscientious about the need to control weeds and we expend considerable effort and time in keeping our properties clean and assisting one neighbour. This approach is not shared by everyone in the district. This is most disappointing. We know that despite our efforts fireweed seed beyond our fence line can blow on to our property. We would like to see all residents of our district doing their bit to control weeds and some encouragement by the council would help.
 - Fireweed is growing on the roadside bordering the Royal Australian Air Force base at Amberley. There is a strong probability that it will spread on to the

base or perhaps it is already growing on the base. The Queensland government and local government needs to coordinate weed programs with the Federal government for its defence land or any other Federal government land.

- I agree with the idea that weeds programs should be coordinated to maximise their achievements, however very little currently is being achieved. This failure is very discouraging for those of us who work hard at controlling fireweed and other weeds on our land. Possibly there is room for a programme like working for the dole, with properly equipped and supervised teams, to assist in controlling fireweed.

We also have concerns about the potential harm to people through the alkaloid from fireweed entering food such as honey, milk and mixed with grains used in food. There are various reports available on the net that give an indication of potential harm:

[http://fireweed.org.au/wp-content/blogs.dir/55/files/2014/04/Toxicity Research Report Final-1 01.pdf](http://fireweed.org.au/wp-content/blogs.dir/55/files/2014/04/Toxicity%20Research%20Report%20Final-1%2001.pdf)

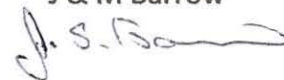
https://www.une.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/36868/fireweed-bvfa-report.pdf

If these reports are correct, there could be serious implications for honey producers and other food producers and food processors. Although this matter is outside the terms of reference, your inquiry may wish to consider seeking expert advice on the potential for harm to people.

We sincerely wish you and your committee all of the best.

Regards

J & M Barrow



In. J. Barrow.