

Jan Cottam

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16TH January 2017-01-16

Research Director

Agriculture and Environment Committee,

Parliament House. Qld 4805

Dear Sir

I am writing in response to an enquiry being conducted by you regarding the impact of weeds on our environment, particularly prickly acacia, giant rat, s tail grass and fireweed.

I am a property owner at Bowen and am affected by Acacia Arabica, but by many other weeds too. In fact this property, because of its position is the dumping ground for anything washing through it from above and the railway and Ergon corridors and main roads and culverts

There are many weeds and noxious plants and they wear various tags and differing consequences according to the area, soil type, landfall, climatic conditions and rainfall etc. Bowen is in the Dry Tropics and has its challenges.

The weeds on this property are: Bellyache bush, (from railway vehicles and machinery); sickle pod (from properties higher up and washing down creeks); lantana, chinee apple; rubber vine; grader grass and thatch grass (not declared and in from the highway) and Acacia Arabica (prickly acacia). Luckily, so far, we do not have Giant Rats Tail, which would become our priority

I realize your inquiry is only scrutinising one of the above, but on this property it is the least of our problems and expense and it spreads nowhere from here, unlike all of the other mentioned above. Although I do acknowledge the huge problem the prickly acacia is in the Mitchell grass plains of the Western Downs and its devastating consequences. On the contrary here though, in some of our poorer soil country where it was known as a dust bowl in the dry and a bog in the wet, the Acacia Arabica has enhanced the soil and grows a beautiful stand of improved pasture around its canopy, which has been a positive for the environment here. It has been cost effective, saving \$40,000 in drought fodder and supplement in 2015 as well as labour costs which then allowed that cost and labour to be directed onto the other weed issues here. Having said that, when we cleared an area of Acacia Arabica and chinee apple, then planted improved pasture, the result was a disaster with the invasion of grader grass, which itself is another issue to the environment and which councils ignore.

As a property owner, I have to be conscious of costs and for me it would be totally inappropriate to put all of our efforts into eradicating Acacia Arabica while ignoring these other harmful weeds. I

wouldn't agree with this statement for all properties /areas affected by the acacia because that may be their only weed and where it is harmful to the environment, but we must acknowledge the individuality of a property.

Is it possible for scientists to breed the prickles off the prickly acacia? For years they have been researching biological control at a cost and then there has been a further cost for on ground measures. If the plant had no prickles, then there would be no problem.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Cottam', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jan Cottam