



21 January, 2017

Research Director  
Agricultural and Environment Committee  
Parliament House QLD 4000  
Via email: [aec@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:aec@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir or Madam

**Re: Submission to inquiry into impact of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment to this important inquiry.

#### Background

Healthy Waterways and Catchments is a community based, not for profit business that works to protect and restore South East Queensland's (SEQ) natural assets and biodiversity. This is achieved through close collaboration with the regions primary producers, landholders, Councils, State Departments, conservation organisations and voluntary community groups to ensure beneficial projects and education is delivered strategically and effectively.

Two of the three weeds listed for study for this inquiry are prevalent in the South East corner. These are *Fireweed* and *Giant Rats Tail* (GRT) grass. Fortunately *Prickly Acacia* does not pose a threat as yet to the region. Both weeds present have benefited from a mild and wet winter in 2016 and are seeding prolifically. It is expected that both weeds will significantly increase their range and density in coming years based on this favourable seasons seed set.

#### Response to terms of reference

##### **Local Government control of Fireweed and GRT**

Successful management of the two weed species identified is expensive due to the high labour component of the effort. Management options are limited to physical removal or broad scale application of herbicide.

With the benefit of working closely with all levels of government, community groups and landholders in the region for decades, we are in a good position to make the claim that councils, despite their best efforts are struggling to find adequate resources to both properly manage current infestations and prevent spread of *Fireweed* and *GRT*. This applies to both the land in their care and the proper policing of infringements of regulations contained in the QLD Biosecurity Act 2014 on private property.

The ineffective weed control is most evident in rural councils in SEQ. Large land areas and a small ratepayer base results in insufficient funds available to effectively or efficiently deliver weed management responsibilities. Fast growing urban councils face diminishing funding for weed management as competing demands take priority.

The spread of the weeds, particularly GRT, is often compounded by some management efforts. Routine maintenance procedures such as slashing can spread GRT along roadsides, through a lack of adherence to and enforcement of machinery hygiene protocols. This could be ascribed to a





lack knowledge on the operator's behalf compounded by the lack of adequate, easily accessible wash down facilities.

To enable better management of all pest species in SEQ by councils, more resources in the form of direct funding support, better inter-governmental and community collaboration and freely available and consistent educational materials are required to deliver better on ground outcomes and enforcement of legislated regulations by councils.

#### **Crown land, Department of Natural Resources and Mines and Department of Environment and Heritage Protection**

Similar to the comments relating to local councils lack of resources for adequate weed management, the same can be attributed to State departments with similar responsibilities for land management. Crown or State land with inadequately managed weed infestations are often viewed as weed seed sources. This creates issues with neighbouring landholders with respect to undermining local area management efforts. This creates a negative perception particularly when the weed incursions can be traced back to areas designated for conservation purposes. As with local councils, better resourcing and education of the land managers regarding the threat posed by the declared species on the land is needed.

#### **Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Biosecurity Queensland (BQ)**

The work undertaken by BQ in the field of biological control agent research and deployment is of paramount importance to the long term management of weeds within the State. A shortcoming of the program is the lack of awareness within the general community regarding the work undertaken and access to control agents to allow communities to take an active role in their distribution.

More needs to be invested in the development of extension material which can be easily used by interested groups to utilise this important management tool and access to approved agents must be made easier. A greater effort is needed to raise the awareness of the importance and limitations of biological controls in long term weed management strategies.

On a positive note the weed fact sheets developed for invasive species management and weed spread prevention available on line and in print form under the banner of BQ and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries are informative, practical and very well received by the community. More investment in marketing extension material to target groups such as the four wheel drive community for example will assist with weed spread prevention and reduce future management costs.

#### **Government Coordination**

As a regional body with responsibilities to deliver a coordinated approach to sustainable agriculture, land and waterway management and biodiversity conservation, we are well placed to comment on coordination efforts in SEQ.

It is our experience that there is limited resourcing available for coordination across all levels of government within the region. It is unfortunate that well-meaning plans developed to manage issues such as sustainable development, conservation or improved agricultural outcomes are often done in isolation and with little reference to one another.

Within SEQ there is not a coordinated whole of government approach to managing singular or priority weeds. A more coordinated approach at a catchment scale that includes cross-catchment integration, especially for Fireweed control, would greatly increase the efficacy of the overall management effort. More importantly, a whole of community approach that empowers governments as well as individuals to take appropriate and strategic intervention in a timely manner would have greatest impact. The lead for this would need to come from State



Government or devolved with appropriate support to the regional body as both institutions have the ability to work across jurisdictions.

**Conclusion**

While the State government has adequate legislation in place with the correct intent to limit the spread and impact of established weeds, the lack of adequate resources available to Local Governments and State Departments with land management responsibilities limits the effectiveness of on ground weed management and enforcement of Biosecurity Regulations. The net result is an increase in range and density of weeds across the landscape.

Coordination, access to information and raising public awareness of biosecurity issues is critical to reducing weed impacts. While our organisation plays an important and strategic role working with the community to take action, we are also constrained by the availability of resources. More effort in this regard is required to be done by the Queensland Government to promote collaboration, foster strategic weed management planning, target market educational extension material, implement best management practice, methods and techniques and better resource the on ground management effort at all levels.

Once again thank you for the opportunity to provide comment into this inquiry. If you would like to discuss our submission further, I can be contacted on [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

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Julie McLellan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Healthy Waterways and Catchments

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