



Contact Details

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Stakeholder Group

Select the stakeholder group
that best represents you
(required)

Question 1

The revised strategy sets out the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in weed management and prevention. Are these clear?

The ideas related to roles and responsibilities is not clearly spelled out. While the document acknowledges that 'one size won't fit all' needs – it does little beyond sketching out aspirations/visions to say who in reality the priority goals will be achieved and progress towards them assessed. It's arguable that to be useful this national strategy does not or cannot possibly have the detail required to implement it across jurisdictions at a variety of scales that involves a diverse range of 'players'/stakeholders.

Need to either spell out roles and responsibilities in greater detail (not possible in my opinion for a national document), OR better acknowledge the need to build-on top of existence policy and planning approaches and associated strategies, plans, decision support tools, legislation etc and provide users of the strategy with some, at least general cues (e.g. relevant plans, Acts, tools, networks, stakeholders) that are currently involved or have contributed to weed management need to be involved. Without this step, of being adaptive and learning from previous efforts there is a very real risk of 'reinventing several wheels'. These wheels might be minor improvements on the existing wheels, but in the years it will take to build and fit them, weed management will be off the road and the challenge will get bigger and some possible wins will become losses.

The strategy does a poor job of recognising and taking steps to build-on existing roles, skills, documents, tools, research and networks. There are many lessons that have been learnt over the past couple of decades that appear not to have been considered in the AWS. Some existing tools, knowledge, policies and plans are recognised, but many at the State/Territory/regional levels appear not to have been.

The roles and responsibilities need to cover both pre, at and post-border weed management. My impression is that pre and at border weed management gets much more attention in this document than post-border. Some of the roles and responsibilities, even in the general terms they are stated are unrealistic - without further consideration of details and the resources and skills required to perform the tasks/achieve the goals.

Stakeholders and the general public are keen to see how priorities are identified and if progress toward targets is being made – particularly where public funds are being used. The creative commons approach is very useful in this respect and should be continued. It should also be applied to publically funded determinations of priorities that are developed in relation to the AWS e.g. publically funded projects results – recognising the need in some cases to protect IP. Transparent, evidence-based priorities using a process agreed to be stakeholders will be important – there are existing examples of this being done e.g. pre and post border weed risk assessment systems

Question 2

Are the goals and priorities of the strategy focused in the necessary areas? why / why not?

Overall the goals and priorities are correct and good, but that conclusion comes with several caveats and some exceptions to this overall conclusion.

The aim to shift the 'lead' for several weed management goals/priorities from government to the private sector, community groups or property owners is in the case of the NT a very radical step that would create a mismatch b/w weed management tasks and the resources, skills and capability to coordinate and deliver weed management results. That said, increased responsibilities for landholders/land managers is required and the idea that those that benefit from landuses that might result in weed problems is a good and much needed goal.

To deliver the vision and the strategy needs to:

- Better acknowledge and utilise existing policies, plans, decision support and risk assessment tools and research results. Many seem to have been overlooked in the strategy.
- Recognise that not all WONS are at the same stage of the WONS process. The 12 new WONS, listed in 2012, are arguably only in Stage 1, not Stage 3 as stated a couple of times. To succeed, equal effort needs to be put into managing these spp collaboratively for time periods long enough to achieve or make good progress toward agreed outcomes/aims.
- Risk management is a key element of informing policy and developing and planning management responses to priority weeds. It is actively used by almost all jurisdictions to this end. The Strategy needs to better recognise the existence of post-border weed risk management systems that are being used – most consistent with Australian Standards. The EPDNS appears to serve a very similar purpose, using a very similar method. The CRC Weeds put a lot of effort into aligning and improving collaboration and coordination across jurisdictions. This work and the variety of WRM systems that were rolled-out across Aust as a result should be built on rather than replaced by the EPDNS. The failure to mention the post-border weed risk management system in the AWS is of concern – given its widespread use and national and international recognition as a very useful policy and planning tool that satisfies many of the principles and goals stated in the AWS.
- The IGAB and AWS (and related documents e.g. EPDNS) recognise the need to protect economic, environmental and cultural/social values from negative impacts of weeds. If this vision is to be achieved all three elements should be given equal weight and priority. Additionally the proposed collaborative approach and shared responsibilities will not work in the absence of an equitable spreading of resources across these interrelated elements of weed management.
- Great to see monitoring and MERI back on the agenda. As stated it the foundation for the design and review of weed management efforts and is, in my opinion, been given a low priority in recent times. Monitoring to succeed, needs involvement and cost sharing across all the key stakeholders identified in the AWS. Like research, it needs to be well designed and linked end user needs and not data collection for to tick a box. Funding bodies as well as parties doing the funded work/projects need to recognise the value of well designed monitoring programs and support projects that truly deliver useful monitoring data. Similarly, planning and policy bodies need to use this information to assess whether current weed management programs are working i.e. delivering stated management results.
- The link b/w policy, planning, management across several scales (national, state/territory/regional etc) and applied research is recognised in the AWS. Recognising examples and using the results on projects where this has been done and consistent with the priorities in the revised AWS should be a priority. Care should be taken to reinvent some of the tools, information, recommendations that exists already.
- Short-term funding, policies and management of weeds – typically does not succeed – given in most cases priority weeds are not eradicable. But most funding at national, state and territory level does not operate on time frames consistent with the needs for long-term weed management results. Priority setting and getting the mix of investment right for prevention, eradication, containment and asset protection needs to consider solutions for this problem. Decision support systems that provide a basis to what to invest in and well what to no longer invest in need to be part of this process

Question 3

The strategy is intended to describe how weed management fits into Australia's biosecurity system. Is the link between Australia's biosecurity system and weed management made clear in the strategy? why / why not?

It's clear that there is a link to IGAB and IGAB related elements and other existing policy and planning documents/agreements etc. e.g. EPBC. But its hard-work tracking-down and disgusting the contents of the related documents. This is not unique to this strategy and reflects the range of stakeholders and existing documents that guide there day to day operations. I suspect anyone without long-term background in weed or pest management, biosecurity, risk assessment and feral animals, weeds, disease, biodiversity conservation and agricultural production threats will struggle to fully understand the links – I know I did and I have 20 years' experience across many of these areas.

Some summary documents focussed on piecing together the links and highlighting what's existing versus what's new would be very useful. Done well it would assist weed and feral managers', researchers and landholders work in a coordinated and collaborative fashion. There are many examples of collaborative, weed management related projects informing policy and planning and on-ground management – that could be added and provide a clearer explanation of how these links might be made i.e. real world examples not just theory.

Comments / Feedback

Any other comments or feedback?

These comments and previous answers to questions posed are my personal opinions - not those of NTG departments. I have 20 years experience in NRM related to, monitoring and evaluation, biodiversity conservation and threatening processes and weed management.

My major other comment is - don't reinvent the wheel where don't need to. There is a body of work - policies, plans, research results and expertise that exists in government agencies, regional NRM groups and research institutes across Australia.

Impacts of weeds

The text looks as if someone went through at end of the process and added an agricultural angle to each of the three types of impact. Don't disagree that impacts on a industry/sector of the economy can relate to economics, environment(?) and social values – but if taking this line, then should do it for all sectors / values e.g. environmental protection, tourism, cultural and social.

Impacts on the economy (p. 11)

No one disagrees with this, but, its only one part of several negative impacts on the economy. It does not recognize for example:

- Tourism impacts
- Recreational impacts
- Cultural impacts
- Biodiversity impacts - many of which are linked to the above
- Cite the NTG Biosecurity Strategy - e.g. tourism \$

If the aim is to manage impacts of weeds o economic, environmental an cultural values – all of which incur a cost – through lost income or management costs, these need to be recognised in the AWS.

'In the long term, total tourism GDP rose at an average annual rate of 4.6 per cent between 1997–98 and 2011–12. Tourism's contribution to Australian GDP was \$87.3 billion, or 5.9 per cent share of the Australian economy.' (http://tra.gov.au/documents/Economic-Industry/Tourisms_Contribution_97-98_to_2011-12_FINAL_3JUL13.pdf)

Environment (p.11)

- The reference to gamba grass - refers to 'savannahs' - the accepted spelling used is 'savannas' despite what the spell checker says.
- Weeds can threaten the integrity of nationally and globally significant sites, species and ecological communities, such as Ramsar-listed wetlands, cultural heritage sites and declared World Heritage areas. National parks and nature reserves, multi-use forest lands, urban and peri-urban public land and agricultural and grazing land all require ongoing weed control and monitoring.

Have already listed agricultural impacts in economic impacts. Same as point made above, need to be consistent across all three types of impact with respect to who impacted.

Primary weed-spread pathways (p.12)

- 'A large percentage of weed species (at least 50% and possibly up to 70%) were originally imported for use as

garden ornamentals'

- o There is also a lot of weeds that are related to agricultural species – not suggesting all weed problems relate to agriculture – but has been a major contributor – see <http://www.timlow.com/books/feral-future>
- o So yes, imported garden plants are a big problem – but there are also industry related problems – though risk assessment processes across Australia have significantly reduced the risk of this happening. There is however a large legacy of those that got introduced e.g. gamba grass (WONS, EPBC) , buffel grass (EPBC) – both conflict weeds.
- Overall the summary of spread pathways did not reflect a large body of work which is readily available there is a huge amount of work in this area not mentioned in this summary.

Stages of weed management (p.17)

- The stages of invasion can be applied at a range of scales (national, state/territory and regional, local). They can also be applied to management of habitats or protection of key assets. The importance of scale is recognised in this section of the AWS, but I don't think the ability to apply this generalised invasion curve approach across several management scales (national v local or property) is well explained and could be improved.
- Its worth noting that most WONS has focused on species at the asset protection or containment stages.
- Different or multiple scales applied to a given weed has important implications for roles and responsibilities of governments, industry and landholders..
- o For example an established high risk weed in one state where the focus is on containment might be an eradication target in another.

National strategy, goals and priorities (p.22)

- 'The vision of the strategy is that Australia's economic, environmental and social assets are protected from the impacts of weeds.'
- o The vision is good, just need to check that all three elements get equal attention.
- 'Priority 1.1 Commit to and continuously strengthen effective risk-based approaches to pre-border and border activities'
- o Australian Gov. provides leadership on pre-border and border risk based approaches
Does this mean post-border is responsibility of states and territories and landholders?

Continued or improved collaboration b/w governments, researchers, industry and landholders is needed to improve weed management outcomes. There are plenty examples where this has been done successfully. They have generated a wealth of expertise, knowledge, decision support tools and collaborative partnerships - these need to be used and refined where necessary - rather than replaced by new ones. Can provide more detail on these previous efforts if required.

There are some useful improvements in the AWS, but there is also, in my opinion a need for greater balance to ensure all three stated larger goals - protection of economic, environmental and social values is to be achieved in the next 10 years.

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