

Environment Australia

Consultancy Services for National  
Weeds Management Facilitator

Report for Period 4<sup>th</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2003

**John Thorp Australia  
16 Flowers Court  
LAUNCESTON TAS  
7250**

**Phone (03)6344-9657**

**Mobile 0419 323 400**

**Fax (03)6343-1877**

**Email: [jthorp@jta.com.au](mailto:jthorp@jta.com.au)**

© John Thorp Australia 2003

**3 June 2003**

# Consultancy Services for National Weeds Management Facilitator

Report for Period 4<sup>th</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2003

This consultancy commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2003 and the work has been undertaken by John Thorp with the assistance of Pat Richardson, Tamara Percey and Mike Wilson (Computer Support Tasmania).

A work programme was developed in conjunction with staff of Environment Australia (EA) and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia (AFFA) at a joint meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2003. This programme was further refined and presented to the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC) on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003.

A significant amount of work has been undertaken in establishing the weed awareness network, office and finance procedures, logo, stationery and promotional documents, as well as coming to terms with and understanding the national NAP and NRM structures and processes.

Visits were made to ACT, Tasmania, Darwin and Adelaide, with the Darwin visit including attendance at the National Landcare Conference.

The following activities have been undertaken according to the work programme and terms of reference for the position.

## **1 Network of weed management activity**

### *1.1 Develop network of weed management activities throughout Australia.*

The National Weed Management Facilitator (NWMF) visited the following locations in order to update on weed management activity – Hobart, Launceston, Darwin, Adelaide, Brisbane. This involved visiting with key officials of relevant government agencies, community representatives and local government, totalling 38 formal appointments. Additional contacts were made at the National Landcare Conference and Natural Resource Management (NRM) planning meeting held in Launceston.

A network diagram of NT Weeds linkages (Attachment 1) has been prepared as a guide to identifying key stakeholders for liaison in that jurisdiction.

1.2 *Assist with Weed awareness activities through organisation of national events.*

The Facilitator participated in and assisted with the National Weed Awareness Workshop held in Brisbane on 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003. This also involved working on the Steering Committee and providing follow-up support.

The Facilitator attended the National Landcare Conference in Darwin and displayed a poster which described his role, work, terms of reference and assistance available.

1.3 *Act as a first point of contact for national enquiries and email requests.*

As first point of contact for Facilitator enquiries, the Facilitator handled an average of 8 per week, with approximately 50% of them addressing specific weed problems with the remainder being more general in nature. This does not include e-mail requests received from [www.weeds.org.au](http://www.weeds.org.au).

1.4 *Visit each State and Territory, eg stakeholders WONS annual meeting (or priority regional visits to WONS officers).*

The States and Territories visited are listed above, with the primary aim of communicating the need to include weeds specifically in the NRM planning process. The Brisbane visit entailed meeting with key personnel in the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NRM), updating them on the Facilitator's role, understanding their current work activities including legislation progress, weed seed prevention project and weeds training under the Conservation and Land Management Training package.

The visits in Tasmania involved staff of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research and local government. These were undertaken in Hobart, New Town Research Laboratories, Prospect offices and the Tramshed meeting room Launceston.

The Darwin visits covered the key government departments, the Weeds Section, Robertson Barracks, Chairman of the NT Landcare Council, Northern Land Council (NLC), University of NT and Asset Services.

The Adelaide visit included the CRC for Australian Weed Management (AWM), Animal and Plant Commission and Indigenous Land Council (ILC).

In all these visits details were gained on their programmes and ways in which the Facilitator might be of assistance were discussed. All clients were questioned as to whether the visit was of value and a satisfactory response was received from all.

- 1.5 *Maintain a watching brief on changes to State and Territory legislation and identify legal, institutional and other impediments/barriers to effective weed management. Participation on Commonwealth cross portfolio weeds group meeting.*

The State and Territory legislation was monitored and the National Weeds data base updated to reflect changes that had occurred since May 2002. Two jurisdictions (NT and Qld) are in the process of implementing new weeds legislation. The noxious weed list for these is expected to change as of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2003. The Queensland legislation is to be proclaimed on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2003.

A date has been set and arrangements made for a Commonwealth cross-portfolio weeds group meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

The Facilitator attended AFFA Canberra Public Relations and Bureau of Rural Sciences (BRS) in order to discuss policy initiatives and to meet with Senator Macdonald's staff.

- 1.6 *Maintain a watching brief for early warning of new weed occurrences.*

No new weed incursions occurred during the period, but Western Australia agreed to provide a weed risk assessment of Hypericum at the request of Australian Weeds Committee (AWC).

## **2 Cooperative Efforts Amongst Stakeholders**

- 2.1 *Encourage State, Territory and Local Governments to develop contingency plans for action against new weed infestations.*

At this stage the Northern Territory and Tasmania have contingency plans for action against new weed infestations, but they do require some modification to adequately reflect the restructure of the Ministerial Councils and jurisdiction agencies. Assistance has been provided by the Facilitator by ensuring that the AWC component is accurately included.

- 2.2 *New weed contingencies: scope what is already covered by State weed strategies. Promote inclusion in new State /*

*Territory / jurisdictional strategies. Circulate models and list on web site.*

Work has commenced in order to summarise what is contained in State weed strategies.

- 2.3 *Educate different jurisdictions and other stakeholders on responsibilities for weed management. Develop key messages and develop and implement an annual communication plan.*

The Facilitator is liaising with the Australian Landcare Council, the Nursery Association and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) on the stakeholders' responsibility for weed management. A particular issue has been promoted with the Australian Landcare Council and that is to encourage Landcare Facilitators to actively participate in the development of NRM plans that recognise the importance of weed management. This issue was also taken up with the Chairman of the NT NRM Committee.

- 2.4 *Integrate and coordinate weed research, education and training programmes throughout Australia.*

The Facilitator visited the CRC AWM in Adelaide for the purpose of gaining an update and participating in the EA communication project. He agreed to participate in the Steering Committee and has reviewed the mimosa best practice guide, as well as providing national weed contact information for personnel involved in mapping and relevant publications.

### **3 Motivate Stakeholders**

- 3.1 *Promote the development of consistent extension products across Australia.*

The Facilitator spent some time in discussion with staff of the Northern Land Council Care for Country Unit and was updated on initiatives being undertaken across the Top End. An issue raised was the difficulty caused by the hold placed on project funding by Minister Ruddick's office.

The ILC was visited in Adelaide where an update was gained on project funding for the Top End and an understanding gained of how the ILC and NLC interact.

- 3.2 *Promote development of consistent training.*

No action undertaken during this reporting period.

- 3.3 *Maintain a watching brief on cultural awareness training to officers who support Aboriginal and TSI land managers.*

It is of particular interest to note that the Aboriginal Ranger Programme is becoming effective, but is hampered by wider community issues, such as health, education and alcohol problems experienced by the communities. Aboriginal people have an abiding interest in their country, but it will take up to 20 years before they have sufficient capacity to manage their land at a sustainable level.

At the National Landcare Conference indigenous people stressed the point that they wish to develop their own land care approach and did not want the views of white facilitators forced upon them. However, in discussions with the facilitators, it was clear they were trying to include indigenous values in their programmes and most of them were housed with the Land Councils giving them direct exposure to their client groups.

#### **4 Systematic Analysis of National Weed Control Efforts**

##### *4.1 Analysis of strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats to more integrated and cost effective weed management.*

At this stage a detailed analysis has not been undertaken, but data is being progressively collected during interstate visits, with a view to presenting a gap analysis at a later stage.

##### *4.2 Monitor, evaluate and publicise progress being made in implementing the WONS and make recommendations on areas for improvement including delivery through NAP and NHT.*

A significant amount of time has been spent in coming to terms with and understanding the operation of the NAP and NHT2, as well as the Regional NRM planning process. Five draft plans have been examined and discussions held with two planning bodies. Weeds issues are variably addressed in these plans and, in general, there is a lack of appreciation of the value that has been gained from NHT1 through community groups wishing to establish weed management plans. In some instances these groups have been detached from the NRM planning process, as they are more strongly focused on on-the-ground action and have little time for developing broader strategies.

##### *4.3 Promote and monitor the implementation and adoption of the EA alert and AFFA agricultural sleeper weed lists.*

A teleconference has been arranged for WONS coordinators in June 2003, where issues, achievements, reporting and barriers to progress will be discussed.

A monthly update is provided to interested parties on the status of the WONS process.

## **5 Report regularly to the Commonwealth Government and AWC**

This is the first report, which primarily covers establishing the NWMF position, including the office, systems and accounting procedures, as well as commencing to build a working relationship with NRM bodies.

### *5.1 Provide recommendations to the Commonwealth Government and the AWC for action to address most prospective areas for investment and weaknesses in national efforts.*

At this stage it would be premature to comment on actions for investment and weaknesses in the national effort. However, it appears that the regional focus of NRM may result in some national programmes, such as bio-control, early detection, prevention of spread and wider research being overlooked and, consequently, not receiving similar funding to that which was available under NHT1. At the time of writing it was not clear how the national actions of the WONS strategies would be undertaken in 2004 and beyond. This is a matter that will need to be addressed over the coming months.

### *5.2 Prepare draft Work Plan for consideration by Commonwealth and AWC.*

The draft work plan was considered by AWC on 9th April 2003.

## **Financial Reports**

Financial reports have been provided to Environment Australia, but are not included, as they are business in confidence. Expenditure is in line with budget and a chart of accounts is in use which allows detailed monitoring of expenditure.

## **Discussion**

As this is the first quarter of the Facilitator's work programme, a significant amount of time has been spent establishing office procedures and re-establishing the National Weeds network. A number of issues have been progressed for AWC, which include participating in the National Weed Awareness Workshop, assisting with the development of weed monitoring guidelines for the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group (MEWG), the gathering of information on weed mapping procedures for the BRS and CRC AWM.

Some subsections of the terms of reference, such as the section on training, have not been addressed at this stage as time has not been available for

these to occur. However, these matters are to be addressed in forthcoming months.

