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Consultancy Services for National
Weeds Management Facilitator

Report for Period 4 September 2005 – 3 May 2006

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Consultancy Services for National Weeds Management Facilitator

Report for Period 4 September 2005 – 3 May 2006

This consultancy reporting period commenced on 4th September 2005 and the work has been undertaken by John Thorp with the assistance of Karen Dwyer, Tara Russell, Patricia Hepburn and Mike Wilson of Computer Support Tasmania.

A work programme was developed in conjunction with staff of the Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) at a joint meeting on 11th March 2003. This programme was further refined and presented to the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC) on 9th April 2003. Further discussions were held between DEH and DAFF during July, October 2003, February, October 2004, February 2005 and 23 August 2005 with follow up liaison on a fortnightly basis to consider issues arising from this consultancy and monitor its performance. A report on the activities of the Facilitator is presented to every meeting of the AWC, the last meeting being, Meeting 12 in Perth on 27-29 March 2006.

Visits were made to ACT, Tasmania, NSW, QLD, NT, SA, WA and VIC, which included attendance and presentations at the 13th NSW Biennial Noxious Weeds Conference, Orange, National Weeds Advisory Group Meeting, Canberra, the 1st Tasmanian Weeds Conference, Launceston, WONS Coordinators meeting, Canberra, Botanic Garden Society of Australia and New Zealand Congress, Hobart, Western Australia Weeds Forum, Perth (presenter and facilitator), National Weeds and Invasive Animals Information Workshop and Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Issues and Indicators - Workshop.

The Facilitator attended 8 WONS meetings and held bimonthly meetings with coordinators in Victoria and met with individual coordinators on another 10 occasions.

A significant amount of work has been done on reviewing many papers, which included the revision of the NWS, Field Manual for Surveying and Mapping Naturally Significant Weeds, Weedeck Cards, papers relating to the National Information Managers Technical Group (NIMTG), AUSBIOSEC, National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA) weeds work programme and assessment of Defeating the Weed Menace national, community and cross regional funding applications.

The Facilitator took three weeks annual leave during December 2005, but the office remained open and wherever possible clients were serviced by Karen Dwyer and Tara Russell with remote direction from the Facilitator. All

requests were checked and followed up by the facilitator on his return to work. The office closed for the Christmas/New Year public holidays. The following activities have been undertaken according to the work program and terms of reference for the position.

1 Maintain an up to date knowledge and network of weed management activity throughout Australia through effectively liaising with all government agencies and industry/sector groupings involved in weed control.

1.1 Establish a network of weed management workers and attend activities throughout Australia.

The National Weed Management Facilitator (NWMF) visited the following locations in order to update on weed management activities – Canberra ACT (six), Launceston and Hobart Tasmania, Grafton, Orange, Sydney NSW, Brisbane QLD, Alice Springs NT, Adelaide SA, Perth WA and Melbourne and outskirts VIC (seven). This involved visiting with key officials of relevant government agencies, community representatives, WONS Coordinators and local government, totalling 62 formal appointments.

A significant amount of time has been spent maintaining the national network, contacting key members and providing information, answering general enquiries and checking on weeds initiatives and their progress around the nation.

This has been backed by the weeds database of national contacts which has been fully updated including organisational name changes with people being contacted to ensure that they still wish to be included and are working in the weeds discipline.

1.2 Act as a first point of contact for national weed enquiries and email requests – refer queries to others where possible – for instance queries on funding and programs etc to AG.

The Facilitator handled an average of 19 enquiries per week, with the majority of them addressing specific weed problems and the remainder being more general in nature. Some requested information on funding opportunities, particularly Envirofund and Defeating the Weed Menace (DWM), or to contact people with specialist expertise. Other requests were for materials published by the past NWSEC, AWC and DAFF. Half of the email requests were received from www.weeds.org.au and these were answered in a timely manner. They came from various parts of the world and were often requests from school/university students wanting information for projects, employment, weed identification and control recommendations. The office does not provide control recommendations, but refers enquiries to information on the World Wide Web via the search

facility or to their respective jurisdictions which have standardised enquiry procedures.

A significant number of requests have related to the Revision of the NWS and its progress and availability.

Twenty four significant draft papers or requests for input into related enquiries/consultancies were received by the Facilitator for action. Most of these were strategies, plans and reviews, the most significant of which was the Weed Mapping Handbook, assessment of DWM applications and participation in the Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Issues and Indicators - workshop.

Following the upgrade of the Weeds Australia web site approximately eight requests per week have been received for the use of images and text in other publications. These are forwarded to Sainty and Associates for final approval after clearing through this office.

1.3 Visit each state and territory, eg stakeholders, WONS annual meeting (or priority regional visits to WONS coordinators).

The States and Territories visited are listed above, with the primary aim of communicating the need to include weeds in the NRM planning process. The Canberra visits included meetings with officers individually in both the Dept of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) and the Dept of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). Contact was also made with staff of the BRS, CSIRO, NLWRA and OCPPO

The Facilitator attended 8 WONS meetings and held bimonthly meetings with coordinators in Victoria and met with individual coordinators on another 10 occasions.

In all the above visits details were gained on work programs and ways by 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.

1.4 Maintain a watching brief on changes to state and territory legislation and identify legal, institutional and other impediments/barriers to effective weed management such as trade through nurseries and other industries. Participation on Commonwealth cross portfolio weeds group meeting.

The State and Territory legislation was monitored and the web site updated twice with new weed classifications for Vic, ACT and NT. These were placed on the web and were supported by pdf formatted documents.

At the time of writing all WONS species were banned from sale or trade.

A table summarising the current status of WONS for sale and trade was prepared for the Australian Government.

The Facilitator presented and facilitated Western Australian Weeds Forum in Perth, WA.

- 1.5 *Maintain a watching brief for early warning of new weed occurrences in order to ensure that appropriate bodies are aware of their existence. Advise on the availability of capacity in managing the issues.*

No new weed incursions occurred during the period, and three weed incursion teleconferences were conducted by the OCPPO.

A national weed reporting facility was maintained on the Weeds Australia web page and this received 7 reports which were forwarded to states and territories for on ground action.

The Facilitator updated the weed botanists reporting web page to reflect staff movements and changed departmental names and email addresses.

2 Participation in the revision of the National Weeds Strategy.

- 2.1 *Provide information and assistance to consultants and associated parties in revising the National Weeds Strategy.*

Participated in four steering committee meetings and one workshop, also reviewing numerous draft documents. Provided contact lists and distributed invitations for the Canberra Workshop.

Acted as first point of contact for the revision after the Consultants had completed their contract, in order to maintain a list of parties interested in commenting on the public draft.

Prepared for the facilitation workshop for the finalisation of the AWS consultation draft.

3 Facilitate and coordinate cooperative efforts amongst stakeholders notably landowners, land users, industry, researchers, educators and the general public to achieve efficiencies and effectiveness in weed management for example in procedures to restrict the spread of weeds.

- 3.1 *New weed contingencies: Act as AWC representative on NIMTG for consultation, review and reporting to AWC for the*

purpose of ensuring that weeds are appropriately incorporated into SQCR. Participate in the development of “Weedplan”.

The Facilitator actively participated in development of the SQCR functional design and technical documents and commented on the framework for the resource management package. He also participated in two teleconferences. This is a very significant task which exceeds the time allocated.

At the time of writing, the development of “Weedplan” had not commenced.

- 3.2 *Inform different jurisdictions and other stakeholders on responsibilities for weed management including (list of key targets – Australia Landcare Council, Nursery Industry including the Nursery Federation and the Nursery Association, primary industry and farming associations) through marketing to rural broadcasters and gardening lifestyle programs. Articulate the goals of the NEWS to key stakeholders and encourage the adoption of the Strategy.*

Two ABC rural broadcasts were given on progress in revising the NWS.

The Facilitator arranged meetings with the nursery industry in Melbourne and Sydney, which were also attended by John Cotter, Chair of the National Weeds Advisory Group. The main issues discussed included the control and sale of weedy species, plant labelling and environmental responsibility, role of the nursery industry in weed education and accreditation of plant nurseries. The attendees included industry peak bodies and nursery owners/managers.

The Facilitator continued to liaise with the Australian Landcare Council and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) on the stakeholders’ responsibility for weed management.

4 Motivate stakeholder groupings to improve weed management and carry out policy messages at a national level.

- 4.1 *Promote the incorporation of weeds issues into regional NRM planning in conjunction with the National Weeds Awareness Council – promote 1 pagers as developed by AG.*

The 1 pagers had not been prepared during this reporting period.

5 Undertake systematic analysis of national weed control efforts and bring forward recommendations to the Australian Government and the Australian Weeds Committee for action to address weakness in national efforts.

- 5.1 *Analysis of strengths / weaknesses / opportunities / threats to more integrated and cost effective weed management. Subset of review of the national weeds strategy – emerging issues and new opportunities.*

Work has continued to collect information on weed management activities around Australia and the information gained from the NRM planning process has been covered in a previous section, where some strengths and weaknesses have been identified.

The Facilitator provided background information and suggested directions for defeating the weed menace to DAFF and has assisted by identifying specific projects that could be undertaken.

All WONS Coordinators have been asked to prepare priority action kits to guide DWM applicants in preparing strategic projects. These are being placed on the web site.

Information and advice have been provided for consultants undertaking reviews for the Australian Government as mentioned previously.

- 5.2 *Participate in and/or assist the AG with the following activities: Evaluation of Weeds Outcomes of Regional Investment Steering Committee (specific activities to be listed here as undertaken).*

Unable to attend final meeting due to clash with other events, but commented on draft documents and final paper.

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

Whenever possible the Facilitator has promoted the achievements of WONS and the value of having national programs, having made one radio interview on aspects of WONS over the reporting period. This broadcast covered Tasmania and Victoria.

Development of WONS national maps

The Facilitator has liaised with BRS in reviewing the weed mapping manual and proof read the document three times and referred it for state review.

Ensure that the WONS pages on web site are kept up to date

All WONS reports and manuals are added to the Weeds Australia web site as they become available. Manuals currently on the web are lantana, rubber vine, parthenium, mesquite, Chilean needle grass and prickly acacia. Also priority action plans and any other material requested by the coordinators.

A number of WONS pages have been significantly expanded to include workshop information and publications, especially bridal creeper, bitou bush/boneseed, Chilean needle grass, serrated tussock and willows. Bulletin lists have been activated for willows.

An interactive calendar has been established for WONS Coordinators and officials in order to assist in event planning and scheduling.

Coordinate annual reporting of WONS to AWC

The Facilitator has maintained extensive contact with the WONS coordinators, providing advice and assistance upon request, providing detailed templates for annual reporting and editing the annual reports for consistency of content and presentation.

WONS reports are dealt with out of session by AWC.

Attend WONS meetings (national and specific).

WONS Coordinators meetings attended were Willows (Attwood), Serrated Tussock (Albury), Asparagus (Adelaide), Chilean Needle Grass (Albury), one National WONS Coordinators meeting (Canberra), Gorse (Ballarat), Athel Pine (Alice Springs), Bitou Bush/Boneseed (Adelaide) and also Teleconferences for Prickle Bush, Athel Pine and Asparagus.

5.4 *Assist with the implementation and adoption of the DEH alert and DAFF agricultural sleeper weed lists – once the revised list is established.*

Wherever practical the DEH alert list has been promoted. Thought needs to be given to how these weeds and the WONS might be promoted collectively as the existence of multiple national lists could well lead to confusion about the purpose and function of each. However it must be recognised that the WONS and incursions lists are the only nationally agreed weed list supported by states and territories.

WONS progress is posted on the Weeds Australia Web Site regularly.

6 Report regularly to the Commonwealth Government (through the Australian Government Departments of the Environment and Heritage and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Management Group) and the Australian Weeds Committee on developments and progress with national level activity and inform AWC on the project work plan.

This is the seventh report, which covers the operation of the NWMF position, including progress on a number of national issues.

The Facilitator routinely holds discussions at least fortnightly with the project officers in DEH and DAFF in order to keep them informed on work being undertaken. He also keeps Australian Government management informed of policies and other work being undertaken regularly.

The Facilitator reports to all AWC meetings on all projects and work undertaken by him, including circulation of this report to the committee.

6.1 Provide recommendations to the Commonwealth Government and the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC) for action to address most productive areas for investment and weaknesses in national efforts. Assist with national issues, funding priorities, WONS and recently “Defeating the Weed Menace” – also covered through other items.

The Facilitator provided advice to DEH and DAFF on applications for the second round of DWM.

The Facilitator attended the second meeting of the National Weeds Advisory Group, Canberra, as an observer.

6.2 Update Work Plan for consideration by Australian Government and advice to AWC.

The work plan is in place and modified as tasks are completed. However most of the activities are of an ongoing nature as they relate to policy support, awareness, communications and routine support.

Discussion

This is the final half year report for the third year of this project including the 2 month contract extension to 3 May 2006 and a significant amount of time has been spent following up and progressing national weeds issues. All states and territories were visited in this period, and much work has been done on national issues in Canberra.

WONS coordination has continued with promotion of WONS activities and successes at one national conference and the development of their review process has been progressed with the AWC.

A number of issues have been progressed which impinge on the work of the AWC, the most significant of these is the involvement in the NIMTG for incursion management, the revision of the NWS, the development of the Biosecurity strategy and oversight of Weedbuster 2005.

National Weeds Management Facilitator Future Work Program

4 March 2005 to 3 March 2006

TOR	What	When	Performance Measures	Purpose	Indicative Resources (Facilitator days per annum)
1	Maintain an up to date knowledge and network of weed management activity throughout Australia through effectively liaising with all government agencies and industry/sector groupings involved in weed control.				
1.1	Establish a network of weed management workers and attend activities throughout Australia VCMC & DSE Innovation in Weed Management 8th QLD Weed Symposium Royal Society of Tasmania 2nd Biennial Weed Control Conference VIC 13th Biennial Noxious Weeds Conference NSW 1st Tasmanian Weeds Conference Botanic Gardens Conference Weedbuster week	Ongoing	Meetings with key agencies and presentations to industry groups Chairman present paper and chair WONS session present paper present paper present paper and chair WONS session present paper present paper participate in events and publicity	To maintain a network of weed specialists who can assist the weeds management effort To encourage national vision and approach to weed management To encourage stakeholders to accept their role and responsibility for weed management	45
1.2	Act as a first point of contact for national enquiries and email requests - refer queries to others where possible - for instance queries on funding and programs etc to AG	Ongoing	Satisfied clients Number of queries handled	To assist individual weeds workers by providing contact and support advice which maximises on the ground action	32
1.3	Visit each state & territory, e.g. stakeholders WONS annual meeting (or priority regional visits to WONS Coordinators)	2 visits per state & territory per year (approx)	WONS management groups develop and publicise priority action lists for each species Outcomes contained in WONS annual reports National focus and strategic placement of WONS funding by S&T	To ensure that a strategic national focus is adopted by all management groups To support WONS coordinators in their work and ensure that their line management is fully appraised of role expectations	In conjunction with 1.1, 1.2, 4.1, 5.4

1.4	Maintain a watching brief on changes to State and Territory legislation and identify legal, institutional and other impediments/barriers to effective weed management such as trade through nurseries and other industries? Participation on Commonwealth cross portfolio weeds group meeting.	Quarterly June September December March When occurs	National noxious weeds database maintained. Data collected Updated legislation pages and Noxious weed list on the website Facilitate web subcontract - content from AWC or from separate projects Meetings attended	To provide easy access to noxious weeds requirements for all S&T to organisations and individuals intending to move plant material across jurisdictions To demonstrate the complexity of S&T weed laws and regulations To assist the AG in appreciating the impacts that policies and programmes may have for on the ground weed management To provide situation analysis and advice on programmes and activities that are operated by key stakeholders	28
1.5	Maintain a watching brief for early warning of new weed occurrences in order to ensure that appropriate bodies are aware of their existence Advise on the availability of capacity in managing the issues	Ongoing	Advice on new incursions to AWC.	To ensure that the OCPPO, S&T are aware of the problem in order that preventative action may be considered and activated when appropriate	3
2	Participation in the revision of the National Weeds Strategy				
2.1	Provide information and assistance to consultants and associated parties in revising the National Weeds Strategy	Through out 2005	Services delivered	To provide information and advice, which assists the efficient development of the revised Strategy	10
3	Facilitate and coordinate cooperative efforts among stakeholders notably landowners, land users, industry, researchers, educators and the general public to achieve efficiencies and effectiveness in weed management for example in procedures to restrict the spread of weeds				
3.1	New weed contingencies: Act as AWC representative on NIMTG for consultation, review and reporting to AWC for the purpose of ensuring that weeds are appropriately incorporated into SQCR. Participate in the development of "Weedplan"	Ongoing	Participation in workshops. Documents reviewed Report to the management committee and AWC on progress Participation in development of "Weedplan"	To ensure that processes and procedures are implemented that support the effective operation of eradication and management programmes over the life of the campaign	20

3.2	Inform different jurisdictions and other stakeholders on responsibilities for weed management including (list of key targets – Australia Landcare Council, Nursery Industry including the Nursery Federation and the Nursery Association, primary industry and farming associations)through marketing to rural broadcasters and gardening lifestyle programs Articulate the goals of the NEWS to key stakeholders and encourage the adoption of the Strategy	Ongoing	Key messages and priority stakeholder target groups agreed by the Management Committee Press releases & publicity Web site Project reports Public presentations, Articles Conference presentations and attendance AWC newsletter Number of releases Stakeholder groups contacted	To ensure that the key messages relating to weed management are delivered to stakeholders and to ensure that they are updated on national directions and initiatives	24
4	Motivate stakeholder groupings to improve weed management and carry out policy messages at a national level				
4.1	Promote the incorporation of weeds issues into regional NRM planning in conjunction with the National Weeds Awareness Coordinator - promote 1 pagers as developed by AG	Ongoing	Messages communicated NRM regions contacted	Assist DEH in promoting weed issues with NRM regions, particularly funding mechanisms and integrated control.	10
5	Undertake systematic analysis of national weed control efforts and bring forward recommendations to the Australian Government and the Australian Weeds Committee for action to address weakness in national efforts.				
5.1	Analysis of strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats to more integrated and cost effective weed management. Subset of review of the national weeds strategy - emerging issues and new opportunities	Ongoing Standing item for AWC meetings.	Report to the Management Committee and through them to the AWC on recommendations to improve integration and cost effectiveness.	To identify opportunities for improving weed management across the nation	8
5.2	Participate in and/or assist the AG with the following activities:Evaluation of Weeds Outcomes of Regional Investment Steering Committee(specific activities to be listed here as undertaken)	throughout 2005	Work undertaken, papers written, meetings attended, outcomes achieved where appropriate	To assist the AG with program evaluation and other matters as appropriate.	9

5.3	Monitor, evaluate and publicize progress being made in implementing the WONS and make recommendations on <i>areas for improvement</i> including delivery through NAP and NHT. revision of national weeds strategy development of WONS national maps ensure that the WONS pages on web site are kept up to date coordinate annual reporting of WONS to AWC attend WONS meetings (national & species)	As identified or when requested throughout 2005 Dec 2005 ongoing Sept 2005 throughout 2005	Report to DAFF and DEH and AWC on progress on the WONS including recommendations for improving delivery through NAP and NHT. Report to stakeholders on progress. Attend at least 1 WONS meeting a year or meet with coordinators.	To ensure that the WONS program is delivered in a coordinated and effective manner at a national level	24
5.4	Assist with the implementation and adoption of the DEH alert and DAFF agricultural sleeper weed lists. - once the revised list is established	Annual Report [and as part of visits in 1.4 and 2.3]	Report to DEH and DAFF on actions taken	To encourage action on the management/eradication of the listed species	4
6	Report regularly to the Commonwealth Government (through the Australian Government Departments of the Environment and Heritage and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Management Group) and the Australian Weeds Committee on developments and progress with national level activity, and inform AWC on the project work plan.				
6.1	Provide recommendations to the Commonwealth Government and the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC) for action to address most productive areas for investment and weaknesses in national efforts. Assist with national issues, funding priorities, WONS and recently "Defeating the Weed Menace". - also covered through other items	Quarterly and for AWC meetings.	Reports to AG departments, Management Committee and through them to the AWC. Participate in project reviews and provision of advice on projects as requested	To assist the AC and AWC in gaining best value from the limited funding available for weed management at a national level	[Addressed through range of TOR e.g. to 1.2, 1.5, 4.1, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3]
6.2	Update Work Plan for consideration by Australian Government and advice to AWC	21/03/2005	Work plan endorsed by the Management Committee and presented to the AWC.	To ensure that the Facilitator operates to the satisfaction of the AG	3

This work plan will be progressively updated through the addition of specific activities undertaken and anticipated over the next 6 month period.

It is recognised that the Facilitator will be absent on annual leave from time to time. Leave will be scheduled to minimise clashes with AWC meetings and other national events. For 2004 it is proposed that leave periods will occur in July-August and January 2005. Only five days leave were taken in the first year of the contract.

Compliance activities, financial records, including GST credits and FY audit, pay travel allowances according to non-SES officers rates, half yearly and annual reports, recruitment of staff with DEH approval, comply with style manual, privacy principles, document control and record keeping (AS4390), advise conflict of interest, indemnify the Commonwealth.