

NATIONAL WEEDS STRATEGY



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

WEEDS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING

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Supporting information about the National Weeds Strategy, Weeds of National Significance and progress to date may be found at www.weeds.org.au where links and downloads provide contact details for all species and their committees.

The information in this booklet is provided to assist strategy development at all levels, recognising that final content will be dependent on the situation and the species being addressed.

Comments and constructive criticism are welcomed as an aid to improving the process and future editions of this booklet.

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1 Introduction

These guidelines have been provided by the National Weeds Strategy Executive Committee (NWSEC) in order to assist people and organisations in developing consistent and effective national strategies, designed to manage weeds of national significance.

The two Ministerial Councils, ARMCANZ, ANZEC and Forestry Ministers, endorsed the process for identifying weeds of national significance (WONS) and announced the inaugural twenty species, on 1st June 1999.

The endorsement of a weed species as a WONS, by definition, requires that national action is needed to effectively manage the problem.

Effective management of a WONS will require coordinated action, backed by a commitment from all major stakeholders, to support and take part in management activities.

Too often well meaning people have implemented spray, slash and burn weed control methods which over the short term can show spectacular results, and use large sums of money, but in the longer term do little to reduce the overall weed problem.

It is of utmost importance that the strategy aims at sustainable long-term management of the weed problem, based on current or realistically predicted resourcing levels. This requires that long term management of a specific weed problem does not rely on the on-going injection of external funding, but must be seen as a core responsibility of the land manager concerned, with a commitment to future management. External funding or new money may be required in the short term (3 to 5 years) to establish a management regime that is sustainable.

These strategies are central to identifying the "on ground" action which must be undertaken in order to manage a weed problem, be it eradication, containment, suppression or usually a combination of all three.

The issues involved are complex and may require many stakeholders to participate in the action phase. The Committee believes that a sound well thought out strategy backed by community commitment is a fundamental necessity for managing weeds of national significance.

Consequently a national species strategy should combine the relevant knowledge about the plant, its impacts, distribution, social consequences, regulatory controls, species management tools, and research needs into an effective management strategy, which can be assessed for feasibility, cost benefit and appropriateness of the proposed action. It should also outline performance measures and methods for evaluating progress in reducing the impact of the weed species. This later task will require significant resources, possibly up to three percent of total project costs.

The strategy will fulfil many functions, the most usual being as a basic planning document or a prospectus for current and prospective funding organisations.

Weed management is a component of land management, as weed problems often result from unsustainable land use or management practices.

When one weed species is removed another often follows it, which may be even more detrimental to the production system or environment.

These projects are usually multi million dollar investments and therefore require sound, competent project management, which will ensure that the sequence and quality of work is undertaken in a timely and efficient manner. At the same time this will ensure that all stakeholders can follow progress and see what their investment has achieved.

These guidelines address the methods and content that form the basis of a successful strategy. They have been trialed and used successfully in formulating and reviewing a number of WONS strategies. But it must be recognised that weed problems are extremely diverse and preparing an elegant well constructed and managed strategy requires substantial effort and commitment from all stakeholders.

2 Weeds of National Significance

The 20 weeds of national significance are as follows:

Common Name	Scientific Name
alligator weed	<i>Alternanthera philoxeroides</i>
athel pine	<i>Tamarix aphylla</i>
bitou bush / boneseed	<i>Chrysanthemoides monilifera</i>
blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.
bridal creeper	<i>Asparagus asparagoides</i>
cabomba	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>
Chilean needle grass	<i>Nassella neesiana</i>
gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
hymenachne	<i>Hymenachne amplexicaulis</i>
lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i>
mesquite	<i>Prosopis</i> spp.
mimosa	<i>Mimosa pigra</i>
Parkinsonia	<i>Parkinsonia aculeata</i>
parthenium weed	<i>Parthenium hysterophorus</i>
pond apple	<i>Annona glabra</i>
prickly acacia	<i>Acacia nilotica</i> ssp. <i>indica</i>
rubber vine	<i>Cryptostegia grandiflora</i>
salvinia	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>
serrated tussock	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i>
Willows except weeping willows, pussy willow and sterile pussy willow	<i>Salix</i> spp. except <i>S. babylonica</i> , <i>S. X calodendron</i> and <i>S. X reichardtiji</i>

3 Method and Process of Developing Strategies

Strategy development is a complex and skilled process, the difficulty of which should not be underestimated. Successful strategy development results from combining three components, the method used, processes adopted and content analysed. All are critical in creating a logical document, which gains community ownership and support.

Problems are encountered when stakeholders are overlooked and consequently they do not become committed or gain ownership of the strategy. Sometimes key organisations are left out of the consultation process. All landowners and managers including aboriginal groups and Landcare should be involved. Appropriate facilitators, sensitive to group needs, may be helpful to this process.

3.1 Method

Strategy development must capture all knowledge about the problem and screen possible solutions. For this reason it should involve representatives of all stakeholder groups at some point during strategy development.

It may not be feasible or appropriate to conduct a national workshop for the species, where all stakeholders are represented. Usually limited by the size of the group and the cost of travel for such an activity. Consequently, alternate mechanisms may be required for distributing the strategy and communicating with stakeholders in all parts of Australia. The goal of this consultation is to, review the strategy and gain acceptance and commitment. But a stakeholder workshop will generally be useful.

Failure to do this may well mean that a strategy is developed which is not backed by effective on the ground action, and therefore fails. It may also be necessary to confront stakeholders with their responsibilities, because they may control key actions that if poorly executed, could prevent the weed from being managed effectively. This is particularly important where substantial public funds are to be applied to strategy implementation.

Identify the key people who will undertake the majority of the work, nominate an executive officer or project manager who will be conducting the process and writing the final document. The skills of these people will have a direct bearing on the quality and timeliness of the strategy. It is generally unrealistic to expect these people to add this job to an existing workload, because it is a large task. Specific staff time should be allocated to the task for the entire development period.

A communication plan is required in order to keep the community informed about strategy development, call for public submissions or to gain commitment. Effective communication is the key driver in developing a successful strategy.

A common problem is to divide the strategy into two parts, firstly preparing the document and secondly the implementation. But this is not correct, because the day work commences on the strategy, is the day work starts on managing the specific weed problem. Consequently involving all parties at an early stage is vital in gaining their commitment to the ongoing funding and management of the problem.

3.2 Process

It is important to understand the processes that are used for strategy development. These processes have the capacity to enhance or undermine strategy development, because using the right combination of techniques can make the process more effective and efficient.

As an example, it will be necessary to consider the biology of the plant and the technical issues surrounding its control. This could be achieved by using an appropriate review paper, expert, convening a technical panel or circulating a discussion document. The processes underpinning these activities are those of scientific enquiry, research and reporting which are designed to combine knowledge in order to describe the invasion process and highlight the key factors driving it. However, if the intention is to gain stakeholder commitment, a structured workshop is most appropriate.

Consequently, it is important that the processes used are matched to the outcome desired for each component of the strategy. One aspect that will need continual monitoring is the use of processes that encourage commitment by stakeholders, and at the same time capture their expertise.

3.3 Funding Issues

Strategy development is a time consuming and consequently expensive activity, which needs to be seen in proportion to the overall size of the weed program being undertaken. Whilst the implementation phase of the strategy may be able to raise Natural Heritage Trust and or other funding, most contributions will be core funding by the States and Territories.

4 Written Content and Style of Strategy

A strategy should remain current for ten to fifteen years, being distributed widely as it will be used by a wide variety of people. These range from community groups to senior public servants, researchers, extension personnel and landholders that will read the strategy from differing perspectives.

Consequently the use of jargon, acronyms and technical terms should be minimised with a glossary of terms designed to help the reader understand the intent of the document.

The strategy must be easy to read with pertinent diagrams and tables that relate directly to the content. The document will be as short as possible, containing relevant material that relates directly to the strategy process or content.

A numbering system with distinctive styles for headings, which clearly shows the relationship between the various levels, will make the document more readable. A table of contents will assist readers in navigating through the document and aid in communicating the overall structure.

Use a typeface that is easy to read, with a minimum font size of 12 points.

The strategy does not need to be commercially printed or contain colour pictures, but be well laid out to achieve a high level of readability.

4.1 *Vision (Outcome)*

A short statement (one sentence maximum) outlining the aim of the strategy which should communicate its central purpose and inspires people to become involved.

4.2 *The Challenge (Significance of Strategy)*

Several paragraphs summarising national significance, weed impacts and key management factors, including a short statement outlining the potential distribution.

4.3 *Executive Summary*

Usually not more than a page in length, it gives the reader an overview of key aspects of the strategy and sometimes includes short chapter or section summaries. Many key decision makers will only read the executive summary and rightly or wrongly make judgements about the strategy, based on this limited information. A skilfully written summary will encourage further reading of the document.

4.4 *Key Outcomes*

The results of all the actions undertaken will result in measurable outcomes being achieved. These should be summarised into a few outcomes that support the vision, emphasising what will be gained by implementing the strategy.

4.5 *Process Followed*

A short descriptive section describing the process used, stakeholder consultation and their degree of support or otherwise for the strategy.

4.6 *Background*

4.6.1 *Biology of the weed*

The biology of the species distilled into the critical attributes driving the invasion, including critical points where intervention is required. A life cycle diagram showing control points will improve the readability of the strategy.

4.6.2 *History of spread*

Past experience and observations on spread will give some clues as to future distribution and areas under greatest threat, as well as identify factors influencing the invasion.

4.6.3 Summary of impacts

A broad summary of impacts that justifies the proposed national status and gives reasons for having a species strategy.

This short section covers the national situation, which may be based on existing distribution data and other information. It should clearly show the threat posed by the weed, the industries and environmental situations impacted, including examples. A list could be used to aid the reader in gaining a clear understanding of why the weed problem is under active national management.

4.6.4 History of research and management including regulation

This section of the strategy should be short and to the point, but understanding the history, background and previous management of the problem may identify strengths and weaknesses of past efforts. The role of legislation and regulatory bodies would usually be important in the overall process. Some judgement on the efficacy of these measures would aid in determining future directions for the strategy.

4.6.5 Control methods

Outline of the various control methods available, their use and short comings.

4.6.6 Socioeconomic factors affecting management decisions

For a weed management strategy to be effective many actions need to be undertaken and some of those are not technical in nature, but rely on people to carry out the actions. In some cases they will gain substantial economic benefits from the program. We call these the socioeconomic factors. By example, the holding of cattle in the house yards when they arrive on a property, is extremely important in terms of quarantining new weed problems to a restricted area where they can be controlled. The cattle should generally be held for about 8 days in order to clear their digestive tract of weed seeds. Of course seeds in the fleece or hair are a different proposition. Consequently for this measure to be effective it will require the active agreement and support of the land manager and if this cannot be gained then a key factor in weed seed distribution will not be controlled. Any strategy must identify these particular distribution mechanisms and be proactive in determining how they can be effectively managed in a social context.

In come cases socioeconomic problems will exist which cannot be managed effectively and if this is the case it must bring into question the effectiveness of any strategy. We call the people who are impacted by the socioeconomic factors, the "key stakeholders", because their cooperation is vital in managing the problem. Where this type of factor exists it will be necessary to clearly describe how the problem will be managed and generally the type of actions that would be undertaken.

One stakeholder group that is sometimes overlooked are the aboriginal people and associated land right claims, which can restrict access for all parties, leaving the land as a foci for weed dispersal.

Common law may be used to address specific cases where the person and mechanism of weed spread can be clearly identified and this may be a forceful incentive in ensuring compliance in the future.

It must be stressed that socioeconomic factors are extremely varied and that the management of these is the most challenging aspect of all weed management actions and strategies.

4.7 Strategic Plan

The headings in this section, Goals, Objectives, Management Strategies and Prioritised Key actions are most appropriately presented in a tabulated form which shows the relativity between each area and follows a logical framework which is transparent to the reader.

4.7.1 Principles underpinning the plan

Plans should be based on the recognition and acceptance of the four principles of the National Weeds Strategy:

1. Weed management is an essential and integral part of the sustainable management of natural resources and the environment, and requires an integrated multidisciplinary approach.
2. Prevention and early intervention are the most cost effective techniques that can be deployed against weeds.
3. Successful weed management requires a coordinated national approach which involves all levels of government in establishing appropriate legislative, educational and coordination frameworks in partnership with industry, landholders and community.
4. The primary responsibility for weed management rests with landholders/land managers but collective action is necessary where the problem transcends the capacity of the individual landholder/landmanager to address it adequately.

4.7.2 Relevance to other strategies

Land management and related strategies are used widely by State and Territory governments. These range from catchment management to biodiversity and impact on land managers in many ways. These weed strategies should recognise the existence of the above and the linkages which can be made to them. This will usually mean that duplication of effort will be minimised, that appropriate bodies will be found to assist in championing the strategy and undertaking the work. It is also important that the people responsible for and administering the related strategies understand and have an input into the development of these weed strategies. They will often have constructive, practical suggestions and be supportive allies in helping achieve the aims of the weed strategy.

4.7.3 Quarantine and legislative controls

For some species international quarantine will be a significant issue, possibly because of the limited genetic range of the material within Australia or because there are other similar species which may hybridise or could be confused with the one under management. This should be considered and AQIS consulted to ensure that the plants involved are adequately covered by the prohibited and permitted lists. Cases may arise where AQIS may not be able to impose restrictions on a species, because there is a lack of national action or supporting legislation within the States and Territories. In this instance it will be necessary for jurisdictions to consider the regulatory mechanisms and standards that they will apply. These will include such aspects as area freedom, prevention of sale, contamination of agricultural and other products and the implementation of any required measures.

If any legislative or regulatory changes result from the above analysis then they will usually require preparation of impact statements and extensive consultation with all stakeholders affected. Where this is not required and the problem is restricted to an industry sector or other specific group, codes of practice and compliance agreements may well be the most effective method to use. However, where international controls are required it will be necessary to show that the weed is under active management within Australia if the conditions of the World Trade Organisation, SPS Agreement are not to be breached.

4.7.4 Goals (also see glossary)

The table can be divided into main sections (by goals) dealing with preventing further spread, existing problems and wider awareness education and overarching management. Goals are further subdivided into objectives, usually two to three for each goal. Each objective is followed by a table with four columns headed strategy, actions, responsibility and priority.

4.7.5 Objectives (also see glossary)

Targets or aims that the project must reach in order for it to achieve the goals converts goals into specific outcomes and concrete terms against which results can be measured.

4.7.6 Management strategies (also see glossary)

Management Strategies will reflect the goal, and be relatively generic in their coverage, for example, preventing spread by livestock or spread of bio-control agents. They will not specify the actions to be undertaken at this level.

4.7.7 Prioritised key actions and responsible party

This section takes the three right hand columns of the table with the far right hand containing a prioritisation method and the middle one listing the key actions that will be taken at a national level. The column headed responsibilities lists responsible agencies, organisations and/or individuals. Actions are not necessarily broken down to a regional level unless that is essential to the strategy. This finer detail would be included in the action

plans that will be implemented by each of the jurisdictions involved in developing this strategy.

Priorities only need to be established to three levels, "what must be done", "what should be done" and "what could be done". What must be done is priority one and lists the actions that must be undertaken in order to effectively manage the weed problem. If these priority one actions cannot be undertaken or enforced effectively then the advisability of implementing a strategy such as this must be seriously brought into question.

Priority two, "what should be done" contains the actions that improve the efficiency or effectiveness of the overall strategy, they are important in terms of implementing action. But if for some reason several of them could not be fully completed then they would not represent a fundamental flaw to the whole weed management exercise.

Priority three actions are important in terms of implementing a successful ongoing strategy, but they may have more flexibility regarding their timing and when they need to be implemented. For example, public awareness is important for the long term management of a problem, but there is some flexibility about how and when this type of educational program is implemented.

Usually priority one actions would be implemented prior to those at a lower level and will usually form the foundation on which the lower priority actions are based. It must be recognised that the goals, strategies and actions form an integrated whole, which enhances the effectiveness of the entire weed management program. The reasons for prioritising actions are to enable a structured, timely, project to be put in place which progressively draws on resources as they become available and tackles the most important problems or components first.

When the strategy is fully implemented all priority actions will have been undertaken but if short term problems arise which prevented some actions from being undertaken then the lower priority ones would be those that are delayed.

4.8 *Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology*

Mechanisms must be put in place which allow the strategy and "on the ground" actions to be effectively evaluated in order to show that progress is being made in dealing with the problem. It is also necessary to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of individual actions and to show stakeholders and funders that the program is being operated soundly and that they are getting value for money. Evaluation is an aspect of weed management, which has generally been overlooked in the past, but is required today in order to show that the desired outcomes are being achieved.

These programs can be costly and are usually difficult to evaluate and it is not unreasonable to expect that up to 3% of the budget may be used for this purpose. Evaluation usually requires mapping current and potential

distributions, monitoring the spread, showing areas where eradication has taken place and the cost/benefit of what has been achieved.

It is sufficient for the strategy to contain an outline of the evaluation procedure that would be further defined in the action plans. Often the cost of evaluation can be reduced by planning for it at the beginning of a project, so that data can be collected progressively rather than as a dedicated activity towards the conclusion of the exercise. This also has the advantage of being able to provide information to stakeholders progressively which shows them the value of the work being undertaken.

Often the core data describing current infestations, its effects and economic impact are not available and base line data collection may well be a significant component of the strategy.

It must be recognised that monitoring and evaluation against desired outcomes are one of the key performance measures expected by current and future funding organisations.

4.8.1 Performance indicators (also see glossary)

Performance indicators or measures are pieces of information expressed as an index, rate or other comparison, with one or more criteria and monitored at regular intervals. They must relate to the vision and focus on describing progress in strategy implementation.

4.9 Management Arrangements and Stakeholder Responsibilities

It is important to discuss and reach agreement between all the people actively involved in the weed strategy on the roles and responsibilities of all parties concerned. This will minimise the possibility of duplication of effort and omissions from the work program, at the same time conflicts that may arise through misunderstandings over jurisdictional responsibilities will be prevented. Whilst resolution of these issues may appear to be straight forward, in some cases it may be necessary to get rulings from senior personnel in responsible agencies to ensure that the roles and responsibilities are supported by "on the ground" action in the agreed time frames.

The determination of roles and responsibilities should also include an understanding of the resources required and the long term commitment that would usually be involved. It would also be useful to gain written agreement from major stakeholders on their input.

An organisational chart that shows the relationships of the various participants could be included as an appendix to the strategy, accompanied by summaries of the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders.

4.9.1 National approach

This section outlines the involvement, (both current and future) of the main jurisdictions and landmanagers, including their level of commitment to solving the problem. This is where the value of national co-operation and co-ordination will be evident, showing the value of the strategy.

4.10 Appendices

Appendices should be used to provide levels of detail that would otherwise clutter the strategy document. They contain information that is important to the formulation and implementation of the strategy, but not critical to the understanding of the goals and management strategies.

4.10.1 Sources of funds and budget

An overall budget showing the sources and application of funds allocated to each goal and management strategy. This should also show any shortfall and indicate possible external funds being sought.

4.10.2 Roles and responsibilities

It is vital that all organisations actively involved in the project define their role, responsibility and commitment to implementing the strategy. This should also include an outline of the work to be undertaken and the funding sources available.

4.10.3 Management structure

Roles and responsibilities for managing and implementing the strategy could be described, using an organisational chart, tables or lists showing higher levels of detail.

4.11 Figures and tables

Tables and figures can be included as appendices or in the body of the report, depending on their purpose. As a matter of principle they are best sited adjacent to the supporting text.

5 Project Management

These strategies entail the expenditure of large sums of money, in the form of cash or in kind support. Therefore it is vital that processes be put in place to monitor expenditure, schedule work, monitor progress and allocate responsibilities. It is most appropriate that sound project management principles and procedures be adopted and applied in a similar manner to those used in the construction and civil engineering industries where multi million dollar investments are also made.

6 Weeds of National Significance Species Committees

Each weed of national significance has a lead agency and committee of interested States and Territories which are responsible for developing species strategies. A model terms of reference for these committees is included at appendix 1, but it must be recognised that these will be varied by the committees concerned to meet their specific needs.

7 Example Strategies

Completed strategies can be found on the Weeds Australia web page at www.weeds.org.au under each weed of national significance, where each strategy is posted once it reaches the discussion draft stage. Consequently these strategies will become available progressively over some months as strategy development progresses.

Appendix 1

Weeds of National Significance Implementation Committees

Model Terms of Reference

Provide the national management framework for (specific weed) as a Weed of National Significance, and advise the NWSEC on progress. In particular, to:

- (a) provide guidance, direction and policy advice for the management of (specific weed) through the implementation of a National strategy and action plan;
- (b) plan and facilitate action on the following key issues through the development and implementation of:
 - (i) programs to reduce the impact of established infestations of (specific weed);
 - (ii) programs to detect, evaluate, monitor and control new outbreaks of (specific weed);
 - (iii) programs to manage existing infestations, to prevent the spread of (specific weed) to new areas;
 - (iv) procedures to monitor and evaluate the progress being made in managing (specific weed);
 - (v) a regular review process that evaluates the (specific weed) Strategy and to identify opportunities for improvement;
- (c) oversee the preparation of annual budgets, identify funding sources and make applications consistent with the needs of the strategy.

Glossary

Vision (Outcome)

A short easily remembered, clear inspirational statement about the aim of the project that is realistic and credible.

The point at which we aim

The Challenge

The purpose of the project, including what it has been established to accomplish, weed impacts, key management factors, and an outline of the potential distribution (approximately 2 paragraphs).

Goals

High level results to be achieved by the project

Objectives

Targets or aims that the project must reach in order for it to achieve the goals. Converts goals into specific outcomes and concrete terms against which results can be measured.

They are:

Specific
Measurable
Action focused
Realistic
Timely

Strategies

A plan of action or policy which will be completed in order to achieve the objective.

Actions

Specific tasks undertaken to achieve the strategies that contribute to the success of the overall project.

Tactics

The plans and means adopted in carrying out the project.

Performance Indicators

A piece of important and useful information relating to the vision, expressed as an index, rate or other comparison, with one or more criteria and monitored at regular intervals.

Check List

Use this sheet to check that key strategy sections have been addressed.
Desirable report length 6-12 pages for Standing Committees.

- Vision
- 2. Significance of Strategy (the challenge).....
- 3. Executive Summary.....
- 4. Key Outcomes
- 5. Process Followed and Stakeholder Involvement
- 6. Background
 - 6.1 Biology of the Weed (key elements)
 - 6.2 History of Spread (key elements)
- 7. Strategic Plan.....
 - 7.1 Relevance to Other Strategies.....
 - 7.2 Goals, Objectives and Strategies
 - 7.3 Management Strategies.....
 - 7.4 Prioritised key actions and responsible party.....
- 8. Monitoring and Evaluation Methodology
 - 8.1 Performance Indicators
- 9. Appendices
 - Sources of funds and budget overview.....
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Management structure.....
- 10. Named Project Manager