

# NATIONAL WEEDS ADVISORY GROUP

## COMMUNIQUÉ 2

The second meeting of the National Weeds Advisory Group was held in Canberra on 27 September 2005. The National Weeds Advisory Group's role is to provide advice to the Hon Ian Macdonald, Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation, and the Hon Ian Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, on the management and directions of the 'Defeating the Weed Menace' programme. The programme will invest \$40 million over four years and targets the most threatening and invasive weeds through research, biological control, community awareness and action.

At its second meeting, the National Weeds Advisory Group considered three main issues.

### Implementation of the Defeating the Weeds Menace Programme

The Group noted that a first round of 36 projects has been funded. A report on progress for the first six months' of activity will be made to the next meeting of the Group.

A second call for projects has recently been made and the Group provided the following advice for the expert assessment panel on the weightings that should be given to eligibility and evaluation criteria for assessing the project proposals received from the call.

As a minimum, a project should meet at least one of the DWM programme objectives.

All eligibility criteria are to be considered with equal weight and include that the project proposal:

- is consistent with the objectives in the National Weeds Strategy;
- is consistent with national, state/territory or regional weed management strategies;
- is consistent with long-term outcomes, high public benefit, solutions and/or resolution to the issue;
- includes future preventative measures; and,
- includes the advice of a Weeds of National Significance or State weed Coordinator.

Evaluation criteria with a high priority weighting include project proposals that:

- include future preventative measures (high ratio of benefits to costs);
  - provide long-term outcomes, solutions and/or resolution to the issue (high ratio of benefits to costs); and
  - for cross regional projects – demonstrate that the project is complementing work undertaken by appropriate natural resource management regional organisations or providing leadership in weed management.
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Evaluation criteria with lower priority weightings include project proposals that:

- address the causes of the problem rather than the symptoms (high ratio of benefits to costs); and
- for cross regional projects – provide a matching or better level of contribution from the proponent.

## Research and development

The Group considered a draft research and development strategy report prepared by the CRC for Weed Management and commissioned through Land and Water Australia. The Group noted that the proposed coverage was beyond the scope of the DWM Programme. Accordingly, the Group proposes to develop a more coordinated and targeted approach to weeds research in Australia. Members will consider further the draft strategy before providing advice on the most important investment priorities to be supported by the research and development component of the DWM Programme.

The Group supports in-principle the priorities identified in the draft strategy. These include:

- reducing the rate of emergence of new weed problems;
- reducing the impact of existing weed problems of national priority; and,
- supporting national frameworks and capacity for sustainable weed management.

The Group also supports a coordinated approach to weeds research in Australia, such as the model provided by the CRC for Australian Weed Management.

## National communications strategy

A draft communications strategy for the DWM Programme was considered. The aim of the strategy is to raise community awareness, skills, knowledge, motivation, commitment and confidence about weed control and management, and to inform the public about the Defeating the Weeds Menace programme. The strategy identifies a range of activities including:

- establishing support and extension services;
- development of new information products;
- increasing the use of the internet communication on weeds issues;
- enhancing partnerships with key stakeholders; and,
- national advertising campaign.

There was general support for national communications activities which included a substantial investment to raise public awareness on weeds.

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The Group identified the need for appropriate activities to underpin a national campaign, believing that as people are motivated to act on weeds there also needs to be clear ways for them to make a difference.

The Group identified that there is also a need for a national resource centre/portal to better coordinate and disseminate information to assist improved understanding and awareness of weeds issues in Australia. Such a tool may be a national resource centre/portal for weeds resources to assist in improving understanding and awareness of weeds issues in Australia.

## Other matters

The National Weeds Advisory Group and the Australian Weeds Committee have established formal communications links to ensure that there is consistency in the work of both groups and to identify synergies to increase the effectiveness of the DWM and other national programmes and activities.

The National Weeds Advisory Group noted that all State and Territory governments have made commitments to ban the sale of Weeds of National Significance within their jurisdictions.

The next meeting of the National Weeds Advisory Group will be held in Canberra on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2005.

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