

**Weed Management Review
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
SYDNEY NSW 2001
3 December 2013**

Review of Weeds Management in NSW

I am providing this submission on behalf of the Sutherland Group of the Australian Plants Society to inform the review of weeds management in NSW.

The Australian Plants Society is an active community organisation which aims to foster support for and promote the preservation and conservation of Australian native plants. Sutherland Group is a long-established, active community group with members committed to conserving Australian native plants in the Sutherland Shire.

Many of our members are bushcare volunteers with Sutherland Shire Council, and also volunteer with the Friends of the Royal National Park, undertaking weed control to help preserve our unique flora and fauna habitats.

The writer of this submission, Conservation Officer for Sutherland Group, is an ecological consultant with experience in the drafting of vegetation assessments and vegetation management plans.

The Sutherland Group wishes to make the following points:

1. Restrict sale of weed species

We are concerned about the continuing sale of exotic plants that have been documented as weeds either in NSW or other parts of Australia. We believe more stringent controls and enforcement are needed to monitor the sale of specific exotic plants, especially those which have been documented as having weed potential worldwide. At times, the sale of 'weedy plants' is reported from large mainstream nurseries. We would also like to encourage the Commission to engage more strongly with horticultural groups including horticultural media. This may include, for example, the ABC Gardening Australia show and magazine, who at times deliver very mixed messages on the cultivation of weeds and other dubious exotic species.

2. Monitor weed control and provide training to volunteers

Long-term monitoring with robust data collection on weed control is still infrequently or poorly used among many bushcare or landcare groups. Monitoring techniques, consisting of, for eg, transect data with photographs, provide very useful records on methods that may be more efficient and or effective for specific weeds. We suggest that local government provide monitoring training for their bushcare volunteers to increase the skills of bushcare practitioners. A standardised method of weed control monitoring should also be adopted and promoted throughout NSW. The BioBanking vegetation survey methodology could one such potential standard, which is effective at capturing groundlayer species prevalence, as well as native canopy regeneration.

3. Review listing of noxious weed species to include other damaging weeds

We note that many of the declared noxious weeds are rarely encountered in the Sydney Basin. We believe some noxious weeds listings require reconsideration, whilst it is acknowledged that it is not always practical to list all weeds as noxious (NSW DPI Primefact Sheet 254, January 2008). In a typical Sydney flora assessment, a review of declared noxious weeds will reveal about approximately 90 to 110 species for any Sydney local government area. Yet, on average, only about four of these species will be found on any given site, despite up to 40 or 50 exotic species being recorded on the average disturbed Sydney bushland site. Conversely, the most commonly abundant weeds that are often the most damaging to endangered ecological communities are often not listed as noxious for many local councils. Examples include African Love Grass (*Eragrostis curvula*) and African Olive (*Olea europaea* subsp. *cuspidata*), amongst others, that are not listed for several key councils where Cumberland Plain Woodland is present. Therefore, there is a reduction in the emphasis placed on the identification and targeting of the most damaging weeds affecting endangered ecological communities. We suggest a more consistent approach from local government authorities to the same weed species where the same endangered ecological communities are present.

4. Encourage more research into ecological weeds

Sutherland Group would like to encourage the Commission to foster more research of ecological weeds, especially the species having large-scale detrimental impacts on native ecosystems. Research should ideally be directed towards trial control mechanisms and gathering more information regarding efficient and best practice follow-up works. The establishment of a government monitored weed discussion forum (electronic) may assist in the gathering and dissection of useful weed information on identification, risk ratings, methods of spread and suitable control methods which may be of great assistance to the local gardener and/or land owner.

5. Encourage weed control on private land through incentives

Sutherland Group supports incentives and mechanisms for the control of weeds on private land, and would like the Review to encourage authorities to develop such initiatives. An example of this is the Sutherland Shire Council Green Web Program where Council funding and other assistance is granted to private residents in designated locations for weed removal.

Sutherland Group strongly believes that weed control is extremely important for the preservation of our native vegetation ecosystems and unique flora species.

We ask the Natural Resource Commission to consider our views in the Review of Weeds Management in NSW.

Yours sincerely,

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