



Inquiry into the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland

This paper

This paper provides background information about the Agriculture and Environment Committee's inquiry and how to participate.

The inquiry

The committee has resolved to investigate and report on the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland. The committee is undertaking this inquiry in accordance with s.92(1)(d) of the [Parliament of Queensland Act 2001](#). The committee proposes to report on the inquiry by mid-2017.

Terms of reference

The committee will investigate and report to Parliament on the impacts of invasive plants (weeds) and their control in Queensland, particularly whether:

- the responsibilities of local governments in relation to the control of prohibited, restricted and invasive plants imposed under s.48 of the *Biosecurity Act 2014* are reasonable, and local governments are meeting those obligations
- programs for the control of weeds on Crown land administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines are effective
- Biosecurity Queensland's weeds programs, including biological controls and new technologies, are adequately funded and effective at controlling weeds
- environmental programs administered by Department of Environment and Heritage Protection impact favourably on weed control programs administered by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and local governments, and
- federal, state and local government weeds programs are coordinated to maximise their achievements and to have a whole of government approach.

Case studies

As it is not possible to examine government programs for all weeds, the committee has resolved to examine the impact of three invasive plant species as case studies for the inquiry:

- prickly acacia
- Giant rat's tail grass, and
- fireweed.

Weeds

For the purposes of the inquiry, weeds are species of plants set out in Schedules 1 and 2 of the [Biosecurity Act 2014](#). Because of their lack of biological controls in Australia, these species have the potential to affect ecosystems by causing the extinction of native species and degrading ecological processes. They also reduce primary industry productivity by approximately \$4 billion per year across Australia.¹

Prickly acacia



Prickly acacia (*Vachellia nilotica*) was introduced into Queensland for shade and fodder for stock. However, it has proven to interfere with mustering, movement of stock and access to water. In addition, trees have been shown to reduce grass production by out-competing fodder crops for water, and to increase the cost and difficulty of bore drain maintenance.

Mechanical control measures are complicated by trees' habit of growing on the banks of waterways, and biological controls have proven an incomplete solution. Some herbicides have been used to good effect.²

Giant rat's tail grass



Giant rat's tail grass (*Sporobolus pyramidalis* and *Sporobolus natalensis*) entered Australia as a contaminant in pasture seed. It is now endemic in areas of eastern Australia. It is unpalatable to stock when mature, and out-compete native species, coming to rapidly dominate pastures. No biological control for the grass exists. Management strategies currently consist solely of glyphosate and flupropanate sprays.³

Fireweed



Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*) is scattered across various regions of Queensland, particularly the south-east. Fireweed competes strongly with pasture grasses and is toxic to livestock.

Fireweed can easily be mistaken for closely related, native species, particularly coast groundsel and *Senecio brigalowensis*. *Senecio brigalowensis* is increasingly abundant and weedy in central Queensland from Roma to Rockhampton, and also causes cattle poisoning.

Mechanical and biological controls have proven to be minimally effective. Herbicide spraying is also difficult to implement, as the weed often goes unnoticed until

flowering. After this point, twice as much herbicide is required, and the weed is frequently able to re-grow.⁴

Committee Members

Mr Glenn Butcher MP, Member for Gladstone (Chair)
Mr Tony Perrett MP, Member for Gympie (Deputy Chair)
Mrs Julieanne Gilbert MP, Member for Mackay
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References

- ¹ Sinden, J, Jones, R, Hester, S, Odom, D, Kalsich, C, James, R and Cacho, O, 2004: *The economic impact of weeds in Australia*, CRC for Australian Weed Management Technical Series no. 8, Adelaide.
- ² Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2016: *Prickly acacia fact sheet*, Queensland Government, Brisbane.
- ³ Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2016: *Rat's tail grasses fact sheet*, Queensland Government, Brisbane.
- ⁴ Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2016: *Fireweed fact sheet*, Queensland Government, Brisbane.

How to get involved

The committee welcomes public participation in their work.

Register your interest

You can [subscribe](#) to receive regular email updates about the work of the Agriculture and Environment Committee, including updates about this inquiry.

We will notify you of dates and venues for the committee's public meetings and hearings for the inquiry.

Make a written submission

The committee invites written submissions on any issues that are relevant to the inquiry. The inquiry terms of reference explain what the committee will consider.

[Guidelines](#) on making submissions are available from the committee's webpages or by calling the committee's secretariat staff.

Written submissions should be **posted** to:

**Research Director
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House QLD 4000**

or **faxed** to 07 355 36699

or **emailed** to: aec@parliament.qld.gov.au

Submissions close on 16 January 2017.