

What is the future of established weed management in Australia?

Weeds cost Australia over \$5 billion¹ each year in agricultural impacts and control costs. Whilst harder to quantify, we also know weeds degrade natural ecosystems, threatening the future of many native plants and animals. Significant investment is directed at weed prevention, eradication and containment in addition to the management of widespread weeds. With approximately 20 new weed species establishing in Australia every year² the scale of the problem is great and ongoing management of established weeds is critical. The question is what is the most strategic and sustainable approach?

Wild Matters has been contracted by the Australian Government to develop a National Established Weed Priorities (NEWP) framework, building on and learning from the Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) initiative. The aim is a revitalized, long term, strategic approach to reducing the spread and impacts of established weeds. Working with the Environment and Invasives Committee's Weed Working Group, Wild Matters is engaging with stakeholders in weed management from the local to the national level. The aim is to deliver a co-designed national program that takes account of regional priorities and systems and integrates with broader land management issues and actions.

The history of established weed management

The WoNS initiative began in 1999 and over time 32 WoNS became the “flagship” for national established weed management. Many gains were made across Australia to reduce the spread and impacts of these priority weeds, however after twenty years the WoNS initiative has lost momentum. The partnership approach between governments, industry and community has declined and leadership and coordination has been lacking. Additionally, the value of a single species focus has been questioned as the best way to deliver outcomes for the wide range of established weeds across Australia.

Developing a new approach

Wild Matters reviewed the WoNS initiative in 2020 and proposed a new approach to national weed management in the report [National Established Weed Priorities – Towards a National Framework](#). The report outlined the future of Weeds of National Significance (WoNS), as well as proposing a new strategic concept – Weed Issues of National Significance (WINS). A mechanism was also suggested to collate and address priority outstanding actions for the current 32 WoNS, plus other discrete national weed management actions, in a National Established Weeds Action List (NEWAL).



Co-designing the way forward

Further detail is now required on framework elements, including agreed outcomes and principles, governance and decision-making, WoNS and WINS nomination and assessment, strategic planning, monitoring progress, resourcing and coordinated implementation from national to local scales.

Stakeholder views will be sought through a range of local, state/territory and national consultations including workshops, round tables and one-on-one conversations. This will inform a more detailed draft of the framework, which will be available online in early 2022 for formal comment. The framework will then be further revised before being presented to the Environment and Invasives Committee as a final draft for endorsement.

In 2022 Wild Matters will also focus on components of an implementation plan for the framework, including a priority issue/weed nominations process, communications, a national coordinator model, a national steering committee, strategic plan templates and program co-investment options.

We want to hear from you

We want to hear what works and what doesn't work in strategically tackling established weeds from local to national scales. We also want to understand your broader land management concerns and how this influences how you manage established weeds.

Wild Matters is seeking views and insights on the framework from a diverse range of people and organisations involved in weed management across Australia, including:

- on-ground control programs, policy and research, development and engagement
- agriculture, natural ecosystems, Indigenous lands, forestry and aquatic systems
- tropical, rangeland and temperate regions.

Diverse stakeholder input is critical to creating a process that will have the greatest benefits across Australia. We want to hear your thoughts, so please get in touch with the project team.

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¹ McLeod, R (2018) Annual Costs of Weeds in Australia. Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, Canberra.

² CSIRO (2020) Australia's Biosecurity Future: Unlocking the next decade of resilience (2020–2030), Canberra.