

Developing a National Established Weed Priorities framework

What is the future of established weed management in Australia?

FRAMEWORK STATUS UPDATE – 13 AUGUST 2021

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The Environment and Invasives Committee’s Weed Working Group has initiated the development of a National Established Weed Priorities (NEWP) framework, building on and learning from the Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) initiative.

[Wild Matters Pty Ltd](#) has been appointed by the Australian Government to work with the Weeds Working Group in bringing the framework to fruition.

The aim of the framework is a revitalised, long term, strategic approach to reducing the spread and impacts of established weeds across Australia.



A proposed National Established Weed Priorities framework

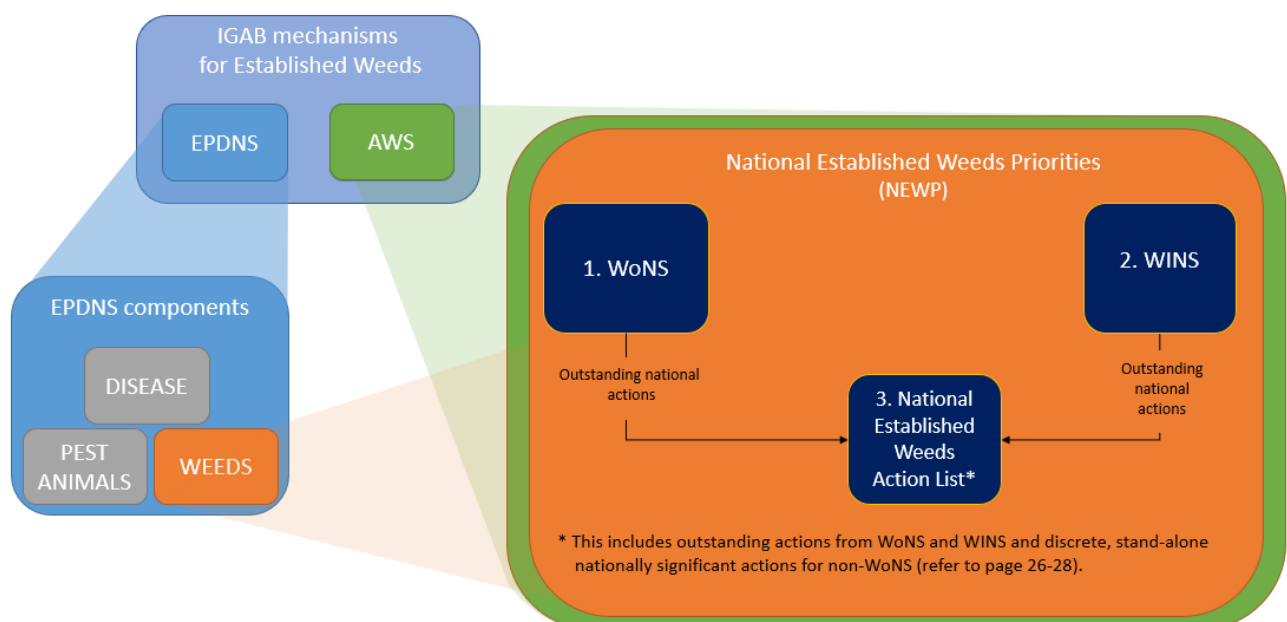
The framework is being developed under Goal 2 of the [Australian Weeds Strategy 2017 – 2027](#), which seeks to minimise the impact of established weeds.

The framework also needs to align with the National Biosecurity Committee’s [National Framework for the Management of Established Pests and Diseases of National Significance](#) (EPDNS Framework).

Wild Matters reviewed twenty years of the WoNS initiative and proposed a new approach to national weed management in the report [National Established Weed Priorities – Towards a National Framework](#).

The report proposed developing a National Established Weed Priorities (NEWP) framework that consists of the following components (diagram below from page 18 of the report):

- Weeds of National Significance (WoNS)
- Weed Issues of National Significance (WINS)
- National Established Weeds Action List (NEWAL)



Feedback and updates so far on the draft NEWP framework...

Weeds Working Group held open invitation national online workshops on 9-10 March 2021 and a follow-up online survey in May 2021, which together provided nearly 750 comments on the proposed framework and its elements. Based on this feedback, some *revisions*, *additions to* and *comments* on the framework are given below and will be integrated into the next version of the framework. Further feedback will be sought in the fourth quarter of 2021, through a range of local, state/territory and national workshops, round tables and one-on-one conversations.

Vision

Feedback included the need for relevance at the local level, to be outcomes focused, to cover both agricultural and environmental weeds, to consider capacity building that drives practice change, to include prevention and to stress collaboration.

Working draft vision statement:

Landholders, communities, industry, researchers and government routinely collaborating to address established weed priorities at local, regional, state/territory and national levels, aiming to strategically, practically and sustainably prevent the spread and reduce the impacts of established weeds on industries, the environment and people.

Outcomes

Having short, medium and long-term outcomes expands on the vision to give more clarity on what the NEWP framework would set out to achieve. Workshop and survey feedback has informed the following:

Proposed short-term outcomes:

- *National governance has been established to oversight the implementation of the NEWP framework.*
- *Stakeholders have agreed to collaborate under the NEWP framework, including all State/Territory and the Australian government [and other stakeholders?]*
- *National priorities regarding weeds, weed issues and required actions have been determined, with a process for regular review.*
- *Strategic plans have been developed for priority weeds, weed issues and other consolidated priority actions.*
- *A Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) plan has been prepared, including specific targets and accountabilities.*
- *Clarity has been given on future expected activities and actions regarding each of the 32 Weeds of National Significance.*

Proposed medium-term outcomes:

- Stakeholders have formed partnerships to develop and implement specific projects and programs, as deliverables under the NEWP framework.
- Coordination and networks have enhanced weed management communication, learning and shared activity from national to local levels.
- Land holder/manager capacity and drive to undertake weed control is built through access to new tools, best practice management information and local expertise.
- Implementation of action plans at regional, local and property scales are achieving strategic, landscape-level control programs for established weed priorities.
- Government and industry biosecurity policies and procedures provide a supportive regulatory environment for managing established weeds.

Proposed long-term outcomes:

- The future entry, spread and impacts of priority established weeds not present in regions are averted through ongoing prevention, local eradication and containment activities.
- Substantially reduced economic, environmental and social impacts and costs of control for priority established weeds present in regions.
- A culture of shared responsibility and common ownership of established weed problems drives ongoing collective actions and innovation.

Principles

The Australian Weeds Strategy and the EPDNS framework each have seven principles which are all applicable to the NEWP framework. These include principles relating to shared responsibility, evidence-based decision-making, prioritisation, coordination, prevention, asset-based protection, research, collaboration, strategic planning and regular review. Additional draft principles of the NEWP framework, based on workshop and survey feedback, are proposed:

- 1) National established weed priorities need to take state/territory, regional, local and industry weed management objectives into consideration, recognising that priorities can differ.
- 2) Established weed management is primarily undertaken at the local level and this needs to be taken account of in NEWP framework planning, implementation and review.
- 3) Utilising, aligning with and partnering across existing frameworks, systems, programs, plans and structures in the implementation of the NEWP framework can bring synergies to increase effectiveness and efficiency of achieving outcomes.
- 4) Often there is a requirement to manage multiple weeds and other threats in an integrated manner to protect an asset.
- 5) Sustained resourcing is required over multiple years to successfully manage weed infestations and achieve long-term reductions in impacts.
- 6) Control tools developed need to be practical and cost effective for ready uptake by land managers.
- 7) Established weed priorities should be subject to regular review, with flexibility to change priorities according to emerging needs or risks, feasibility of actions to be achieved and benefits of reallocating available resources.

Scope/Scale

- The EPDNS framework provides for a broad scope of established weeds potentially targeted in implementing the NEWP framework, ranging from those widely established in many jurisdictions across Australia down to an emerging species in one region that is not feasible to eradicate and has potential to expand its range nationally.
- Such weeds could be posing current or future nationally significant impacts to agricultural industries, natural ecosystems, Indigenous lands, forestry, aquatic systems, public amenity, infrastructure and/or people.
- The types of actions covered under NEWP that are required to prevent and reduce establish weed impacts are broad and will be determined through strategic and action planning from national to local levels. Actions within scope include coordination, research, development and extension (RD&E), spread prevention, on-ground weed control, communications and stakeholder engagement, development of and training in best practice management, government and industry policy, risk assessment, impact assessment, mapping and monitoring and evaluation.
- The framework is being designed for the long-term, with the intention of it being a key driver of collaborative action across Australia in addressing established weed priorities for the next 10 years and beyond. However, continuation would be subject to regular review, measured progress in addressing priorities and ongoing stakeholder support.
- Stakeholders are broad, covering community, industry, government and RD&E at local, regional, state/territory and national scales.

WoNS

WoNS remains a well-known brand and an important driver of weed management programs, albeit with some challenges that have arisen in recent years due to the stop/start nature of funding sources and national coordination. The framework is seeking to define the future national coordination needs of the existing 32 WoNS with a view to freeing up resources for new WoNS. Workshop and survey feedback on transitioning WoNS included:

- *The proposed reference to the current 32 WoNS as ‘legacy’ was not supported as the term can be interpreted to have negative connotations (e.g. sounds like it’s an old issue, or a hangover from the past). Use phases instead, as has been done previously for WoNS.*
- *“Once a WoNS always a WoNS”. Whilst there may have been considerable national effort and coordination to build capacity to control the weed (e.g. new control tools, best practice management guidelines), on-ground control programs will continue to be required at the regional/local level to prevent spread and reduce impacts.*
- *Transition needs to be based on having actually achieved implementation of a WoNS strategic plan, not on an arbitrary timeframe. Timeframes will vary between WoNS depending on biology, maturity of best practice control tools, seasonal conditions, stakeholder collaborations and resourcing of strategic plan implementation. Transition should be a transparent and consultative process.*

WINS

There was strong support for the Weed Issues of National Significance concept. Comments included:

- *Selecting priority issues will need to avoid being too broad just for the sake of being inclusive. A tightly defined and achievable set of strategic actions should be identified for implementation across Australia.*
- *Weed management under WINS should be multi-species and landscape scale in approach.*
- *Examples of potential WINS given included conflict species, riparian and aquatic systems, sustainable herbicide usage, invasive garden plants, climate change, fire, compliance, control tools development, social dimensions of weed management and sleeper established weeds.*

NEWAL

Feedback on the National Established Weed Action List included:

- *Preference for a simpler name such as the 'Action List'. Need for better clarity on how it is distinct from and interacts with WoNS and WINS strategic plans.*
- *The list would provide a flexible mechanism to assist with WoNS transition and completion of strategic plans.*
- *Actions on the list need to be discrete and with a definitive end-point of completion.*
- *The process needs to be clear on how actions would get onto the list and how old (e.g. from an existing WoNS strategic plan) versus new (e.g. a non-WoNS which would benefit from biocontrol research) actions are prioritised.*

Coordinated Implementation

Ways of implementing the framework are in the early stages of development and stakeholder feedback will progressively be sought as more detail is developed. Comments received to date include:

- *Community and industry must be involved in a transparent process for the nomination, assessment and selection of new WoNS and WINS.*
- *Need clear delineation of management end-points for WoNS, WINS and NEWAL. These need to be within a MERI framework that regularly measures and communicates progress and achievements.*
- *Any co-ordinated national initiative must be underpinned with consistent regional and local compliance.*
- *In addition to national priorities, regional and local weed priorities need to be taken into account and enabled under the framework.*
- *Implementation should utilise or at least align with and partner across existing frameworks, systems, programs and structures*

Specifically on coordinators:

- *Coordinator roles are highly valued, from the national strategic level to the local on-ground level.*
- *Their roles should include:*
 - *Development and implementation of action plans, working with existing state/territory, regional and local weed/land management plans and stakeholder groups.*
 - *Fostering networks of weed managers interacting with scientific experts and broader land managers.*
 - *Education, training and empowerment at the local level, coupled with regular check-ins, prompting and constructive feedback.*
 - *Fostering policy and program consistency between state/territories and between regions in strategic management of weeds*
 - *Improving links between landholders, technical experts and potential funding streams.*
 - *Giving and building technical oversight of weed control projects.*
 - *Driving participation.*

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