



CLARENCE ENVIRONMENT CENTRE

29-31 Skinner Street

South Grafton 2460

Phone/ Fax: 02 6643 1863

Web site: www.cec.org.au

E-mail: admin@cec.org.au

Date:

SUBMISSION

to

Industry & Investment NSW

Attn Ms Marion Bennett

Branch Support Officer

on

Statutory Review of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 - Issues Paper

From. The Clarence Environment Centre

Author: John Edwards

Honorary Secretary

john.edwards.ncec@gmail.com

Statutory Review of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993

Dear Sir/Madam

Foreword:

It is widely acknowledged that introduced weeds are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity that we currently face. In that respect it must also be acknowledged that a healthy vibrant biodiverse environment is a vital necessity for ensuring the ongoing existence of the human race itself.

In his Foreword to the recently exhibited review of the Threatened Species Conservation Act, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Frank Sartor, wrote: *"Biodiversity provides us with important economic benefits. It helps us to access clean water and air, healthy soils, food and medicinal resources; to resist disease; and to adaptively respond to threats such as climate change. Nature's plants and animals are an intrinsic part of our land and culture and we have a responsibility and a strong interest in their conservation. Key industries, including agriculture, fisheries, biotechnology and tourism, depend on it.*

Loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems are occurring globally and locally. Over 20% of the world's mammal, reptile, bird, amphibian and fish species assessed so far have been found to be threatened with extinction."

With this in mind, the Clarence Environment Centre wishes to stress what we see as weaknesses in the current battle against invasive weeds. We accept that some of these issues are not directly addressed by the Act, but believe the framework should nevertheless encompass these issues because, if not addressed, the fight against weed invasion is lost before it even begins.

The Act, and apparent anomalies with its implementation"

Any legislation is only as good as its implementation by the relevant regulatory authority. In the case of noxious weeds, a landowner is required under the law to control them. However, without doubt, the worst areas of weed invasion across NSW include State Forests, National Parks, Council owned land, roadsides, power lines, and rail corridors.

Weed invasion frequently spreads from these government controlled areas onto private property where the property owner can be forced to eradicate it at their own expense, while no such requirement appears to apply to those agency neighbours, with their weeds remaining uncontrolled to reinfest.

What constitutes a weed, and at what stage should it be declared?

It is our firm belief that weeds that have the potential to cause major environmental damage are not only those that have been introduced from overseas.

The case of the North Queensland Cadagi Gum is a classic example. Heavily promoted and introduced by the then Forestry Commission in the 1980s as a shade tree, the Cadagi Gum was found to cross pollinate with local Spotted Gums. The long-term impact this will have on the timber industry (Spotted Gums are an important timber species, while the Cadagi is useless for timber) are yet to emerge, and nobody appears to be all that concerned at losing an important timber resource (mind you the timber industry has never been renowned for its forward looking).

A prolific seeder, the Cadagi Gum was soon observed to be establishing widely throughout bushland across northern NSW. These problems were reported as early as the early 1990s, at a time when sales could have been curtailed, and control measures relatively easy to introduce, but nothing was done, and 15 years on, Cadagi Gums are still being sold and no control action being considered.

We believe the Cadagi Gum has the potential to become a greater pest species than Camphor Laurel

In conclusion:

The Clarence Environment Centre firmly believes that weed control must be elevated to the top of the Government's list of priorities, with greatly increased funding and commitment across the board, especially on public land.

Any way that the Act can be set up to achieve this end must be fully explored.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment

Yours sincerely

John Edwards
Honorary Secretary