

CNG News

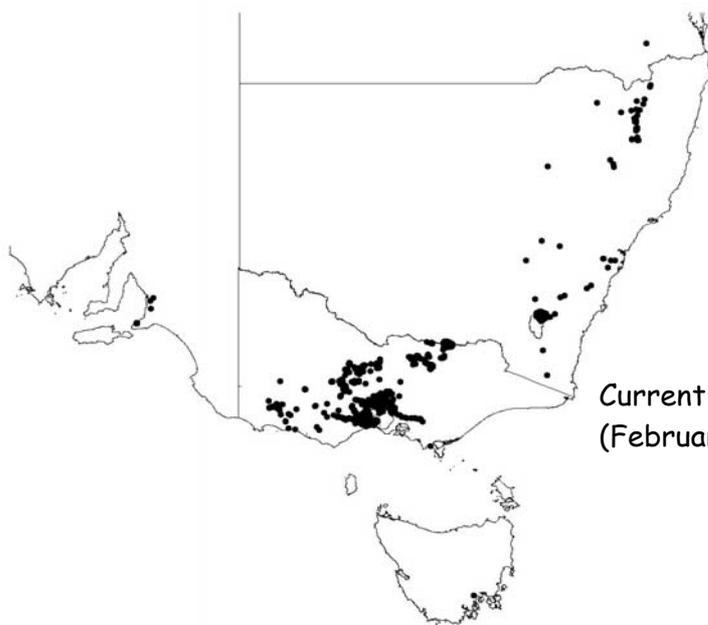
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Welcome

'Prevention is better and cheaper than cure'. Early detection and management of weeds is more likely to result in effective control and prevention of spread than well established weed problems. Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania have limited infestations of CNG as shown in the map below, and so have the opportunity to significantly hinder the spread of this weed throughout their jurisdictions. This issue of *CNG News* provides brief reports of the CNG situation in these three states, and what measures are being undertaken to combat the problem.

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Current Australian distribution of CNG (February 2005).

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CNG in Queensland

The first confirmed sighting of CNG in Queensland was a small infestation on a roadside in the Clifton Shire at Felton, near Toowoomba, in 1998. All plants were treated at that time.

In January 2005, this initial infestation site was checked for reinvasion, with six plants being found and treated.

In response to the reinvasion, officers from the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM) and surrounding local governments inspected the site and surrounding areas. As a result of the inspections, additional infestations were discovered in the Clifton Shire and the neighbouring shire of Warwick. Surveying of these areas is ongoing.

A large infestation was found at the Clifton Showgrounds (shown in the photo below). Protocols were put in place to minimise potential spread from the area, and an intensive regional education/awareness program was undertaken with local landholders, landcare groups, local government officers, regional Natural Resource Management groups, and other stakeholders including users of the showgrounds (eg. a local polo club).

DNRM have set up a local taskforce to develop a State Strategy for the management of CNG in Queensland. The strategy will cover the following aspects of CNG: biology, history of spread in Queensland, impacts and threats, legislative status, cost/benefit of control, education and awareness, prevention of spread, research and development, eradication, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholders roles and responsibilities, as well as an investment plan.



Photo: CNG infestation at the Clifton Showgrounds (February 2005).

CNG in South Australia

South Australia has only isolated known infestations of CNG. In 2004, 6190 hectares of land was surveyed on the Fleurieu Peninsula, resulting in the detection of approximately 14 hectares of CNG in four diverse locations. The infestations consist of individual or small clumps of plants with by far largest infestation occurring at Sunset Cove (formally Wirrina), a holiday resort in the south of the Peninsula. Two additional infestations in Jamestown in the states northwest and Lucindale in the southeast have been recorded by the States Herbarium. Follow up visits to these areas have not found any new evidence of the weed to date.

Management of the weed in South Australia is undertaken by the Stipoid Grass Weeds Working Group (SGWWG). This enthusiastic group consists of representatives from state government agencies, Animal and Plant Control Boards and community groups in the Greater Mount Lofty Ranges and metropolitan Adelaide. The SGWWG has completed a survey of known sites on the Fleurieu Peninsula and undertaken control work with the clear objective of eradicating the pest from the region. A detailed project summary report covering the group's activities for the period of 2003 - 2005 has recently been released. Copies can be obtained from the Project Coordinator, Martin Weidenbach (martin@fapcb.com.au).

The Sunset Cove site has occupied the bulk of the SGWWG's time over the past year. An application by the landowner to sell off weed infested land for a housing estate prompted a call from the SGWWG to develop of a management plan to counter the threat of spreading the weed. Private consultants undertook this work and recommendations from the report, including comments from the SGWWG, have been forwarded to the local council. The final decision on the fate of the project is still pending. In the meantime, the SGWWG continues to manage the infested site with a suitable herbicide.



Photo: Field survey at Sunset Cove (October 2003).

CNG in Tasmania

There is currently only one known outbreak of CNG in Tasmania, consisting of about 20 plants in a lawn in Hobart. This infestation highlights two important points: (1) that CNG is able to become established and recruit in Tasmania (the existing infestation has been there for at least five years); and (2) that CNG is apparently able to grow out of its primary climatic range in Tasmania, as predicted by Bioclim modelling (based on existing occurrences within mainland Australia).

Being an island state, a unique opportunity to limit the further introduction and spread of CNG exists in Tasmania. Firstly, the routes of introduction are likely to be more defined and limited in extent than on the mainland. The main points of entry are likely to be from feed and stock transported from existing infestations on the mainland, and through movement of vehicles, especially on ferries and other ships that frequent Devonport and Launceston. Recent inspection of these areas and the route south along the main highway to Hobart, revealed remnants of the once widespread Tasmanian temperate tussock grasslands. The remnants contain an abundance and diversity of native spear grasses under threat from possible CNG invasion.

As with most weeds, it is difficult to develop an adequate 'forward' strategy for controlling a weed before it has become a major problem for containment, let alone eradication. Although added to the recently prepared statewide action plan and the watch list of environment officers, detection of new infestations is most likely to occur through community environment and landcare groups, especially in the north. Providing these groups with information to aid identification will be important to ensuring a vigil 'eye' is kept on this potential invader.

The Tasmanian infestation of CNG has been included in a national seedbank sampling study, to gauge how easy it will be to eradicate infestations of this type in Tasmania.



Photo: University of Tasmania, site of the only known CNG infestation in Tasmania (May 2005).

Upcoming Events

2nd Biennial Weed Control Conference - Victoria (17-18th August 2005)

The Weed Society of Victoria will be holding its Second Biennial Weed Control Conference - 'Smart weed control managing for success' in Bendigo.

For further details contact Ros Shepherd on secwssv@surf.net.au .

13th Biennial Noxious Weeds Conference - NSW (20th-22nd September 2005)

The conference, to be held in Orange, is given the theme 'Weeds - the real cost'. It will include talks from a wide range of experts, and interactive workshops and seminars.

For further details contact Lyn Gough on lgough@orange.nsw.gov.au .

1st Tasmanian Weeds Conference (13th-14th October 2005)

The Tasmanian Weed Society is pleased to announce that the 1st Tasmanian State Weed Conference will be held in Launceston. The theme of the conference is 'A decade of change'.

For further details visit www.tasweeds.org/ .

Indigenous Grassland Management (September 2005)

Greening Australia run an accredited five session course covering all aspects of indigenous grassland management. Skills learnt will enable participants to recognise, protect and utilise indigenous grasses. Course held in the Benalla area.

For further details contact James Greenway (0427 554 025) or David Curry (0428 568 408).

4th National Native Grasses Conference (11th-13th October 2005)

The Stipa Native Grasses Association will host the National Native Grasses Conference to be held at historic Burra in South Australia. Seven aspects of native grass management will be discussed.

For further details contact Christine McCrae on cmcrae@hwy.com.au .

Defeating the Weed Menace

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries, with the support of the National CNG Taskforce, was successful in obtaining funding for a national CNG project through the first phase of the Australian Government's Defeating the Weed Menace program. The project will involve the development of a best practice management guide for CNG, containing information on its biology and ecology, management options for various situations, and real-life case studies.

A second call for project proposals under the program is expected in the very near future. Keep an eye on the NHT website (www.nht.gov.au) for further information on grants, application guides and forms, and selection criteria.