

WEEDS OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

**2012–17 addendum to the Weeds of
National Significance gorse (*Ulex
europaeus* L.) strategic plan**

This publication is produced as part of the Weeds of National Significance initiative, a joint initiative between the Commonwealth of Australia and each of the Australian states and territories.

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An unpublished draft of the revised strategic plan has guided national coordination of this Weed of National Significance for the past two years. Before publishing the revised plan, the Australian Weeds Committee altered it because some actions had been completed, and then agreed to include a uniform monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) template for all phase-3 Weeds of National Significance.

Supporting information about the Australian Weeds Strategy, Weeds of National Significance and progress to date may be found at www.weeds.org.au, where links and downloads provide contact details for all species and copies of the strategy. Comments and constructive criticism are welcome as an aid to improving the process and future revisions of this strategy.

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Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Strategic goals	2
2.1	Goal 1: Protect against, prevent spread of, and eradicate gorse in key areas	2
2.2	Goal 2: Strategically manage existing infestations	2
2.3	Goal 3: Increase capability and willingness to manage gorse	3
3	Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement framework	4
Appendix 1	The Weeds of National Significance initiative and its phases	8
	References.....	10

1 Introduction

In June 2010, the National Gorse Taskforce decided to revise the Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) Strategic Plan. The original document was published in 2003, and this revision is based predominantly on results of a 2009 review of the strategy implementation by the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC).

With the gorse project effectively reaching its concluding stages, it was decided revising and reproducing the entire document was an unnecessary use of time and resources. Consequently, the taskforce decided to revise the action component of the strategy.

In July 2010, the National Gorse Taskforce developed a summary of recommendations from the AWC 2009 *Review of the implementation of the Gorse Strategic Plan* and other sources, and held a national strategy revision meeting in Melbourne. Representatives of four states and the Australian Government attended the meeting; a fifth state representative was consulted subsequently. The meeting drafted a table of updated objectives and outstanding actions and tasks to be implemented over a 12-month period of near full-time coordination, and then part-time coordination beyond this.

In September 2010, the taskforce publically released an addendum to the 2003 WoNS Gorse Strategic Plan, which replaced Section 2 of that document. The 2010 addendum was the basis for this 2012 update that has been completed to guide phase three management of gorse (in line with other WoNS now in phase 3).

2 Strategic goals

Revised actions to manage gorse in Australia and minimise its social, economic and environmental impacts are described in Sections 2.1–2.3.

2.1 Goal 1: Protect against, prevent spread of, and eradicate gorse in key areas

The objectives and strategic actions to achieve goal 1 of the strategic plan and responsible partners for each action, are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Objectives and strategic actions to achieve goal 1 of the Gorse Strategic Plan 2012–17

Objectives	Strategic actions	Responsibility
1.1 Protect clean areas and promote early detection of new infestations	Create gorse awareness information and target information distribution to early detection areas	State agencies, regional bodies, local government, community groups
1.2 Eradicate isolated and scattered infestations	Maintain, review and manage MoUs through state and regional monitoring of eradication programs	MoU signatories, Australian Weeds Committee, state jurisdictions
	Promote research and the uptake and dissemination of research on eliminating gorse seed banks	State agencies, research bodies

MoU = memorandum of understanding

2.2 Goal 2: Strategically manage existing infestations

The objectives and strategic actions to achieve goal 2 of the strategic plan and responsible partners for each action, are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Objectives and strategic actions to achieve goal 2 of the Gorse Strategic Plan 2012–17

Objectives	Strategic actions	Responsibility
2.1 Identify key assets for protection and prioritise these nationally, jurisdictionally and regionally	Determine and publicise key national assets under threat from gorse, and promote control of gorse where threats to key assets exist	State agencies, regional bodies, local government, community
2.2 Biological control—distribute agents and facilitate research	Encourage stakeholder biocontrol agent distribution	State agencies, regional bodies, local government, community
	Facilitate investigation and pursuit of new and potential biocontrol agents and/or related needs	Research organisations

2.3 Goal 3: Increase capability and willingness to manage gorse

The objectives and strategic actions to achieve goal 3 of the strategic plan and responsible partners for each action, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Objectives and strategic actions to achieve goal 3 of the Gorse Strategic Plan 2012–17

Objectives	National actions	Responsibility
3.1 National collation and storage of spatial data	Engage with the national WoNS mapping program and collate existing gorse mapping for input to the system	State and territory agencies, Australian Government
	Encourage the uptake and use of the WoNS national mapping program	State and territory agencies, Australian Government, regional and local stakeholders
3.2 Adoption of best-practice management	Deliver best-practice information and implementation advice to states, regions, local government and the community	States, regional bodies, local government and community
	Promote weedmerical use/footage inclusion in key natural resource management or catchment management authority areas	Regional bodies
	Establish and provide new and updated best-practice management advice as required	State, regional and local weed management agencies
	Establish and provide information on techniques for restoring gorse-affected landscapes	State agencies, researchers, regional bodies, community groups
3.3 Outstanding gorse management achiever recognition	Recognise outstanding gorse control achievers through award presentations	State agencies

3 Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement framework

The Australian Weeds Strategy (NRMMC 2007) gives the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC) responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the management of national priority weeds, including WoNS. The AWC is therefore responsible for monitoring and reporting on progress under this strategic plan.

This strategic plan is subject to a five-year review; however, mechanisms must also be put in place to allow the goals and actions to be evaluated throughout this period. This enables ongoing assessment of progress towards intermediate and long-term outcomes, and, ultimately, helps to determine the effectiveness of individual actions. It also helps to identify program improvements, and provides evidence to stakeholders and funding bodies that they are getting value from their investment.

Individual jurisdictions and/or organisations responsible for weed management and conservation will need to develop their own monitoring strategies. They should, where possible, coordinate actions to implement this plan, and monitor and evaluate progress towards its goals in conjunction with existing state, regional or local plans. While individual actions should be monitored at the jurisdictional level, data or evidence collected as a part of state, regional and local activities or plans should be provided to the AWC and collated so that it can be assessed each year within the national context. This will help to build a comprehensive overview of the plan's delivery. Table 4 lists key evaluation questions that should be assessed by the AWC each year at the national level to ensure progress against strategy goals, and which should be used to provide the basis for an annual report to the AWC.

This monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework lists the basic reporting information that should be collected for the life of the strategic plan—including during phase 3 delivery (see Appendix 1). This will ensure that sufficient data are collected to identify successes and failures, and provide the opportunity for improvement where outcomes are not being achieved. Annual MERI plans may be developed to follow activities in more detail.

Although performance indicators or other ways of measuring progress are not provided in this strategic plan, a scoring system could be appropriate.

Table 4 Suggested monitoring and evaluation questions to measure progress under the phase 3 WoNS Gorse Strategic Plan 2012–17

WoNS:		Jurisdiction:	Date:
Goal	Key evaluation questions	Data or evidence required	Consider
1 Prevent new infestations from establishing	To what extent have new infestations been prevented from establishing?	1.1 National distribution data: Has the national distribution map been reviewed and/or updated? Has the Priority Management Action spreadsheet been updated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are these documents publicly available? • Have stakeholders been advised of any changes? • Where is this data or information stored? • Does this information capture national priorities?
		1.2 New infestations: Number of new infestations recorded Percentage of known infestations actively controlled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are any new infestations occurring in areas identified as a high priority in the national strategy? • How were infestations detected (passive or active surveillance, community reporting etc.)? • Have high-risk pathways been adequately identified? • Have threats been minimised?
		1.3 Eradication and containment programs: Percentage of eradication and/or containment programs being maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percentage of programs identified in the national strategy are being actively managed? • Is there a plan in place for ongoing management? • How is progress being monitored and reported to stakeholders? <p>(Examples using case studies can be included)</p>
		1.4 Legislation: Legislation or policy changes for this species Legislative change has been identified by stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What legislative changes have been made? • Are minimum requirements being maintained (e.g. ban on sale, trade, movement)? • Is control required throughout or in part of the jurisdiction? • Is compliance actively enforced?
			Score:

Table 4 *continued*

WoNS:		Jurisdiction:		Date:
Goal	Key evaluation questions	Data or evidence required	Consider	
2 Strategically manage existing infestations	To what extent is integrated weed management effectively managing core infestations?	2.1 Integrated weed management: Effectiveness of integrated weed management programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are existing tools providing adequate control of WoNS? Have new advances or technologies been developed and are they incorporated into best-practice management information? Are there barriers to adoption of best-practice management? Are research programs addressing any observed gaps (e.g. herbicide trials, biocontrol, restoration requirements post-control)? 	
	To what extent are assets being protected through strategic management?	2.2 Asset protection: Number of priority assets identified as 'at risk' from WoNS Percentage of priority assets being protected (e.g. assessed against relevant threat abatement plans) Percentage of state and regional invasive species plans that identify priority assets at risk from WoNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methods by which assets are being protected (e.g. targeted annual spray programs, high-risk pathway surveillance, strategic plans) Are long-term monitoring programs in place to detect change? To what extent is management leading to an improvement in asset condition? <p>(Response should include status report on progress towards asset-protection programs)</p>	
				Score:
3 Increase capability and commitment to manage WoNS	To what extent has the capability and commitment to manage WoNS increased?	3.1 Community engagement and awareness: What is the status of best-practice information? Are partnerships being maintained to ensure collaboration on WoNS? Number and type of media activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is best-practice information up to date and readily available? Is this information and/or advice being targeted to priority regions? Is training being delivered to meet the needs of weed managers (including the community)? Are networks and groups being supported (e.g. through dissemination of research outcomes, 	

Table 4 *continued*

WoNS:	Jurisdiction:	Date:	
Goal	Key evaluation questions	Data or evidence required	Consider
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> funding opportunities, control options etc.)? Has awareness and engagement in WoNS management been raised effectively?
		3.2 Resourcing: From what sources are programs being funded?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of projects funded by Australian Government, jurisdictions, industry, etc.
		3.3 Policy and planning: Are the objectives of the strategy being integrated into Australian Government/state/regional plans, policies and programs? Has cross-border collaboration occurred?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are priorities reflected in planning and policy approaches (e.g. weed risk assessments, invasive species plans, asset-protection plans, district plans, weed spread prevention activities, management programs, incentive programs, state working groups)? How are national priorities being maintained (e.g. containment lines, eradication targets, training and awareness raising, research projects)?
	Score:		
Continuous improvement	Are there any unexpected outcomes that have been identified through implementation of strategy?	Barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have any other management issues or impediments been identified? 	

WoNS = Weeds of National Significance

Scoring:

- 1: Insufficient evidence to score
- 2: No progress has been made against this goal
- 3: Limited progress is being made against this goal
- 4: Reasonable progress is being made against this goal
- 5: Excellent progress is being made against this goal

Appendix 1 The Weeds of National Significance initiative and its phases¹

In 2007, an independent review of the WoNS initiative concluded that the nationally strategic approach of WoNS was highly successful in leveraging consistent multijurisdictional activity on high-priority weed species. This initial review was followed by a detailed review of the inaugural WoNS species by the Australian Weeds Committee (AWC) in 2009–10. The AWC reviewed the implementation of the 20 WoNS national strategies and, in light of achievements for these 20 species, considered the capacity for national coordination of additional WoNS species.

Following the reviews, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (Resolution 15.7, 21 May 2009) endorsed a three-phased approach to national management of WoNS species (Figure 1). This ‘phased approach’ aims to provide the most cost-effective use of limited ‘national coordination’ resources.

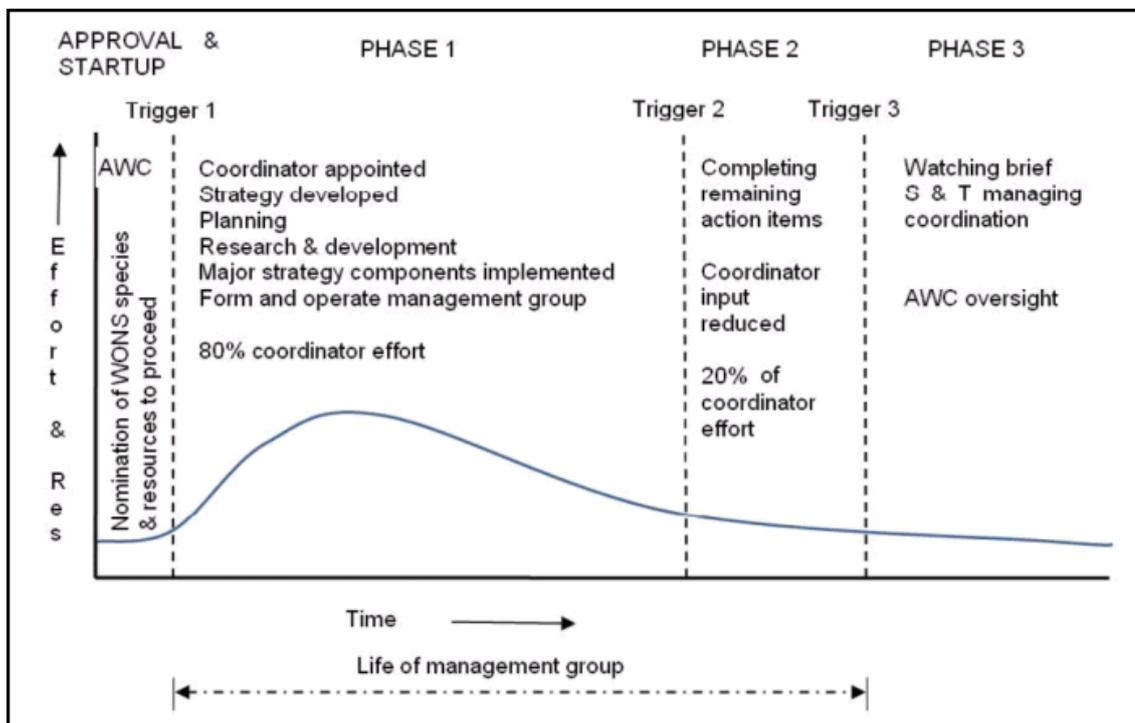


Figure 1 Australian Weed Committee diagrammatic representation of coordinator effort and resource use when implementing a Weeds of National Significance strategy

The phased approach recognises the need for reduced national coordination (‘phasing down’) of WoNS species that are under effective national management, and allows for further weed species to be nominated for consideration as additional WoNS. The AWC is implementing these reforms, and national coordination of the inaugural 20 WoNS species has already transitioned to phase 2 or 3, depending on the species. No species have yet been removed from the WoNS list. The AWC is developing a protocol to guide future decisions about when this should occur on a case-by-case basis.

¹

Adapted from Thorp 2012, *Additional list of Weeds of National Significance*, <www.org.au/WoNS>.

In 2010, jurisdictions nominated additional candidate WoNS species. These species were independently assessed, and the AWC endorsed 12 additional 'species' to be listed as WoNS. The AWC Chairman, Dr Jim Thompson, announced these additional plant species as WoNS on 20 April 2012. Additional information on the selection of these species and the phased approach is available on www.weeds.org.au/WONS.

References

NRMMC (National Resource Management Ministerial Council) 2007, *Australian Weeds Strategy—a national strategy for weed management in Australia*, Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources, Canberra.