



## Mining company works towards eradication of Weed of National Significance

Mount Gibson Iron Ltd has been successfully treating one of the Weeds of National Significance, bellyache bush, on Koolan Island off the western Kimberley coast of WA.



Along with other weeds, bellyache bush (*Jatropha gossypifolia*) originated from the old settlement site on Koolan Island and has spread into the surrounding natural vegetation. Although not on the mine lease, “monitoring and weed control is done voluntarily to prevent spread to the lease” stated Mount Gibson Iron Ltd Rehabilitation Officer, Cheryl Hamence.

“Over the past five years, weed control activities have reduced the area infested and density of this weed”, said Cheryl. “At some sites, no mature bellyache bush plants have been spotted in the annual weed survey for the past couple of years.”

“The method we use when coming across bigger plants is the cut stump method where the stem is cut as low as possible then the stump is sprayed with a small hand pump of Access® and diesel. “

The sites where bellyache bush is found on Koolan Island are steep, rocky and challenging to access. Using bigger spray packs is not often possible. The plants can also be quite isolated from each other in amongst a lot of other native and introduced vegetation.

*The steep, overgrown slopes have made it difficult to find the bellyache bush – this plant is being overtaken by a weedy vine. Photo: Mount Gibson Iron Ltd.*



Cheryl indicated that “most of the small plants are hand pulled. They only have a shallow root system so that makes them quite easy to pull out. We are not finding many older plants at flowering/fruiting stages now.”

Annual mapping of the bellyache bush infestations and recording of all treatments undertaken enables Mt Gibson Iron Ltd to see progress toward eradicating this weed from the island.



The Chairman of the National Bellyache Bush Management Group, Ms Megan Munchenberg, considers this to be a good example of strategic weed management. “It is great to see a company being pro-active in managing bellyache bush. Preventing its spread and reducing its impact is ensuring that the control effort is reduced over time. I congratulate Mount Gibson Iron for taking this approach”

*Mount Gibson Iron staff member hand pulling bellyache bush seedlings in amongst dense vegetation. Photo: Mount Gibson Iron Ltd.*

Further information on bellyache bush is available at [www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/bellyachebush](http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/bellyachebush).

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