

Council of Australasian Weed Societies (Inc)



STRATEGIC PLAN 2007 - 2010 incorporating REVIEW OF FORMER STRATEGIC PLAN 2002 - 2005

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Executive Summary

The Council of Australasian Weed Societies (CAWS) is the national body in Australia and New Zealand representing and promoting the interests of its member societies and their members towards reducing the impacts of weeds. CAWS has had many successes in improving weed management in Australia since its formation in 1976. This document is intended to outline the strategic direction of CAWS for 2007-2010 and an action plan for 2007-2008.

Weeds have an immensely negative impact on rural production, sustainable natural resource management, conservation of biodiversity and human welfare. Although many weed management solutions are constantly being found, new challenges regularly emerge with both existing and new weeds. There is a clear need for a representational body at the national level and CAWS intends to continue to effectively meet that need.

The vision for CAWS:

CAWS is the national, independent, representative voice for weed management in Australia and New Zealand and provides members with national leadership, information and support to advance weed management.

CAWS has established six goals:

1. Our External Profile - CAWS is recognised by all levels of government and the general communities of Australia and New Zealand as the leading, independent body regarding weed management issues.
2. Our Activities - CAWS initiates and supports weed related activities of national significance in response to member interest.
3. Our People - CAWS provides trans-national services, products and communication opportunities to individual members of member Societies and grows membership levels of CAWS societies to 1,000 by 2010.
4. Our Finances - CAWS has a reserve of funds able to support national initiatives.
5. Our Management - CAWS maintains effective decision-making, management frameworks and review processes.
6. Our Direction - CAWS develops and regularly reviews its strategic directions.

1. Introduction

The Council of Australasian Weed Societies Inc. (CAWS) has had many successes in improving weed management in Australia since its formation in 1976. In order to continue to aid weed management efforts in Australia and New Zealand into the future, CAWS regularly considers its future directions and reviews its strategic planning.

Significant changes in weed management have occurred at a national level in both Australia and New Zealand in the last decade.

In Australia, weed related activities have been undertaken following the implementation of the National Weeds Strategy (including the development of the Weeds of National Significance plant list and the implementation of the Weed Risk Assessment System for plant imports), as well as 13 years of funding being given to the Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management (Weeds CRC). There has also been a shift in responsibility and organisation of strategic weed management from state to regional levels, for example from State government departments to regional Catchment Management Authorities or Natural Resource Management Boards. Environmental weeds are now seen as having almost as high a priority for research and management as agricultural weeds. There is now a greater community awareness of weed issues, particularly as relates to invasive garden plants. There have also been increases in electronic communication over the last ten years leading to an increased availability of information on websites and through email listservers. In general over the last ten years, there has been an increased priority placed on weed management at national and state levels, an increase in voluntary involvement in weed management by communities and greater recognition of the value of collaboration amongst those involved with different aspects of weed management. On the negative side, the last ten years have seen generally increased working hours in Australia, resulting in less time being available for individuals to donate to CAWS and/or state society activities.

Not altogether surprisingly, changes in weed management in New Zealand generally reflect those across the Tasman. The Biosecurity Act of 1993 established Biosecurity New Zealand within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and gave it overall responsibility for all aspects of biosecurity from pre-border to management of established pests. However, management of most animal and pest plants devolved to 16 Regional Councils and Unitary Authorities, each of which is required to produce (and regularly review) a Pest Management Strategy. Biosecurity NZ continues to be responsible for a few important pest plants, and more were added in 2007. Other legislation has had major influences on the ingress of new weed species. The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HSNO) 1996 controls the introduction of new organisms and of substances such as pesticides to New Zealand. The Act

also established the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA), charged with evaluating all risks, including the importation of plant species new to New Zealand. This has meant that very few *new* species have been introduced, although garden plants continue to naturalise at an alarming rate. Furthermore, Biosecurity NZ in cooperation with other relevant Government Departments, Regional Councils and the Nursery and Garden Industry Association, has produced a National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) - a list of over 100 mostly garden plants that have been declared unwanted organisms and which therefore cannot be sold, propagated or distributed anywhere within the country. Environmental weeds are now seen as being at least as important as agricultural weeds. Weedbusters name and logo have been borrowed from Australia, modified to suit local conditions, and is making great progress, with strong support from the Department of Conservation and buy-in from Regional Councils. Weedbusters and several other websites now deal with the identification and management of invasive alien species. Professional Societies have change, too. The Biosecurity Institute was born out of the old Institute of Noxious Plant Officers, spread its wings and now covers all aspects of Biosecurity. The NZ Plant Protection Society forged a trans-Tasman link by joining up with CAWS and expanding it from an Australian organisation to an Australasian one. Agriculture, too, is changing quickly in NZ, and that affects weed management. The country is being promoted overseas as 'clean and green' and farming is having to reduce its pollution of waterways, and thus reduce algal blooms and eutrophication. The current emphasis is on dairy farming, with both forests and sheep farming making way for cows. And just as in Australia, long working hours and the distractions of other leisure time activities makes it harder for people to volunteer for weedbusting and similar pursuits.

Weeds have an immensely negative impact on rural production, sustainable natural resource management, conservation of biodiversity and human welfare. Although many weed management solutions are constantly being found, new challenges regularly emerge with both existing and new weeds. There is a clear need for a representational body at the national level and CAWS intends to effectively meet that need in both Australia and New Zealand.

2. Description of CAWS

CAWS is the national body in Australia and New Zealand representing and promoting the interests of its member societies and their members towards reducing the impacts of weeds. Individuals and organisations with an interest in weeds are members of the following Australian State or New Zealand weed related societies, which in turn constitute all current members of CAWS:

- Weed Society of Queensland (Inc)
- Weed Society of New South Wales (Inc)
- Weed Society of Victoria (Inc)
- Tasmanian Weed Society (Inc)

- Weed Management Society of South Australia (Inc)
- Plant Protection Society of Western Australia (Inc)
- Plant Protection Society of New Zealand (Inc)

CAWS operates with an Executive Committee comprising two delegates from each member society, a President, Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer. Subcommittees are occasionally used to assist with achieving particular objectives.

Financial reserves at 1 January, 2008, were approximately \$130K. Total membership of member societies at this date was approaching 800.

Under the CAWS Constitution, the object of CAWS is to encourage and foster the study and promotion of weed science and technology in Australia and New Zealand and in particular to:

- Provide independent, representative leadership for weed management¹ in Australia and New Zealand, including in the weed specific areas of science, policy, planning and operations
- Initiate and support trans-nationally significant weed related activities to meet the interests of Australian and/or New Zealand society members.
- Continue to support the Australian/Australasian Weeds Conference and provide other forums for information exchange, networking and debate
- Provide national and international policy positions, promote weed awareness in the government and the general community and provide a capacity to respond to weed issues
- Support specific national and international weed related publications
- Provide national and international level services, products and communication opportunities to individual members of member societies

3. History of CAWS

CAWS was formerly known as the Council of Australian Weed Science Societies (CAWSS) and was formed at a meeting of state weed society representatives during the 1976 Australian Weeds Conference in Melbourne. The state societies wanted to continue to meet needs that varied between states. CAWSS was agreed as an organisation to provide the national coordination between state societies. Bill Haseler was elected as first President.

CAWSS organised its first national conference in 1978, the First Conference of the Council of Australian Weed Science Societies. The conference had previously been organised by the Australian Weeds Committee, a Federal Government body composed of representatives from weed related state government departments. The success of the 1978 conference resulted in the Australian Weeds Committee handing responsibility for future Australian Weeds Conferences (AWC) to CAWSS.

Increased national activity in weed science and weed management, and an increased pool of funds has enabled the AWC to be supported by CAWS on a biennial rather than triennial basis. The AWC has also continued to grow in size and prominence, with 469 delegates attending the 15th conference in Adelaide in 2006.

CAWS has supported the publications of various weed related books and has travel awards for students and early career weed scientists. It has provided comment on national weed strategies and action plans and also contributed to the debate on invasive garden plants. It has supported national weed awareness activities, such as WeedBuster Week and the "Lord of the Weeds" secondary schools competition run by the Weeds CRC.

4. History of development of the CAWS Strategic Plan (the Plan)

The initial development of the Plan commenced with a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and identification of issues done independently by each member society in 1999. A compilation of the results was presented to the CAWSS meeting in Hobart in 1999, and approval was given to proceed with completing the Plan.

A first draft of a strategic plan was developed using a workshop process on February 2, 2001 at Gatton Research Station, Queensland. Ideally this would have involved the CAWSS executive committee and other participants from across Australia. Given that our resources would not allow this, the first draft was developed by a cross-section of participants from Queensland involving private industry, state government, education, Weed Society of Queensland (WSQ), CAWSS executive members residing in Queensland, executive members from other relevant societies and people involved in weeds and planning but not currently active in society business. The Plan was further developed in stages, with input from member societies and the CAWSS Executive Committee. An advanced draft was reviewed in Perth in September 2002, to establish the Plan for the next term.

4.1 Review of the CAWS Strategic Plan

The review of the Plan (including annual activities and long-term future directions) is a necessary component of the normal business of CAWS. The review can reflect (any) changes in the aspirations of member societies and their members, successes and achievements of CAWS, changes in policy and direction of federal, state and local governments related to weeds and weed management and all other matters related to weeds and weed management in Australia and New Zealand.

A first draft of this revised plan was developed by a working group of three CAWS members, John Virtue, Rachel Melland and Andrew Laird. This was then circulated in April 2007 to the CAWS Executive to gain additional content from

member Societies. The final draft was presented for member comment in November 2007.

5. Definitions

The following definitions apply for use in CAWS:

Member Society - a society that is a member of CAWS

Member or society member - a member of a member society

Weed management - all activities that directly or indirectly are aimed at preventing or reducing the impact of weeds; includes research, extension, communication, training, policy, planning and on-ground operations.

Exec C'tee - the CAWS executive committee

List of acronyms in this document:

FASTS - Federation of Australian Science and Technological Societies

IAAST - Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology

6. Strategic Plan

VISION

CAWS is the national, independent, representative voice for weed management in Australia and New Zealand and provides members with national leadership, information and support to advance weed management.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

We are a group of societies, united by a commitment to weed management, representing members' views, seeking agreement on issues requiring national leadership and facilitating joint activities.

WHAT BUSINESS WE ARE IN

Our Clients

Our clients are our member organizations, their members and their potential members.

Our Services

For weed management, we provide:

- A representative voice both within and outside Australia and New Zealand on matters pertaining to weed management and weed science.
- Seed funding for member societies to organize and run the Australian/Australasian Weeds Conference, including the CAWS Orator.
- Financial and logistical support for other national and international conferences and workshops, and for visiting weed experts for such events.
- Weed management information via a website and support for publications
- Prestige-based awards that recognise national contributions to weed management
- Financial and prestige-based awards to support development of young scientists
- Financial and logistical support for national weed awareness initiatives

For members only, we provide:

- Financial support for the development, growth and interactions of Member Societies
- Exchange of ideas for activities that could be initiated by, and services that could be provided by each Member Society.

The Benefits Provided:

Our services enhance the ability and willingness of Member Societies, members and potential members to contribute solutions for weed management in Australia and New Zealand.

Our goals address:

- Our External Profile
- Our Activities
- Our People
- Our Finances
- Our Management
- Our Direction

6.1 OUR EXTERNAL PROFILE

Goal: *CAWS is recognised by all levels of government and the general communities of Australia and New Zealand as the leading, independent body regarding weed management issues.*

Strategy	Action	Who	By when
6.1.1 Prepare and promote position statements on key national issues for weeds.	Develop a list of issues requiring position statements and prioritise eg. invasive garden plants, national research capacity, national consistency in weed management	Exec C'tee	June 2008
	Develop a model position statement	Exec C'tee	June 2008
	Assign individual authors to draft particular statements	Exec C'tee	June 2008
	Submit draft position statements to Exec C'tee	Individual authors	June 2008
	Make press releases following approval of position statements	Spokesperson	Ongoing
6.1.2 Make press statements and submissions to promote weed issues to government and general public, and respond to current issues eg. CAWS submission on the revised Australian Weeds Strategy.	Spokesperson to be selected based on expertise and professional affiliations with due consideration to any conflict of interest	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Develop and implement a standardised process for preparing press releases and submissions ie/ following press release for the "Weed Wise Nursery" award	Exec C'tee	Sept 2008
6.1.3 Establish affiliations and membership on other appropriate national and international	Determine bodies for seeking affiliations or membership.	Exec C'tee	June 2008
	Establish and maintain a list of affiliations and memberships	Exec C'tee	June 2008

bodies	(eg. other weed societies, FASTS as a priority, also AIAST, Agronomy and Ecology societies)	Implement regular two-way communication	Email/CAWS representative	Ongoing
6.1.4 Member societies and their members recognise and contribute to representational activities.	Involve member societies and their members on committees.		Exec C' tee	Ongoing
	Promote CAWS activities to members eg. via a standard, quarterly newsletter article/president's report from CAWS for Member Society newsletters.		See 6.3.1 and 6.3.2	Ongoing
	Develop protocols to ensure a regular flow of information from CAWS back to member societies		Exec C' tee	March 2008
6.1.5 Determine what (if any) of the activities of the Weeds CRC that CAWS is in a position to continue after the closure of Weeds CRC in July 2008.	Continue liaison with CRC until closure		Exec C' tee	Until July 2008
	Consider which CRC activities that CAWS considers appropriate for continuation (particularly, as a high priority, the national newsletter - WeedWatch).		Exec C' tee	May 2008
6.1.5 The name of the society reflects and promote the leadership role and profile of the organisation.	Ensure the current name of the society, Council of Australasian Weed Societies, reflects the range of member societies and leadership role.		Exec C' tee	Ongoing

6.2 OUR ACTIVITIES

Goal: *CAWS initiates and supports weed related activities of national significance in response to member interest.*

Strategy	Action	Who	When
6.2.1 Maintain and improve the national and international profile of the Australasian Weeds Conference.	Maintain involvement with NZ (Australasian Weeds Conference)	Organising C'tee	Ongoing
	Develop and implement options for partnerships with the Australasian Weeds Conference, including combining with international weed meetings	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Promote the Australasian Weeds Conferences widely.	Exec C'tee/ Organising C'tee	Ongoing
	Develop press releases in association with the Australasian Weeds Conference	Exec C'tee	All conferences
6.2.2 Sponsor and co-sponsor special purpose workshops and symposia with state, national and international focus.	Consider proposals for sponsorship of special purpose workshops/symposia	Exec C'tee	Sept 2007
	Establish a framework for CAWS-initiated workshops, including frequency and location.	Exec C'tee	Sept 2007
	Develop and prioritise topics based on issues and needs from a national perspective.	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Approve sponsorship and workshops.	Exec C'tee	Ongoing

DRAFT FOR COMMENT January 2008
 Comments due to virtue.john@saugov.sa.gov.au by 27 March 2008

6.2.3 Redesign and maintain a high quality website with national level weed services and links.	Review and update the current website with logo and CAWS name changes and missing documents	Secretary	June 2007
<i>[The CAWS website is our external presence and should present a professional image.]</i>	Develop a revised website with new content (see 6.2.8) with both the www.caws.org and www.australasianweeds.org.au domain names	Exec C'tee	March 2008
	Identify items for loading, prepare and load.	Exec C'tee and Secretary	Ongoing
	Develop maintenance and updating protocols.	Exec C'tee and Secretary	June 2008
	Increase links to other websites.	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Add past AWC proceedings as pdfs of papers to website, in a searchable database format	Exec C'tee	June 2008
6.2.4 Increase the national profile of the CAWS Medal	Promote the CAWS Medal Issue press releases announcing the winner of the Medal	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Publicise the winner in the CAWS update to member societies (see 6.1.4)		
6.2.5 Consider international conference partners for the Australasian Weeds Conference	Investigate bodies that could form mutually beneficial partnerships with CAWS and the AWC.	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Investigate the combining of international conferences (eg. International Weed Science Congress, Asia Pacific Weed Science Society Conference) with AWCs, including issues regarding concurrent years, compatible formats and other advantages and disadvantages.		

6.2.6 Support weed education and weed awareness at a national level	Seek co-sponsorships and participate in activities where appropriate e.g. Lord of the Weeds, Weed Buster Week	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
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6.3 OUR PEOPLE

Goal: CAWS provides trans-national services, products and communication opportunities to individual members of member Societies and grows membership levels of CAWS societies to 1,500 by 2010.

Strategy	Action	Who	When
6.3.1 Implement and maintain regular email communication from CAWS to member Societies for dissemination to individual members	Maintain an email address list of member Societies (secretaries)	Secretary	June 2007
	Establish and implement a process for sending national messages to member societies for distribution to individual members	Exec C'tee	June 2007
	Member societies to make members aware of affiliation with CAWS	Member societies	Ongoing
6.3.2 Implement a national level flow of information to member societies for dissemination to individual members	Establish a CAWS electronic update to be disseminated to member societies after each teleconference for dissemination to members (see 6.1.4 CAWS quarterly newsletter insert)	President	Ongoing
6.3.3 Maintain and continue to implement an awards system that compliments the CAWS Medal.	Actively seek nominations from member societies for all relevant awards categories (student and young scientist travel awards, "Weed Wise Nursery" award, Australasian Weeds Conference travel award). Awardees can be external to member societies.	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Actively promote all winners of CAWS awards at the national and state level.	Exec C'tee and member societies	Ongoing
6.3.4 Assist Member Societies in publicising activities to gain new members	Determine processes and communication pathways to assist member societies in publicising activities (See also 6.3.1).	Exec C'tee	Ongoing

6.4 OUR FINANCES

Goal: CAWS has a reserve of funds able to support national initiatives.

Strategy	Action	Who	When
6.4.1 Implement and/or support workshops and symposia that maintain or build CAWS reserves	See 6.3.2	Relevant subcommittee	Ongoing
6.4.2 Improve sponsorship	Investigate means of rationalizing, consolidating and maintaining the long-term financial viability of CAWS	Exec C'tee	June 2008
	Seek long-term sponsorship arrangements for the Australasian Weed Conference.	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Develop corporate sponsorship packages and disseminate to target market	Exec C'tee	Sept 2008
	Review sponsorship arrangements offered as part of AWC while maintaining flexibility as AWC sponsorship is often achieved on a case-by-case basis and highly influenced by the relevant Organising Committee	Exec C'tee	Ongoing
6.4.3 Investigate alternative sources of funding to build reserves	Investigate seeking charity status in order to be able to receive tax-deductible donations (Similar to a conservation organisation such as ACF).	Exec C'tee	March 2008
	Develop an operational plan for funding.	Exec C'tee	Sept 2008
6.4.4 Increase member society contributions to CAWS	Review membership fees (for member Societies) when services have improved.	Exec C'tee	June 2008

Increase membership of member societies.	See 6.3	Ongoing
Maintain number of member societies (Subject to review of the constitution) and continue to support development of Societies where gaps exist in the Australasian Region (e.g. Northern Territory).	Exec C'tee	Ongoing

6.5 OUR MANAGEMENT

Goal: CAWS maintains effective decision-making, management frameworks and review processes.

Strategy	Action	Who	When
6.5.1 Seek continuous improvement in CAWS meeting, financial and administrative arrangements	Maintain agenda paper format and set a deadline for submission and circulation of agenda papers prior to meetings	President and Secretary Exec C'tee	Ongoing
	Review meeting frequency	Exec C'tee	March 2008
	Maintain an honorarium for Secretary/Treasurer		Ongoing
6.5.2 Consider a central office and Executive Officer services.	Investigate options eg. potentially sharing office services with a similar organization(s) that might not be fully committed and happy to take on extra work for a fee (eg. AIAST)	Exec C'tee	Subject to budget

6.6 OUR DIRECTION

Goal: CAWS develops and regularly reviews its strategic directions.

Strategy	Action	Who	When
6.6.1 Maintain a current Strategic Plan that includes actions for achieving CAWS goals	Review and update the strategic plan at the beginning of a new executive committee term (currently a two year basis).	Exec C'tee	Start of term
	Review and prepare draft amendments to the Strategic Plan, for the Exec C'tee.	Subcommittee of Exec C'tee	January
	Adopt revised Strategic Plan	Exec C'tee	When Plan complete
6.6.2 Evaluate performance annually and use this for reporting to member societies.	Record achievements against each action for the financial year and forward to member societies.	Exec C'tee	August
	Conduct annual audit of finances and compile an annual report		August