

## CAWS President Update – May 2008

I'm writing this at the end of a very successful 16<sup>th</sup> Australian Weeds Conference (16AWC) in Cairns. There are many tired delegates who have had an intensive week of talking, listening and reading. The 400 delegates have also had the important opportunity to build and foster networks, plan new projects and exchange ideas. The field trips demonstrated the scale of current and potential weed problems in Far North Queensland, and the advanced techniques and collaborative arrangements in place to tackle these were impressive. On behalf of CAWS, I thank the Weed Society of Queensland's 16AWC committee for their vast efforts in organising the excellent meeting, expertly led by the conference chair Dr Michael Widderick. We now look forward to the 17<sup>th</sup> Australasian Weeds Conference in Christchurch 26-30 September 2010, convened on CAWS' behalf by the Plant Protection Society of New Zealand.

CAWS had a face-to-face meeting at the 16AWC and a number of important decisions were made. CAWS committed \$2000 in seed funding for a new weed society based in the Northern Territory. With the advent of GM canola crops approved for commercial planting in NSW and Victoria, CAWS has agreed to fund the travel of Dr Suzanne Warwick (Eastern Cereal and Oilseed Research Center, Ontario) to Australia in November to present on the Canadian experiences with such crops. The CAWS Strategic Plan was formally ratified and directs our activities to 2010, with upcoming activities of redeveloping the CAWS website and preparing a position paper on invasive garden plants.

We welcome the Federal Government's budget commitment of \$15 million over four years for a national weeds research centre. There was no further detail at the 16AWC on how this centre will be realised. CAWS has previously written to the Federal Government and urged that the new centre retains the following features of the Weeds CRC model that has made it so successful:

- truly national research collaboration with all State Departments, Universities and CSIRO providing in-kind FTE investment;
- cash investment from various research and development corporations (e.g. GRDC);
- an independent, representative board determining research directions and delivery mechanisms;
- weed species targeted for both northern and southern Australia;
- a substantial budget proportion focused on delivery of management information to landholders;
- quality factsheets, technical publications and website;
- training of post-graduate students in weed management;
- post-doctoral research positions supervised by Australia's leading weed scientists; and
- research coverage across the weed management spectrum (prevention, detection, eradication, containment and integrated management).

CAWS will continue to advocate for national weed research and on-ground management programs. In particular, the strategic gains and partnerships that have been made through the Weeds of National Significance program (demonstrated in many presentations at the 16AWC) must be maintained.

Nominations are being sought for the 2008 CAWS Most Weed-Wise Nursery Award. This is a positive way of raising awareness about invasive garden plants and what the garden

industry and gardeners can do to address the problem. The Award is endorsed by two key national organisations, the Nursery and Garden Industry Association of Australia and Sustainable Gardening Australia. Further details are at the Awards link on the CAWS website [<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~weedss/>].

Finally, we welcome another member to the “weeds hall of fame”, the CAWS Medal winners. At the 16AWC conference dinner I was very pleased to award Dr Steve Walker with the 2008 CAWS Medal. Steve has worked in weeds related for over 30 years and is currently the Weed Sciences leader at the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, based in Toowoomba. He has been instrumental in increasing our understanding about key weed management issues (including weed ecology, biology and management, residual herbicides, crop tolerance, integrated weed management, weed control in cotton and herbicide resistance) and has made substantial contributions toward improved weed management in Australia and more specifically the northern grain region. Steve’s passion for weed research and improved weed management is evident in his contribution towards the development of skills and knowledge in others, with supervision of many PhD students and mentoring of young weed scientists. In recent years he has been the Cropping Program leader in the Weeds CRC, applying his skills and experience nationally and internationally. Congratulations Steve.

**Dr John Virtue, CAWS President**