

CAWS President Update – September 2008

We're at an important crossroads with weed management in Australia, the end of an era for the Weeds CRC and the soon-to-be beginnings of a new national weeds research centre.

On behalf of CAWS I'd like to wish the Weeds CRC a fond farewell and a large thankyou for its comprehensive contribution to weed management, at local, regional, state, national and international scales. Launched as the Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems in 1995, and becoming the CRC Australian Weed Management in its second round from 2001, it has made a massive contribution to weeds research, education and awareness. The Weeds CRC has had a wide geographic coverage, with contributing staff from every Australian State and Territory and New Zealand, in government agencies, universities and industries. Issues covered have included herbicide resistance, biological control, weeds of natural ecosystems, pastures, crops and aquatic habitats, risk assessment, economics, impacts, policy, eradication, dispersal and invasive garden plants. Publications have numbered in the hundreds with factsheets, guides, manuals, books, journal papers and conference presentations. The Weeds CRC has been very effective in raising national awareness, with frequent articles in the print and electronic media. Its independence has enabled it to lobby governments for policy change, one of the most effective being the end of the permitted genera entry into Australia (in collaboration with WWF).

One of the greatest benefits from the Weeds CRC has been the networks and wider sense of community it has fostered amongst staff and students across Australia and overseas. It has broken down traditional rivalries between various research institutions around the country and will leave a legacy of ongoing collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. The Weeds CRC was of particular benefit as a training ground for our weed scientists of the future. For students and young weed scientists alike, it was vital to not only have had the scientific mentoring, but also the opportunity to feel welcome and a part of a national, cooperative network.

There are far too many people to thank individually, but our particular gratitude goes to the Directors/CEOs; Steve Powles, Rick Roush and Rachel McFadyen, and to the Program Leaders over the years; Richard Groves, Deidre Lemerle, David Kemp, John Fisher, Bruce Auld, Jim Pratley, Chris Preston, Dane Panetta, Paul Pheloung, Tony Grice, Steve Walker and Peter Martin (apologies if I have missed any!). To these people and all other individuals who contributed, CAWS and its members offer many thanks.

Note that the Weeds CRC's website will remain active for several years as an ongoing source of information: www.weedscrc.org.au

CAWS takes a keen interest in the development of the new national weed research centre, with Australian Government funding of \$15 million over four years. An interim board has been established, led by John Kerin, to develop a collaborative structure inclusive of State/Territory governments and research and development corporations (e.g. GRDC). Research priorities and a physical base for the centre are yet to be determined. CAWS would want the new centre to have a wide geographic coverage, including links across the Tasman, and to address both environmental and primary industries weed issues equitably.

Finally, congratulations to two students who have both been awarded CAWS travel awards for 2008. Sam Trengove is undertaking a Masters degree through The University of Adelaide on the potential for site-specific weed management in Australian agriculture, including comparing various sensor devices for weed detection. He will be presenting a paper at the Weed Science Society of America conference in February 2009 and visiting weed/engineering scientists in three US states, Canada, Denmark, Germany, France and Spain. Eleanor Dormontt is undertaking a PhD through The University of Adelaide on the evolution of the invasiveness of *Senecio madagascariensis*. She will be attending the international symposium "Fifty years of invasion ecology – the legacy of Charles Elton" at Stellenbosch, South Africa in November 2008. Her poster will be titled "A powerful emerging approach to assess the genetic consequences of invasions: the use of molecular markers to compare native and invasive populations".

The next round of applications for the CAWS Student Travel Award (\$3000) and Early Career Weed Scientist Travel Award (\$2000) will be due by the end of May 2009. No applications were received for the latter award in 2008.

Dr John Virtue, CAWS President