

Educate to eradicate: incorporating weed issues into primary education

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Summary Raising weed awareness in the public sector is critical to maintaining support for weed programs. However, generating interest in weed issues is often a difficult task, especially among young people. The NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (NSW DECC) and NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) have formed a partnership to develop a school education program that builds on existing programs to increase weed awareness among young Australians.

The project titled Weeds: Educate to Eradicate, is funded through the Australian Government 'Defeating the Weed Menace' programme. The project is an innovative approach to raising weed awareness among young Australians by educating students using integrated learning tools. The partnership developed in the program will provide expertise for state-wide implementation and the capacity to foster national expansion of the project.

The Weeds: Educate to Eradicate project includes an interactive teaching resource called 'Weeds Attack!', created by NSW DET's Centre for Learning Innovation. The 'Weeds Attack!' resource consists of web-based and multimedia materials that incorporate existing weed education programs. In particular, it includes Weed Warriors, a national program designed for schools that aims to actively involve students in the management of local weed issues. During the Weed Warriors program students work closely with local weed professionals to implement a biological control program for a regional priority weed.

By including existing weed education programs, 'Weeds Attack!' provides a complete package for primary school teachers to educate their students about the impacts of weeds in a fun and interesting format, while fulfilling crucial curriculum requirements.

'Weeds Attack!' will allow students to investigate the impacts of weeds on a global scale and learn about weed science principles and weed impacts

upon biodiversity, the environment and agriculture. Students will also work with local weed managers and community groups, as part of the Weed Warriors program, to implement a biological control program for a locally significant weed. This will give students the opportunity to apply effective weed control measures in their community.

While the program is being developed and piloted in New South Wales, the resource conforms to national curriculum standards to allow national adoption. Australia's Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) are being used as primary examples in 'Weeds Attack!' Resources include information on environmental and agricultural weeds to ensure the program is applicable to all regions across Australia.

The prototype of the resource has been developed using the WoNS weed bitou bush (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera* subsp. *rotundata* (DC.) Norlindh) and incorporates the existing bitou bush Weed Warriors program. It is envisaged that the resource will be adapted for each of the WoNS and all of the weeds targeted by the Weed Warriors program.

More information on the project and the resource is available at www.tale.edu.au.

Keywords Education, Weed Warriors, weed awareness, teaching resources, curriculum, Weed Attack!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our thanks to the CRC for Australian Weed Management for their cooperation incorporating Weed Warriors and other education products into Weeds: Educate to Eradicate. Thanks to the Illawarra Noxious Weeds Authority, Port Kembla Public School, Sutherland Shire Council, Kurnell Public School, Port Stephens Council, Bobs Farm School and the NSW DPI Biological Control Team for their assistance in piloting the resource. This project received funding from the Australian Government Defeating the Weed Menace programme.