

Nursery and Garden Industry and invasive plants

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Summary The Nursery and Garden Industry is a major stakeholder in one of Australia's most important environmental issues – invasive plants. Australia has a long history of bringing plants into the country and many of these have become invasive. Many Australians didn't care too much about plants being invasive. Early Australians wanted our gardens, parks and public spaces to look like the 'Mother Country' and wanted to plant crops that they grew back at home. Nobody saw the error in this at the time: in fact some Australians still do not see this as a problem. Society has changed and the industry is changing. The Nursery and Garden Industry is playing a major role in the 'war' against invasive plants.

The industry is working to reduce the number of invasive plants grown and sold in several ways.

National position paper on invasive plants This document (see www.ngia.com.au) sets out the nursery and garden industry's commitment to helping the community tackle the issue of invasive plants. It also outlines how governments and authorities can assist in this regard. Identified priorities include: one consistent, reliable and independent weed risk assessment process used at all levels; agreed lists of invasive plants; recognition of the industry's initiatives and role in managing environmental issues such as invasive plants; and a commitment to industry-based communications and awareness programs when targeting our businesses and our consumers.

National labelling guidelines These guidelines (see www.ngia.com.au) include a section on invasive and potentially harmful plants. They were developed to help the industry provide clear and accurate information on plant labels, and aim to establish an accepted standard in the preparation of plant labels and marketing material. They are recommended for adoption by all plant producers, suppliers of plant material, plant retailers and label manufacturers. In this area it covers: correct botanical nomenclature; warnings about invasiveness; and poisonous plant warnings.

National 'Grow Me Instead' program This is an educational program for industry and consumers. The \$600,000 program is co-funded by NGIA, NGIs and the Federal Government's Defeating the Weed Menace program. It aims to promote the following key messages: choose the 'right plants' for your local area; remove problem plants and replace them with low risk alternatives; responsible gardening practices to reduce weed spread; and get expert local advice on local problem species, alternatives and gardening practice. A range of approaches will be taken to promote these messages, including 'Regional Grow Me Instead' booklets, posters and other in-store promotional material, industry workshops for retailers, presentations tailored for consumers in garden centres, garden clubs and customer nights, an education programs for industry and for consumers, and invasive plant information to be incorporated into industry accreditation programs.

Other activities A range of other activities are undertaken by the nursery and garden industry. These include the appointment of a Development Officer with national responsibilities for Invasive and Harmful Plants (Robert Chin, NGIV); involvement in Federal and State level committees and advisory groups relevant to invasive plants; and production of a range of industry publications.

Invasive plants are not a new problem in Australia. The Nursery and Garden Industry is playing a major and responsible role to reduce the impact of environmental weeds. We won't do it alone and we will all get the best results by working together.

Keywords Nursery, weeds, invasive plants, Grow Me Instead, federal government.

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