

## Strategic weed communications to meet client needs

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**Summary** Integrated and strategic communication is crucial for large organisations to be successful in achieving their objectives. Consequently, the NSW Department of Primary Industries Weed Management Unit (NSW DPI) has recognised the need to have a well planned, integrated, State-wide Communication Strategy (the Strategy) to achieve their objectives.

NSW DPI has a commitment to meet client needs in delivering information and training resources to build their capacity, raise the profile of weed issues with 'decision makers' and engage the general public.

To achieve this we face many challenges. Some of these hurdles include a highly decentralised structure, limited established networks for internal and external communication, a recent restructure and name change and a lack of robust information regarding client needs.

Integrated communication strategies involve the implementation of a diverse range of communication activities delivering consistent messages over time to influence the attitude and behaviour of a target audience (Kotler, 2003).

The NSW DPI Strategy development process was initially driven by a client needs analysis and expanded according to evaluation, new information needs of existing client groups and the changing priorities of NSW DPI.

Currently the Strategy includes a range of integrated components that draw together all the NSW DPI weed management functions and roles. It primarily targets weed professionals including, frontline NSW DPI staff, local government and Catchment Management Authorities with capacity building initiatives and the general public with awareness initiatives.

Included are key activities that focus on initiating organisational processes and systems to support NSW DPI knowledge management responsibilities, improving internal communication and targeted external communication and capacity building initiatives.

It includes a range of communication activities to achieve specific outcomes with diverse but defined client audiences.

There are communication activities that focus on building the capacity of weed professionals through improved information promotion and delivery. The

Weed Resource Bulletin established in 2006 currently has over 400 internal and external subscribers and is the primary method used to promote NSW DPI information resources to weed professionals in NSW. Since its commencement approximately 100,000 publications have been distributed.

NSW DPI has also established an Extranet for weed professionals which currently has over 200 subscribers across NSW. It was established as a tool to facilitate two-way communication between NSW DPI and weed professionals and to be a central repository for weed information to assist them in performing their weed management functions.

Also within the Strategy are initiatives and programs to raise the awareness of, and engage with, the general public in weed management. Activities included to achieve this are: the implementation of the Weed Warriors program; and the development of a range of media resources for television, radio and print which are made available to weed professionals across the State for strategic regional use.

Local governments have the responsibility for noxious weed management in NSW so public relations activities have also been included to target these 'decision makers'. The establishment of relevant awards programs aims to raise the profile and importance of weed management with senior management and within core Council business.

Each component of the Strategy has clearly defined target audiences, objectives, desired outcomes and evaluation requirements. It is expected that implementing the various components concurrently will provide improved communication outcomes and the Strategy will evolve over time as priorities and resources change.

Continued market research and evaluation will be important to modify and extend the Strategy, integrate new technologies and processes, and continue to engage key stakeholders in weed management.

**Keywords** Integrated, communication, strategy, weed awareness, capacity building.

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