

## **Do as I say, not as I do: benchmarking weed hygiene practices across NSW**

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**Summary** Numerous industry and government guidelines describe and recommend weed hygiene practices to limit common pathways for weed spread. Yet despite these guidelines poor weed hygiene continues to undermine the efficacy of weed control efforts and enables the spread of noxious weeds into and across NSW. This paper presents the results of a study that interviewed over 50 individuals with responsibilities for managing weed spread; private landholders, public land managers, weed contractors and agricultural transport operators were interviewed about their knowledge, practice, and support of good weed hygiene practices. A further 40 individuals were invited to participate, but many declined because they do not engage in weed hygiene. None of the recommended practices discussed in the interviews were undertaken by all applicable interviewees. The weed

hygiene practices that were most likely to be undertaken involved using wash down bays for machinery by landholders and weed contractors, providing weed identification guides to staff by public land managers and weed contractors, and using wash down bays for vehicles for agricultural transport operators. The weed hygiene practice that was least likely to be used across all interview groups was washing down boots and clothing. While participants knew about most of the recommended weed hygiene practices, they provided a large range of explanations for not prioritising weed hygiene in their day-to-day activities. If weed hygiene is to become part of everyday farm practice in NSW then effort needs to be invested in addressing the widespread view that the costs far outweigh the benefits.

**Keywords** Weed control, farm hygiene, rural Australia.