

19th Australasian Weeds Conference Hobart 1-4 September 2014

Thank you for being supported to attend the 19th Australasian Weeds Conference. The CAWS travel award made it possible for me as a representative of a poorly resourced non-government organisation to attend and actively contribute to the conference.

Participation

I participated directly in the conference in four ways.

1. I presented a poster paper titled: 'National Survey: who's tackling invasive species'

The poster paper (copy at right) presented the results of a national survey in 2013 of over 800 organisations working on tackling weeds and feral animals.

The survey found that the total yearly value of the volunteer effort tackling invasive species exceeds \$740 million while the value of the paid effort is \$880 million. This effort totals at least \$1.6 billion each year.

A number of people noted that they now appreciated the scale of effort or made a reference to the figures in discussing the costs of invasive species.

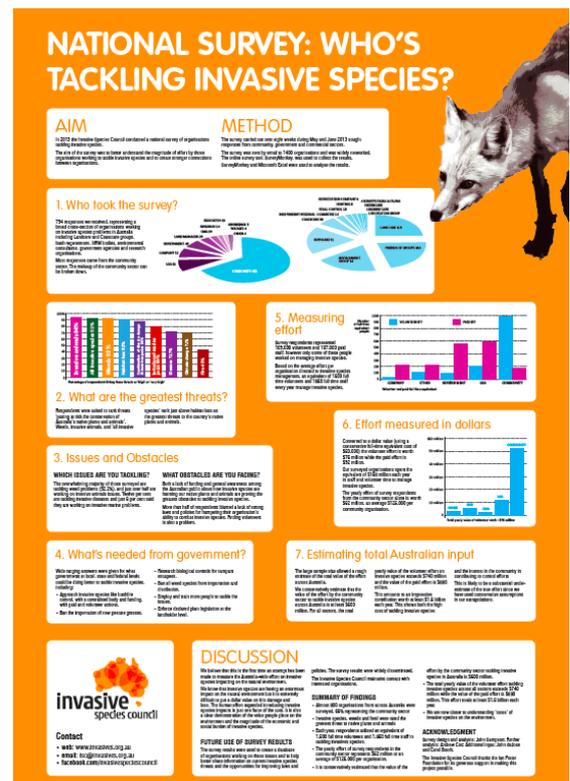
2. I presented a paper titled 'Environment Health Australia: a proposal to strengthen environmental biosecurity'

The paper was well received. About 70 people attended the paper presentation and afterwards there was high awareness about the proposal amongst conference participants.

3. I participated in a six-member panel discussion about 'What is the biosecurity approach and how will it impact weed management?' I was the only non-government member of the panel.

The panel session was well-attended and explored questions such as weed risk, legislation and regulation, responsibilities, communication and engagement.

4. I participated directly in CAWS activities including attending the CAWS AGM the day before the conference as the Weed Society of Victoria delegate and I volunteered to 'man' the CAWS conference stall for one shift.



Benefits of attendance

Attendance at the conference was highly beneficial to me and the Invasive Species Council. As well as having the opportunity to present our work through the paper, poster paper and panel discussion, I was able to meet many weed researchers and policy staff for the first time. This allowed me to develop new relationships and learn new information.

I found many of the presentations highly relevant to my work. I learnt about the latest thinking in relation to weed risk assessments, improving weed hygiene, the risks of weed spread from internet trade, the application of new technology and new surveillance methods such as detector dogs and the impacts of climate change on weed spread.

This information will be invaluable in the work of Invasive Species Council in seeking improvements to policy and laws across Australia that aim to prevent new weeds and reduce the spread of existing weeds. It will also help Weed Society of Victoria policy development.

CAWS and Conference promotion

Attendance at the conference allowed me to promote the CAWS Oration speaker, Professor Daniel Simberloff, in an interview I lined up between Prof. Simberloff and Environment reporter, Gregg Borshmann on ABC Radio RN's Breakfast program. The interview was broadcast on 3 Sept, the third day of the conference. See <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/australia-better-than-most-for-biosecurity-protection-expert/5715242> to hear the interview online.

Prior to the conference I promoted the CAWS conference in the Feral Herald that was sent to over 1,000 Invasive Species Council supporters and repeatedly on the Invasive Species Council Facebook page. During the conference I posted pictures and quotes from key speakers on Facebook and Twitter.

Future community attendance

Community members active in local weed programs were noticeably absent at the conference. Thought should be given to making it easier for community members to attend future Weed Conferences. The high registration cost is a significant barrier even for local community group participation and a CAWS travel award (granted to four people in 2014) only benefits a small number of people.

Conference papers provided via USB stick to attendees should also be provided as an unlocked pdf to allow highlights of text and comments to be made on a laptop or tablet while listening to each presentation. I see no reason why the papers needed to be locked.

Andrew Cox
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