

CAWS Travel Grant Report

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The CAWS Student Travel Award enabled me to travel, as part of my PhD at the University of New England, to two conferences in August and September, 2014 - SCAR (Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research) Open Science and the 19th Australasian Weeds Conference.

SCAR Open Science 2014 was held in Auckland, New Zealand and brought together the leading scientists of the Antarctic community from around the world. Over 1000 delegates were registered for the event. I presented a poster in the Scientific Advice for Policymakers and Evidence-based Conservation category, entitled Ecology and management of invasive *Poa annua* in the sub-Antarctic. This poster presentation was a great opportunity to meet and talk with relevant academics and scientists in the field of alien species control in both the sub-Antarctic and Antarctic regions and particularly those involved in alien weed management. I was also able to listen to some excellent talks regarding the key conservation issues in the Antarctic, detecting changes in vegetation communities over time, managing invasive species in the sub-Antarctic and using spatial information technology in conservation management. I also attended a very informative workshop run by the Association of Polar Early Career Researchers focused on ways of communicating Antarctic Science to the wider community. This workshop covered important topics such as using social media and photography to better communicate one's research.

The 19th Australasian Weeds Conference was held in Hobart, Tasmania and brought together scientists, land managers and key stakeholders of the weeds community from around Australasia. I presented a talk entitled Management of invasive *Poa annua* in the sub-Antarctic Wilderness of Macquarie Island. I received great feedback and some very constructive comments on other possible management techniques for *Poa annua* (winter grass). Through listening to other presentations at this conference and speaking with other delegates I gained some new ideas for further research. These included the use of spatial information technology, using herbicides to reduce the viability of grass seed, trialling even lower rates of glyphosate than we have currently used for selective weed control and using a range of different surfactants to increase the efficacy of herbicides in the harsh sub-Antarctic environment. One topical issue from this conference that I found interesting was that a weed may not always cause damage to the environment or need to be managed – in some cases they may in fact provide benefits to native flora and fauna.

This CAWS grant allowed me to attend two very different but highly relevant conferences where I was able to liaise with key people involved in both the Antarctic science and weed management communities. I was also able to gain a broader understanding of the major current issues in these two areas, gained tips on how to communicate more effectively to the broader community, and developed new ideas to further my research. The support of CAWS has benefitted me greatly in my research pursuits and is much appreciated.