

Buffel Grass Technical Working Group

Communiqué No. 4

The Buffel Grass Technical Working Group (TWG) met for a fourth time on Thursday 5 October 2023 in Alice Springs. The TWG is examining management approaches and challenges of buffel grass control including potential weed declaration options. The Group will make recommendations to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security by 30 November 2023 on future management practices to mitigate the risks and impacts of buffel grass. The TWG is made up of people with specific expertise or land management experience relevant to the management of buffel grass.

At the fourth meeting, members reviewed the terms of reference and considered the objectives they wished to achieve through their recommendations to the Minister.

The TWG agreed that their objectives are to:

- Keep buffel grass out of clean areas.
- Protect sites of high ecological value.
- Protect cultural values.
- Protect population centres and built assets from fire.
- Reduce spread via transport corridors and mining operations.
- Stop intentional sowing of buffel grass and introduction of new varieties.
- Take a more strategic regulatory approach to management.
- Not reduce the value of the pastoral estate.
- Minimise biodiversity loss in invaded areas through strategic management.
- Determine what reasonable measures are, to prevent spread.

Members considered existing legislation that contributes to the achievement of these objectives including the *Bushfires Management Act 2016*, the *Fire and Emergency Act 1996*, the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1976*, the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*, the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989*, the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) 1976* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

It was generally agreed by the TWG that the best possible management of buffel grass would be achieved through the strategic use of various existing powers arising from these Acts along the application of controls through the *Weeds Management Act 2001*. In addition, a range of recommendations about the monitoring and management of buffel grass will be made to compliment these measures. The TWG's intention is to make recommendations to the Minister that will, as much as feasibly possible, achieve the agreed objectives.

The final meeting of the Technical Working Group will be held on 16 November 2023 to finalise the recommendations to the Minister.