

Buffel Grass Technical Working Group Communiqué No. 5

The Buffel Grass Technical Working Group (TWG) met for the final time on Thursday 16 November 2023 in Alice Springs. The TWG is made up of people with arid zone scientific or land management expertise and is examining current and prospective buffel management options including potential declaration. The Group has finalised its deliberations and will make recommendations to the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security by 30 November 2023.

At the final meeting, members refined the objectives they wished to achieve through their recommendations to the Minister.

The TWG settled on the following objectives:

- Keep buffel grass out of clean areas.
- Protect sites of high ecological value.
- Protect cultural values.
- Fire protection around population centres and built assets.
- Reduce spread via transport corridors and mining operations.
- Prevent intentional sowing and introduction of new varieties.
- More strategic approach to management, including minimising biodiversity loss.
- Protect the value of the pastoral estate.

Members then discussed a broad range of issues relating to management practices and alternative options, including declaration classifications and their purpose, challenges in getting the balance right, knowledge gaps, governance structures, funding requirements, and policy refinements necessary to improve our management of buffel grass. The group formed a comprehensive range of recommendations that its hoped will, when used in conjunction with current legislative tools, deliver on the objectives as much as feasibly possible.

The collaboration, impartiality and objectivity demonstrated by the working group over the past six months is an excellent example of the benefits of bringing together expertise to examine the evidence, share their knowledge and experience and develop solutions that have reasonable feasibility of success.

It is anticipated that the Government will make a decision on future management options for buffel grass in the first half of 2024 following consideration of the TWG's recommendations as well as other views from advocacy groups, industry and the community.