

Buffel Grass WAC Discussion Paper #5

November 2024

Recap

At the previous WAC meeting (#4 held 27 June 2024), the WAC considered the structure and content of the draft Buffel Grass Strategy, finalised its content and unanimously approved the Strategy. [Buffel Grass Management Strategy: Central Australia 2024 – 2030](#)

The Minister for Environment Parks and Water Security declared buffel grass a weed under the *Weeds Management Act 2001* (the Act) on 5 July 2024. The Minister chose not to classify buffel at the time of declaration.

Agenda Item 11: Declaration - Frequently Asked Questions

A Declaration Fact Sheet has been prepared, to distinguish actions from the agreed Strategy that align with the Act, alongside strategic actions that can be pursued regardless of legislative status.

The Fact Sheet is available online: [buffel-grass-declaration-fact-sheet.docx \(live.com\)](#)

- Discussion on the Fact Sheet – suggestions for amendments or clarification required.

Agenda Item 12: Permits to use buffel grass

Under the Act, a person may apply to the Minister for a permit to use a declared weed. Permits may be granted for the following:

- bring a declared weed into the NT
 - propagate or scatter a declared weed
 - sell, purchase, or offer to sell or purchase a declared weed
 - hire any equipment or other item that contains or carries a declared weed
 - store, grow or use a declared weed
 - transport or carry a declared weed
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- Discussion on Permits – are these activities likely to attract interest in permit applications? If so, standard and specific conditions to be developed.
 - Weed Plan can acknowledge grazing as a control technique (not a permit ‘use’)
 - erosion control – existing and future requirements?

Agenda Item 13: Strategy to inform Weed Plan

The Buffel Grass Strategy recognises biodiversity and cultural heritage protection as priorities for buffel management. The Strategy provides management recommendations to reduce impact, while recognising its effectiveness at stabilising soil, and value to the pastoral industry.

A weed management plan WMP (to be developed by the WAC) will provide more specific guidance on how buffel grass is expected to be managed in the NT to reduce its negative impacts.

The new Minister for Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE), the Honourable Joshua Burgoyne, has not given a timeframe for the development of a WMP. There is flexibility in the schedule to allow sufficient consultation, engagement and discussion, noting that many stakeholders would like to see its development progress.

WMP Content **Required** under the Act: s10 (2).

A weed management plan is to include the following particulars:

- (a) the name of the plan;
- (b) the area or activity to which the plan applies;
- (c) the general and specific objectives of the plan;
- (d) the name and any classification of the declared weed or potential weed to which the plan applies;
- (e) the methods to be used to achieve the objectives of the plan and the time during which the methods are to be used, and other specifications required, to achieve the objectives of the plan;
- (f) the methods to be used to prevent the spread within or from the area to which the plan applies;
- (g) the requirements for owners and occupiers of land and officers to monitor the results of the plan and the methods used.

- Discussion on **required** content – several of these points can be drawn directly from the Strategy, eg (a) to (d). Other content will be informed through expert knowledge, industry best practice, and established data collection protocols.
- WAC members will be invited to consult with their stakeholders/networks to inform the methods.
- Public consultation will be sought via ‘Have Your Say’ survey, open throughout the weed plan development.

Optional Content under the Act: s10 (3-5).

(3) A weed management plan may include the following particulars:

- (a) the procedures for inspecting land, animals, vehicles, plants, fodder, soil and other things for the presence of declared weeds or potential weeds;
- (b) the processes to be adopted following the removal of declared weeds or potential weeds from land to rehabilitate the land;
- (c) the use of declared weeds under a permit;
- (d) the program for educating the owners and occupiers of land in the area to which the plan applies and other persons to whom the plan applies on how to manage declared weeds or potential weeds;
- (e) the criteria for obtaining assistance to carry out the obligations imposed under the plan and the extent of the assistance;
- (f) any other particulars that are determined by the Minister.

(4) A weed management plan may prohibit or restrict the use of a substance or class of substances or a methodology used to manage declared weeds or potential weeds.

(5) A weed management plan may adopt or incorporate by reference any code, standard, methodology or publication, or a part of any code, standard or publication, published by any authority or body.

- Discussion on **Optional** content – what (if any) optional extras may be relevant to include in the buffel WMP.
- Eg (c) permits – informed by discussion item 12; (d) education – linked to management guide and potential best practice guide; (e) assistance – linked to funding opportunities

Agenda Item 14: Have Your Say survey

The Act requires a minimum 4 week consultation period for a draft weed management plan, prior to its adoption. The WAC has indicated a desire for a longer consultation period, and it is proposed to open an online survey to gather feedback throughout the development of the plan.

A draft survey has been distributed to members for feedback, prior to opening and promoting for public use. The survey will be hosted on the NTG Have Your Say platform, with all comments made available to the WAC at regular intervals.

- Discussion on **Have Your Say** survey. Interactive trial of the survey, with comments invited and discussed in real time.