

# Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee Meeting Communique

## Overview

The Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee (WAC) held their 5<sup>th</sup> meeting on the 27th November 2024 in Alice Springs to progress the management of buffel grass in the Northern Territory. The Committee discussed the declaration of buffel grass as a weed under the *Weeds Management Act 2001* by the then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security. The group heard presentations from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority and the MacDonnell Ranges Priority Places Project. Committee members each provided detailed updates on their organisation's activities since the June 2024 meeting. There were some very initial discussions regarding the development of the Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan.

## Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee (WAC) present

Name	Representing
Phillip Cowan (Chair)	Department of Tourism and Hospitality- Parks and Wildlife
Tracey Guest	Parks Australia (UKT NP)
James Cocking	Desert Knowledge Australia
Nathaniel Staniford	NT Fire and Emergency Services (Bushfires NT)
Joel Andrew	Alice Springs Town Council
Benjamin Kaethner	Central Land Council
Ross Stanes	NT Cattlemen's Association
William Evans (nominated for membership but awaiting formal Ministerial appointment at time of meeting)	NT Cattlemen's Association

## Buffel Grass WAC apologies

Garth Forster	Central Land Council
Roy Chisholm	Pastoral Land Board
Josef Schofield	Australian Wildlife Conservancy

## Other attendees

Roni Opden (Executive Officer)	Department Lands, Planning and Environment (Weed Management)
Tabitha Fudge (Minutes)	Department Lands, Planning and Environment (Weed Management)
Amber Clarke	Department Lands, Planning and Environment (Weed Management)
Stephen Wingrave	Department Lands, Planning and Environment (Weed Management)

Max Arkley-Smith (presenter)	Department Lands, Planning and Environment (Weed Management)
Bianca Overington	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Pastoral Branch)
James Christian proxy for Roy Chisholm	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Agribusiness Development)
Travis Kelly (presenter)	Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
Kylie Cowan (presenter)	Department Lands, Planning and Environment (Flora and Fauna Division)
Peter McDonald (presenter)	Department Lands, Planning and Environment (Flora and Fauna Division)

## Key Discussion Points

### WAC Business

The Executive Officer confirmed that the [Buffel Grass Management Strategy: Central Australia 2024 – 2030](#) had been delivered to the then Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security following the Committee's previous meeting in June 2024. The Committee noted that buffel grass had been declared a weed under the *Weeds Management Act 2001* in July 2024 by the then Minister.

The Committee requested the Chair write to the incoming Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment seeking input into the WAC's future work and priorities post completion of the Buffel Grass Strategy and the species declaration as a weed.

The Committee briefly discussed the development of a Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan (WMP) and possible content. This will be explored further at future WAC meetings pending direction provided by the Minister.

### Committee Updates

Members provided updates on buffel management activities undertaken by their respective agencies. Many members noted uncertainty around what the declaration meant for on ground management. A Buffel Grass WMP should provide additional, more specific details to provide greater clarity, particularly for landholders and managers.

It was noted that two additional Weed Management Branch staffers have commenced in Alice Springs to increase buffel grass management capacity.

### Presentations

The Committee heard a presentation from the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) around their Sacred Site Register and Authority Certificates for working on sacred sites. The group discussed how this related to undertaking weed control activities and where clearances may be required/existing Authority Certificates modified.

The Committee heard a presentation from the Flora and Fauna Division of the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment regarding the MacDonnell Ranges Priority Places Project. This is a federally funded project looking to mitigate environmental threats and improve landscape condition. Buffel grass management work will be undertaken at key threatened species sites on conservation reserves within the MacDonnell Ranges.