

Richmond River, any infestations in Kyogle Shire will wash down and infest areas downstream in times of flood. So naturally water hyacinth must be controlled in Kyogle Shire but is it fair to ask a landholder in Kyogle to spend \$200 spraying a lagoon when he will receive no benefit at all.

Taking the exercise one step further it is also debatable as to who suffers the greatest disadvantage from water hyacinth on the lower Richmond - the landholders involved or the general community. Provided aquatic weeds do not affect the flow of water in times of flood farmers are not going to worry if water skiing on the river at Coraki is not possible because it is choked up with water hyacinth.

Each case has to be argued on its merits and there will be as many arguments for as there are against.

However, a close watch must be kept to ensure that the declaration of a weed as noxious does not put an unjust burden on a small part of the community when it is the community as a whole who will benefit.

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL ON ROADSIDES

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Most countries have legislation to protect agricultural industries from plants which are considered to be harmful in some way. The purpose of such legislation is to ensure the containment or eradication of undesirable plants (proclaimed as noxious weeds). The noxious weeds legislation usually requires that proclaimed species be controlled in all situations. This includes not only agricultural land, but Crown and public lands, and road and railway easements (and railways).

Under the Acts, responsibility for the control of noxious weeds on roadsides rests either with the landholder whose property adjoins the road or with some government body, often a municipal council. In Victoria, landholders are responsible for the half width of adjoining easements while the Vermin and Noxious Weeds Destruction Board carries out work on highways.

under agreement with the Country Roads Board. Landholders often resent the cost and effort of controlling weeds on roadsides as they have no other rights on the easement. They sometimes claim that many weed seeds are introduced by stock and traffic using the road. Farmers do expect roadsides to be kept free of weeds however, arguing that they should not be expected to control weeds which are free to grow in areas under government control. However, the cost of controlling noxious weeds on roadsides by a government agency is high, and money for a full program is often not available. Where local authorities are responsible for the work, the effort is variable and often inefficient. The Victorian system has undoubtedly reduced the incidence and spread of many noxious weed species along roads, e.g. Paterson's curse (*Echium* spp.) in north eastern Victoria. It also provides facilities for uniform State-wide programs and provides a useful service in controlling species that the Board considers undesirable on road easements (e.g. *Rubus* spp.).

However the usefulness of much of the effort against all noxious weed species on roadsides is being questioned. Many species are now widespread and so policies of containment are difficult to apply. It has not been shown that all noxious weeds will spread from the easement into farmland. General experience and evidence from a limited amount of research indicates that establishment is generally prevented by good farm management. Perhaps the most relevant criticism of roadside weed control is that little facility exists to prevent the re-establishment of noxious weeds on non-agricultural land. The importance of management of competitive species is an accepted part of weed control on farms but roadside weed control rarely extends beyond the mechanical or chemical attack on any weeds present. Although this can suppress infestations of weeds, it invariably means that there is a recurring cost.

In general, weed control should be part of a broader program of roadside vegetation management which considers such factors as safety, visibility aesthetics, and spread of weeds from roadsides. Desirable trees should be retained and a low, grassy understory encouraged. Adequate repair of any disturbance associated with road construction and maintenance needs to be carried out. This would reduce the rate of invasion by weeds and lower the cost of weed control.