EDUCATION OFFICERS OF THE COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WEED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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Early in the life of the Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems (CRCWMS), it was recognised that a focus on education and adoption were vital to the function of the CRCWMS and estimating its success. Through the appointment of three education officers/technical coordinators, the CRCWMS has taken a lead role in improving education about weeds, at all levels, and increasing the adoption of weed management programs. It is also the aim of the CRCWMS education officers to foster community and industry ownership of weed problems so there is continued acceptance and support for weed management projects.

Toni Nugent is the education officer for the cropping program of the CRCWMS. A background in agriculture and a Graduate Diploma of Education gives Toni a good understanding of broadacre cropping systems and the costs of weeds to the industry. Her work focuses on improving community understanding and the adoption of weed management strategies in cropping systems across southern Australia, coordinating and facilitating education and adoption activities, producing weed management handbooks and synergising activities of existing information providers.

Kate Blood’s background in horticulture and six years experience in park and recreation management in Victoria ensures a good knowledge of shortcomings in the management of invasive species in natural ecosystems. Kate is the education officer for the natural ecosystems program and her objectives include improving information sharing on environmental weeds, publishing a field guide, training and working more closely with the horticulture industry to reduce the sale, promotion and demand for invasive species.

An interest and background in natural resource management including work on the density and viability of seeds in feral and trail horse manure, has lead Ursula Taylor to the CRCWMS. Ursula is the education officer for the perennial pastures program and is involved in writing a handbook on pasture weed management, designing short courses, promoting weed awareness to the community and establishing closer operating links with pasture industry organisations.

Work undertaken by the education officers can be broken into three areas:

1. Networking and sharing information - Weed Navigator
   Listservers (email discussion groups)

2. Education, Training and Extension - Market research
   Short courses
   Weed management handbooks and guides

3. Promotion and Community Awareness - Media
   Nursery industry
   Weedbuster week

Evaluation is an essential part of the role of the education officers to ensure that needs of the CRCWMS and the community are met. Collaboration on various projects, including the production of the directory entitled The Weed Navigator and Weedbuster Week, are amongst the high priorities of each education officer.