

‘Weed Warriors’ – overcoming the problem with weeds

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Summary ‘Weed Warriors’ is an innovative education and awareness program that aims to create communities willing and capable of addressing local weed problems.

Weeds degrade our natural environment, reduce the viability, productivity and sustainability of our primary industries and affect the health of people and animals. A less understood problem with weeds is their impact on the psyche and social fabric of Australian communities.

Traditional education and awareness programs strive to increase the knowledge and understanding of a particular issue or set of issues. The Weed Warriors program acknowledges that increasing people’s awareness of an issue without empowering them with the practical tools needed to become part of the solution to the problem can leave people feeling overwhelmed and disconnected, often leading to inactivity and at worst, apathy.

Consequently the Weed Warriors program is designed to take people from knowledge to action through a series of practical, hands-on experiences. It focuses on linking students with a network of regional stakeholders and community groups in the implementation of real life biological control programs. The Weed Warriors program encourages in program participants ‘a sense of connection to place’ and strives to develop a commitment to and responsibility for local environmental issues that is critical to bringing about lasting change.

This paper deconstructs the National Weed Warriors program and analyses the structures and tools developed to support it.

Keywords Weed Warriors, community engagement, biological control.