

**CAWS Travel Grant Award 2014**  
**Profile: Rebecca Grant; Secretary, Weed Society of Victoria.**

As from April 2013, I am the current elected Secretary for the Weed Society of Victoria Inc. (WSV). I also study a Bachelor of Science, majoring in biology on a part time basis at Deakin University. My perusal of a career and education within the environment and biology streams began in high school when I was award the year 12 geography award leading me to the decision to complete both a Diploma of Environmental Management and a Diploma of Conservation and Land Management at Chisholm Institute of TAFE. On completion of these in 2007, I began working at the Department of Primary Industries (now Department of Environment and Primary Industries), in Frankston, Victoria. I worked within the Biosciences Research Division assisting with weed biological and chemical control projects, but most of my time was spent with the Weed Risk Assessment Team. I then crossed over into the field of animal welfare within the Department, taking up a 15 month contract with the Bureau of Animal Welfare from late 2011- early 2013.

After working in weed sciences with the Department of Primary Industries for four years, I decided to join the Weed Society of Victoria committee in 2012. I joined so I could maintain professional links with my colleagues after I left the weed sciences field, having finished my contracted positions with the Department. Upon the previous secretary's retirement, and with the support of the then current committee, I accepted the nomination as secretary for WSV.

**Conference abstract**

At the Australasian Weeds Conference to be held in Hobart, September 2014, I will be presenting a poster with a proceedings paper that show cases the valuable work of weed societies.

On becoming the Secretary of the Victorian Weed Society I began to fully realise the true value of the organisation, and appreciate the community created from its membership and event participants. Although the main aim of most societies is to take a role in actively promoting awareness of weeds, weed societies offer much more. Events hosted by weed societies, provide opportunities for participants to hear of projects being undertaken by a wide variety of people from weed experts through to community groups which can range through local, state, federal and even international levels or a collaboration of any of these. Often, people come from an array of organisations and would not necessarily be given opportunities to share their work with a wider audience otherwise.

Speak to those involved in weed societies and you will be met with enthusiasm of how society networking has returned benefits that would never have been possible otherwise. Participants may see a presentation that provides valuable information, or a casual chat with a fellow participant may prove a fruitful link in sourcing an expert or even funding towards a project. For example, when Tasmanian and Victorian weed risk assessment staff met at a Victorian Weed Society conference, a professional link was established. This led to the sharing of scientific research and literature that ultimately supported the declaration of several invasive species in Tasmania. The connection eliminated the same information being reviewed a second time unnecessarily, saving time and money.

