

## Australasian Weeds Conference Travel Award 2014

### Travel report- Rebecca Grant, Secretary, Weed Society of Victoria Inc.

With the assistance of this CAWS travel award, I attended the 19<sup>th</sup> Australasian Weeds Conference titled "Science, community and food security: the weed challenge", held in Hobart, Tasmania, 1-4<sup>th</sup> September 2014. My contribution to this conference was to present a poster with invited paper titled "Weed Societies: building better communications between weed stakeholders". The concept for this paper was to promote the work of weed societies, how societies are structured, the value in participation of weed society events and to investigate the beneficial outcomes of networking at a conference. My paper includes two case studies demonstrating post conference collaboration which resulted from delegates meeting at weed society events. The full conference paper can be found via [http://www.caws.org.au/awc\\_index.php](http://www.caws.org.au/awc_index.php). The poster can be viewed under the publications tab on the Weed Society of Victoria website via <http://www.wsvic.org.au/>.

As secretary for a weed society, attending this conference provided an important learning and networking opportunity. I was able to meet more Weed Society of Victoria members and members of other weed society committees. I had many discussions on why it was such a successful conference, how other committees were administered, current industry work and the directions the weeds industries were headed. These discussions, presentations and forums have provided much motivation and inspiration for future Weed Society of Victoria events.

Overall, presentations throughout the conference highlighted the need for better co-ordination and consistency in dealing with weed problems across Australia. This is particularly obvious with weed hygiene and legislative requirements regarding long distance transport/travel and the management of waterways such as the Murray-Darling Basin described in a presentation by Hillary Cherry. Community engagement was another strong theme highlighting the value of volunteer efforts and their willingness to take ownership of weed management.

At the conclusion of conference presentations, delegates were treated to a demonstration from Steve Austin with his detector dog Missy. Missy has been trained to detect hawkweeds in alpine areas. Hawkweed samples were hidden around the room amongst the 200+ delegates with Missy detecting the hawkweed with ease. Delegates were impressed with such an innovative detection method and Missy's talent. It was beautiful to see so many people appreciating the talents of a truly remarkable dog. Louise Hanigan's full paper "Determining the feasibility of training a dog to detect *Hieracium* species" is included in the proceedings.



I also attended the 'Weed culture in the wilds of Hobart' field trip. Participants visited hawkweed sites on Mt Wellington, discovered edible minor weeds along the Rivulet followed by a lunch of such weeds provided by Paulette Whitney who harvests them from her garden. This alternative use of weeds was definitely a tasty solution to a common backyard problem.

I would like to thank CAWS for awarding me this travel grant and congratulate the conference organisers and presenters on an outstanding conference.

Photo: Meeting Missy, hawkweed detector dog.