



COUNCIL OF AUSTRALASIAN WEED SOCIETIES

Medal for Leadership Winner in 2018

Kate Blood

Kate Blood's childhood passion for weeds led her into the invasive plant world and a horticultural degree at The University of Melbourne's Burnley Campus. After graduating, she worked in Victoria's national parks and reserves for six years with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. Kate then turned her focus to environmental weeds full-time with the CRC for Weed Management Systems. She is currently employed by Victoria's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Kate was completely fearless about breaking communication guidelines and rules where she thought (almost always correctly) that the rules were timid or dumb. This occasionally caused ructions but Kate was the easiest renegade to defend because of her logic and charm. But arguably her greatest skill was in her TV and radio advocacy, where she presented as this serene lady gardener in a classy hat and cane basket of flowers, pushing genocide to weeds. Her charms simply could not be denied and she has been an excellent environmental advocate. Subsequent advances in weed legislation and budgets owe a lot to Kate. She earned this award years ago.

Kate is a skilled ecologist, first class communicator and a savvy public servant. It is extremely rare for one person to possess all of these skills, rarer yet to be able to successfully use them to such good effect in natural resource management. Kate, through her knowledge, is attention-grabbing, and through her gentle, measured, considered observations and opinions is persuasive. Kate is a leader and driver of change in weed management. Through her commitment to NRM and her communication style described above, Kate's contribution to weed management across Australia has been, and continues to be, hugely influential.

She has led the Weeds in the Early Stages of Invasion (WESI) Project, formally NIPPA, since 2011. WESI focuses on high risk invasive species at the early stage of invasion that threaten biodiversity. The WESI team have developed tools and training programs specifically for public land managers in Victoria, to support, enable and build their capabilities in identifying and managing weeds in the early stages of invasion.

By investigating the barriers that prevent action on early invaders, WESI has created a process and tools to assist public land managers. The most significant resource developed by the WESI team under Kate's leadership was the 6-part decision making framework that guides public land managers through the process of dealing with invasive plants at the early stage of invasion. The six guides are:

1. Looking for weeds: search and detect guide
2. Looking for weeds: name and notify
3. Assess the risk: environmental weed risk screen for Victoria
4. Looking for weeds: delimiting survey guide
5. Managing for weeds: decide the response guide
6. Managing for weeds: eradication response guide.

From 2016 to 2017, Kate sat on the National Cactus Reference Group, which over-saw the development of the opuntoid cacti best practice management manual and associated resources. She played a critical role in testing and ground truthing the decision support tools that were developed. Kate has an outstanding ability to critically view extension materials and management tools from the perspective of the target audience, allowing refinement of the language and visual guides to make it more accessible, effective and user friendly.

In recent years through the WESI project, Kate has organised and delivered a series of weed identification training sessions across Victoria, and most recently, was involved with the delivery of information sessions and field trips for opuntoid cacti, promoting and putting to use the tools within the management manual. Her knowledge, understanding of her audience, enthusiasm and delivery style makes for a charismatic and effective and accessible presenter, teacher and mentor.

Kate has been instrumental in ensuring that the conversation around early invaders continues, through her strong social media presence, using the handle @weedyk8 on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Yammer. Kate also co-founded I-SPEI (Invasive Species Prevention and Early Intervention) - pronounced 'I-spy' - an email-base network/discussion group, established in October 2012 to encourage national and international communication and knowledge sharing on invasive species prevention and early intervention.

