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## Summary and conclusion

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The speakers at this workshop gave an excellent overview of biological control programs in Victoria and the relationship to the National scene.

The following major points were made:

- Biological control programs may require 10-20 years to achieve an effective outcome.
- Strict protocols are in place to ensure the scientific integrity of the programs, to protect natural and modified ecosystems and to provide a mechanism for the resolution of conflict of interest where it arises in the community.
- The major benefit of successful biological control will be at the community level although some benefits will flow to individuals.
- Both government and industry organizations have provided significant funding over many years, but there is currently serious questioning of both the time span and level at which this funding will continue to be provided.
- A large number of control agents are being tested against a range of pest species. Are resources spread too thinly?
- The level of resources that are used to study plant and agent interactions should be reviewed with a view to increasing the availability of resources for mass rearing insects for field releases.
- Community expectations on the potential value of biological control vary, and "success" to the scientist may not be seen in the same light by farmers or others in the community.
- In many bushland situations biological control appears to offer the only chance of returning the vegetation to near natural condition.
- There is an exciting opportunity to link mass rearing and release programs to schools and community groups. This would give the benefits of increased availability of insects coupled with a better community understanding of the place of biological control in weed control.
- To be effective biological control programs must be linked to regional weed control strategies and not be seen as an add-on that may have some benefit.
- Although there is good communication and co-ordination between State and Commonwealth research workers, the impact of biological control would be enhanced through the development of a better National focus.

This workshop provides policy makers and managers at both the State and National level with information to review existing and proposed biological programs. Programs must have a stronger focus on producing effective outcomes with tangible results in the field.

The proceedings will also serve as a valuable tool both for promoting biological control and in increasing the level of understanding in the government, industry and the community. This will help the development of stronger links between workers in research and in the field, and provide for the integration of biological control into regional weed control strategies and programs.

With the current level of resourcing there is a need for a reduction, or at least a consolidation, in the number of target species and agents under study. It would be preferable to adopt a "best bet" approach with a view to achieving a limited number of recognized successes rather than maintaining a larger number of possibilities of success without adequate resources to complete the required work.

Professional publicity should be given to programs where success can be demonstrated. This publicity should not raise unrealistic expectations, but rather clearly spell out the level of success and the limitations. Publicity of this nature will help to sustain community, industry and political support to help the continued flow of the necessary long term funding. Effective integration of the community into rearing and release programs will also build and maintain support for programs.

Although there is excellent communication between research workers in State and Commonwealth agencies, the impact of programs could be enhanced through the development of a stronger National focus. The Australian Weeds Committee and the co-ordinator, recently appointed jointly by the Wool and Meat Research Industry Councils, are two avenues which could help in the development of this focus.

Finally, congratulations are due to both the members of the Weed Science Society of Victoria and the staff of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for their work in organizing and presenting this important workshop. Their efforts are well appreciated and I look forward to the continued co-operation between the Department and the Society in the coming years.