

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL - WHO SHOULD PAY?

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Funding of local government bodies, including shire councils, county councils and Pasture Protection Boards has recently come under review. In view of landholders' problems in meeting rates and levies in the present rural crisis the reviews are very timely.

However, a recently reported article in the "Northern Star" would indicate that not all of the findings of the various investigations will be to the landholders' benefit - at least not in terms of noxious weed control. The article stated in part:

"The proposal that rural holdings only should finance noxious weeds eradication and inspection, whether the weeds be on rural roads, town streets or whatever"

The above statement implies that for whatever reason a weed is declared noxious, landholders must pay for its eradication.

If we consider the huge environmental lobby which now interests itself in certain plants whenever it considers our 'quality of life' is affected, it becomes obvious that inequities in such a system would quickly occur.

Species which come into this category include *Chrysanthemoides monilifera* (boneseed) in Victoria and more recently in northern New South Wales and *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* (ragweed) on the North Coast. With both these species there is no threat to agricultural land - one threatens our native shrubs and wildflowers and the other causes hayfever - and yet as the environmentalists gain strength there is a very real danger that they could be declared noxious and landholders would have to pay to eradicate them.

Other situations also arise involving species which do pose a threat to agricultural land, where it is difficult to define who should pay.

Take as an example a weed which is declared noxious in the Kyogle Shire, *Eichhornia crassipes* (water hyacinth).

Now, assuming that the statement previously referred to came into effect so that all landholders, but only landholders, paid for noxious weed inspections and where necessary, control, then the following inequity would occur.

Not one landholder in Kyogle Shire loses any production because of water hyacinth. The reason it is declared noxious in Kyogle is that as Kyogle Shire is on the headwaters of the