

## Australian weed biocontrol: A look at the past, present and future

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**Summary** For over a century, Australia has successfully implemented the applied discipline of biocontrol as an approach to alleviate issues caused by problematic plant species (weeds). The benefits of this applied ecological approach lie not only in the efficacy in controlling the weed targets, but also because of the environmentally-friendly and self-sustaining attributes of many programs, with these benefits very often translating into a natural successive process of ecological restoration. As a result, biocontrol often forms a vital component of integrated weed management strategies. However, because these programs require significant long-term financial investment and expertise to match the time scales of the issue, Australia has seen a major decline in capability for weed biocontrol research, extension and on-ground management over the past 15 years. This has been recognised at a state and federal level, with several

significant recent funding commitments being made towards existing and new weed biocontrol programs. This talk will look at a couple of the historically successful biocontrol of weeds programs in Australia, focussing on the role these programs have had in restoring ecological balance to the ecosystems that were once invaded. Here we further present in its early stage the development of a co-dependent partnership model to sustainably fund the future needs of research, development and extension in weed biocontrol. Collectively, this model encourages communication and consultation in bringing together Australia's leading weed biocontrol RD&E agencies for rebuilding capability and capacity, to fast-track and maximise the on-ground delivery of biocontrol agents.

**Keywords** Weed biocontrol, co-dependent partnership funding model.