Review Report: Weed Management Plans for Gamba grass, Mimosa and Bellyache bush
Prepared by:

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Long Title:
Review Report for the Weed Management Plans for:

Andropogon gayanus (Gamba grass)

Mimosa (Mimosa pigra) and

Bellyache bush (Jatropha gossypiifolia).

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Acknowledgement

The Weed Management Branch acknowledges the time invested by land managers, landholders and key stakeholders to inform and guide this review.
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</tbody>
</table>
# Glossary

<table>
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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALC</td>
<td>Anindilyakwa Land Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTFRS</td>
<td>Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTG</td>
<td>Northern Territory Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWCNT</td>
<td>Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RJCP</td>
<td>Remote Jobs and Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WMB</td>
<td>Weed Management Branch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a review of the Weed Management Plans for *Andropogon gayanus* (Gamba Grass), *Mimosa* (*Mimosa pigra*) and *Bellyache Bush* (*Jatropha gossypiifolia*) (the three Plans), on their performance between December 2013 and April 2017.

The review aimed to evaluate:

- whether the three Plans had facilitated better management outcomes; and
- whether they were enforceable in their current capacity following the recent implementation of compliance and enforcement activities by the Department’s Weed Management Branch.

It used a number of methods to evaluate performance of the Plans and the progress towards achieving higher levels of compliance with the management actions, reducing the risk posed by gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush and hence facilitating better management actions on ground, including:

- review by legal practitioners;
- review of Weed Management Branch data;
- direct engagement with stakeholders and the broader community including through interviews, property visits; via direct letters, emails, newspaper advertising and a questionnaire (Appendix 1);
- assessment of current processes and activities;
- discussion of preliminary review findings with Weed Management Branch to identify gaps in the effectiveness of the three Plans.

An assessment against each of the Plans’ targets was conducted to support the review process and to demonstrate how the Weed Management Branch’s operational processes have been strategically aligned to facilitate compliance and enforcement.

Many of the comments received in response to this engagement were consistent in the issues identified. For this reason a combined report of all three Plan reviews is presented to maximise efficiencies and ensure consistency, as many of the recommended changes will affect all Plans.

The review findings support changes to the three Plans to improve:

- legislative rigour in the event of prosecution
- implementation and transparency of compliance and enforcement programs
- clarity of instructions across various land management situations; and
- targets for measuring the impact, if any, of the Plans’ implementation.

A summary and analysis of feedback received during the consultation period is included at Appendix 2.
2 Background to Weed Management Plans

2.1 Classifying a declared weed

Pursuant to section 7(1) of the Act, the Minister may declare a plant to be a declared weed by notice in the Gazette. Such a declaration may also classify the weed having regard to whether it is necessary to:

A. Eradicate the weed (referred to as “Class A” weeds);

B. Prevent the growth and spread of the weed (referred to as “Class B” weeds); or

C. Prevent the introduction of the weed into the Territory (referred to as “Class C” weeds).

The Department’s legal advisor provided the following advice:

“… Once a plant is declared to be a declared weed, the Act imposes duties on owners and occupiers of land (as well as the general public) which are designed to manage and control the weed. These duties apply regardless of whether the weed is classified as a “Class A”, “Class B”, “Class C” weed (or a combination of these classes). The classification of a weed may guide the priorities of the Weed Management Branch and the contents of a weed management plan. However, it does not alter the obligations on owners and occupiers of land to control and manage weeds pursuant to the Act. …”

The three Plans have split declarations. Declaration classes are as follows:

The mixed declaration classes (A/C and B/C) reflect the varying feasibility of control between the two areas; that is low density, high feasibility of eradication and control (Class A), and high density, lower feasibility of eradication or control (Class B); plus the need to prevent new introductions across all of the Territory (Class C).

For example, for gamba grass, the delineation of management zones associated with these declaration classes represents a defensible balance between continued use of some existing gamba grass pasture in the B/C zone (subject to control caveats detailed in the plan), the need for control and, over time, a reduction of gamba grass in areas of highest infestation (B/C zone), and the need to eradicate outlying populations (A/C zone).

2.2 Purposes of a weed management plan

Section 10(1) of the Act provides that the Minister may make a weed management plan for any one or more of the following purposes:

- To prevent a declared weed entering the Territory.

Given the foregoing discussion on the enforceability of a weed management plan, any plan given for this purpose would not be enforceable but merely educational/aspirational. However, it is an offence under section 9(4)(a) to bring a declared weed into the Territory without a permit.

- To prevent anything containing or carrying a declared weed entering the Territory.

Again, a plan for this purpose would not be enforceable but merely educational/aspirational. However, it is an offence under 9(4)(g) to transport or carry a thing containing or carrying a declared weed without a permit.

- To manage a declared weed within the Territory or a part of the Territory.

Such a plan is enforceable where obligations are placed on owners and occupiers of land in the Territory on which a declared weed is present.
To prevent a declared weed being propagated or moved within the Territory.

Again, such a plan is enforceable where obligations are placed on owners and occupiers of land in the Territory on which a declared weed is present.

The content of a weed management plan must be considered in the context of the general obligations on owners and occupiers of land and the limited enforceability of weed management plans. There are already requirements in the Act requiring owners and occupiers to treat declared weeds on their land. These general requirements may prove difficult to enforce. A weed management plan should place more stringent requirements on owners and occupiers to manage, treat and/or eradicate the weed.

### 2.3 Current situation

There are currently ten statutory Weed Management Plans (the statutory Plans) in force in the Northern Territory. These Plans include the Northern Territory’s worst weeds such as gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush.

In accordance with section 12 of the Act, the Minister is to review a Weed Management Plan not later than 3 years after it is approved and thereafter at intervals not longer than 3 years.

The statutory Plans establish the objectives, management requirements and management actions to be achieved by land owners and occupiers and the minimum actions to be taken to achieve these outcomes. Conducting land management practices in accordance with the Plan will secure compliance with the requirements of the Act.

In general, the statutory Plans’ objectives are to:

1. eradicate existing infestations and prevent further establishment in the A/C zone;
2. control the growth and spread in the B/C zone;
3. strategically control infestations in transport and service corridors (gamba grass only); and
4. apply an adaptive approach to weed management.

The three Plan reviews are occurring in parallel to the development of Compliance and Enforcement Plans that will incorporate these species at regional scales. The implementation of these programs using the statutory Plans as a tool, will be closely monitored for compliance and associated onground outcomes. Ongoing extension, collaborative management programs (catchment-scale) and ongoing implementation of tenure-driven approaches to weed management should contribute to broader cultural changes and long-term compliance.

The review also considered whether the three Plans demonstrated best management practice to achieve their overall aims: to mitigate the risk of these weeds to the environment, culture, the economy and agricultural productivity. Information and research has occurred in this regard in the past three years, particularly in management techniques and herbicide trials and it is apparent that the statutory Plans need significant changes to become contemporary and more practical.
3 Review Framework

3.1 Purpose

In accordance with the Act, the Minister must review all statutory weed management plans within three years of their implementation. The review assessed progress towards achieving higher levels of compliance with the weed management actions and reduced levels of risk posed by gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush. It will also inform the Weed Management Branch of key stakeholders’ accountabilities and effectiveness.

The review also aimed to assess the performance of the three Plans against the targets as well as to provide recommendations to improve the three Plans and their delivery, through:

- assessing the level of awareness among land owners of their responsibilities under the three Plans;
- documenting the implementation of the actions by NT landholders;
- determining the performance of the three Plans; and
- identifying recommendations that could improve the three Plans and their implementation.

The three Plans were also scrutinised (by internal staff and legal advisors) for their applicability as a compliance tool. With the Branch’s recent focus on compliance and enforcement activities, the three Plans guide the development of compliance plans and measuring compliance.

3.2 Key review questions

The key review questions were designed to facilitate the redesign and improvement of the Plans. In fulfilling the purposes of the review, the following key questions will be addressed:

1. Has the Plan facilitated better management outcomes?
2. Is the Plan enforceable in its current form?

3.3 Review plan

The review plan identifies the review activity, means of verification and its association to the key review question.

Table 1: Review Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key review question</th>
<th>Means of verification</th>
<th>Review activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Has the plan facilitated better management outcomes?</td>
<td>Areas of eradication, containment and reduced spread</td>
<td>‘Lessons learnt’ discussions with relevant Weed Management Branch staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with key stakeholders.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recorded new incursions in eradication management zones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessed distribution and density data from survey programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Is the Plan enforceable in its current capacity?</td>
<td>Test case against current management requirements</td>
<td>Assess the Plan against information gathered during recent compliance training and enforcement implementation as well as legal advice on the current (gamba grass) plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Are management requirements specific enough?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Methods

A number of methods, listed below, were used to evaluate performance of the three Plans and the progress towards achieving higher levels of compliance with the management actions, reducing the risk and mitigating the impacts of the three species:

- Review by legal practitioners.
- Review of Weed Management Branch data including information collected from various sources.
- Dissemination of emails and letters to major stakeholders with a targeted survey and request to comment on the existing Plans. Emails and letters were sent directly to stakeholders with large scale properties with known or previously existing infestations of gamba grass, mimosa or bellyache bush, industry experts, local and regional councils and other relevant constituents. During the consultation, 22 responses were received across all three Plans. Major stakeholders contacted are listed below in Table 2. The survey questions can be found at Appendix 1. Additionally, stakeholders were encouraged to provide broad comments on the three Plans and weed management activities in general.
- Assessment of gamba grass monitoring, survey and control processes and activities to understand the requirements, challenges and complexities of managing and resourcing compliance programs.
- Engagement with the broader community through advertisements in various newspapers and community newsletters, a media release, information on the website and direct consultation.
- Discussion of the preliminary review findings with Weed Management Branch staff. The aim of these discussions was to assess the effectiveness of the three Plans and identify the challenges and opportunities in managing weeds and implementing a compliance and enforcement program aligned with the next iterations of the Plans.

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**Stakeholder Questionnaire**

**Weed Management Plan for Gamba Grass**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Property/Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Doe</td>
<td>123 Green Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Smith</td>
<td>456 Apple Lane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Environment and Natural Resources**

**DEPARTMENT OF**

**Northern Territory**

**Stakeholder Questionnaire**

**Weed Management Plan for Gamba Grass**

*What do you think the role of the Weed Management Branch is?*

*Do you think the current management plan is adequate in addressing the issue?*

*Do you think the gamba grass monitoring and control programs are effective?*

*Do you think the gamba grass monitoring and control programs are effective?*

*What other measures could be adopted to control gamba grass?*

*What do you think the role of the Weed Management Branch should be?*

*What other measures could be adopted to control gamba grass?*

*What do you think the role of the Weed Management Branch should be?*

---

**Northern Territory**

**Stakeholder Questionnaire**

**Weed Management Plan for Gamba Grass**

*What do you think the role of the Weed Management Branch is?*

*Do you think the current management plan is adequate in addressing the issue?*

*Do you think the gamba grass monitoring and control programs are effective?*

*Do you think the gamba grass monitoring and control programs are effective?*

*What other measures could be adopted to control gamba grass?*

*What do you think the role of the Weed Management Branch should be?*

*What other measures could be adopted to control gamba grass?*

*What do you think the role of the Weed Management Branch should be?*
### Table 2: Major Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key stakeholders, land owners, managers or occupiers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minister for Environment and Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. of Primary Industry and Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dept. of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory Weed Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin Regional Weed Reference Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Regional Weed Reference Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darwin City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katherine Town Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litchfield Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kakadu National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesee Wyoming (rail corridor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Association of the Northern Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and Extractives Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greening Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria River District Conservation Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed contractors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamba grass permit holders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APT Pipelines NT Pty Ltd (Amadeus Gas pipeline)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Plan performance – assessment against targets

This section of the Review report outlines the results of an assessment of the targets in the three Plans. As this is the second review of the three Plans, the 3-5 year targets for each Plan were assessed for performance. Targets were assessed according to who is responsible for the target. ‘Northern Territory Government’ targets were assessed individually, ‘All landholders’ targets were grouped.

4.1 Gamba grass

Objective 1: Eradicate existing infestations and prevent further establishment of gamba grass in the A/C zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target/s</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Northern Territory Government | • Results of eradication activities are obtained from landholders. | • WMB contacted by a remote ranger group which had identified and subsequently eradicated gamba grass on Groote Eylandt.  
• Gamba grass control work data obtained from Kakadu National Park.  
• Roadside surveys being undertaken by Dept. Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics to assess weed management contracts across the Darwin region and data provided to Weed Management Branch.  
• NT Parks and Wildlife (PWCNT) weed control data submitted to Weed Management Branch, including parks within the A/C zone.  
• Gamba herbicide assistance program uptake.  
• WMB is currently assessing systems for use in remote sensing to monitor spread of gamba grass in the A/C zone which can later be ground-truthed and monitored. | • Message of the importance of identifying and eradicating gamba grass is reaching remote areas.  
• Data is being obtained from NT Government agencies.  
• Greater effort needed to obtain data from pastoralists and other private landholders.  
• Feedback has been used to plan future activities. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target/s</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| All landholders    | • Identify infestations of gamba grass in the A/C zone.  
• Programs developed and implemented to eradicate infestations of gamba grass in the A/C zone.  
• All gamba grass infestations are under active eradication programs.  
• The number and size of infestations of gamba grass in the A/C zone is reduced. | • Data comparison between the 2013 review of the Plan indicates that previously known areas of gamba grass have been quantified and new areas have been surveyed.  
• WMB contacted by remote ranger group which had identified gamba grass on Groote Eylandt. Other remote groups which also contacted WMB include: Wadeye, Gove, Gapuwiyak, Maparru and Ramingining.  
• PWCNT identifying new infestations of gamba grass in Nitmiluk NP spreading from neighbouring properties.  
• PWCNT asked for Nitmulik NP to be reclassified into the A/C zone following the previous review of the Plan and declaration (previously fell in the B/C zone) to ensure a more rigorous control program was implemented.  
• WMB supplied herbicide to ranger groups in the A/C zone to assist in eradicating gamba grass under the Gamba Action Program.  
• Gamba grass eradication program occurring in Kakadu NP.  
• Gamba Action Program in place in the Katherine Region.  
• Inspections scheduled for 2017 of several properties where gamba grass has been reported and has not been confirmed by a Weeds Officer.  
• Letters have been sent to all properties with known gamba outlining their obligations under the Act and Gamba Action Program assistance.  
• One infestation in the Katherine region appears to have been eradicated.  
• WMB is working with TOs, NLC, DPIR and PWCNT to eradicate isolated gamba plants on Fitzroy Station. | • Gamba grass eradication programs are occurring in remote areas across the Top End in the A/C zone.  
• NT Gov Gamba Action Program assisting landholders to manage and eradicate gamba grass in the A/C zone.  
• Greater focus on gamba grass eradication in the A/C zone required in the Darwin region.  
• Collaborative projects between WMB and stakeholders are occurring to deliver greater eradication outcomes in the A/C zone.  
• Approximately 50% of known infestations in the A zone around the Katherine region are under active management.  
• Gamba grass report card has been identified as a priority for the Katherine region to communicate the issues and work that is being undertaken.  
• Permit issued to Amungee Mungee on 27/10/15. A 2016 inspection indicated compliance.  
• Amungee Mungee report is outstanding.  
• Aerial survey preparation is underway to determine the extent of gamba grass in the Katherine region (April 2017), particularly in the A/C zone. |
### Objective 2: Control the growth and spread of gamba grass in the B/C zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target/s</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Northern Territory Government | • Results of management activities are obtained from land holders. | • All participants in the Gamba Action Program fill out surveys prior to being supplied with herbicide to manage gamba grass on their property. This includes obtaining information on their previous management activities.  
• Site visits to land parcels to liaise with landholders regarding their gamba grass management occurs across both the Darwin and Katherine regions.  
• The WMB Enforcement and Compliance Program is obtaining results of management activities in the B/C zone.  
• Survey data is submitted to WMB from NT Parks and Wildlife and the Dept. Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.  
• The Department has invested in a detailed stakeholder analysis and the development of a Weed Spread Prevention Strategy. The Strategy is underpinned by two separate documents that aim to engage and inform industry and managers of Government-owned lands.  
• ‘Preventing weed spread is everybody’s business’ booklet represents the first step in better engaging industry and the wider public in weed spread prevention on private land. This industry-focused document highlights the roles and responsibilities of the Department and land managers, in context to weed risk, sustainable economic development and legislated requirements. | • Participation numbers in the Gamba Action Program over the last three years stand at over 5000.  
• Direct contact by WMB officers with landholders is occurring.  
• 478 properties have been inspected for gamba grass management in the Darwin rural area.  
• Data is being obtained from Government agencies.  
• Aerial survey preparation is underway to determine the extent of gamba grass in the Katherine region (April 2017).  
• The Weed Spread Prevention Strategy provides a high level and aspirational approach to administering proactive approaches to weed spread prevention in the Northern Territory.  
• The Department is committed to assist in the development of industry specific weed hygiene procedures and deliver tailored training focusing on regional and industry specific weeds.  
• A Weed Spread Prevention Strategy has been developed to complement industry-based approaches to weed management and to provide WMB staff with a process for systematic multi-tenure liaison over a five-year period. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target/s</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| All landholders    | - Property weed management plans are developed for all properties in the B/C zone with gamba grass infestations  
|                    | - The number and size of infestations of gamba grass in the B/C zone is reduced  
|                    | - Gamba grass is actively managed in the B/C zone | - WMB works with larger properties to develop weed management plans.  
|                    |         | - The Gamba Action Program has seen participation numbers increase from just under 1000 participants in 2014 to over 2000 participants in 2016 indicating the number and size of infestations in the B/C zone should be reducing and more gamba grass is being actively managed.  
|                    |         | - In certain areas of the Darwin rural area, gamba grass density and abundance is visibly reducing. The implementation of the Compliance and Enforcement Program also validates this (refer Section 5.2 on page 32).  
|                    |         | - WMB is liaising with Government Departments responsible for weed management to prioritise areas for management and develop better spread prevention practices.  
|                    |         | - Over 5000 Gamba Grass Management Guides disseminated to rural residents across the Top End over the last three years via the Gamba Action Program.  
|                    |         | - Education and awareness. Letters have been sent to all properties with known gamba in the Katherine region outlining their obligations under the Act and for information on the Gamba Action Program.  
|                    |         | - Gamba grass report card has been identified for the Katherine region to communicate the work being undertaken to the Katherine community.  
|                    |         | - Presentations to various stakeholder groups and a presence at rural markets to outline the gamba threat and promote the Gamba Action Program.  
|                    |         | - Meetings with major stakeholders and property inspections occurred to assist in the development of a strategic gamba management program.  
|                    |         | - Weed management plans are being developed in consultation with the WMB, particularly on Government managed lands (VCL, PWCNT and Power and Water).  
|                    |         | - Better management outcomes are occurring on ground due to implementation of the Stakeholder Roadmap.  
|                    |         | - Better management outcomes are occurring on ground due to implementation of the Gamba Action Program.  
|                    |         | - Gamba grass is being managed better in the rural areas due to education delivered through the dissemination of the Gamba Grass Management Guides to all participants in the Gamba Action Program.  
|                    |         | - Working with rail, gas, Power and Water Corporation, TNRM, AACo and Bushfires NT to ensure gamba grass management programs are in place. There is now a good communications relationship with these stakeholders.  
|                    |         | - Awareness of Darwin rural landholders of their legal responsibilities to manage gamba grass. |
### Objective 3: Strategically control infestations of gamba grass in transport and service corridors

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| Northern Territory Government and all owners and managers of service and transport corridors | Programs are developed to manage spread within and from transport and service corridors. | - WMB is conducting direct liaison with Dept. Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics responsible for weed management on roads to develop better spread prevention practices.  
- Roadside weed surveys completed in 2016 in the Darwin region to help determine priority areas for management and improve slashing and control regimes to prevent weed spread.  
- ‘Preventing Weed Spread is Everybody’s Business’ booklet developed to increase awareness regarding weed spread in many industries including transport and service corridors.  
- WMB is working directly with local councils, particularly in the Enforcement and Compliance focus areas, to ensure strategic management of gamba grass is occurring in those areas.  
- WMB direct liaison with the owners of the rail corridor to ensure gamba grass is not spreading from this corridor onto neighbouring properties.  
- Weed ID and weed spread prevention training is being delivered to Power and Water Corporation Remote Operations staff.  
- Roadside inspection of all known gamba was undertaken with Katherine Town Council staff.  
- WMB has met with gas pipeline infrastructure company APA Group. They have sound environmental planning and management. Provisioning of weed management data to the WMB has been arranged. | - Stakeholder Roadmap is developed and is facilitating high level liaison with transport and service corridors owners and managers.  
- Training provided to all remote services staff. Three sessions in total involving at least 20 participants per session.  
- Eradication planning for road, rail and gas has occurred. Ongoing monitoring programs are currently being determined.  
- CDU gamba grass survey – Mary River area. |
### Objective 4: Apply an adaptive approach to weed management

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| Northern Territory Government | • Information and advice on alternative pastures is developed and provided to landholders. | • Nil. | • Was not actioned  
| | | | • Collaboration with Dept. of Primary Industry and Resources is required. |
| Northern Territory Government | • Results of gamba grass management and eradication activities are collated and published for the Northern Territory. | • Gamba grass Assistance/Action Program report developed annually (although not usually distributed to the public). | • Annual gamba grass report card for Katherine community is being developed.  
| | | | • Reports require dissemination to the public. |
| Northern Territory Government in partnership with Community Organisations, NGOs and Research Organisations | • Information and awareness resources and campaigns are developed and implemented to raise awareness and capacity of landholders to control and contain the spread of gamba grass. | • Resources developed and utilised at Darwin and regional shows, field days, meetings, mail outs.  
| | | • Targeted Gamba Action Program extension material developed and disseminated annually to thousands of participants.  
| | | • In May 2014, a weed spread prevention survey was distributed to over 400 industry, Government and public representatives to identify areas for action. | • Extension and education, in conjunction with compliance and enforcement, is a major focus for the WMB.  
| | | | • Operational tools, including the Weed Data Collection Manual and associated Field Guide have been developed to further build stakeholder capacity in data collection.  
| | | | • The Program Manager for Weed Spread Prevention has conducted over 80 meetings with Industry and Government stakeholders across all regions in the Territory. Industry peak bodies, including the Extractive Industries Association, were also consulted. |
| Northern Territory Government | • A Weed Watcher Reporting System for the Northern Territory is investigated. | • Apps are currently been investigated. | • Not completed. An ongoing process. |
### Who is responsible

| Northern Territory Government in partnership with Community Orgs, NGOs and Research Organisations | Northern Territory Government |

### Target

- Results of successful eradication or control activities or trials are promoted.
- The A/C and B/C zone declaration boundary is reviewed, with the view to expand the A/C zone.

### Evidence

- Several media releases have been utilised to acknowledge and advertise the Gamba Grass Compliance and Enforcement Program which promotes successful control activities.
- The A/C and B/C zone boundary was reviewed after three years of the Plan's implementation and as part of the previous review of the Plan.
- Consultation plan has been identified as a priority action to obtain input from the Katherine community as there is strong support for gamba to be eradicated and to discuss changes to the declaration boundaries.

### Performance

- CDU gamba grass survey informed Litchfield National Park Management Plan for gamba grass.
- Four areas were added to the A/C zone in the process of reviewing the A/C and B/C boundary and including Fish River Station, Mt Bundy Station, Nitmiluk NP and Portion 2700 (refer Figure 1).
- Eradication programs are now being implemented on these properties.
- Recent feedback indicates another review of these boundaries is required, particularly around Katherine.
Gamba grass declaration zones following 2013 review

Figure 1: Gamba grass re-declaration following 2013 review
### 4.2 Mimosa

**Objective 1: Eradicate existing infestations and prevent further establishment of mimosa in the A/C zone**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| Northern Territory Government | • Results of eradication activities are obtained from landholders. | • Mimosa control work data obtained from Kakadu NP. | • Was not actioned.  
• Greater effort required to source data from Government agencies, Aboriginal Land, pastoralists and other landholders in the A/C zone.  
• Greater focus on mimosa eradication in the A/C zone required, particularly across the Top End in Arnhem Land (outside of Prickly Acacia and Mimosa project areas).  
• Collaborative projects between WMB and stakeholders are occurring to deliver improved eradication outcomes in the A/C zone.  
• Data and information collected by or provided to the WMB regarding eradication projects has been limited in the past three years.  
• Greater effort required to source data from Government agencies, Aboriginal Land, pastoralists and other landholders in the A/C zone. |

| All landholders | • Property weed management plans are developed for all properties in the A/C zone with mimosa infestations.  
• Programs developed to eradicate high priority infestations of mimosa in the A/C zone.  
• All mimosa infestations in the A/C zone are under active eradication programs.  
• The production of seed and spread of mimosa within the A/C zone is prevented.  
• The number and size of infestations of mimosa in the A/C zone is reduced. | • Data comparison from 2013 review of the Plan indicates no change in density or spread of mimosa in the A/C zone  
• 1 from 5 programs completed in the Katherine region.  
• Progress to be assessed on ground. Land managers have been made aware of their management requirements.  
• ‘Preventing Weed Spread is Everybody’s Business’ booklet developed to increase awareness regarding weed spread. Other extension services provided to stakeholders include Due Diligences, field days, stakeholder meetings and regional Shows.  
• Dedicated Prickly Acacia and Mimosa Project Officer (PAMPO) employed under joint Australian/NT Government funding for a period of three years to develop mimosa eradication programs to enhance economic opportunities in Arnhem Land and the Daly Land Trust. | • Greater focus on mimosa eradication in the A/C zone required, particularly across the Top End in Arnhem Land (outside of Prickly Acacia and Mimosa project areas).  
• Collaborative projects between WMB and stakeholders are occurring to deliver improved eradication outcomes in the A/C zone.  
• Data and information collected by or provided to the WMB regarding eradication projects has been limited in the past three years.  
• Greater effort required to source data from Government agencies, Aboriginal Land, pastoralists and other landholders in the A/C zone. |
## Objective 2: Control the growth and spread of mimosa in the B/C zone

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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| Northern Territory Government | • To reassess declared boundaries of the AC/BC zones with the view to extending the A/C zone by amending the boundary declared under the *Weeds Management Act*, so that the focus is increasingly on mimosa eradication. | • The A/C and B/C zone boundary was reviewed after three years of the Plan's implementation and as part of the previous review of the Plan. | • New area added to the B/C zone: Oenpelli floodplain', NT Portion 1646 (refer Figures 2 and 3).  
• The previous Government's focus was on enhancing the Territory's economy and so focus on mimosa management shifted to the B/C zone where it was mainly infesting pastoral/agricultural land, not focused on eradication in the A/C zone, which lies primarily in Arnhem Land. |
| Northern Territory Government | • Results of management activities are obtained from landholders. | • Mimosa control work data obtained from Community Organisations and Landcare groups managing mimosa e.g. Finniss Reynolds Catchment Mimosa Project. | • Data collected from pastoral properties involved in the Finniss Reynolds Catchment Management Group.  
• Greater effort required to source data from Government agencies, Aboriginal Land, pastoralists and other landholders in the B/C zone. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| All landholders    | • Develop a mimosa mapping and monitoring program for infestations in the B/C zone.  
• Property weed management plans are developed for all properties in the B/C zone with mimosa infestations.  
• Programs developed and implemented to manage infestations of mimosa in the B/C zone.  
• Mimosa infestations in the B/C zone are contained. | • Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) in collaboration with WMB, have been delivering the Finniss Reynolds Catchment Mimosa Project  
• A whole-of-catchment plan has been developed for properties engaged in the Finniss Reynolds Catchment Mimosa Project, rather than individual property plans. Some individual property plans were developed by WMB and pastoral stations.  
• ‘Preventing Weed Spread is Everybody’s Business’ booklet used to increase awareness regarding weed spread.  
• Dedicated Prickly Acacia and Mimosa Project Officer (PAMPO) employed under joint Australian/NT Government funding for a period of three years to develop mimosa eradication programs to enhance economic opportunities in Arnhem Land and Daly Land Trust.  
• TNRM in collaboration with the WMB, are updating the Mimosa Biocontrol Identikit. | • Collaborative projects between WMB and stakeholders are occurring to deliver greater management outcomes in the B/C zone.  
• Data and information collected by or provided to the WMB regarding eradication projects has been limited in the past three years. |
Figure 2: Mimosa declaration March 2010

Figure 3: Mimosa declaration December 2013, following review
Objective 3: Apply an adaptive approach to weed management

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Northern Territory Government | Information and advice on alternative pastures is developed and provided to landholders. | Nil. | Was not actioned.  
Collaboration with Dept. of Primary Industry and Resources is required. |
| Northern Territory Government | Results of mimosa management and eradication activities are collated and published for the Northern Territory. | Nil. | Was not actioned. |
| Northern Territory Government in partnership with Community Organisations, NGOs and Research Organisations | Information and awareness resources and campaigns are developed and implemented to raise awareness and capacity of landholders to control and contain the spread of mimosa | Resources developed and utilised at Darwin and regional shows, field days, meetings and distributed via mail outs.  
Collaborative catchment scale projects are being implemented e.g. Finniss Reynolds Catchment Mimosa Project  
Employment of a dedicated Prickly Acacia and Mimosa Project Officer through Australian/NT Government funding. | Extension and education, in conjunction with compliance and enforcement, is a major focus for the WMB. |
| Northern Territory Government | A Weed Watcher Reporting System for the Northern Territory is investigated. | Apps are currently been investigated. | Not completed. An ongoing process. |
| Northern Territory Government in partnership with Community Orgs, NGOs and Research Organisations | Results of successful eradication or control activities or trials are promoted. | Nil. | Was not actioned |
| Northern Territory Government | The A/C and B/C zone declaration boundary is reviewed, with the view to expand the A/C zone. | The A/C and B/C zone boundary was reviewed after three years of the Plan’s implementation and as part of the previous review of the Plan. | One new area was added to the B/C zone in the process of reviewing the A/C and B/C boundary as eradication was not deemed achievable in that area. |
4.3 Bellyache bush

**Objective 1: Eradicate existing infestations and prevent further establishment of bellyache bush in the A/C zone**

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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| Northern Territory Government       | • Results of eradication activities are obtained from landholders.     | • Bellyache bush control work data obtained from Kakadu NP.              | • Was not fully actioned.  
• Greater effort required to source data from Government agencies, Aboriginal Land, pastoralists and other landholders in the A/C zone. |
| Northern Territory Government       | • Programs developed and implemented to eradicate infestations of bellyache bush on all NT Government controlled lands in the A/C zone. | • Reports and findings of bellyache bush on Groote mine site.  
• Reports of bellyache bush on an island in the Victoria River. | • Eradication program on Groote mine site.  
• Eradication program by Anindilyakwa Land Council rangers at Umbakumba community. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| All landholders    | • Identify location, extent and density infestations of bellyache bush in the A/C zone.  
• Property weed management plans are developed for all properties in the A/C zone with bellyache bush infestations.  
• Prioritise areas for control by identifying isolated and small infestations which are easy to treat, significant seed sources or areas with a high probability of seed spread and/or infestations in high value or vulnerable areas.  
• Programs developed to eradicate high priority infestations of bellyache bush in the A/C zone.  
• The production of seed and spread of bellyache bush within the A/C zone is prevented.  
• The number and size of infestations of bellyache bush in the A/C zone is reduced. | • Data comparison from 2013 review of the Plan indicates both a change in density or spread of bellyache bush and newly found infestations in the A/C zone.  
• Weed data collection occurs at property visits and is uploaded into the NT Weed Database.  
• All known Class A infestations have been mapped with the exception of one property in the Katherine region which is scheduled for inspection in 2017-18.  
• A Weed Management Plan for road corridors has been written and implemented.  
• NTG is managing bellyache bush infestations on Vacant Crown Land.  
• Active eradication and management programs are occurring in Kakadu NP.  
• WMB is collaborating with Mataranka Weed Working Group (PWCNT, Roper Gulf Shire, Remote Jobs and Communities Program, Roper River Landcare Group and WMB) to control bellyache bush in the Mataranka township.  
• WMB is collaborating with Mabunji Aboriginal Corporation for bellyache bush control and training in Borroloola.  
• WMB is collaborating with Katherine Town Council for bellyache bush control.  
• Jawoyn Rangers reported and treated isolated bellyache bush infestation close to the Fergusson River (Barnjarn Land Trust).  
• ‘Preventing Weed Spread is Everybody’s Business’ booklet developed to increase awareness regarding weed spread.  
• Dedicated eradication programs on two isolated infestations in the Barkly region. | • Collaborative projects between WMB and stakeholders are occurring to deliver greater eradication outcomes in the A/C zone, particularly in the Katherine region.  
• Progress on private properties mostly unreported.  
• A greater number of infestations located in the A/C zone indicates greater awareness of the weed and its impacts to the community.  
• Greater focus on bellyache bush eradication in the A/C zone in the Darwin region is required. |
**Objective 2: Control the growth and spread of bellyache bush in the B/C zone**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory Government</td>
<td>To reassess declared boundaries of the AC/BC zones with the view to extending the A/C zone by amending the boundary declared under the <em>Weeds Management Act</em>, so that the focus is increasingly on bellyache bush eradication.</td>
<td>• The A/C and B/C zone boundary was reviewed after three years of the Plan's implementation and as part of the previous review of the Plan.</td>
<td>• New areas added to the B/C zone include Hodgson River and Rosie River areas (refer Figures 4 and 5).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Northern Territory Government | Results of management activities are obtained from landholders. | • Upper Daly River Catchment aerial surveys completed following management and herbicide trials.  
• Upper Daly River Catchment project data collected/submitted for reporting purposes.  
• Roper River downstream spread monitored. | • Data is being obtained from Government agencies.  
• Data is being obtained from landholders.  
• Data is being collected by WMB staff.  
• Data is being obtained from Landcare and Conservation groups. |
<p>| Northern Territory Government | Programs developed and implemented to control and/or eradicate (where feasible) bellyache bush on all NT Government controlled lands in the B/C zone. | • Bellyache bush management programs occurring on PWCNT and Power and Water Corporation managed lands. | • Stakeholder Roadmap is developed and is facilitating high level liaison with government managed land owners and managers. |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</table>
| All landholders    | • Develop a bellyache bush mapping and monitoring program for infestations in the B/C zone.  
• Prioritise areas for control by identifying isolated and small infestations which are easy to treat, significant seed sources or areas with a high probability of seed spread and/or infestations in high value or vulnerable areas.  
• Bellyache bush is actively managed in the B/C zone.  
• Programs developed and implemented to manage infestations of bellyache bush in the B/C zone.  
• Programs developed and implemented to prevent the spread of bellyache bush from pathways of spread. | • A whole of catchment plan has been developed for properties engaged in the Upper Daly Bellyache Bush Project, rather than individual property plans.  
• Priority areas are being identified in the Upper Daly River Catchment.  
• Working group has been formed for the Upper Roper Catchment.  
• Progress on Willeroo and Mathison Stations in reduction of bellyache bush infestations.  
• ‘Preventing Weed Spread is Everybody’s Business’ booklet used to increase awareness regarding weed spread.  
• Active management is occurring in Daly River catchment.  
• Limited management activity in Roper River catchment  
• Bellyache bush assistance program ongoing.  
• Limited promotion due to resource limitations. | • Collaborative projects between WMB and stakeholders are occurring, to deliver greater management outcomes in the B/C zone.  
• Data and information collected by or provided to the WMB regarding eradication projects has been limited in the past three years. |
Figure 4: Bellyache bush declaration February 2010

Figure 5: Bellyache bush declaration December 2013, following review
### Objective 3: Apply an adaptive approach to weed management

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<tr>
<th>Who is responsible</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Performance</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Northern Territory Government | Information and advice on alternative pastures is developed and provided to landholders. | Nil. | Was not actioned.  
Collaboration with Dept. of Primary Industry and Resources is required. |
| Northern Territory Government | Results of bellyache bush management and eradication activities are collated and published for the Northern Territory | Results of management activities are reported against in the Upper Daly bellyache Bush Project. | In progress. To follow after completion of the Upper Daly bellyache Bush Project. |
| Northern Territory Government in partnership with Community Organisations, NGOs and Research Organisations | Information and awareness resources and campaigns are developed and implemented to raise awareness and capacity of landholders to control and contain the spread of bellyache bush | Resources developed and utilised at Darwin and regional shows, field days, meetings, mail outs  
Significant planning and training activities with DIPL and contractors is occurring | Extension and education, in conjunction with compliance and enforcement, is a major focus for the WMB. |
| Northern Territory Government | A Weed Watcher Reporting System for the Northern Territory is investigated | Apps are currently being investigated. | Not completed. An ongoing process. |
| Northern Territory Government in partnership with Community Orgs, NGOs and Research Organisations | Results of successful eradication or control activities or trials are shared. | A series of short videos is under production. | In progress. |
| Northern Territory Government | The A/C and B/C zone declaration boundary is reviewed, with the view to expand the A/C zone. | The A/C and B/C zone boundary was reviewed after three years of the Plan’s implementation and as part of the previous review of the Plan. | Two new areas were added to the B/C zone in the process of reviewing the A/C and B/C boundary as eradication was not deemed achievable in those areas. |
5 Review Findings

These review findings arise from stakeholder and internal staff feedback and evidence against the targets of the Plan, to determine if the Plans are effective (see tables above).

Quotes used are from external stakeholder and internal staff responses, provided to validate necessary amendments to improve on the existing Plans.

5.1 Improve legislative rigour in the event of prosecution

One of the offences under the Act which is easiest to prove is under section 9(2), which requires the owner and occupier of land to comply with a weed management plan relating to a weed.

The intention of the original and current Plans was to mitigate the impacts of gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush to the environment, culture, economy and production. At the time they were written, their focus was as an extension tool, to express best management practices for weed management. They were also developed to be used as a tool for compliance as per section 9(2) of the Act. Until late 2016, they had not been used specifically for this purpose.

The Weed Management Plan for *Andropogon gayanus* (gamba grass) has been a crucial point of reference in the development of a Compliance and Enforcement Framework for gamba grass in 2016-17. The move towards a focus on compliance and enforcement has been directed by government. The ongoing and increasing recalcitrance of land owners and managers who do not manage gamba grass on their properties has contributed to the fire risk to human safety and property.

In order to provide transparency in the delivery of compliance and enforcement activities, it is essential to clearly promote obligations under the Act and enforcement options available to address non-compliance. Thus, community education remains a focus. The obligations and compliance criteria must also be specific and measurable, with minimal flexibility in interpretation and the application of subjective judgement. This similarly applies to compliance and enforcement activities which must be delivered in accordance with the Plan and the framework.

The Gamba grass Plan has recently been utilised on a practical level more than previously for these reasons and has been reviewed by the Department’s legal advisor who gave the following feedback in terms of its legislative rigour:

…”The plan can be very specific (e.g. requiring all owners and occupiers to use a certain herbicide twice per year) or more general (e.g. requiring all owners and occupiers to use their best endeavours to eradicate a weed by using on or more of the methods listed in the plan). This will depend on the invasiveness of the weed, the treatment/control options and whether a “one size fits all” approach is the most appropriate or a more generalised plan should be adopted. However, general requirements should be made in order to achieve a set goal (e.g. to eradicate the weed or prevent its spread). This will ensure it goes further than the general obligations already contained in the Act.

The WMB should also ensure that the weed management plan contains all the information specified in section 10(2) of the Act. This includes the methods that owners and occupiers of land must use in order to achieve the objects of the plan and prevent the spread of the weed.

Vague requirements (e.g. “minimise seed production” or “implement hygiene procedures”) should be avoided as they are highly ambiguous, have the potential to be confusing and are very difficult to enforce. It is also unnecessary to prohibit things which are already prohibited by the Act (e.g. “do not sell the weed”).
Where practical, the WMB should also consider requiring land owners and occupiers to provide reports (perhaps once per year). This will enable the WMB to determine the effectiveness of treatment and also assist enforcement being readily able to identify those owners and occupiers who are not complying with the weed management plan. A standard form could be drafted and attached to a weed management plan to assist landowners and occupiers in this regard.

Weed management plans should also be drafted to reflect the classification of the weed by the Minister. For example, for a “Class A” weed, the weed management plan should be drafted with the intent of achieving a complete eradication of the weed in the Territory. …”

The Compliance Manager, Weed Management Branch, who has been utilising the Plan specifically for development of the gamba grass compliance and enforcement program, gave the following feedback on the gamba grass Plan; however, this feedback is relevant to all Plans:

“ … The Plan could be greatly improved by clarifying management requirements, particularly with regard to gamba-free buffer widths and timeframes for undertaking control methods to achieve compliance. It should have ambiguity or subjective measures removed (such as ‘best endeavours’). The requirements must be clearly measurable, and separate ‘management techniques’ from ‘management requirements’. As an example, the current management requirements for controlling growth and spread in the B zone list 6 requirements for properties under 50 acres. Of these, only 1 is measurable for compliance purposes in the current format. The other 5 are better suited to management techniques.

For the purpose of having a Plan that reflects a means to ensure compliance with the Act, the compliance requirements must be a key focus of the Plan, with the management techniques forming additional information to support the targets.

What about requirements for recreational land users who are not owners or occupiers? Consider a section for all people focused on requirements under WMA s.9(4) including sale, transport, propagation etc. (there are mentions at section 5.4.2 of the plan, and again at 7.3).” …

The above comments suggest the current Plans do not adequately or clearly describe land owners’ and occupiers’ or the general public’s management requirements or provide clear and measurable actions to determine compliance with these requirements. This is also validated by comments made by Bushfires NT:

“… In general, considering the 2014 version is an updated 2011 document and that much has happened since 2011, BFNT suggests the document may require a major rewrite.” …

It can be concluded from the legal advice provided and experience in the practical application of the three Plans that a complete re-write of management requirements with clear and measurable actions will greatly improve legislative rigour. Currently, if the department was to commence prosecution action against a land owner or manager, it would be extremely difficult to prove non-compliance against the actions in the current Plans.
Other feedback from stakeholders (including Bushfires NT, Weed Management Branch staff, weed management contractors, local government representatives, Department of Primary Industry and Resources and Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory) also supports this finding:

“B zone management requirements are not clear enough.”

“In relation to timing and control table: requiring actual treatment times e.g. first treatment completed before January, second round before April, third round…by end of May etc. – gives fixed timing for action and hence easier for compliance to be managed.”

5.2 Improve implementation and transparency of compliance and enforcement programs

To be able to develop and conduct compliance and enforcement programs fairly and transparently, clear and definitive actions for weed management must be described. For example, it is no longer acceptable to rely on an individual’s assessment of what is “reasonable” in terms of their management or “appropriate” buffer zone distances. It makes it extremely difficult to determine one’s compliance when multiple persons are being assessed against those same management requirements. How can Weed Management Officers effectively and fairly measure compliance with such open and unmeasurable actions? It also makes it difficult to issue transparent Orders and to fairly determine compliance with an Order without having standardised and measured compliance actions.

The current gamba grass Plan was used to form the basis of assessment of compliance for the Gamba Grass Compliance Program. This program required fair and transparent actions to be resolved for issue in all Orders which could easily be measured for compliance. These actions should be specified in the Plans so all land owners and occupiers have a clear understanding of the legal obligations. Currently, they are not.

During 2016-17, the Gamba Grass Compliance Program achieved the following:

- 478 properties had roadside inspections
- 44 onsite inspections were conducted
- 33 Orders to control gamba grass were issued
- 1 infringement notice was issued.
Intensive interrogation of the Plans by Weed Management Branch staff, particularly those undertaking compliance activities on-ground and using the Plans, resulted in the following feedback being provided, with the aim of improving transparency for future compliance programs:

“Consider a definitions section. Specifically - owner and occupier of land; declared weed; eradication.”

“Is it measurable for compliance purposes? – consider a new Appendix with measurable requirements – e.g. define buffer zone widths; put time frames on control options. Are timeframes given? – they’re given for suitable control periods (Table 1), and as targets (Appendix D). This is good, and related directly to objectives. Probably need to review and adapt accordingly with next revision.”

“Are requirements clear? – yes, but limited in specifics. Difficult to measure. Overlapping landowners and NTG requirements (e.g. Class A: ‘design a survey program’ then, ‘develop awareness resources’).”

“Has a communication strategy been developed to ensure stakeholders understand the risks posed by gamba grass and understand their legal obligations to manage it?”

“It is highly desirable to provide a clear explanation to the public on the enforcement intentions and procedures of the Branch.”

Bushfires NT also provided the following feedback in relation to the gamba grass Plan’s overall transparency and future compliance use:

“The new plan should reflect that Weed Management Branch is now doing gamba compliance and will become the legal document that reflects government expectations of land holders. In particular: 1) compliance criteria in Class B/C seems to be based mainly on increased fire risk in core areas- this should be spelt out, 2) management prescriptions need to be updated, more practical and based on successful experience; and 3) targets, monitoring and evaluation methodologies need to reflect a reduction of risk (i.e. outcomes not outputs) and should be reviewed regularly.”
Below is an example of how compliance and enforcement activities have resulted in improved compliance in the B Zone for gamba grass.

Figure 7: Roadside inspection for gamba grass management compliance in the B zone – Darwin rural area

Figure 8: Compliance following issue of an Order stating a 15 m gamba grass-free buffer be maintained to property boundaries
5.3 Improve clarity of instructions across various land management situations

As stated above, the Plans do not clearly describe measurable actions for implementation by all stakeholders. The term “reasonable effort” in relation to the management of weeds is ambiguous and stakeholder perceptions of this, in terms of their compliance, can vary greatly.

Legal advice obtained in relation to the 2014 gamba grass plan offered the following improvements to its content (applies to all Plans):

“… In our view the Plan can be significantly amended and simplified. The following are recommendations only for how to word the plan to ensure it is easy to understand and enforceable.

Eradication Zone

We understand that a variety of methods can be used to eradicate gamba grass and there is no “one size fits all” approach. We also understand that there are only a (relatively) small number of properties in the eradication zone on which gamba grass is present. Lastly, you wish to ensure pastoral lease holders are still able to graze their cattle on gamba grass.

Having regard to the foregoing, we recommend wording along the following lines:

All owners and occupiers of land in the eradication zone must, except in accordance with a permit:

(a) use all reasonable endeavours to eradicate gamba grass on their land by utilising one or more of the control methods listed in Part X;

(b) make a report to the Weed Management Branch between 1 November and 30 November each year in accordance with the form at Part Y specifying:
   a. the control methods used in the previous 12 months to eradicate gamba grass;
   b. the effectiveness of the control methods used; and
   c. whether gamba grass has been completely eradicated from the property and, if not:
      i. the current location of all gamba grass on the property; and
      ii. the control methods intended to be employed in the following 12 months to eradicate gamba grass from the property.

Note: Permits will only be granted for the purpose of using gamba grass as an improved pasture for cattle grazing.

Such wording is flexible in that each owner and occupier of land may determine the best solutions for eradicating gamba grass on their property. However, owners and occupiers are still required to eradicate gamba grass on their properties. Also, by requiring reports, the WMB can readily determine who is complying with the weed management plan and whether they are having success in eradicating gamba grass. The WMB can then work further with owners and occupiers who are having limited success in their eradication attempts.

Management Zone

Currently, the Plan is broken up into various parts imposing different requirements on owners and occupiers of land dependent on land zoning and/or land size. There are no issues with structuring the Plan this way, although some terms (such as “transport and service corridors”) are ambiguous and should be defined.
It is difficult to propose wording for the Plan as it relates to the management zone. This is a matter for the expertise of the WMB. However, the following may be of assistance in revising the Plan:

- A requirement to maintain a “buffer zone” appears to be a reasonable way to avoid the spread of gamba grass onto neighbouring properties. The Plan should clearly state when a buffer zone must be created (e.g. within 3 months of the Plan being declared in the Gazette), how it must be created and how it must be maintained.

- Requiring owners and occupiers in the management zone to provide reports may not be practical given the significant number of properties containing gamba grass. Perhaps you could place this obligation only on particular types of properties.

- Obligations should be placed on owners and occupiers to use one or more of the “control methods” in order to manage gamba grass (similar to the above requirement for the eradication zone). For example, “[owners and occupiers must] use all reasonable endeavours to prevent gamba grass spreading on their land or to any neighbouring properties by utilizing one or more of the control methods listed in Part X”. Such a general requirement should be “in addition to” any specific requirements placed on owners and occupiers (for example, to create and maintain buffer zones).

- If you require owners and occupiers to implement “prevention programs”, “quarantine procedures” or “hygiene procedures”, they should be required to submit draft programs/procedures to the WMB for review and approval. This will ensure that the WMB can readily identify non-compliance with the Plan. The Plan should also require that owners and occupiers comply with the program/procedure approved by the WMB as this will assist in the Plan’s enforcement.” …

Much of the feedback received during the consultation period from stakeholders (including Bushfires NT, Weed Management Branch staff, weed management contractors, local government representatives, Department of Primary Industry and Resources and Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory) as well as the general public referred to the Plans not providing clear enough detail as to what was actually required on-ground to be compliant.

The following statements from stakeholders provided informative suggestions to improve clarity of instructions as well as provide detail on other issues that need to be considered in the re-write of the Plans:

“‘The Plan needs to be very clear when stakeholders are blatantly ignoring their obligations - this will result in compliance action.’” and

“Document needs to be more clear about what is required in the B zone.” and

“On large landholdings, it is not clear what is required on the property: eg. buffer zone around whole property, keeping clean areas clean.” and

“A Zone - requirement should be to: eradicate plants prior to seeding.
B Zone - requirement should be to: prevent flowering and seeding.” and

“Gradually reduce infestation sizes over time.” and

“Suggest a sentence on disposal (on land) under section 6.3.1 – physical removal.” and

“The control method of 'spraying seedlings' is difficult to manage as plants are much harder to identify and native species could be affected by misidentification.” and

“Use residual herbicides in areas inaccessible during the control period.” and
“Need to consider gamba grass infestations adjoining orchards - if this gamba burns, the outside 2 rows of produce can be damaged/ruined.” and

“If the plan needs to be reviewed in 3 years, what do you expect people to achieve in that time? More appropriate time frame targets should be included.” and

“Clean fill is an issue for the development industry - fill needs to have weed free certification.” and

“5.1 Add 'collaboration' as a means of successful weed management.” and

“6.1.3 While gamba will burn in wet season you have to be careful that you have access due to flooding to control burn especially when infrastructure nearby. Wet season burn also depends on holding fuel over from previous year which can be challenging. Depending on season you can safely burn up until end of June.” and

“6.4 contain spread from other land, not just to neighbours.” and

“6.4 Think the width of buffer zones should be clarified, especially if going to be enforced.” and

“6.5.4 - when and how to burn: This section is inadequate.” and

“6.5 Asset protection needs to be mentioned in relation to fire management.” and

“The plan should state requirements for cattle movement between A/C and B/C zones and also management along the A/C -B/C zone boundaries.” and

“Do the Plans have enough information for landholders to manage these weeds as per their requirements in each zone? Yes; however the boundary information for Class B zone for Bellyache Bush is messy and confusing; need to make it more succinct – map of management zones needs improvement.” and

“Bellyache bush Plan - Figure 1: Picture has labels pointing to: ‘Eradication Zone’ and ‘Management Zone’. Both are management zones - described in text as ‘eradication’ and ‘growth and spread to be controlled’. ” and

“Eradication is a very difficult status to achieve.”
Figure 9, below is the current map used in the Weed Management Plan for Bellyache bush.

Figure 9: Current management zone map used in the Weed Management Plan for Bellyache Bush

All of the responses highlighted above are valid suggestions on how to improve clarity. Workshopping management actions with groups currently implementing on-ground works or with expert knowledge will also greatly improve the outcomes of the Plans and essentially achieve greater compliance and weed management outcomes.

Other things considered important during the re-write include:

- Planning guidelines for land clearing – ensuring management actions do not conflict with land clearing guidelines.
- Requirements for shipment of cattle and hay from interstate in relation to transporting declared weeds.
- More stringent actions regarding weed spread prevention.

5.4 Improve targets for measuring the impact, if any, of the Plans’ implementation

Monitoring activities are inhibited by the lack of a comprehensive baseline dataset to report and assess the progress and performance of these Plans against. For example, there is no way it can be determined if any of these weeds are being eradicated from the Class A (eradication) zone (refer Figure 10). The maps in Figure 10 appear to indicate an increase in density and spread of gamba grass over the past three years. However, the changes between the maps could purely represent better survey in known areas of gamba grass, or be opportunistic discoveries of gamba grass that have been recorded since 2013.

Therefore, it is not possible to definitively conclude whether gamba grass is actually increasing in density and/or spreading in those areas. The reviews of the three Plans, including feedback from stakeholders, have highlighted the need to develop and implement a monitoring program to measure the impact of the Plans.
Across the Northern Territory, various Government departments have *ad hoc* monitoring programs in place; however, these are based only on contractor performance against the contract, not to assess if the contract is producing positive results and weeds are reducing in the contract areas. The Weed Management Branch’s Stakeholder Roadmap has identified deficiencies in standard approaches to monitoring within NT Government agencies.

The following comments were received from academics and researchers during the public consultation period, questioning whether the Plans were having an impact. This also indicates the level of stakeholder interest in the Plans achieving positive outcomes including a reduction in weed spread:

“… 8.2.1 Are existing monitoring plans adequate? 8.2.3 Performance indicators need to be assessed/changed for better qualitative measures. 8.2.3 Do the monitoring plans exist and are they adequate to measure these metrics?” …

The following comment was submitted in response to the performance indicator targets in the gamba grass Plan:

“… Whilst these targets look good on paper- to my knowledge there aren’t adequate monitoring methodologies to actually be able to say if the programs are successful. Either change targets or implement monitoring methodologies.” …
Figure 10: Known gamba grass densities 2013 vs 2016. Data obtained from Department of Environment and Natural Resources.
Suggestions from stakeholders for improving monitoring capabilities, developing better and more measurable targets, reporting and compliance with the Plans and are listed below:

“If the plan needs to be reviewed in 3 years, what do you expect people to achieve in that time? More appropriate timeframe targets should be included.”

As well as monitoring the overall impact and performance of the Plans, monitoring also needs to occur at a local or property level in certain circumstances. Monitoring of permit conditions is one such instance of when this should occur.

Permits to use a declared weed can be granted by the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in special circumstances. For example, two permits have been issued which enable the continued grazing of gamba grass on stations in the Class A zone. These areas had been planted with gamba grass prior to its declaration.

These permits facilitate appropriate monitoring on these properties, in accordance with the Act and the Plan. That is, permit holders were clearly aware of their obligations and are to be visited annually by a Weed Management Branch Officer to assess compliance with the permit conditions. Permit holders are also required to submit an annual management report to the Weed Management Branch for review.

Although not directly linked to monitoring the performance of the Plans, monitoring of these permit conditions for compliance should be high priority and could be built into a wider monitoring program.

A Weeds Management Branch officer suggested the following to monitor for compliance at the smaller scale:

… “Can it be added into the Plan that "when requested by a Weed Management Branch officer, a plan detailing how that weed will be managed back to an eradicable stage within a set timeframe. Progress against the Plan will be assessed by Weed Management Branch officers at pre-determined and agreed stages. If progress is not meeting targeted goals, it may be requested that a remedial plan be developed and implemented under section 14 of the Act." …

5.5 Have the Plans facilitated better management outcomes?

The short answer to this question is yes. Section 4 of this document clearly indicates that awareness/education/extension, catchment programs and on-ground management of gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush is occurring across a variety of landscapes and tenures in the Northern Territory.

Remote infestations of these weeds are being reported and eradicated, large scale management programs in the B/C zones are being implemented with great success, the Gamba Action Program is raising awareness and introducing successful compliance and enforcement programs to gamba grass management in the Darwin and Katherine rural areas, all of which are facilitating better management of gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush.

5.6 Are the Plans enforceable in their current capacity?

The short answer to this question is no. Feedback from legal practitioners and the Weed Management Branch Compliance Manager, as well as feedback from the consultation period, demonstrates that the Plans do not clearly articulate enough, the specific requirements landholders must undertake to comply with the Plans; that, is they are not enforceable in a Court of law in their current state.

As is stated in section 9(2) of the Act, an owner and occupier of land on which a declared weed is present must comply with a weed management plan relating to the weed. This is currently one of the strongest and straight forward sections of the Act in which land owners and occupiers must comply. The current Plans are too vague in their requirements and hence need amending.
6 Recommendations

This section outlines changes that are recommended to be made to the three Plans when they are redrafted.

There have been a number of successes observed since the three Plans came into effect. As an extension tool and management tool, the Plans are succinct and informative. Management of gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush across the Northern Territory has improved, awareness of these weeds in the community has increased, and compliance with the Plans has risen. Successful, large scale catchment-sized projects have also been developed and implemented, particularly in the B/C zones to minimise spread and reduce the impacts these weeds are having across the Top End. Notable projects include the Upper Daly Bellyache Bush Project and the Finniss Reynolds Catchment Mimosa Project.

There have also been some missed opportunities where the three Plans have been underutilised in some areas of their implementation and their applicability to compliance and enforcement activities is currently limited.

6.1 Changes to the Plans

The findings of this review support changes to the three Plans to improve:

- legislative rigour in the event of prosecution;
- implementation and transparency of compliance and enforcement programs;
- clarity of instructions across various land management situations; and
- targets for measuring the impact, if any, of the Plans’ implementation.

All Plans will require major re-writes to address the required changes. The changes and information to be included in the updated Plans will require obtaining strategic information from stakeholders such as Bushfires NT, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Land Management and Rangelands Units, the Department of Primary Industry and Resources, the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and other specialists in the fields of gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush management.

All comments received during the consultation will be considered during the redrafting of the Plans. All comments and justification for any changes can be found at Attachment A.

6.2 Improvements to implementation of the Plan

While the three Plans require major changes, improvements to implementation will also create better management outcomes.

6.2.1 Better strategic management and program reporting

It is recommended that the Weed Management Branch develop eradication, control and containment, and monitoring and evaluation programs that are more strategic.

1. Review the A and B zone boundary for gamba grass to ensure a more targeted and consistent approach to gamba grass management is occurring, particularly in the Katherine region where it has not yet fully established.

2. Formalise catchment plans for priority areas in conjunction with other groups and stakeholders, include pastoral managers and owners to make the plans more inclusive and provide ownership to the stakeholders – ultimately making them more accountable and willing to undertake eradication works of their own accord.
3. Work more collaboratively with, and coordinate management programs, across interstate borders. Possibly showcase each other's work and share successes and failures, promoting buy-in from land owners and occupiers.

4. Develop a monitoring and evaluation program to better assess outcomes of the Plans.

5. Utilise the Weed Information System (WIS) to inform monitoring requirements and reporting.

6. Liaise with station owners and company heads rather than managers on the importance of good weed management, including long-term economic benefits for property productivity.

7. Increase land manager and station staff capacity to independently identify gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush, administer and record best management practice control techniques and collect data in accordance with the Northern Territory Data Collection Manual. Develop a targeted extension program in this regard including the need to systematically implement prioritised training for new managers.

8. Utilise station staff for early detection and eradication programs on stations.

9. Increase and improve communication between the Weed Management Branch, interstate partners, Territory Natural Resource Management, Regional Landcare groups and land managers, particularly with regards to aligning on-ground programs and statutory management requirements. Consultation with external agencies and organisations will also benefit the development, dissemination and implementation of new extension products.

10. Implement an annual reporting program, both from landholders and by the Weed Management Branch to inform future management at a Territory scale.

11. Report on eradication and catchment-scale management programs to affected stakeholders and the public. This will keep lines of communication open and encourage more control action on-ground.

12. Promote weed management continuity on stations, particularly those with high management turnover.

### 6.2.2 Improved communication with stakeholders

Develop regional adaptive communication lines for messaging that targets specific or similar groups of weeds and incorporate local and interstate case studies.

1. Formalise a reporting process with the Pastoral Land Administration Branch in the department that informs the Weed Management Branch on new sales and management of stations. Include weed-related information in welcome packs when ownership changes – include existing property weed management plans, identification sheets, statutory management plans etc., information on works already completed on property and surrounding areas, case studies – successful and failed outcomes. Formalised communication with Pastoral Lands Administration will assist in acquiring this knowledge.

2. Formalise a reporting process whereby the Weed Management Branch informs the Pastoral Land Board of managers who are not managing weeds on properties under their control.

3. Implement the new approaches of the Weed Spread Prevention Strategy and the Northern Territory Weed Data Collection Manual to support and encourage landholders to participate in broad scale data collection and subsequent planning.

4. Hold field days for new and existing managers and other station staff to provide information about any new legal requirements, weed identification and control methods, as well as the Weed Management Branch’s compliance and enforcement focus.

5. Disseminate copies of the revised Plans, with all relevant extension material to all affected and at-risk stakeholders to increase awareness of legislated management requirements. This process should be repeated with changes of management and/or ownership.
6.2.3 Enforcement

If better strategic management, reporting, communication and extension are not achieving the desired results of eradication or control of gamba grass, mimosa or bellyache bush, enforcement and compliance activities needs to be undertaken.

1. Finalise the Weed Management Branch Compliance and Enforcement Framework

2. In consultation with staff, other agencies and key stakeholders, develop and finalise the Weed Management Branch Compliance and Activity Plan, initially for a one-year period before review. This includes details of the inspection program, extension activities, regulatory activities, prioritised areas, and timeframes.

3. Develop and implement a communications strategy before commencing targeted compliance and enforcement programs.
7 Conclusions

Gamba grass, mimosa and bellyache bush control has been widely implemented across the Top End in a manner that is consistent with three Plans' management objectives. Despite this, infestations are still years from being eradicated, contained and reduced.

Many stakeholders remain largely unaware of their legal requirements to manage these weeds or the potential impacts of these weeds, including the scope for damage to grazing land and associated productivity. It has also been determined that in some areas, the high densities of infestations may sometimes result in a “fatalistic” attitude; that is a belief that nothing meaningful can be done. Promotion of case studies whereby large catchment-scale projects are making positive progress towards reducing large infestations needs further publicity.

A concerted effort to develop strategic eradication and reporting programs at property, catchment, regional and Territory-wide scales should be applied to increase compliance with the Weed Management Plans.

Feedback from the review indicated optimism towards the three Plans but concerns regarding the lack of progress made towards eradication. Recommended changes to the three Plans and improved implementation should alleviate some of the challenges in reaching the eradication targets in the A/C zones.

In conclusion, the Plans are achieving many of their objectives; however, more strategic programming and continued effort in extension and communication will be required to achieve the goal of eradication in the A/C zones and control, containment and reduction in infestation sizes in the B/C zones.
### Appendix 1: Stakeholder Questionnaire

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tr>
<td>What do you think the role of the Weed Management Branch is?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you communicate to your stakeholders/staff, both your and their responsibilities and requirements to manage declared weeds on their properties, particularly those weeds with a statutory weed management Plan?</td>
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<td>Do you and your stakeholders/staff understand their legal obligations to manage weeds under the <em>Weeds Management Act</em>?</td>
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<td>Do you think active enforcement of the <em>Weeds Management Act</em> and statutory weed management plans e.g. issuing of infringement notices; will aid greater compliance?</td>
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<td>Do you have any suggestions as to how better inform stakeholders of their legal obligations under the <em>Weeds Management Act</em>?</td>
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<td>Do you think the Plans are reasonable in their expectations of land owners and occupiers to either eradicate or manage these weeds according to the declaration zones?</td>
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<td>Are the management requirements achievable for you and your stakeholders? If not, why?</td>
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<td>Can you please explain how you or your stakeholders currently prioritise areas of management on your/their properties?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you or any of your stakeholders/staff developed a property management plan to eradicate, contain or manage your/their weeds? Have you seen them?</td>
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<td>Should the Plans specify priority areas for management or eradication including areas of significant biodiversity or cultural value requiring asset protection?</td>
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<td>What areas/places do you believe to be priorities for management or requiring asset protection for your industry?</td>
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<td>Which mimosa, bellyache bush or gamba grass infestations do you see as most affecting you or your stakeholders?</td>
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<td>Are these Plans being implemented and with what success?</td>
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<td>Are any monitoring programs in place?</td>
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<td>Do the Plans have enough information for landholders to manage these weeds as per their requirements in each zone?</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you believe is most important to the success of eradicating mimosa/bellyache bush/gamba grass?</td>
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<td>What do you believe is most important to the success of minimising their spread? E.g. hunters/poachers, illegal access to property, fishing etc.</td>
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<td>Do you or your stakeholders/staff see catchment plans as useful for weed management?</td>
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<td>What are the reasons for why you or your stakeholders may not be managing weeds?</td>
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<td>Do you believe that good strategic weed management increases productivity? i.e. the costs and resourcing of weed management now will deliver great benefits to production in the future e.g. through reinstating valuable grazing land allowing increase in cattle numbers</td>
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<td>Do you know of areas where non-compliance on adjoining or upstream land is affecting you or your stakeholders?</td>
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<td>Do you think it would be useful for you or your stakeholders to understand the benefits of weed management, not just your legal obligations to manage them?</td>
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<td>Do you think it is reasonable for stakeholders formally supported through grant funding, to have an obligation to continue weed management following the project’s completion? If not, why?</td>
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<td>Do you and your stakeholders/staff undertake weed spread prevention measures?</td>
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<td>Do you and your stakeholders/staff understand the importance of it, particularly the cost of preventing the spread of weeds vs the cost of managing weeds?</td>
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