

Rob Richardson Retires From WSV Committee

After 20 years on the Weed Society of Victoria's committee Rob Richardson has retired. Rob was President from 1989 to 1990 and since then has been Newsletter Editor of *Weedscene*. He was Secretary-Treasurer of CAWSS (Council of Australian Weed Science Societies) from 1996 to 1999. In 1996 he was made an honorary life member of the Society for research work to weed science and for more than 10 years continual and dedicated service to the Society. He was also one of the instigators of the WSV First Biennial Conference and heavily involved with the running of the Eleventh Australian Weeds Conference.

Rob spent his working life as a weed scientist at Keith Turnbull Research Institute (KTRI, formerly Keith Turnbull Research Station), from the days that it was the Department of Crown Lands and Survey to when it was the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. It was while he was working there on the translocation of herbicides, especially in blackberry species, that he obtained his Master of Agricultural Science degree from Melbourne University. His other research included ecological aspects of weed management and various aspects of herbicide application technologies, and by the time he left KTRI he was in charge of the Herbicide Application Research Group. During his time at KTRI, and since



'retirement', Rob has been editor of the well known journal *Plant Protection Quarterly*, in which most of the proceedings of the Society's seminars are published.

When Rob left KTRI he remained on as editor of *Weedscene*, ably helped by his wife Fiona. Together they formed a publishing company specialising in books about weeds, and are part of the team involved with the publication of *The Biology of Australian Weeds*. They also resell books about weeds from around the world.

Although Rob has decided to no longer be on the committee, he and Fiona will continue to put together *Weedscene* for the Society. Rob will be sadly missed as he has had a large input into the Society over the years, but no doubt the time saved from attending meetings will be put into the publication of more books about weeds and their peculiarities.

Ros Shepherd, Secretary

Contributions to Weedscene

If you have anything that you would like to have published in our newsletter please contact the new editor John Ashby. He can be contacted at the Society's address or at john.ashby@bayercropscience.com.au.

WSV Grassland Weeds Seminar 8 October 2004

The Weed Society of Victoria is planning to hold a seminar examining grassland weeds on the 8 October 2004 at Melton starting at 8.00 am and finishing at 4.00 pm. The program will investigate integrated control of serrated tussock and Chilean needle grass in native grasslands, approaches to grassland management including management practices, how management can affect ecosystem health, grassland restoration techniques and weed invasions in urban and rural grasslands.

If you are interested put this date in your diary, a detailed program will be distributed in the next issue of *Weedscene*. Costs are expected to be: Students \$60, WSV members \$80, others \$100. There will be a late fee of \$20 for registrations received after 3 September.

For further information see the next issue of *Weedscene* or contact the WSV secretary Ros Shepherd on 9576 2949 or secwssv@surf.net.au.

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MEMBERSHIP RATES

Weed Society of Victoria Inc.



Students	\$20.00
Ordinary	\$40.00
Corporate	\$100.00

WSV Prizes for Excellence in Course Work

Debbie Goettler I grew up on a cattle and pig property in central Victoria. Before returning to studies (Advanced Diploma in Agriculture at the University of Melbourne, Longerenong Campus) I had mainly worked in hospitality and I admit to little or no knowledge of plants, especially weeds.

Due to the diverse variation of plants and weeds to be presented, the collection of these specimens allowed me to travel and see varying land classifications within Victoria, thus educating me significantly in the importance of correct plant selection – and weed control needed to sustain and improve agricultural practices. Also because of the enjoyment and pleasure I gained by constructing this plant collection, I now intend to expand the collection further with weeds at my workplace.

Editor's note Debbie is now working in central New South Wales between

Orange and Wellington (in the agricultural industry) and commented that there are different weeds in this region, many of which she had never seen before. She has also enrolled at the University of New England in Armidale to continue her studies via distance education.

Georgie Tsaikos Georgie has always been interested in environmental issues and started studying the Diploma of Conservation and Land Management at the University of Melbourne, Longerenong College. Plants became her passion while working in the nursery industry. Her interests in plant studies include plant identification of native species and revegetation techniques. Georgie is currently on the committee of her local LandCare group and hopes to finish her Diploma this year so she can have an active role in the conservation and land management industry.

Weeds: Killing Us Softly

Weeds are slowly killing the Australian environment and are second only to wholesale land clearing as a cause of biodiversity loss, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Sharman Stone said today.

'Weeds cost the Australian economy around \$4 billion a year and can devastate the environment and place a huge financial burden on tourism and agribusiness,' Dr Stone said.

'For a grain grower, weeds can cost an average of \$70 a hectare a year and Australia spends around \$0.5 million a year trying to keep one weed, *Mimosa pigra*, out of Kakadu.

'However, the good news is that we are gradually winning the war on *Mimosa pigra* in some areas.'

Dr Stone was speaking at the launch of *Killing Us Softly – Australia's Green Stalkers: a 2020 Vision Statement*, produced by the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Australian Weeds Management.

'In Australia, there are over 2700 'naturalised' alien plants, 10 per cent of which have the potential to become weeds and a quarter of these are likely to become a real problem,' Dr Stone said.

'Around 65 per cent of weeds have been intentionally introduced to Australia as ornamental species, including lantana and blackberry.

'The Australian public needs to know what they're buying and what problems it can cause. Unwittingly, many Australian

gardeners are planting these weeds and allowing them to survive.'

Dr Stone said weeds were not only a financial burden to the Australian environment, they could transform whole ecosystems and choke out native flora and fauna.

'If we continue the way we are going, the next generation won't know a creekline without a tangle of blackberries, or that purple is not the natural colour of north-eastern Victorian hills, which are annually carpeted with Paterson's Curse,' Dr Stone said.

'This is a problem that every individual can help attack.

'Don't let weeds survive and be careful what you buy and plant. Plant back natives that our fauna and insects depend upon. Don't dump garden clippings in the bush and support landowners and local councils with appropriate roadside vegetation projects.'

Since 1996, more than \$11 million in federal Government funding has been used to manage environmental weeds including \$2.8 million for the Natural Heritage Trust to manage weeds of national significance.

Dr Stone praised the work of the CRC and their efforts to help educate the Australian public on identifying and understanding the causes and effects of weeds on the Australian environment.

Department of Environment and Heritage, Canberra

President's Report

2003/2004

Presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Weed Society of Victoria Inc.

20th February 2004

Events The Weed Society of Victoria held eight meetings in the past twelve months, and there were four CAWS committee meetings attended by Weed Society members. Last year included the Weed Society of Victoria First Biennial Conference, which was held on the 20–21 August 2003 at the All Seasons International motel in Bendigo. It attracted 170 speakers and delegates for the two-day event. The theme was Developments in Weed Management. Unfortunately the Christmas Cruise had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers. Today the *What is New in the Cropping World* seminar is being held to assist those people in rural areas with their weed problems.

Continuing directions The Society aims to become more technologically advanced with the introduction of its own computer system, as well as website designed to assist members in their weed work. Further developments may include the webcam for committee meetings in the future. With the success of the First Biennial Conference, the wheels are in motion to do a second conference in 2005. The Society is considering the idea of offering half-day hands-on workshops to give members a better understanding of the practical elements of weed management.

Thanks I would like to thank everyone on the committee for their commitment, hard work and dedication over the past 12 months. Sadly, Rob Richardson will be leaving the committee after 20 years of dedicated service. Many thanks to both Rob and Fiona Richardson for their continuing contributions to the Society, in making Weedscape an informative and successful newsletter. I would also like to thank the sponsors of Weedscape for their financial assistance, as well as all the members of the Weed Society for their support, without which the Society would not exist.

To finish I would like to thank all those who have assisted me in my role as President. I encourage members to become more involved in committee meetings and events and invite members to contribute articles to Weedscape.

**Richard Denver
President WSV**

National Blackberry Taskforce – Research Summit

Rydges Capital Hill, Canberra 3–4 March, 2004

With blackberry identified as Australia's most invasive weed and the major threat to the nation's biodiversity (The Australian 3 January 2004. Blots on the Landscape? Green death: The weeds killing Australia), the nation's top scientists and blackberry managers met in Canberra to review and explore blackberry research for the next 10 years.

Blackberry infests 8 million hectares in Australia and most of the nation's appealing high rainfall National Parks are being choked by this invasive pest. The Research Summit identified and prioritised 11 major research projects with an emphasis on new biocontrol measures to harness the spreading scourge.

New biocontrol projects included:

- Release of eight new strains of blackberry rust in a planned national program and to investigate additional biological control agents, including root fungi and insects.
- Undertake a feasibility study on the use of GM (genetic modification) in biological control measures.

Other key projects included:

- Ecology studies on blackberry covering new strains, vectors, etc.
- Cost effective management systems, including successful adaptive management programs.
- Species identification, 'know the weed'.

- National mapping program (mapping species, not the aggregate).
- Social and economic evaluation.
- New chemical research on herbicides.

Key messages from the Summit are:

- Chairman, Alex Arbuthnot, recommended a national approach to achieving cost effective outcomes to managing blackberry.
- Australia has at least 15 species (taxa) of the European blackberry, it is not one weed, but 15 weeds, with a need to develop management programs for each strain. 'A blackberry isn't a blackberry.'
- All governments and the private sector must support the implementation of the National Blackberry Strategy and the actions identified. The strategy was written under the Commonwealth's WONS program (Weeds of National Significance).
- Any national program must involve the Australian Rubus Growers Association, a growing \$10 million berry industry (Rubus berries include blackberries, raspberries, etc.)

The National Blackberry Taskforce will develop a funding and action plan to achieve support for the new research projects.

**Alex Arbuthnot, Chairman,
National Blackberry Taskforce**

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