



National community efforts help loosen weeds' stranglehold on Australia

Australia is in the grip of a weeds invasion, but the Weedbusters of 2008 are rolling up their sleeves all over Australia, in a determined bid to combat the invasion.

National Weedbuster Coordinator Dr Petra Skoien said that as more than 2400 weeds have invaded our shores, these invasive plants have become one of Australia's most serious and expensive land degradation problems.

"Never before has there been more reason to act, with preliminary results of a federally funded New South Wales Department of Environment and Climate Change study revealing nearly 1300 native plant and animals species are at risk from the invasion of *Lantana camara* – a former garden favourite.

And to add insult to injury, climate change is tipped to favour weed invasion to new areas, at the expense of local species.

Throughout **Weedbuster Week, 1-7 September**, community groups, school students, local governments and individuals will organize and participate in Weedbuster events ranging from weed clean-ups in parks, bushland and farms, to weeds displays, competitions and weed identification walks.

"Every Weedbuster event, no matter how small, is helping spread the message about the damage weeds are doing to our environment, our agricultural systems, our economy, and what people can do to help." Dr Skoien said.

Weedbuster Week is also a time to recognise the efforts of volunteers, community groups and local governments in areas of excellent weed management.

This year, Weedbuster Week will focus on selecting and growing non-invasive plants, and wherever possible, **local species**.

National Weeds Awareness Coordinator Dr Petra Skoien said that planting local species had many benefits including "drought-proofing" gardens, protecting biodiversity and providing habitat for wildlife.

"It is vital that the wider community understand the seriousness of the impacts of invasive species so they are supportive of efforts to manage them; and also that they develop the skills and capacity to contribute to managing weeds in their own backyards." Dr Skoien said. Weedbusters is an awareness program that works with the community to improve management of weeds and prevent spread through increased public involvement in weed management, education and awareness projects.

The Weedbuster campaign has been operating since 1997 and has delivered hundreds of events and activities to engage the public and has generated significant media responses.

The Weedbuster campaign has also received excellent results in engaging and delivering weeds awareness information to stakeholders and the general public.

The Weedbuster campaign is the **only existing national campaign** on weeds awareness in Australia.

For more information about Weedbusters go to www.weedbusters.info

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