

## What is Weed Warriors?

**Weed Warriors is an innovative national community engagement and empowerment program that is focused on fostering increased community awareness of, and involvement in, local weed issues.**

The Weed Warriors program recognises children as the land managers of the near future and seeks to empower and engage them in weed issues through an on-going program of classroom and field-based activities. The activities are designed to take the program participants beyond knowledge to action and help to encourage a sense of connection to, and responsibility for, their natural environment. The program also focuses on linking stakeholders involved in weed management with the community.

## What does the program involve?

As Weed Warriors, students become actively involved in the management of a local weed problem when they join with land managers and community groups to implement a biological control program for a target weed (biological control is the management of a weed using natural enemies from the weed's country of origin). The weed species targeted reflect weed problems that occur in the local area.

Through the program, students are given the unique opportunity to undertake real-life weed research at school. The students take on the role of weed scientists and their classroom becomes a mini research institute as they breed biological control agents to help control the target weed.

The breeding phase of the Weed Warriors program generally lasts four to six weeks. Throughout this time students are taught the skills needed to breed the biological control agents through the provision of resource material and through active participation in the process. Students, in collaboration with local land managers and community groups, then release their biological control agents at a weed infestation local to the school, playing an active role in bringing about a solution to a weed problem in the local community.

An important aspect of the Weed Warriors program is the establishment of mentor-student relationships; linking schools with key people that play a role in weed management, conservation or natural resource management in their local area.

The role of the mentors in the Weed Warriors program is to help increase the quality of the learning experience and to develop in the students a sense of connection to, and responsibility for, weed issues in their local area. Their involvement in the program helps to create a real-world experience for the students and assists them in developing a thirst for environmental knowledge.

## Who does the program target?

The Weed Warriors program is adaptive to all levels of education. However, the program is most often targeted at years 3 to 6 in primary schools and years 7 to 9 in secondary schools.

## What are the benefits of participating in the program?

### Empower and engage the community in weed management

Increase student and community ownership of, and capacity for action to address, local and regional weed management issues through active participation in ongoing integrated weed control programs.

### Fosters a community partnership approach to weed management

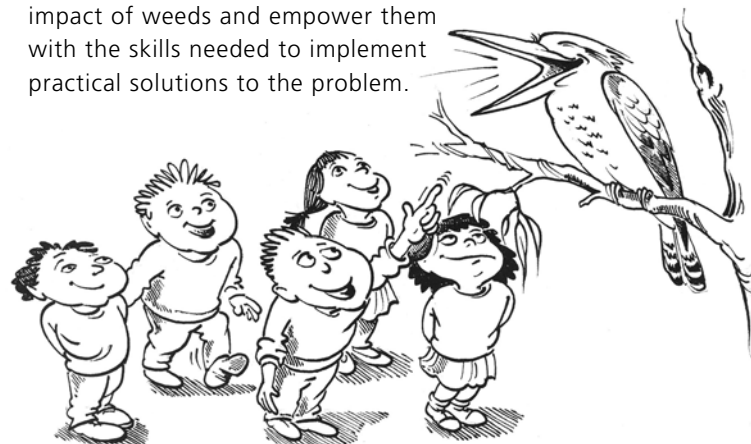
Facilitate the development of sustainable partnerships between the community, public and private land managers, government agencies, local government and industry. Foster the on-going coordinated management of weeds in a region.

### Promote best practice weed management

Enhance current integrated weed management efforts through the establishment of biological control agents against widespread priority weeds through coordinated community participation. Help to decrease the impact of established weeds on natural and productive resources.

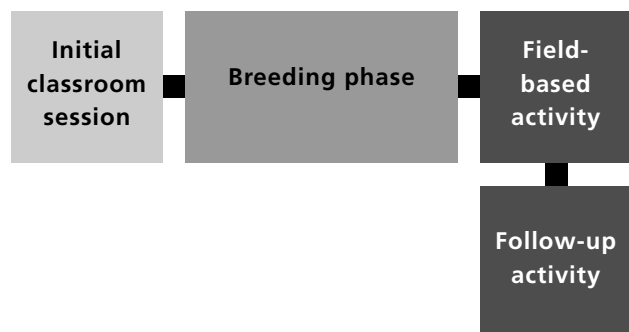
### Educate the land managers of the future and create a more weed-aware society

Help create a more weed-aware and capable community by giving participants a greater understanding of the impact of weeds and empower them with the skills needed to implement practical solutions to the problem.



# Weed Warriors for Key Contacts

## How is the program structured?



### Initial classroom session

Usually forty minutes duration

The initial classroom session is aimed at increasing the student's knowledge of weed-related issues, linked both to their local community and a wider context. Students are also introduced to biological control and the basic concepts behind it. Students are then taught the skills needed to breed the biological control agent for the target weed. The session is interactive and supported by visits from members of the local community and those who act as mentors to the students.

### The breeding phase of the program

At least four weeks duration

During this time students become responsible for the breeding of the biological control agents and making basic observations about the biological control agent's life cycle and its impact on the target weed. Duties include watering and providing quantities of the weed to act as a food source. The biological control agents chosen for the program are highly visible in their impact and students are encouraged to measure their observable impact and report on what they find.

### Field-based activity

Usually two hours duration

The field-based activity centres on the release of the classroom-reared biological control agents at a suitable weed infestation local to the school. Media attendance at the event is encouraged as is attendance by parents and other interested parties. Through participating in the release event, students are given an opportunity to relate their classroom-based learning to a real-world experience.

### Follow-up activity

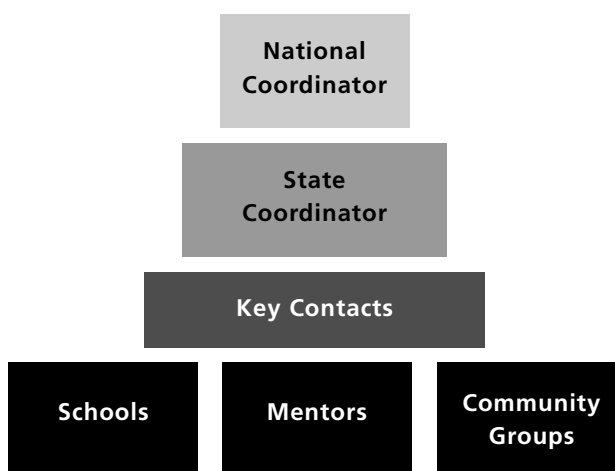
Monitoring the establishment and spread of the biological control agents at the release site six or twelve months after their release is an important follow-up

activity to the release event. There are two ways the students can be involved in monitoring the release site:

- Through active participation in another organised visit to the release site, or
- The Weed Warriors Key Contact monitors the site and reports findings back to the students in the classroom.

## How is the program administered?

Weed Warriors is a national program administered by a National Coordinator, a State/Territory Coordinator and supported by a network of Key Contacts, mentors, community groups and schools.



## Roles and Responsibilities

### National Coordinator

The role of the National Coordinator is to oversee the Weed Warriors program across Australia, administer the national Weed Warriors website, registration and accreditation scheme and help to link Weed Warriors program participants nationally.

### State/Territory Coordinator

The role of the State/Territory Coordinator is to provide a link between the National Coordinator and on-ground programs and to provide support and assistance to the Weed Warriors Key Contacts, mentors and community groups.

### Key Contact

The role of the Key Contact is central to the success of the program. The Key Contact is the person who organises, coordinates and implements the Weed Warriors program within a local area. The Key Contact is also someone who will become a driver for continuing and expanding the program within the region.

## Mentors/community groups

The role of the mentors and community groups within the program are to help in connecting participating students to environmental issues within their local community. The mentors maintain this connection with students within, and beyond, the program. A Weed Warriors mentor is generally a person from the local community who has knowledge and a commitment to local weed issues and who will strive to engage the participating students in addressing other local environmental challenges.

## Weed Warriors Key Contact

A Weed Warriors Key Contact is responsible for coordinating and implementing the Weed Warriors program within a local area.

## Who can be a Weed Warriors Key Contact?

Anyone! Anyone who is interested in addressing local environmental challenges will receive enormous benefits from running a Weed Warriors program.

Demonstrated benefits for a Weed Warriors Key Contact include:

- Increase in knowledge of weed-related issues,
- Building the capability in their region to deliver effective on-ground weed management,
- Building relationships with the community, government agencies and other people involved in weed management in the local area, state and across Australia, and
- Professional development.

Key Contacts do not need to work for a government agency or non-government organisation but should at least be involved in, or have knowledge of, the management of natural resources and/or weeds.

It is also fine if prospective Key Contacts do not think that they have enough expertise to talk to students about weed issues, and particularly biological control. Weed Warriors Key Contacts are provided with detailed information on these subjects and will benefit from the experience of a network of Weed Warriors Coordinators and participants across Australia.



## What are the tasks of a Weed Warriors Key Contact?

A Key Contact will organise and deliver the Weed Warriors program to a school and will be responsible for:

- Selecting the school to be involved,
- Determining the duration and timing of the program and administering the school's involvement, including registering the school,
- Linking the school with a mentor and/or a local community group such as Landcare,
- Selecting an appropriate weed to target,
- Selecting and sourcing an appropriate biological control agent to use (assistance with this is provided where required),
- Ensuring that the school has the materials they need to conduct the program including a sufficient supply of the biological control agent and weed material,
- Help conduct the initial classroom session at the beginning of the program or organising an appropriate alternative person to do so,
- Selecting a suitable biological control release site local to the school for the release of the students' classroom-reared biological control agents. Sites are to be selected according to sound integrated weed management principles and must be done with an authorised weed officer and with the cooperation of the land manager (assistance with this is provided where required),
- Ensuring that prior to the release of the biological control agents the land manager of the release site signs an agreement of cooperation form (provided) and that this form is returned to the State or National Weed Warriors Coordinator,
- Organising and conducting the release event where the student's release their classroom-reared biological control agents,



# Weed Warriors for Key Contacts

- Promoting the program through the local media,
- Providing support as required to the school during the program's duration,
- Organising and/or helping to monitor the biological control release site and collecting information on the biological control agent's establishment and spread, and
- Securing and awarding official Weed Warriors accreditation to each school and facilitating the continuation of the program each year.

## What level of involvement is required as a Key Contact?

On average, a Weed Warriors Key Contact spends four days organising and delivering the Weed Warriors program to a school.

This includes:

### Organising

- One to two days planning and organising the program and all program participants.

### Delivering

- Forty minutes at the beginning of the program for the initial classroom session.
- Two hours at the completion of the program for the release event at which the students will release their classroom-reared biological control agents.

### Follow-up activity

- Half a day, six to twelve months after the release of the biological control agents, to monitor the release site and report back to the students.

During the breeding phase of the program the Weed Warriors Key Contact should also be available to support the teacher and students, should they need any assistance with the program.

The type of assistance that the teacher or students may require is help with locating and collection of the target weed to feed the biological control agents, identification of local and regional weeds, provision of supporting extension material and answering other questions that may arise.



## What support is available for a Weed Warriors Key Contact?

### Personal support

Weed Warriors Key Contacts have the support of the National and State/Territory Weed Warriors Coordinators and the network of other Weed Warriors Key Contacts and program participants across Australia. The mentors and community groups engaged in the Weed Warriors program also provide support for the Key Contact.

### Weed Warriors Starter Kit

Upon registration of their initial school, Weed Warriors Key Contacts are provided with a Weed Warriors Starter Kit which includes a step by step Planning Toolbox, a series of information sheets and templates, a biological control agent rearing manual and Teacher Resource.

### How to get started?

Once an appropriate Weed Warriors school and their Key Contact has been found, the next step in getting a Weed Warriors program started is completing a Weed Warriors registration and agreement form and purchasing a Weed Warriors Starter Kit.

Registering a Weed Warriors school and the purchase of a Starter Kit are the first steps into the Weed Warriors program.

## Registration

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### The first step – initial registration

Prior to registering your first Weed Warriors school it is recommended that you read the getting started information sheet and give consideration to the points addressed.

An initial Weed Warriors registration and agreement form can be obtained from the State or National Weed Warriors Coordinator. These forms are also available on the Weed Warriors website [www.weedwarriors.net.au](http://www.weedwarriors.net.au)

Registering of a Weed Warriors school is very important as it is how you access the resources and information needed to run the program and the accreditation scheme. Registered Weed Warriors schools will also be offered the opportunity to link up with other Weed Warriors around Australia.

### On-going registration

Weed Warriors Key Contacts are encouraged to create sustainable, on-going programs. For every year a Weed Warriors program is run, participants will receive recognition and will lead to further reward and recognition.

Registering your school's Weed Warriors program each year, even if no purchase of additional resource material is required, will ensure that all program participants receive the benefits and recognition they deserve.

## Accreditation

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Weed Warriors is an accredited program. Upon successful completion of their initial Weed Warriors program, program participants, including the Key Contact, teacher, school community and mentor will receive official Weed Warriors accreditation, symbolised by a sign with an accreditation number unique to each program. Accredited Weed Warriors receive access to a secure section of the Weed Warriors website and other special benefits.

## What is the cost for the program?

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The cost of a Weed Warriors Starter Kit, which includes the resources and Weed Warriors accreditation for one school on completion of the program, can be found on the Weed Warriors website.

A Weed Warriors Key Contact only needs one Starter Kit. Use of the kit will empower Key Contacts with the skills necessary to run the program with single or multiple schools. However, each additional Weed Warriors school must be individually registered. The registration fee for additional schools, which covers the cost of an extra Teacher Resource and Weed Warriors accreditation at the completion of the program, can be found on the Weed Warriors website.

### Additional costs

This cost does not factor in the expense of purchasing the infrastructure required to rear the selected biological control agent or obtaining a colony of the biological agent itself.

The cost of the Key Contact's time and the costs associated with transporting students to and from the release site should also be considered.

If assistance in funding the program is required, please contact the State or National Weed Warriors Coordinator.

## For more information

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For more information please contact the State or National Weed Warriors Coordinator. Please refer to the Weed Warriors website [www.weedwarriors.net.au](http://www.weedwarriors.net.au) for contact details.

