



ANIMAL AND PLANT CONTROL COMMISSION

S O U T H A U S T R A L I A

To whom it may concern,

I have no hesitation in recommending the Weed Warriors program.

The Animal and Plant Control Commission is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Animal and Plant Control Act and has a network of 29 Animal and Plant Control Boards across South Australia. One of the strategic aims of the Commission is to have "a motivated and informed community implementing efficient animal and plant control" and the Commission recognises that education and awareness programs such as "Weed Warriors" play an important role in achieving this goal.

Over the past decade, the approach used by Animal and Plant Control Boards towards landholder control of pest animals and plants in their region has moved from "enforcement" towards increasing "awareness and education" of the community, but never before has the Commission been able to provide Boards with such an innovative and effective program as "Weed Warriors".

Since "Weed Warriors" was introduced to South Australia in 2003 through the CRC for Australian Weed Management, several Animal and Plant Control Boards across the state have taken up the opportunity to participate in the program. We have had nothing but positive feedback from boards, teachers and students participating in the program.

Already over 20 schools in South Australia have taken part in the program with the support from Board officers, National Park rangers and other local land managers and we have many more schools keen to undertake the program in 2004. As well as undertaking various weedy activities aligned with the school curricula, students have raised and released biocontrol agents into high priority weed infestations in national parks, conservation reserves and on private land. There has also been a strong interest by local media in the program which has assisted in further increasing community awareness about weed issues.

As well as the clear benefits of educating students and promoting best practice weed management, the program provides the opportunity for groups, such as Animal and Plant Control Boards, to actively engage the community in weed issues through active participation in weed control programs. The program presents the board officers in a more positive light than officers who are just enforcing legislation and this is particularly important for relationships in rural areas with close-knit communities.

"Weed Warriors" also encourages stronger linkages between board officers and other land managers, such as National Park rangers, Friends groups and landholders, which is particularly important as we move towards integrated natural resource management in South Australia. It also offers participants a network of weed researchers from which to seek advice, from both within the state and interstate.

There can be no doubt that "Weed Warriors" has contributed to an increase in community awareness of and participation in weed related issues. The unexpected benefits such as increased linkages between researchers, natural resource managers and community have added further value to participating in the program for not only the Animal and Plant Control Commission and Boards, but also to natural resource management in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria Hawker
Research Officer, Animal and Plant Control Commission
Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation
GPO Box 2834, Adelaide SA 5001
Tel: 08 8303 9501 Fax: 08 8303 9555