

National Aquatic Weeds Project – Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Weeds

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Alligator weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*) cabomba (*Cabomba caroliniana*) and salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) are aquatic weeds that are posing serious threats to Australia's streams, wetlands and water storage facilities.

These invasive aquatics are included on the list of 20 Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) due to their invasiveness, potential for spread and environmental and economic impacts. Since 1999 national management strategies for each weed of national significance have been produced.

A National Aquatic Weeds Coordinator was appointed late in 2003 to oversee the implementation of the WoNS strategies for alligator weed, cabomba and salvinia (aquatic WoNS strategies). Major roles of the coordinator include a public awareness campaign, production of extension material, establishment of the National Aquatic Weeds Management Group and coordination of stakeholders involved in the management of the aquatic WoNS.

The area infested by the aquatics WoNS is currently limited, but each has the potential to spread to most waterways in southern and eastern Australia. As a result, a major aim of each aquatic WoNS strategy is to prevent their spread to new locations.

Each aquatic WoNS is mostly spread through human activity. They reproduce from small plant fragments, which can be easily stuck in boat trailers, earth moving equipment, fishing gear or any other equipment that is used in waterways. Once such equipment is transported to another waterway, plant fragments can dislodge and cause new infestations.

Cabomba is believed to have been deliberately planted in waterways by aquatic plant traders, to later harvest for personal use or for sale.

Preventing the spread of these aquatic WoNS, and other aquatic weeds, is not just the responsibility of those involved in weeds management. All waterway users have a key role to play and by following these 5 measures they could greatly assist with preventing the spread of aquatic WoNS

1. Learning how to identify aquatic WoNS
2. Reporting infestations to local weeds officers.
3. Early detection and treatment, using best management practices available
4. Hygiene - washing down any equipment that has been in contact with aquatic weeds, particularly boats, trailers and earth moving equipment
5. Responsible disposal and purchase of aquarium/fishpond plants.

The national aquatic weeds management project will be helping prevent the spread by running a targeted media and extension campaign amongst key target audiences as to how they can implement these 5 actions. Such audiences include aquatic plant traders, boating and fishing hobbyists and earth moving contractors.