Part 2 Submission on the Buffel Grass Management Have Your Say, Adrian Tomlinson

Submitted via e-mail to weedinfo.nt.gov.au on Jun 4, 2025, 11:29 AM

Hi (name withheld),

Thank you once again for meeting. Jacqueline and I appreciated this opportunity and your time. While we discussed a range of issues and ideas, I am specifically writing to follow up on our discussion around consultation and engagement strategies, some of which I had not raised in my previous letter. I request you include this email with my previous submission.

1. During our meeting we raised concern that the "Have Your Say" approach for garnering input into developing the draft Weed Management Plan and other *ad hoc* engagements that were happening is insufficient for a balanced and inclusive process. ***We expressed our view that a communication and engagement plan informed by a stakeholder analysis is necessary.*** We know our community is very concerned about buffel, however many of those most impacted stand to be excluded.

   We are worried because, as you acknowledged, consultation is largely reactive and hence is responding to those already engaged. This is an especially challenging consultation task because buffel grass's diverse impacts. Furthermore there is asymmetry in how its negative impacts are widely dispersed amongst a very large number of individuals and groups with low power for whom weeds management is not normally core business; while perceived or actual benefits are concentrated in a small number of groups or individuals with high power, and with an established interest in weeds management. In short we were concerned that your valuable time is being consumed attending pastoral industry/NTCA meetings across the Territory whose views are well known, while other individuals and groups (e.g people in remote communities, running clubs, people in rural areas and town camps, people who visit the Desert Park, tourist operators and organisations like the Akeyulerre Healing Centre) which are obviously impacted. These individuals and groups need help and should be being proactively approached and supported with accessible resources so they can engage in an informed way, but are largely not being heard.

   In some cases other approaches altogether will be needed to glean attitudes and impacts. I am aware that best practice resources are available from The Engagement Institute https://engagementinstitute.org.au/.

   Our experience from occasional market stalls is that we encounter a steady flow of people from all walks of life and a variety of industries who are deeply concerned about buffel and tell us their stories. We always encourage them to get onto the Have Your Say but we remain concerned that often this will not happen. *I fear that we are being told people's horror stories and frustrations rather than these being directed to the Weeds*

Management Branch who are in a position to address their ideas and concerns!

We recommend proactive consultation and engagement strategies, suitable for a range of audiences and informed by a stakeholder analysis and delivered by Weeds Branch is needed.

2. Approach for documenting and responding to submissions received - I raised concern that the strategy for documenting and responding to submissions again seems quite informal. For transparency, a comprehensive report on communications and engagement, summarising the engagement strategies used, submissions and other approaches received and systematically responding to each issue or suggestion raised is needed. This should include any directives from the Minister and private meetings held.

3. I also suggested there are suitable departmental templates available for consultation around water allocation plans (WAPs). In particular:
   a. I am aware of stakeholder analyses prepared by Liza Schenkel for the Western Davenport WAP and Alice Springs WAP review that could provide a suitable template for a stakeholder analysis.
   b. The recent consultation summary for the Western Davenport Water Allocation Plans, which was the result of an exercise by the Water Trust to develop a template for reporting a challenging consultation, appears suitable : https://nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/1483064/western-davenport-consultation-summary.pdf

   Whilst I feel this linked document would be better framed as a report on communication and engagement in order to document the stakeholder analysis and consequent engagement strategy design process, I suggest this provides a good template to explicitly, thoroughly, even-handedly and systematically address every consultation and issue raised.

Thank you for your consideration. I appreciate that your team has shown itself to be willing to support and listen whenever approached.

Kind regards,
Adrian