

## **Appendix 4: Workshop with Research and Extension Staff**



## **A4.1 Background**

On 18 July 2006, MLA hosted a workshop in North Sydney involving the WEEDS 120 Project teams (IRF and Rural Enablers) and professionals working in weeds research and extension. The purpose of this workshop was to provide research and extension staff with a brief introduction to the issues they need to consider in the design, delivery, and evaluation of weed communication strategies, based on the key messages from the Project. Expected outcomes of this workshop were:

- increased familiarity of weed researchers and extension agents with the work being done by the WEED 120 team,
- improved capacity of these agents to use messages from WEED 120 in the design, planning, delivery and evaluation of research and extension activities,
- increased understanding of the WEED 120 team with the challenges and opportunities for different weed types and livestock grazing situations, and
- input to assist the WEED 120 team in refining key messages to assist in the design, implementation and evaluation of communication/extension strategies.

Weeds research and extension agents involved in this workshop represented Weeds Australia, the University of Sydney, and the Department of Primary Industries in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. The participants were identified by MLA as being suitable for this workshop based on the relevance of their work to the Project aims. Participants were invited by email invitation, with travel and other meeting costs being covered by MLA.

## **A4.2 Overview of event**

During the morning session, the MLA Project team provided an introduction to their work and described the results-to-date. Following this, there was an opportunity for invited researchers and extension staff to comment on the work being done by IRF and Rural Enablers, and to describe their work and the challenges they faced.

In the afternoon, participants were split into two groups to discuss topics relevant to the projects being carried out by the workshop participants. The two topics were:

- 1) Assisting woolgrowers to use an integrated approach in the management of serrated tussock in native pasture systems with poorer soil and difficult terrain.
- 2) Working with extension staff and woolgrowers to control Prairie Ground Cherry and Silver Leaf Nightshade in disturbed environments, involving bio-economic modelling and other tools.

In each group, members of the Weed 120 Project team were present to facilitate and guide discussion. Each group were to identify challenges and strategies specific to their topic, using the key messages from Weed 120.

### A4.3 Summary of challenges and strategies

Challenges identified included:

#### *Serrated tussock*

- conflict between neighbouring landholders,
- large farms without large income and/or sufficient labour (e.g. I can't afford to control weeds),
- lack of openness towards new ideas, i.e. preference for 'tried and true' methods,
- heterogeneity of farms and farmers – how do you meet the needs of everyone?

#### *Prairie Ground Cherry and Silver Leaf Nightshade*

- multiple flushes of germination and 10 year seed viability,
- managing producer expectations of biological controls,
- integration of weed control with production system, and
- the need for a zero tolerance approach.

Strategies identified were:

#### *Serrated tussock*

- identify a mediator to resolve dispute and to mentor development – ideally this person would have credibility with locals - preferably with a grazing background in the local area,
- provide opportunities for group discussion between neighbouring landholders, preferably with a mediator present to facilitate discussion and assist in conflict resolution and negotiation,
- mentor extension agents to facilitate their development and foster targeted extension,
- reduce large scale problems into a set of smaller tasks/management units,
- show the cost of NOT controlling weeds and compare this with the cost of a well formulated control plan, both in terms of short-term and long-term costs,
- raise awareness of the range of available control methods (weed specific), and
- prepare, or assist landowners and extension staff to prepare, control strategies specific to the enterprise, and region (terrain, weather, soil type, vegetation type etc.), and which meet 'felt needs' or goals.

#### *Prairie Ground Cherry and Silver Leaf Nightshade*

- establish a consultative committee for the project,
- use media in late Spring when identification is easier to alert producers to the differences between species,
- develop an Agnote on identification of the species at early growth stages,

- liaise across States where the weeds occur to develop standard information sources, and
- work with farmers to critique and validate control strategies.

Overall, reactions towards the information resulting from the Weed 120 Project were positive. Participants expressed satisfaction at the workshop outcomes, feeling that the day had been of benefit to their work, and expressed interest in receiving further information from the Project. The opportunity to work with researchers with specific weed control projects highlighted the need for extension strategies to be tailored to specific weeds.