

# BUYERS BEWARE

## Advice on weeds for intending property purchasers

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The purchase of land, be it a suburban building block or multi-hectare property, is a major decision and can be emotive.

Noxious weeds are often forgotten among the myriad considerations involved.

**Before signing a contract, prospective purchasers should take the following considerations into account:**

- Are there noxious weeds on the land?
- Are noxious weed infestations being managed?
- What are the costs of weed control?
- If the land is to be used for farming, will weed infestations lead to production losses?

Privacy laws prevent Council from disclosing weed infestation information to prospective buyers without the owner's consent.

### What should I do before purchase?

1. Before buying land you should arrange for someone who knows about weeds to inspect the property with you. If weeds are found on the property, a weed control operator can provide an estimate of how much control work will cost. Council does not provide information on such costs, but can



**Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*), a class 4 noxious weed, covers the dam of otherwise pristine farmland.**

provide contact details of suitable experienced weed control contractors.

2. Your solicitor should request a section 64 certificate from Council. A section 64 certificate will provide information on current notices over the property or money payable to Council in relation to noxious weeds. These debts and outstanding notices remain with the property on sale and become the responsibility of the buyer.

The small cost of an independent inspection and the certificates may save you thousands of dollars in weed control.

### Considerations before you choose your rural property

**Is it a high maintenance piece of land?** Think about what time you are willing to commit to the maintenance. Do you like to mow and garden all weekend, or do you want a low maintenance bush block that has a low carrying capacity? After the initial purchase, can you afford the equipment you will need to look after the property? That is: a tractor, slasher, and spray gear.

**Are the properties in the area cared for in a manner you will accept? What is growing in the area?** If it is a Lantana-infested valley and you intend to be a weed-free property.

**How much do you really know about the area?** Does it flood and if so, what weeds will be brought on to the property from upstream? What is above you in the catchment is a factor, as that will be shared with you.

**Can you live next door to the current activity?** If there are weeds over the fence line, odds are there always will be. Do not think that when you move there it will change, it will not. What you buy today is what you live in.

**Do you know the weeds on the property, and can they be eradicated?** Buy a Giant Rat's Tail Grass infested property because it is cheap and you will live to regret it. It will cost more in time, labour, chemical, and loss of productivity than the property is worth. Privet in the valley may cause you an allergy that makes living there unbearable.

**Have you had a weed inspector advise you prior to purchase?**

**What is the aspect?** South facing blocks will always have Crofton weed.

**Are there water weeds on nearby dams that can be brought in by ducks or floods?**

**Are there any easements through the property?** If there are, will weeds be transported on to your property by vehicle traffic or stock movement?

The weeds that are there now tell the story of the property, so before you commit to buying have a chat with the local weed inspector.

# Landholders have a legal obligation

Landholders have a legal obligation under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* (the Act) to manage weeds on their property, and it is part of being a good neighbour and land custodian.

Rous County Council is the local control authority responsible for controlling weeds on public roads, advising landholders on weed control, and for regulating the Act.

To prioritise where funding and control efforts should be focussed, weed species are categorised as noxious weeds, National Environmental Alert Weeds, and Weeds of National Significance (WoNS). These listings may vary from state to state, and from one local control authority to another.

There is also some overlap, with several species being on more than one list.

To be classified as a noxious weed and come under the control of the Act, a plant has to have the potential to cause more harm than benefit to the environment and the community.

Its management and control have to be economically viable. That is, the cost of its control measures is less than its potential damage bill. The job also has to be physically possible.

Noxious weeds are classified into five groups.



**Class 1** and **class 2** weeds are a potential serious threat to agriculture or the environment. These species are prohibited.

They are considered eradicable because, at this point, they only exist in pockets.

These classes include Alligator Weed and Hymenachne. If you have, or think you may have, these weeds, Far North Coast Weeds will help.



Weeds in **class 3** and **class 4** are serious threats and may already be widely distributed in an area or not, but are likely to spread further afield.

Class 3 is regionally controlled, while class 4 is locally controlled. These classes include familiar plants such as Privet, Camphor laurel and Lantana.

**Class 5** weeds, which are restricted plants, have the potential to spread beyond the state, as well as within.

All class 5 weeds have State-wide declaration.

Weeds in classes 1, 2, and 5 are 'notifiable' to the local weed control authorities.

National Environmental Alert Weeds (NEAW) are those that have been identified as being in the early stages of becoming a problem. With already established populations in bushland areas, they are a future threat to biodiversity.

Golden Rain Tree (*Koelreuteria elegans* subsp. *Formosa*) and Rosewood (*Tipuana tipu*) are on this list.

If managed now, hopefully these species and others on the NEAW list will not become as ubiquitous as Camphor laurel and Privet are today.

Some species are a serious problem over a large area of Australia. These plants have been designated WoNS.

The plants on this list were chosen for their invasive abilities, impact, potential for spread, and social-economic and environmental values. WoNS include Lantana and Blackberry.

Weed management and minimising the threat to biodiversity needs a community effort.

Rous County Council and local Landcare groups can help with identification and advice on removal and containment strategies.



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