

Senate Inquiry into preventing invasive species harmful to the natural environment

I am the coordinator of a friends group which has the privilege of volunteering in a conservation park, Paganoni Swamp Reserve, in the metropolitan area of Perth, Western Australia. Most weeks we pull out weeds which if not removed would alter soil conditions to the extent that they would adversely impact on the ability of our native species to flourish. The major weeds include *Euphorbia terracina* (Geraldton carnation weed), *Centranthus macrosiphon* (Pretty Betsy), *Moraea flaccida* (Cape Tulip), *Trachyandra divaricata* (Dune onion weed), *Ehrharta calycina* (Perennial veldgrass) and *Gladiolus caryophyllaceus* (pink gladiolus).

Phytophthora cinnamomi (dieback) is present on the eastern boundary and is slowly working its way westward. It is a water mould (oomycete) whose spores can travel through water or via plant root-to-plant root contact. If it is not controlled the disease moves through the soil infecting more plant roots by these methods at a faster or slower rate depending on slope and soil moisture. A significant number of plant species in West Australia's south west are susceptible to *P cinnamomi*. These include species such as banksias, hibbertias and grevilleas which constitute many of the plants present in Paganoni. Once present in the soil this disease cannot be eradicated.

Foxes and cats play havoc with mammal species that should be plentiful in Paganoni, including quolls, bandicoots, phascogales, wallabies and bandicoots. Feral bees inhabit tree hollows instead of native species and also deter birds and native bees from visiting flowering plants and trees.

What we don't need are any more weed species, animal pests or plant diseases as the current crop are already having a significant impact on our natives which are yet to face the full impact of climate change.

The cost of invasive species is significant and well-known, yet it appears that the will to develop sound biosecurity measures that a) stop any incursion in the first instance or b) respond in a timely and effective manner if there is an incursion, is lacking. There doesn't appear to be any action taken if biosecurity is breached, or any long term commitment to redress the failures that continue to occur on a regular basis. For example, if the resources, political will and commitment currently spent on deterring people arriving by boat, who have contributed mightily to Australia's cultural, social and economic life, were instead diverted to deter invasive plants, diseases and animals arriving by boat the benefits for all Australians and our environment would be enormous.

A new environmental body should be established to coordinate research, prioritise threats and generally develop policies to address the systemic failings evident from the ongoing incursion of a significant number of invasive species that threaten Australia's unique flora and fauna.

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