

A plan to tackle weeds

Loss of native vegetation cover and condition caused by weed invasion is a major threat to the natural values of our coast. In some areas, native vegetation communities comprising dozens of species can be displaced by just a few species of invasive environmental weeds.

The Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) has developed the *Native Vegetation and Weed Action Plan (2009)* in an effort to gain a detailed understanding of native vegetation in the reserves we manage, and to understand and address the threats posed by weeds. The project was developed with the aid of a grant from the Australian Government.

The plan underpins GORCC's conservation activities and aims to provide strategic directions for volunteer groups involved in coast care.

Comprehensive data

The *Native Vegetation and Weed Action Plan* contains data and detailed maps for coastal reserves between Torquay and Lorne. The plan maps and assesses Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) and maps weed infestations, down to the scale of individual plants in some instances. It also lists the status of each native vegetation community and each weed species to determine their importance.

Weed control priorities

Our first priority is to keep out weeds that aren't yet established in the area. An example is Sea Spurge, an aggressive coloniser of dunes that has spread beyond control on some parts of the Australian coast but has been kept to almost zero locally.

We also place a high priority on weed species that are established but can be controlled or eradicated before they've done much harm.

To manage established weeds, we apply the 'assets-based' approach that is standard around Australia. EVCs with high conservation significance and low weediness are the areas we focus on first, as we can keep those areas in top shape with relatively little effort. Restoring areas that have been totally overrun with weeds requires considerably more effort and resources.

Local gardens full of weeds!

Some of our worst environmental weeds come from local gardens. Plants like Sweet Pittosporum, Mirror Bush, Gazania, Coast Tea Tree, Coast Wattle, Agapanthus, Polygala and Bluebell Creeper are valued by coastal gardeners for their toughness and vigour, yet those same traits mean they are highly invasive in the wild.

Some of the most widespread environmental weeds make a significant contribution to bushfire risks, with a combination of high flammability and dense growth habits. Coast Tea Tree and Coast Wattle are two examples.

Getting involved

There are heaps of ways to get involved in caring for the coast, from getting rid of environmental weeds in your own garden to volunteering for a local environmental group.

Contact us on 03 5220 5055 or email info@gorcc.com.au if you'd like to find out more about our weed control program or get in touch with any of the local volunteer groups.



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Great Ocean Road
Coast Committee Inc

35 Bell St
PO Box 53
Torquay VIC 3228

Ph: 03 5220 5055
Toll-free: 1300 736 533

www.gorcc.com.au

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