

Bushwalking NSW Inc- Policy on Invasive Species

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1. Acknowledgement of Country

Bushwalking NSW Inc acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and acknowledges and respects their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge their custodianship of the Country in which we engage our bushwalking and related activities.

2. Purpose

To support the appropriate management of invasive species in areas frequented by bushwalkers and other outdoor recreationists and to ensure that bushwalking and related activities are undertaken in accordance with effective biosecurity principles.

This policy presents a position statement by Bushwalking NSW Inc which represents bushwalking clubs in NSW and the ACT. The focus is therefore on bushwalking and related outdoor activities as they are undertaken within natural areas. It is not intended as an overarching policy on the management of invasive species.

3. Definitions

3.1 Biosecurity

Protecting our environment, economy and human health from the negative impacts of pests, diseases and weeds is called 'biosecurity'. Environmental biosecurity aims to prevent the importation or incursion of new environmentally invasive species, and to reduce to a minimum the impact of invasive species on biodiversity, the environment and ecosystem function.

New types of foreign pests and weeds are getting into Australia every year. More than fifty new invaders harmful to the environment have been detected since 2000. Each new infestation that reaches our shores increases the cost of looking after the country's bushlands, seas and wildlife. Every failure to eradicate an infestation risks environmental problems of epidemic proportions.

3.2 Invasive Species

An invasive species is an introduced, non-native organism (disease, parasite, plant, or animal) that begins to spread or expand its range from the site of its original introduction and that has the potential to cause harm to the environment, the economy, or to human health.

The Invasive Species Council uses the invasion curve – a graph of the invasion process depicting the rising harm and costs as an exotic species becomes established and spreads within its new environment. After a new species establishes, there may be a period of days, months or even decades during which it is possible to eradicate it – before it becomes too widespread. If a species cannot be totally removed, it may still be possible to contain it, preventing it from spreading to the rest of its potential habitat across Australia.

3.3 General Biosecurity Duty

The general biosecurity duty requires any person who knowingly creates or spreads a biosecurity risk to take practical measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate that risk. Individuals are encouraged to work out the best ways of managing biosecurity risks.

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3.4 Minimal Impact Bushwalking

Bushwalkers and other outdoor recreationists should value the bush and its pristine nature. To ensure its preservation, bushwalkers follow a Code which sets out guidelines for how to behave while in the bush. The Bushwalker's Code covers general care of the environment, dealing with rubbish, hygiene, fires, choice of campsites and many other issues. More information on the Bushwalker's Code and Minimal Impact Bushwalking can be found at <https://www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au/bushwalkers-code/>

As bushwalkers, we are best placed to detect a new pest, disease or weed in the natural areas that we visit. Left undetected, invasive species can be costly to eradicate and can have significant impacts on the environment. You can help by knowing your responsibilities under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015:

- being aware of the biosecurity risks you are causing when you walk
- keeping your gear clean
- quickly reporting significant or unusual pests, diseases and weeds
- being aware of and managing biosecurity risks where they occur on your land (e.g. controlling weeds)
- participating in community programs aimed at protecting the environment
- volunteering to manage biosecurity risks in shared spaces such as public land, waterways, coastal waters, etc.

4. Objectives of Policy

- Support land managers and governments in preventing new invasive species and in eradicating or controlling species which are already prevalent.
- Advocate for management of land in accordance with recognised biosecurity principles.
- Promote awareness of invasive species within the bushwalking community and encourage all of our affiliated clubs to practice biosecurity in their various activities.
- Encourage the public and members of our affiliated organisations to implement the Bushwalkers Code of Conduct <https://www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au/bushwalkers-code/>

5. Policy Principles that should apply to Invasive Species

5.1 Leave Hitchhikers behind

Weeds, pests and diseases are major threats to Australia's native plants and animals. They can hitch a ride on muddy hiking boots, dirty car rims, on camping gear, or even in your gut. Keep your gear and clothing clean before, during and after your walk. Avoid contaminating water by taking care with personal hygiene and toileting. More information on avoiding unwanted hitchhikers can be found here <https://invasives.org.au/how-to-help/keep-gear-clean-wild/>

5.2 Spot the Invader

Bushwalkers and other outdoor recreationists can help alert land managers to pest animals or weeds. Finding the first weeds, disease or pest in an area helps land managers eradicate them before they spread. Public reports of established pests like feral pigs and horses help managers coordinate control efforts.

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If you see a pest, unusual weed or signs of disease such as large numbers of dead plants or wildlife please contact the person or authority responsible for managing that area. Information on the relevant contacts can be found here [to be added]

5.3 Take Action

Lobby governments and land managers to take action to protect our environment from invasive species. Encourage your club to join campaigns to combat invasive species and get yourself dirty for conservation by joining a local Bushcare, Landcare or Coastcare group.

Bushwalking NSW has long lobbied State Governments to reduce the feral horse population in Kosciuszko National Park. Our most recent submission on this can be found here

<https://www.bushwalkingnsw.org.au/bushwalking/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BNSW-Final-Submission-Draft-Wild-Horse-Heritage-Management-Plan-KNP.pdf>

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