

## **XVII International Symposium on Biological Control of Weeds**

**Title:** *Biocontrol across borders: Coordinating a nation-wide mass-rear and release network in Australia*

**Session topic first preference** Release and Establishment

**Session topic alternative preference:** Post-release monitoring and evaluation, including social and economic assessments of BC

### **Abstract:**

Australia has commenced a landmark collaboration to fast-track delivery of weed biocontrol agents. The five-year 'Nation-wide Weed Biocontrol Mass-Rearing and Release Network for Enhanced Drought Resilience in Australia's Agricultural Landscapes' project creates a national consortium of research, government, industry and community partners to deliver a multi-jurisdictional biocontrol network. The project is led by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (CISS), with \$5.9 million in funding through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund (FDF).

This project is establishing a coordinated national framework for the large-scale mass-rearing, release, monitoring and evaluation of biocontrol agents. By uniting facilities, expertise, and stakeholder networks, the program will accelerate the deployment of nine biocontrol agents targeting seven major weeds; African boxthorn, opuntoid cacti, prickly acacia, horehound, cabomba, sagittaria and salvinia. The project will also develop a nationally harmonised weed biocontrol data collection, analysis and evaluation system. An overarching 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan' will measure progress towards achieving FDF outcomes.

The project is the first major investment arising out of Australia's 'National Weed Biocontrol Pipeline Strategy'. This CISS-led strategy was developed to guide future weed biocontrol research, development, and extension activities for priority weeds at a national scale.

**Keywords:** (up to 5)

Coordination, Mass-rearing, Release, Monitoring, Network

**Highlights:** (up to 3 Key Messages)

1. Biocontrol funded for its contribution to drought resilience and ecosystem function
2. A national collaborative network will accelerate weed biocontrol agent delivery and monitoring
3. A national strategy for weed biocontrol has led to success in attracting major investment.

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