



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 313

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA:

Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan

The Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036 (The Plan) was approved by the Minister and came into effect on 1 May 2026.

1. The Weed Advisory Committee's communique of November 2025 records that the Committee "was unable to reach consensus on how the general duties under section 9E of the Act should be applied to the pastoral industry" and that "Two options will therefore be put to the Minister, along with information on WAC deliberations for his consideration".

a. What were the two options put to the Minister, and on what date were they put?

Option 1 was a risk-based approach which proposed individual permits for higher risk activities, including introducing buffel grass seed into the Northern Territory (NT), propagating or scattering buffel grass in areas greater than 1 hectare, selling or purchasing buffel grass. This process would enable assessment of individual applications, and targeted monitoring and reporting conditions.

Option 2 was a blanket exemption via an industry wide permit for the pastoral industry, allowing the Minister to grant a permit for pastoral use of buffel grass on properties governed under the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*.

The two options were put to the Minister on 8 December 2025.

b. Which option was adopted, and what was the basis for adopting it?

Option 2, however the Minister modified Option 2 to require individual permit applications for the import of seed into the NT to reduce the risk of new cultivars being introduced.

- c. **The consultation summary records that “Non-pastoral members acknowledged the need to allow for continued use of existing buffel grass by the pastoral industry, but supported a risk-based approach to permits rather than broad exemptions”. Will the information on the Committee’s deliberations provided to the Minister be tabled?**

No. Members are expected to provide honest advice and to openly discuss issues, proposals and risks in depth. If members expected their comments to be made publicly available, they may become more cautious about expressing views, particularly where discussions involve differing stakeholder views, regulatory issues or other sensitive matters. In lieu of the Committee’s deliberations, a Communique from each meeting has been made publicly available at [Buffel grass | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au/buffel-grass/).

- d. **What is the rationale for the allowances for pastoral use provided for in the Plan?**

The pastoral use provisions recognise that buffel grass is widely established and used for pastoral production across the NT. The Plan adopts a regulated approach that allows continued pastoral use of buffel grass while providing a mechanism to monitor, manage and place conditions on activities involving a declared weed. This approach seeks to manage environmental, cultural and fire impacts while recognising the ongoing role of buffel grass in pastoral production.

2. **The Buffel Grass Permit Guidelines (Version 1, 27 April 2026) record that “To allow for the continued pastoral use of buffel grass, the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment has granted a pastoral industry permit for Crown land subject to pastoral lease under the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*”.**

- a. **Appendix A of the Plan, approved on 18 March 2026, states that the Minister “upon receipt of an application, can grant an industry-wide permit to Crown land subject to pastoral lease under the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*”. The Guidelines of 27 April 2026 state that he has granted it. On what date was an application received, from whom, and on what date was the permit granted?**

A permit application was received on 28 April 2026 from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries on behalf of pastoral leaseholders (under the *Pastoral Land Act 1992*). The permit and the Guidelines were both approved on 1 May 2026.

- b. **For what term was it granted, what conditions attach to it including any bond, and will the permit be provided?**

The permit was granted for a period of 10 years. There are no conditions however, risk management measures apply to each property listed and include:

- to take 'reasonable measures' to prevent buffel grass on "their" land spreading to other land where buffel grass is not contiguous across adjoining land tenures and/or there is active management occurring on a neighbouring property;
- to secure and contain buffel grass during the course of transporting it;
- to carry the permit when transporting buffel grass and produce the permit for inspection on request of an officer; and
- refer to 5.3.2.2 of the Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan

Approved permits are not public documents and a copy will not be provided.

c. How many individual permits have been granted since the Plan came into effect on 1 May 2026, for what activities, and how many have been refused?

One pastoral industry wide permit covering 225 pastoral leaseholders. Since 1 May 2026, the lessees were given the option to retain or surrender their permit. 19 lessees surrendered their permit and 206 permits have been individually issued. The industry-wide permit is now redundant. One permit to import buffel grass has been granted.

No applications have been refused.

d. How many of those were permits to import buffel grass seed into the Northern Territory, and for what volumes?

One permit to import up to 2,700 kg of buffel grass seed into the NT has been granted.

3. Section 5.3.2.1(a) of the Plan defines "reasonable measures" for pastoral land as "use in accordance with the relevant objectives of the Pastoral Land Act 1992" and provides that "Grazing is considered a reasonable measure for managing buffel grass on pastoral land". Section 5.3.2.1(b) provides that reasonable measures on non-pastoral land in non-urban areas may include "Destroying outlier buffel grass plants and infestations as a priority".

- a. **On pastoral land, what result must grazing achieve for the duty to prevent spread onto adjoining land to be discharged?**

The Plan does not prescribe a specific outcome that grazing must achieve.

- b. **Where buffel grass spreads from pastoral land onto adjoining land whose occupier is expected to destroy it, who bears the cost of that control?**

Responsibility for management of buffel grass sits with the occupier of the land on which the buffel grass occurs.

The Department's Weed Management Branch may require landowners or occupiers to develop and implement a spread prevention plan.

- c. **Appendix A of the Plan classifies as a low risk activity, for which “permits will not be required”, the scattering of buffel grass by owners or occupiers of land used for pastoral production, with seed sourced from within the same weed management region, “as long as use is in accordance with the objectives of the *Pastoral Land Act 1992* and the size does not exceed 1 ha”. Over what unit is the one hectare measured - per event, per property, or per year - and how is compliance with that limit monitored?**

The 1 hectare limit is classed as total per property. Above that, an individual permit application would be required. Compliance will be supported through education and guidance, in accordance with the Plan and the '*Weeds Management Act 2001: Compliance Policy*' is available at [Weeds and the law | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au/weeds-and-the-law/)

4. **What monitoring, compliance and enforcement resources are allocated to implement the Plan over its first two years?**

\$750,000 annually has been allocated to improve the strategic management of buffel grass in the NT. [Buffel grass | NT.GOV.AU](https://www.nt.gov.au/buffel-grass/) includes links to the Buffel Grass Action Program Framework, 2025-26 Annual Report and 2026-27 Annual Operational Plan. The Program is focused on supporting landholders and land managers, protecting key conservation assets and preventing future spread along transport corridors.

- a. **The Department's buffel grass page records that the Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee “was approved by the Minister for Environment on 6 May 2024 and disbanded on 17 June 2026”. Its last published meeting was on 12 November 2025, at which it was unable to reach consensus on the pastoral question. On what date was the decision to disband made, by whom, and for what reason?**

The Committee was concluded by the Minister on 16 June 2026 because it had finalised its advisory function on the drafting of the Plan.

b. What expert advisory arrangements now exist to guide implementation of the Plan, and when were they established?

The Department engages with stakeholders through direct consultation with organisations and individuals represented on the former Committee, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

c. Budget Paper No. 3 for 2026-27 sets a target that at least 90 percent of compliance inspections under the *Weeds Management Act 2001* are undertaken. How many inspections were planned for 2025-26, how many were undertaken and who sets the number planned?

Refer [Compliance and Enforcement Reporting 2025-26](#).

d. How many of those inspections related to buffel grass, and how many resulted in a direction, notice or penalty?

None of the inspections related to buffel grass.

As per the Plan, the focus of the Buffel Grass Action Program is on supporting and building the capacity of landholders and land managers to undertake buffel grass management on their land.

e. If inspections are not recorded by weed species, in which system are they recorded and in what format?

Inspections are electronically recorded in the Weed Management Branch's ArcGIS-based compliance management system, including ArcGIS Survey123, ArcGIS Online and ArcGIS Field Maps. Inspection data is stored as spatial records.

5. What assessment has the Department made of the ecological impacts of buffel grass invasion across Central Australia and the Barkly?

Refer [Buffel Grass NT Weed Risk Assessment Technical Report \(2022\)](#).

The Department also provided information as requested to assist the national assessment of buffel grass under the National Emerging Weeds Program (NEWP) and available at [NEWP-Assessment-Report-260826](#).

6. What assessment has been made of the impacts of buffel grass on the tourism industry in Central Australia, including in the MacDonnell Ranges, at Uluru and Kata Tjuta, at Watarrka, and along the Larapinta Trail?

Refer [Economic Impact Assessment of Buffel Grass in the NT \(Report 1\)](#).

7. What outcomes would trigger review or amendment of the Plan if monitoring shows continued spread?

Under the *Weeds Management Act 2001*, weed management plans are in force for up to 10 years and are typically reviewed one to two times during this period.

Weed management plans are not operational plans, they function as regulatory documents that outline legal requirements. Operational planning is available at [Buffel Grass Action Program Operational Plan 2026-27](#), which is developed and reviewed annually to set priorities based on current information, including results of monitoring programs.