



AIMING FOR ERADICATION OF PRICKLY ACACIA FROM THE BARKLY

Introduction

The Barkly Tablelands region of the NT covers around 15% of the Territory's land area, yet contains only around 3% of the population. Pastoralism is the dominant land-use with nearly three-quarters of the area under pastoral lease. A total of 28 pastoral leases are found on the Barkly with the average size of these cattle stations coming in at around 5400km².

Weeds pose a significant threat to primary production on the Barkly. Three of these weeds are commonly referred to as the 'prickle bushes' and these are; Parkinsonia (*Parkinsonia aculeata*); Mesquite (*Mesquite propolis*); Prickly Acacia (*Acacia nilotica*).

Although all three prickle bushes require ongoing management, there is now a particular opportunity to eradicate Prickly Acacia from the region in the near future.

Background & Motivation

Prickly Acacia is regarded as one of Australia's worst weeds. It has caused significant environmental and economic losses in neighbouring Mitchell Grass areas in Queensland and could potentially infest large tracts of the NT's productive Mitchell Grass areas. The economic impacts from this weed are estimated at \$5 million per year. This is because it significantly reduces primary productivity of grasslands, interferes with stock mustering and restricts stock access to water.

Prickly Acacia is listed as a Weed of National Significance, and is declared for eradication from the NT, making it imperative to remove from the Barkly.

In September 2016, Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) facilitated a partnership between NT Weeds Branch and the pastoral leases of Rockhampton Downs and Brunette Downs to strategically treat the last large standing infestations of Prickly Acacia on the Barkly. The treatment was performed utilising a locally owned and operated Indigenous fee-for-service business called MTP Contracting.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Over 45,000 hectares managed and treated for Prickly Acacia

Local Indigenous business and staff employed in treatment activities.

Multiple stakeholders working together including NT Government, pastoral properties and local contractors.



Dan Steel (NT Weeds Branch), Rachel Hoolihan (Rangelands Officer, Brunette Downs) and Max Priest (Director, MTP Contracting) making a plan of attack against Prickly Acacia.

Rockhampton Downs and
Brunette Downs Stations

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Activities

MTP Contracting treated known Prickly Acacia populations across both Rockhampton Downs and Brunette Downs with the assistance of the properties' respective management and that of NT Weeds Branch. Plants were individually treated using a process known as basal barking, whereby the entire circumference of the lower part of the trunk is sprayed with a mixture of diesel and an oil-soluble herbicide (in this instance a chemical known as Access).

"This partnership has allowed us to get significantly closer to the eradication of Prickly Acacia on the Barkly".

Dan Steel of NT Weeds Branch, Tennant Creek



Athol Finlay from MTP Contracting, spraying Prickly Acacia that was previously submerged

Outcomes

This partnership has enabled over 45,000 hectares of Prickly Acacia to be treated across pastoral leases Brunette Downs and Rockhampton Downs. Furthermore, MTP Contracting have been able to continue to develop local Indigenous staff in weed treatment and strengthen their relationship with pastoral stations and the NT Weeds Branch.

Future Activities

The goal of all interested parties is to eradicate Prickly Acacia from the Barkly region of the Northern Territory. This will require a concerted effort across multiple pastoral leases over the coming years. There is still standing Prickly Acacia and a large seed bank, which will remain viable for around fifteen years. Consequently, all areas will need to be monitored and re-treated as necessary. But the work performed thus far is a critical stepping stone to a Prickly Acacia free Barkly region.

Barkly Landcare Conservation Association has successfully obtained further funding through TNRM and the National Landcare Program to continue treatment across both properties during late 2017.

"It's important we don't lose focus following efforts over recent years.....whilst we're on top of it, you stay on top of it".

Max Priest, director of MTP, which is based out of the Barkly Community of Corella Creek

Acknowledgements

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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