

Media Release:

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Aquatic Weed Discovered in Durack Lake

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts (NRETA) Weed Management Officers are asking the public to be vigilant following the recent discovery of Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) growing in the lakes of the Palmerston suburb, Durack.

NRETA Principal Weeds Officer Steve Wingrave said Water hyacinth, native to South America but imported to Australia as an ornamental aquarium plant, poses a serious threat to aquatic environments due to its explosive rate of spread.

“Water hyacinth can double its mass every five days and seeds can remain viable for 20 years or longer,” Mr Wingrave said.

“It forms a dense, impenetrable mat over the water surface and not only reduces water quality, but it also increases water loss by up to five times the normal loss from evaporation.”

Palmerston City Council reported the discovery of the weed earlier this week and staff from the Northern Territory Government Herbarium confirmed the plant identification.

“Water hyacinth is not currently established in the Northern Territory and immediate action is taking place to eradicate the weed and prevent spread,” Mr Wingrave said.

“Weed Management and City of Palmerston Officers are working to physically remove and bury all plant material, then we’ll continue to work together to monitor and manage the outbreak.

“Herbicides are not being used as the infestation is relatively small and Water hyacinth is free floating so the plants are being hand collected.

“Inspections of surrounding areas have not identified any other infestations of Water hyacinth and a risk assessment is now underway.”

Water hyacinth is a declared Class A, to be eradicated, and Class C, not to be introduced, weed in the Northern Territory and it is also illegal to sell the plant.

“The first recorded incidence of Water hyacinth was at Fogg Dam in 1974 and there has been six infestations located and eradicated to date, however this is the first time it has occurred in the lakes at Durack,” Mr Wingrave said.

“At this stage we’re unable to confirm how the infestation occurred, however Water hyacinth is used as an ornamental plant for ponds and aquariums so it is a strong possibility it came from within the residential area.

“We urge people to dispose of aquariums and aquatic plants by drying them out and placing them in the domestic bin, otherwise they are likely to wreak havoc on the natural eco-systems, and it’s illegal to dispose aquatic life directly into waterways.

“Should members of the public see any occurrences of Water hyacinth we urge them to notify their local council or the NRETA Weeds Branch on 8999 4567.”

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Steve Wingrave on 8999 4482.

Attached images of Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) credit to the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, Queensland

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