

**Media Release:**

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## **Aquatic Weed Discovered in Top End**

The Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) Weed Management Officers are asking the public to be vigilant following the recent discovery of Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) growing in water ways in the Darwin rural area.

NRETAS Strategic Weed Management Planner Geraldine Lee 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 over 20 years,” Ms Lee 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.

“Water hyacinth is not currently established in the Northern Territory and immediate action is taking place to eradicate the weed and prevent its spread.

“Weed Management Officers will be investigating reports from members of the public and removing any infestations.

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.

“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,” Ms Lee said.

“Disposing of declared weeds into any waterways is not allowed, as it can wreak havoc on the natural eco-systems and is also illegal.

Water hyacinth is a free-floating, aquatic plant which has fleshy, dark green leaves and bulbous stems. Water hyacinth flowers are light purple to lilac. It is noted that water hyacinth does have similarities to a native aquatic plant Monochoria (*Monochoria vaginalis*), however due to the high level of risk posed by water hyacinth, all suspected sightings should be reported.

“We encourage members of the public to call the NRETAS Weeds Branch about sighting and removal of Water hyacinth on 8999 4567 and a Weeds Officer will come out to the property and destroy it”.

**Media Note – for more information contact Geraldine Lee on 8946 5156.**

**Image - Water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*)**

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