

Weed Management Branch  
Department of Lands, Planning and Environment  
Energy House  
18-20 Cavenagh Street  
Darwin NT 0801  
Submission via online portal  
Cc: [weedinfo@nt.gov.au](mailto:weedinfo@nt.gov.au)

9 January 2026

Dear Weed Management Branch,

**RE: Submission on the draft Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan**

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) is Australia's national peak body for private land conservation, representing organisations that work to conserve, manage, and restore nature on privately managed land. ALCA's member organisations include those managing key land for conservation in the Northern Territory.

We welcome the opportunity to provide recommendations on the Northern Territory Government's draft *Buffel Grass Weed Management Plan 2026-2036*.

The conservation efforts of our 22 member organisations have influenced over 9.3% of Australia with more than 4,000 landholders; we have over 70,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$400 million.

Together, ALCA and our members address some of the most pressing conservation issues across the country, by restoring endangered ecosystems, building the protected area estate, tackling invasive species, expanding private conservation finance, and funding, and using nature-based solutions to tackle climate change.

## Recommendations

ALCA strongly recommends that the Northern Territory Government:

1. Urgently declare buffel grass in the Katherine and Darwin Weed Management Regions as a Class A weed (i.e. requiring eradication), and, at minimum, a Class B weed (growth and spread to be controlled) in the remainder of the Northern Territory. These designations will be important to help progress potential partnerships for funding with the Federal Government.
2. Formally support the buffel grass Weeds of National Significance (WONS) nomination, noting that this does not impose additional obligations on landholders, and would greatly help unlock Federal funding support, as well as improved Federal-State-Territory coordination and the sharing of emerging technology for buffel grass management.

ALCA recommends that the final Plan:

3. Designates buffel grass within the Katherine and Darwin Weed Management Regions – where buffel grass incursions are still limited, and eradication of known incursions may still be reasonably feasible – as Category 1 (priority species for eradication). The next iteration of those two regions' Weed Management Plans should then reflect this designation.
4. Should not describe buffel grass as having “*value to the pastoral industry*”. It is ALCA's understanding that the pastoral industry does not have a unified view that the benefits of buffel grass as feed for stock outweigh the disadvantages – especially the serious disadvantage of heightened risk from fire to pastoral operations. Removing this largely political statement would strengthen the integrity of the Plan.
5. Extends Management Requirements to all Conservation Areas across the Northern Territory, and not limit these requirements to only the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Weed Management Regions ('Central Australia') [in combination with Recommendation 6, below].
6. Wherever possible, requirements for conservation land managers to provide Buffel Management Plans to the Weeds Management Branch can be demonstrated through appropriate sections in existing or revised conservation land management plans.
7. Wherever possible, extends Management Requirements to all Transport Corridors across the Northern Territory, and not limit these requirements to only the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Weed Management Regions ('Central Australia').
8. Extends the Buffel Grass Education and Assistance Program to all conservation land managers; transport corridor managers; and interested private, public and Aboriginal landholders across the Northern Territory; and not limit the Program to only the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek Weed Management Regions ('Central Australia'). It should be noted that this approach does not and should not limit the Program from having priority regions, or priority land tenure types (e.g. conservation land) for Program assistance.
9. ALCA and its relevant member organisations would be happy to assist the Weeds Management Branch to review buffel grass factsheets that are developed for conservation landowners and managers.

## Further context

ALCA echoes the concerns on buffel grass as outlined by the South Australian Government, which has also declared the grass a weed:

*“Buffel grass has been recognised as one of the greatest pest threats to the arid rangelands of South Australia. It is referred to as a ‘transformer species’ meaning it has the ability to alter entire ecosystems through the alteration of fire regimes and competition with native plants. In recognition of its social and environmental impacts, buffel grass has been declared as a weed under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> See:

[https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/275906/4108\\_PIRSA\\_factsheet\\_Buffel\\_Grass\\_Control.pdf](https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/275906/4108_PIRSA_factsheet_Buffel_Grass_Control.pdf)

Further, as the SA Government notes:

*“...buffel grass fires burn extremely hot and can spread rapidly.”<sup>2</sup>*

ALCA’s member organisations are involved in the on-ground management of a significant proportion of Australia’s protected area estate, and several members already manage substantial buffel grass incursions on property that they own or help to manage across the country.

Our member organisations that operate in the Northern Territory report the significant cost, time, and ongoing challenges in managing the serious adverse impacts from buffel grass upon the Territory’s unique biodiversity, and the clear challenges it creates for fire management for the prevention of harm to life, property and nature.

Members operating in the Northern Territory are facing increasing issues with buffel grass on their properties, putting conservation objectives at risk. The pace and scale of invasion is extremely concerning for our membership due to the significant impacts of buffel grass on conservation and cultural values, and viability of private-run conservation reserves to adequately manage the landscape-scale impacts on vegetation, fauna, and fire risk posed by buffel.

Buffel grass incursions are known to alter ecosystem structure and function and to reduce biodiversity of all taxa (e.g. plants, insects, vertebrates, etc.). Buffel grass also leads to more frequent and intense fires which not only accelerate the impacts on biodiversity and loss of woody cover but also increase the risks to on-ground managers and staff seeking to control and mitigate buffel-fuelled fires. Further, the impacts from buffel grass are not restricted to single habitat types, but rather can be found across a vast diversity and array of vegetation and fauna assemblages across multiple reserves and broad ecosystem types that our membership manages across the country.

Without full and proper efforts to control, reduce, and – wherever possible – eradicate buffel grass as a weed, a key driver of negative ecosystem transformation will continue to be overlooked in national discussions about improving Australia’s environmental, economic, social, and cultural wellbeing. The scale of buffel grass as an invasive species and its cross-cutting impacts – and expected greater impacts if not more fully addressed – are putting at risk the resilience and function of ecosystems, and the people who rely upon those ecosystems for their prosperity.

## **Australian Land Conservation Alliance**

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## About the Australian Land Conservation Alliance

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance is the peak national body representing organisations that work to conserve, manage, and restore nature on privately managed land. We represent our members and supporters to grow the impact, capacity, and influence of private land conservation to achieve a healthy and resilient Australia.

Our twenty-two member organisations are:

- Arid Recovery
- Australian Wildlife Conservancy
- Biodiversity Conservation Trust NSW
- Biodiversity Legacy
- Bush Heritage Australia
- EcoGipps
- GreenCollar
- Greening Australia
- Landcare Australia
- Nari Nari Tribal Council
- National Landcare Network
- Nature Foundation
- North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
- NRM Regions Australia
- Odonata
- Queensland Trust for Nature
- South Endeavour Trust
- Tasmanian Land Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy Australia
- Trust for Nature (Victoria)
- Wildlife Bank Trust
- World Wildlife Fund - Australia

ALCA member land conservation efforts have influenced over 9.3% of Australia with more than 4,000 landholders. We have over 70,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$400 million. Together ALCA and its members address some of the most pressing conservation issues across the country, including restoring endangered ecosystems, building the protected area estate, tackling invasive species, expanding private conservation finance, and funding and using nature-based solutions to tackle climate change.

Through their active land management, ALCA member organisations are deeply embedded in rural communities and economies, providing jobs, securing significant regional investment, and safeguarding remaining native habitat, with its many positive spillover effects for community, wellbeing, and food security. We seek to demonstrate the role and value of private land conservation as a cornerstone of the Australian economy.

Some ALCA members are statutory entities; the views expressed in this submission do not necessarily represent the views of the Government administering those statutory entities.