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Ms Tania Coulter
Parliamentary Officer
Natural Resources Committee
GPO Box 572
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Via email nrc.assembly@parliament.sa.gov.au

9 October2026

Dear Ms Coulter

Parliamentary Inquiry: Inquiry into buffel grass

Thank you for the invitation dated 4 September 2026 to provide a submission to the Natural Resources Committee's Parliamentary Inquiry into buffel grass.

Primary Producers SA (PPSA) is the peak cross-commodity body representing South Australian primary producers and the State's member of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF). Our members comprise Grain Producers SA, Livestock SA, the SA Dairyfarmers' Association, the SA Forest Products Association, the Horticulture Coalition of SA and the Wine Grape Council of SA.

PPSA supports targeted, adequately funded action to address the harmful impacts of buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris* and *Cenchrus pennisetiformis*), while protecting pastoral grazing systems in which it is a valuable and well managed pasture species. We support coordinated control in cropping districts and vulnerable landscapes where buffel grass is undesirable. Pastoral areas where it is valued and appropriately managed should be excluded from blanket eradication programs and additional restrictions that undermine its beneficial use.

We remain opposed to the proposed Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) listing, given concerns about potential consequences for pastoral management, continued grazing use and future control priorities. This position recognises that pastoral land remains subject to existing South Australian weed requirements and that demonstrated risks at priority sites and dispersal pathways require appropriate management.

The logical starting point for South Australia is to evaluate implementation of the South Australian Buffel Grass Strategic Plan 2019–2024, clarify the status of its review and renewal, and establish a funded successor strategy. National recognition cannot substitute for effective State planning, clear responsibilities and sustained investment in practical management, including preventative infrastructure such as truck washdown facilities.

Our accompanying submission addresses the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

PPSA recommends that the Committee:

1. Seek a public account of implementation of the 2019–2024 strategy, the status of its review and governance arrangements since its stated period ended.
2. Recommend a funded successor State strategy, developed with primary producers, pastoral managers, Aboriginal land managers and other affected stakeholders.
3. Retain a differentiated management approach that protects valued and well managed pastoral grazing systems from blanket eradication programs and additional restrictions that undermine their beneficial use.
4. Prioritise prevention and coordinated control in cropping districts, uninfested vulnerable areas, significant environmental and cultural sites, and key dispersal corridors.
5. Support investment in practical hygiene infrastructure, early intervention and sustained follow-up, with clear responsibilities for public agencies and infrastructure managers.
6. Require evidence of the need, benefits and costs of any proposed regulatory change, together with safeguards for grazing systems in any national management response.
7. Assess agency capacity and recommend sustained implementation funding, regardless of any decision on national listing, with transparent reporting on outcomes.

PPSA seeks a renewed, accountable and adequately resourced State response that directs effort to demonstrated harm while preserving the economic value of buffel grass in pastoral systems where it is accepted and well managed.

We would welcome the opportunity to assist the Committee further, including by appearing at a public hearing to discuss our submission.

If the Committee have any queries regarding this submission, please feel free to contact me via email admin@ppsa.org.au

Thank you for your careful consideration of these matters.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Rhodes
Chief Executive Officer

PRIMARY PRODUCERS SA

Submission in response to the South Australian:

Parliamentary Inquiry into Buffel Grass

CONTEXT

The Natural Resources Committee of the Parliament of South Australia is inquiring into the management of buffel grass.

The inquiry is seeking a comprehensive assessment of buffel grass in South Australia and the effectiveness of current efforts to manage it. The inquiry aims to understand the extent and impacts of buffel grass in South Australia, evaluate the success of current management efforts and policies, and identify improvements needed to better prevent, contain and manage its spread in the future.

OUR INDUSTRY MEMBERS

GRAIN PRODUCERS SA

LIVESTOCK SA

SADA

South Australian Forest Products Association

Horticulture Coalition of South Australia Inc.

WINE GRAPE COUNCIL SA

PPSA at a glance

Primary Producers SA (PPSA) is the peak industry body representing the interests of South Australian primary producers.

PPSA also serves as the South Australian member of the National Farmers Federation (NFF). This ensures PPSA is directly engaged in all NFF activities including implementation of the Roadmap for Australian Agriculture to exceed $100 billion in farm gate value by 2030.

PPSA has the capacity to provide strong representation and advocacy on behalf of the South Australian primary production sector through our membership base.

Our members are the peak commodity organisations of South Australia. Current members include Grain Producers SA, Livestock SA, SA Dairyfarmers' Association, SA Forest Products Association, Horticulture Coalition of SA, and the Wine Grape Council of SA. Each organisation is represented by a councillor on the PPSA Policy Council, to provide direction and oversee the operations of PPSA.

Our purpose

As the united voice of South Australia's primary production sector, our purpose is:

- To **advocate the interests and concerns of Primary Producers** to both State and Federal governments and community using evidence-based reasoning.
- To **present one voice** to government, both State and Federal, and the wider community on Cross-Commodity issues affecting Primary Producers in South Australia.
- To **promote Primary Production in South Australia** and ensure that the contributions and achievements of South Australian Primary Producers are recognised; and
- To **assist stakeholders and suppliers to Primary Production** where such assistance will benefit Primary Producers.

What we do

PPSA develops the South Australian primary production sector through:

1. **Engagement**. PPSA partners with government and industry to develop policies and programs that promote the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of South Australian primary production.
2. **Leadership**. PPSA acts as the conduit to the South Australian primary production sector and presents a united voice on behalf of its membership in advocacy and representative activities.
3. **Communication**. PPSA influences policy makers by promoting the contribution we make to the South Australian economy and engaging positively with government and the broader community.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Introduction

Primary Producers SA (PPSA) welcomes the opportunity to assist the Natural Resources Committee inquiry gain further insight and knowledge of the management of buffel grass (Cenchrus ciliaris and Cenchrus pennisetiformis). PPSA supports targeted, adequately funded action where buffel grass causes harm, while protecting pastoral grazing systems in which it is a valuable and well managed pasture species.

The logical starting point for South Australia is to evaluate delivery of the South Australian Buffel Grass Strategic Plan 2019–2024, clarify the status of its review and renewal, and establish a funded successor strategy. Further national recognition cannot substitute for effective State planning, clear responsibilities and sustained investment in practical management. [1]

Past deliberations

This submission builds on PPSA's letter to the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board dated 25 March 2025 (attached). That letter supported the State's targeted management framework and opposed the proposed Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) listing, expressing concern about consequences for pastoral management, grazing and future control priorities. It also supported protection of vulnerable areas and investment in truck washdown facilities. [2]

PPSA maintains that a uniform eradication response would be inappropriate.

Coordinated control in cropping landscapes, where buffel grass is undesirable, can proceed alongside protection of its established pastoral value. Those pastoral areas where the plant is accepted as valuable and well managed should be excluded from blanket eradication programs and additional restrictions that undermine its beneficial use in grazing systems.

PPSA's position should not be read as suggesting that pastoral land is currently exempt from South Australian weed requirements. Rather, future policy and implementation should expressly protect appropriate grazing uses while addressing demonstrated risks at priority sites and pathways.

RESPONSES TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

a) The current and projected spread and distribution of buffel grass across South Australia, including areas at greatest risk of further spread;

PPSA supports a current, shared evidence base on distribution, pathways and areas at risk. The Committee should seek consolidated mapping from relevant agencies and landscape boards, distinguishing established populations from isolated incursions and identifying the date and confidence of observations. PPSA does not offer a new estimate of the extent of infestation in this submission.

Prevention should focus on uninfested cropping districts, vulnerable native vegetation and the corridors connecting established populations with those areas. Priorities should be informed by local surveillance and landholder knowledge, with particular attention to road and rail corridors, machinery movements, soil disturbance and other potential dispersal pathways.

PPSA Members support coordinated control efforts in South Australia's cropping zones. Early detection, rapid treatment and follow-up monitoring should be supported before small incursions become an enduring management cost. Regional boundaries should not interrupt surveillance or responsibility for treatment along a shared corridor.

b) the impacts of buffel grass on:

- **Environment, including biodiversity, native vegetation, threatened species, and bushfire risk;**
- **culture, including Aboriginal cultural heritage and Country;**
- **economics and society, including pastoral land and remote communities; and/or**
- **critical infrastructure including road/rail transportation network, powerlines and renewable energy projects;**

PPSA recognises concerns about biodiversity, native vegetation, cultural landscapes and fire risk where buffel grass is causing harm. Protecting significant environmental and cultural assets requires site-specific objectives and practical measures suited to local conditions. These impacts warrant action without assuming that the same management response is appropriate on every land use.

PPSA Members emphasise that buffel grass is also an important pasture resource in parts of the pastoral sector. Industry feedback through the networks of the National Farmers Federation (NFF), highlights its critical role as fodder for the northern Australian cattle industry.

The Committee should consider livestock production, seasonal feed availability, management costs and the consequences of removing an established pasture resource equally alongside environmental and social impacts.

PPSA supports retaining grazing as an available management tool where appropriate. Its effectiveness should be assessed against clearly defined objectives, including biomass management and protection of adjacent assets. Grazing should not be assumed to eradicate buffel grass or prevent all dispersal; nor should it be displaced automatically by chemical or manual control without considering local outcomes and costs.

Decisions concerning the APY Lands should be developed directly with the relevant Aboriginal landholding bodies, Traditional Owners, communities and ranger groups. Their authority, knowledge and management priorities must be respected. Coordination should address shared pathways and neighbouring assets through practical agreements and sustained support. PPSA does not purport to speak on behalf of those communities.

Road and rail managers, utilities and renewable energy project proponents should have clear responsibilities for hygiene, monitoring and treatment associated with their activities. Project planning and procurement should address weed risks arising from construction, access tracks and maintenance, with provision for follow-up after works conclude.

c) updates of the implementation of the South Australian Buffel Grass Strategic Plan (2019 -2024) including progress to date, emerging challenges, best practice approaches to the prevention, containment and management of buffel grass, and opportunities to improve and support its ongoing delivery;

The stated period of the South Australian Buffel Grass Strategic Plan ended in 2024. PPSA's March 2025 letter anticipated a review of the strategy and plant policy in 2025. The policy currently available through PIRSA still refers to the 2019–24 strategy and specifies review by 2025. [1, 2]

PPSA Members question why a renewed strategy has not been clearly communicated, given South Australia's expertise and the priority attributed to buffel grass management. The end of the plan's stated period does not establish that field activities ceased. It does, however, warrant a clear account of ongoing priorities, accountability and funding.

To fully inform the Committee's deliberations, PPSA recommends it seeks advice from relevant agencies in the form of a report concerning the implementation of the 2019–24 strategy, identifying:

- Actions completed, partially completed or deferred, and the reasons for any shortfall.
- Funding allocated and spent, staff capacity and the continuity of regional delivery.
- Evidence of outcomes, including protected sites, treatment follow-up, reinfestation and changes in distribution.
- The operation and membership of the State Buffel Grass Taskforce and arrangements for interagency coordination.
- The review process, consultation undertaken and timetable for publishing a successor strategy.

PPSA contends that a renewed strategy should preserve differentiated management objectives. It should distinguish prevention and eradication of new incursions in vulnerable landscapes from containment, asset protection and integrated management in established areas. It should expressly recognise pastoral areas where buffel grass is valued and well managed, and avoid imposing blanket eradication objectives on those areas.

PPSA recommends meaningful participation by primary producer organisations and pastoral managers in the review, alongside Aboriginal land managers, conservation interests, landscape boards and infrastructure agencies. Operational knowledge should inform treatment priorities, feasible timeframes and the evaluation of costs and benefits.

Practical delivery priorities

PPSA reiterates its support for strategically located truck and machinery washdown facilities along major transport routes. Investment should include an assessment of location, access, maintenance, waste handling and operating responsibility so facilities provide a usable preventative measure rather than infrastructure without ongoing support.

Other priorities include coordinated corridor treatment, accessible identification and hygiene guidance, rapid support for new incursions, and repeated surveillance after treatment. A renewed strategy should specify who delivers each action, the resources available and how success will be measured. Reporting should assess enduring outcomes rather than relying solely on hectares treated or expenditure.

> **d) current legislation, policy and governance framework for the management of buffel grass in South Australia, including coordination between relevant stakeholders, research and monitoring, mapping, community awareness and early interventions;**

Buffel grass is already declared under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* throughout the whole of the State of South Australia. The published Declared Plant Policy provides regional management objectives and differentiated control arrangements. [3]

PPSA continues to support a targeted State framework and considers that the inquiry should first test its implementation, coordination and resourcing before recommending additional obligations.

The Committee should distinguish shortcomings in legal powers from shortcomings in delivery. Where agencies identify a regulatory gap, they should explain the practical problem, why existing powers cannot address it, and the expected benefits and costs of the proposed change. Any additional requirements should be developed through consultation and an assessment of impacts on grazing businesses.

Pastoral managers need clear guidance on how weed management expectations interact with grazing practices and pastoral lease responsibilities. Future policy should recognise integrated management and avoid uncertainty about the continued use of established pasture where it is valued and well managed. Regional implementation should remain consistent with applicable law.

PPSA recommends a published allocation of responsibilities across PIRSA, DEW, landscape boards, transport agencies and other public land managers. Shared mapping, coordinated seasonal work programs and clear arrangements for reporting new incursions would help prevent gaps between jurisdictions or tenures.

National coordination and consultation

The July 2026 National Established Weed Priorities (NEWP) update reports that the National Biosecurity Committee was unable to reach consensus, and deferred a decision on buffel grass pending further work, with working-group advice due by December 2026. It also clarifies that NEWP prioritisation, including the WoNS label, does not itself create landholder obligations: regulatory decisions remain with states and territories. [4]

PPSA supports the principle identified in the national process: reduce harmful impacts where they occur while safeguarding grazing systems that value buffel grass. Further consultation should examine how that principle will be applied in practice, with pastoral and cattle industry participation from the outset.

PPSA's concerns about national listing therefore relate to potential subsequent policy choices and management programs, rather than an assertion that listing automatically changes South Australian law. Before any change in position is sought from industry, governments should explain the proposed scope, safeguards for beneficial grazing uses, expected outcomes and funding arrangements.

National cooperation can assist shared research and coordination. Any proposal for biological control requires particular scrutiny of consequences for valued pasture across jurisdictional boundaries. PPSA's concern is that a treatment intended for one landscape could adversely affect grazing elsewhere. National prioritisation should not be treated as approval of any particular control method.

e) any other related matter.

A key question is whether the responsible agencies and delivery partners have sufficient resources to implement the proposed intervention, regardless of whether buffel grass is given national priority status or listed as a WoNS. The NEWP guidance confirms that priority status does not guarantee implementation funding. [3]

The Committee should seek a costed delivery program identifying existing commitments, gaps and the additional resources required. Funding should cover local surveillance, treatment and follow-up, regional coordination, trained staff, contractor capacity and preventative infrastructure. Remote operations and seasonal treatment windows should be reflected in realistic budgets and delivery schedules.

PPSA favours sustained funding tied to agreed outcomes. Public agencies should resource their responsibilities on public land and infrastructure corridors, rather than relying on adjoining landholders to absorb gaps in delivery. Cost-sharing proposals should be transparent, proportionate and developed with those expected to contribute.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE

PPSA's central request is for a renewed, accountable and adequately resourced State response that directs effort to demonstrated harm while preserving the economic value of buffel grass in pastoral systems where it is accepted and well managed.

PPSA recommends that the Committee:

1. **Seek a public account of implementation of the 2019–2024 strategy, the status of its review and governance arrangements since its stated period ended.**
2. **Recommend a funded successor State strategy, developed with primary producers, pastoral managers, Aboriginal land managers and other affected stakeholders.**
3. **Retain a differentiated management approach that protects valued and well managed pastoral grazing systems from blanket eradication programs and additional restrictions that undermine their beneficial use.**
4. **Prioritise prevention and coordinated control in cropping districts, uninfested vulnerable areas, significant environmental and cultural sites, and key dispersal corridors.**
5. **Support investment in practical hygiene infrastructure, early intervention and sustained follow-up, with clear responsibilities for public agencies and infrastructure managers.**
6. **Require evidence of the need, benefits and costs of any proposed regulatory change, together with safeguards for grazing systems in any national management response.**
7. **Assess agency capacity and recommend sustained implementation funding, regardless of any decision on national listing, with transparent reporting on outcomes.**

References

[1] Biosecurity SA (2019) South Australia Buffel Grass Strategic Plan 2019-2024. (Government of South Australia).

[2] PPSA letter to Tony Fox, Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, 25 March 2025, outlining PPSA's position on the proposed WoNS listing.

[3] PIRSA, Declared Plant Policy for buffel grass, including regional implementation and review provisions. https://pir.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/234548/buffel_grass_policy.pdf

[4] Weeds Australia, National Established Weed Priorities, July 2026 outcomes and buffel grass update. https://weeds.org.au/national-established-weed-priorities-newp/

ENDS.