

Status Report for *Kunzea ericoides* at Gowrie Park

May, 2013

Background

Kunzea ericoides was first reported at Gowrie Park by Rivercare member, Clive Bott in 2012, with this identification confirmed by Matt Baker from Tasmanian Herbarium in March 2013. The plant is present in the former township area of Gowrie Park, alongside Spanish Heath, Montpellier Broom and various other weeds. This report has been produced for Mt. Roland Rivercare, with the aim of better understanding the distribution and possible management of *Kunzea* at Gowrie Park.

Kunzea ericoides – a weed?

Kunzea ericoides is a plant native to the Australian mainland and New Zealand, but is not found naturally in Tasmania. In recent years, it has been identified as a garden escapee in Tasmania, at various locations. In appearance, to a casual observation it is similar to *Leptospermum scoparium* (tea tree), and visually 'fits in' with native plants at Gowrie Park. *Kunzea* flowers in January and February, with very fine seed present from April or thereabouts.

Kunzea spreads in a similar manner to Spanish Heath, though at Gowrie Park, *Kunzea* is perhaps even more invasive and mobile than Spanish heath. It appears to be highly invasive, and capable of establishing mono-cultures in disturbed areas. It also appears to have the potential to dramatically alter the composition of native vegetation in areas where it is present.

Kunzea ericoides is regarded as an invasive weed, and is actively managed, in Victoria and ACT, where it has been observed to rapidly colonize disturbed areas.

Does this plant require active weed management at Gowrie Park? Probably yes, but this is a point for discussion by land managers.

Distribution

The Gowrie Park area has been surveyed for presence of this plant, and it has been found to be widespread over the 10 ha area to the south of Claude Road in the former township area, including the area known as 'Toptown'. Density of the weed varies throughout this area, but it is widely present, sometimes to a density of 50% canopy cover or greater. *Kunzea ericoides* appears to be rapidly spreading, with many areas of establishing plants, less than 40 cm tall throughout the old township area, and along sides of the road and tracks in Toptown, including O'Neills Road.

With one exception, *Kunzea* does not appear to be present north of Claude Road at Gowrie Park, however this area has not been exhaustively searched.

To this point, Kunzea has been identified at two points outside the weed containment zone for Gowrie Park, most notably in the water catchment area, and these points have been controlled in 2013.

However, in several areas, *Kunzea ericoides* is near to spreading outside the current containment zone, and these hotspots are described below.

Hotspots

1. Around start of Mt. Roland walking tracks, including car park area, O'Neills Road near car park, and start of walking track from O'Neills Road to O'Neills Creek camping area. Kunzea is rapidly spreading in these areas, and the risk of human induced spread is high.



2. A second hotspot is at the Western edge of Gowrie Park, on both north and south sides of Claude Road, adjacent to an area recently subject of fuel reduction actions. The plants on the roadside have been slashed, though spread along the roadside is not apparent, yet.



3. A third hotspot is in the south of Gowrie Park, around the track heading to the water catchment area. Here is a corridor of mature Kunzea plants, on both sides of the track, producing vast amounts of seed. (Picture on following page)



A fourth hotspot is the edge of a track heading south between Toptown and the main town area, starting from 434983 5408437 acc 3m Kunzea is spreading southward along this track.

Control Options

Small plants can be handpulled, though they tend to be strongly rooted, and can snap off, or else create large soil disturbance when pulled. Cut/paint appears to be successful. Spraying has been trialled on site, though at this stage it is too early to evaluate results. Experience from other areas, suggests that *Kunzea* should be susceptible to typical woody weed herbicides.

Control of *Kunzea ericoides* at Gowrie Park is likely to require an integrated approach involving each of the three options listed above.

Recommendations for future management

There is some urgency about the management of *Kunzea* at Gowrie Park. In several areas, the plant is threatening to escape beyond the containment area. Also, in many areas, establishing plants are less than 50cm tall, and just starting to produce seed. At present, these plants would be easily sprayed, however as they grow taller, the job becomes much more time consuming and expensive, and involves much greater herbicide application. A control program to be implemented in spring 2013 appears highly desirable, along with the following actions.

1. Formal risk assessment for *Kunzea ericoides*, at Gowrie Park, and more widely in Tasmania.
2. Ongoing monitoring of *Kunzea* at Gowrie Park, specifically looking for areas where it has spread beyond existing containment lines.
3. Control of *Kunzea* at hotspot locations, as identified above, and any new area where the *Kunzea* is found to be growing outside of existing containment lines.

Control options recommended for hotspots

Hotspot one – around the start of the walking tracks and car park. This area is suited to spraying – most *Kunzea* is growing along roadsides, as a monoculture, less than 50cm tall. Estimated spray time, with quickspray (or equivalent) up to max of one day. Need to liaise with Council here.

Hotspot two – On road verge of Claude Road. Need to liaise with DIER re these works. Best to cut/paint, but could be sprayed. Estimated time for cut/paint is 2 hours.

Hotspot three – Mature *Kunzea* growing either side of track to water catchment area – cut/paint, with possible spray followup. Estimated time for cut/paint 30 – 40 hours.

Hotspot four – At start of track heading south near toptown – cut/paint with possible spray followup – 20 hours cut/paint.

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