

rivals, cheaply.

Rat deserting ship, indeed.

**Manson MacGregor, Amaroo**

### **A significant weed**

Peter Randall (Letters, August 14) is concerned about removal of Cootamundra wattles (*Acacia baileyana*) in the ACT region. His comment about "the local plant police" is unfair and unworthy. A great deal of scientific study has gone into the impacts of *A baileyana* and unfortunately the conclusion is that it is a significant environmental weed in Victoria and the ACT and a relatively important or emerging environmental weed in many other parts of southern Australia.

When grown beyond its relatively restricted natural range it invades intact open woodlands, heathlands, grasslands and dry eucalypt woodlands. It displaces other wattles that are native to these areas and can form dense stands that shade out other native plants. It can also hybridise with other species of wattles, thereby replacing natural populations of these species with unnatural hybrids. Where there are dense stands it does add nitrogen to the soil and increase soil fertility but paradoxically this makes the area less suitable for many plants native to that area and much more suitable to exotic invasive weeds.

Mr Randall's enthusiasm for our nature parks is praiseworthy but he might wish to check the facts before criticising those who devote time and expertise to the study of such matters and the volunteers who work to control this plant for the benefit of the region's native flora.

**David Coutts, Flynn**

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