Weedscan – a community tool for weed identification, reporting and management

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Summary

WeedScan, a website and smartphone app, has been recently developed for identifying, reporting and managing priority weeds in Australia. With the funding support from the National Landcare program via the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, NSW Department of Primary Industries, CSIRO and other state partners have joined forces to develop this world first community tool to engage citizen science to not only identify weeds without the need of advanced taxonomic skills, but also to automatically notify control authorities for subsequent management actions. The project team has made significant progress over the last three years, including the nominations of 325 priority weed species from the states and territories, the collection and curation of more than 80,000 quality weed photos, machine learning, and the development of the WeedScan website and app. In the meantime, a large-scale user consultation across Australia was conducted in 2022 to identify desired functionalities for inclusion in WeedScan.

WeedScan is different to many generic plant ID app, such as such as PlantSnap, Pl@ntNet PictureThis and iNaturalist. It is much more than just an ID tool. WeedScan has the additional capabilities to record priority weeds, instantly notify local and state weed authorities if a high priority weed is recorded in the region, and link to local management information. Focused groups can be created in WeedScan to share records. Users can also browse the public records in WeedScan by local government areas, states and territories across Australia. The official launch of WeedScan is expected in August 2023, with approximately 300 priority weed species properly trained through machine learning. It will be available in app stores for both Android and iOS. Public adoption of WeedScan will allow more eyes on the ground, ensuring the early detection of new and emerging weeds in Australia and minimising future biosecurity threats due to weeds.

**Keywords:** Invasive weeds, machine learning, artificial intelligence, machine learning