

Priority Weeds Management Policy

Date Adopted: 27 September 2022

Version: 2.1

Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

1. To ensure that Council is fulfilling its functions as the Local Control Authority in relation to weeds, according to the Biosecurity Act 2015.
2. To ensure that Council is fulfilling its biosecurity duty in relation to weeds, according to the Biosecurity Act 2015.
3. To provide clear guidelines and maintain a consistent approach in the management and control of priority weeds on Council owned and managed land.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all Council owned and managed land (including all bodies of water on Council owned and managed land) within the Maitland Local Government Area.

Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to deliver a consistent approach to the management of priority weeds found on Council land in the Maitland Local Government Area. Implementation of this policy will minimise the impact of weeds on the local environment, community and economy.

1. Weeds management prioritisation

The Hunter Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan (HRSWMP) was developed to guide investment in weed management across the Hunter region and provide a consistent basis for regional weed management planning and implementation. Council will prioritise its management of weed species in accordance with the HRSWMP and the *Biosecurity Act 2015* that underpins the plan.

1.1 Weed risk assessments

To ensure that limited resources are used to their best effect, and that management of weeds is commensurate with the risk posed by each species, risk assessments have been undertaken on weed species across the state and within the Hunter region by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the Hunter Regional Weeds Committee (HRWC) respectively. The state and regional weed risk assessment process culminated in the identification of high-risk weeds and the development of a priority weed list for the Hunter region.

1.2 Priority weed categories

Priority weeds fall into two broad categories: State Priority Weeds and Regional Priority Weeds. These are further divided into sub-categories depending on their presence, distribution, risk, and feasibility of control/prevention. This determines the associated objective for each weed species in the HRSWMP as prevention, eradication, containment and asset protection as outlined below:

State Priority Weeds:

Prevention: These weeds are currently not found in the state, pose significant biosecurity risk and prevention is a reasonably practical objective.

Eradication: These weeds are present in limited distribution and abundance in some parts of the state, and elimination of the biosecurity risk posed by these weeds is a reasonably practical objective.

Containment: These weeds are widely distributed in some parts of the state and while broad scale elimination is not practicable, minimisation of the biosecurity risk posed by these weeds is reasonably practicable.

Asset Protection: These weeds are widely distributed in some areas of the state and as “Weeds of National Significance”, their spread should be minimised to protect priority assets.

Regional Priority Weeds:

Prevention: These weeds are currently not found in the region, pose significant biosecurity risk and prevention is a reasonably practical objective.

Eradication: These weeds are present in limited distribution and abundance in some parts of the region, and elimination of the biosecurity risk posed by these weeds is a reasonably practical objective.

Containment: These weeds are widely distributed in some parts of the state and while broad scale elimination is not practicable, minimisation of the biosecurity risk posed by these weeds is reasonably practicable.

Asset Protection: These weeds are widely distributed in some areas of the region and their spread should be minimised to protect priority assets.

1.3 Biosecurity duty

As a land manager, Council has a duty under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* to prevent, eliminate or minimise any biosecurity risk that weed species on its land may pose. To ensure that this biosecurity duty is being fulfilled, Council must undertake certain activities depending on the weed species and the biosecurity risk posed in each situation. For example, these activities could include eradicating a particular weed species from Council land; mitigating spread of a weed species from Council land; or reducing impacts of weed species on a priority asset.

2. Council owned and managed land

Priority weed control on Council land will be scheduled according to weed species and category, seasonal timing, and resource availability. The existence of new weed incursions, isolated infestations, and weed species posing the greatest biosecurity risk will be given priority over lower risk, existing and widespread weeds. All proposed priority weed control works will be considered by Council to ensure that the chosen method and timing of control is safe, suitable, effective, and environmentally sound.

2.1 Herbicide use

All herbicide use undertaken by Council to control priority weeds will be in accordance with the product label, Safety Data Sheet (SDS), Council's Pesticide Use Notification Plan and Pesticide Use Procedure. A suitable permit will be obtained from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Association (APVMA) if a particular herbicide is required to be used contrary to the label.

2.2 Biological control

Biological controls of priority weeds will be utilised by Council where an appropriate biological agent is available and suitable release site/s can be established. All biological control agent releases will occur in consultation with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

2.3 Manual / mechanical removal

In some instances mechanical or manual removal of weeds will be the most suitable method of management for a particular weed species.

2.4 Council works sites

Where priority weeds are present on a Council work site, Council's Biosecurity & Environmental Operations Advisor should be consulted to determine if there are any special requirements that need to be implemented to minimise or eliminate a biosecurity risk.

3. Weeds inspections

Inspections for weeds will be carried out in accordance with the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and Council's Weeds Inspection and Enforcement Procedure. Council will schedule weeds inspections on its own land according to priority, seasonal timing, and resource availability. The threat or existence of new weed incursions, isolated infestations, and weed species posing the greatest biosecurity risk will be given priority over lower risk, existing and widespread weeds.

4. Data reporting

All priority weeds inspections and control undertaken by Council will be recorded and mapped using GIS mapping software. This data will be provided to NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to be collated within the Biosecurity Information System (BIS). For Council as a local control authority, providing this data is a requirement of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and is directly linked to the NSW Weeds Action Program (WAP) funding that is received by Council.

5. Grant funding

Grant funding for the control of priority weeds will be sought by Council when suitable opportunities for such projects arise.

6. Staff training

Council will support the provision of training to its staff involved in priority weeds management, inspections and enforcement. Council will ensure that these staff remain up to date with the skills and knowledge required to achieve the objectives of this policy and the requirements of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

Policy Definitions

Priority Weed: A weed that has been identified as a priority on a state and/or regional level in NSW and as a result may have a duty, measure, limitation or requirement associated with its control, movement, management or sale under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

New Weed Incursion: A weed that has not previously been recorded to occur or be present in a particular area.

Local Control Authority: A council, county council or joint organisation which is responsible for the weed control functions of a particular area under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* as per section 370 of the Act.

Biosecurity Duty: Any person who deals with biosecurity matter or a carrier and who knows, or ought reasonably to know, the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed by the biosecurity matter, carrier or dealing has a biosecurity duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the biosecurity risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised.

Biosecurity Risk: The risk of a biosecurity impact occurring.

Biosecurity Impact: An adverse effect on the economy, the environment or the community that arises, or has the potential to arise, from biosecurity matter (in this case weeds), as per section 13 of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

Policy Administration

Business Group:	City Services
Responsible officer:	Manager Works
Council reference:	Council Meeting 27 September 2022 – Item 11.3
Policy review date:	Three (3) years from date of adoption
File number:	99/3/3
Relevant legislation	Biosecurity Act 2015
Related documents	Weeds Inspection and Enforcement Procedure Pesticide Use Procedure Pesticide Use Notification Plan

Policy History

VERSION	DATE APPROVED	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES
1.0	27 August 2019	Policy rescinded
2.0	27 September 2022	Policy updated
2.1	-	Updated to new branding and alignment to organisation structure. No change to content.