



**NEW ENGLAND TABLELANDS  
NOXIOUS PLANTS COUNTY  
COUNCIL**

*Trading as:*

**NEW ENGLAND WEEDS  
AUTHORITY**

**2009/2010 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# **SECTION 1**

**OUR VISION, MISSION AND  
COMMITMENT**  
**FOREWORD**  
**AREA DETAILS**  
**ELECTED DELEGATES**  
**CONTACT DETAILS**  
**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE.**

## **OUR VISION, MISSION AND COMMITMENT**

### **Our Vision**

To be a high performing and respected Noxious Weeds Authority.

### **Our Mission**

To excel in satisfying the requirements of the constituent member councils.

### **Our Commitment**

- To provide advice that reflects contemporary standards for integrated weed management.
- To provide a prompt, comprehensive and courteous weed advisory and identification service.
- To acknowledge the need to balance environmental and economic values in achieving long term weed control
- To be a leading and influential contributor in regional weed management.

## **FOREWORD**

During the reporting period the New England Weeds Authority (NEWA) has again been proactive in approaching and meeting the challenges of weed control and management issues in the Northern Inland region.

The implementation of the Weed Tracer program and the upskilling of staff in electronic recording and mapping of weeds in the region have proved to be very beneficial and efficient.

The extensive campaign on Privet in the last twelve months has seen a marked improvement in the eradication and control of this serious peri-urban weed, particularly around the Armidale and Uralla townships.

Concerted efforts have continued in relation to Chilean Needle Grass and Serrated Tussock, both of which pose a significant threat to the agricultural viability of the area. An extensive control program has been supplemented by planned extension and education programs which have been well received by landholders.

Our roadside control program remained extremely effective again over the last twelve months due in the main to the dedication of staff, which is one of the reasons why NEWA is so highly regarded throughout the region.

NEWA works closely with other like Authorities including the National Parks & Wildlife Service, the Livestock Health & Pest Authority as well as the three Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's) covering our region. NEWA through its close working relationships with the CMA's and with a reputation for good management, as well as getting the job done, has been able to secure some \$230,000, in funds from the Border Rivers Gwyder CMA, for the first year of a three year regional project to reduce Weeds of National Significance including Serrated Tussock, Gorse Chilean Needle Grass and Bridal Creeper. In addition \$40,000 has been received from the Northern Rivers CMA for environmental weeds, Coolati Grass control and the innovative fitout of slashers with "blower fans" to assist in the prevention of the spread of invasive weed species.

The Authority has again seen some changes in staff with Mr. Josh Biddle replacing Mr. Scott Kermode as the Walcha area District Weeds Officer and Ms Rachel Betts replacing Mr. Michael Warner in the Armidale area. Both of these officers have developed well and have benefited from additional training and the experience of senior officers. My appreciation is extended to these officers for their hard work, dedication, professional and courteous approach to their many duties.

During the past year there have been 2 significant reviews that will impact on the activities of NEWA well into the future.

Firstly, was the initiative in late 2009 announced by the NSW Government to reduce the impact of weeds under the "NSW Invasive Species Plan 2008-2015" through the NSW Weeds Action Program. This Program replaces a range of Noxious Weed Grant Programs previously funded by the Government. In response to this the Northern Inlands Weeds Advisory Committee

(NIWAC), with NEWA as the lead agency, submitted the Regional Weeds Action Program application to Industry & Investment NSW in May 2010. NEWA then took the initiative on behalf of NIWAC to further this application by developing the NIWAC Weed Action Business Plan 2010-2015 for the region's member Councils and Authorities.

Secondly was the Kibble Review into the New England Strategic Alliance of Councils which took place in the first six months of 2010 and resulted in the Minister for Local Government, the Hon Barbara Perry MP accepting the recommendations of the Review that Armidale Dumaresq Council, Guyra Shire Council and Uralla Shire Council be amalgamated, with Walcha Council not being affected by the proposal. Most pleasing was the fact that the Kibble Review recommended that there be no changes made to the management of noxious weeds in the area, leaving NEWA to continue to deliver this function.

Whilst the outcome of the amalgamation proposal is yet to be finalized, NEWA looks forward to continuing its important role within the Northern Inland region.

In conclusion I would like to express my gratitude to Councillors and staff for their valued contributions and efforts throughout the year.

Councillor Maria Woods  
Chair,  
New England Weeds Authority.

## AREA DETAILS



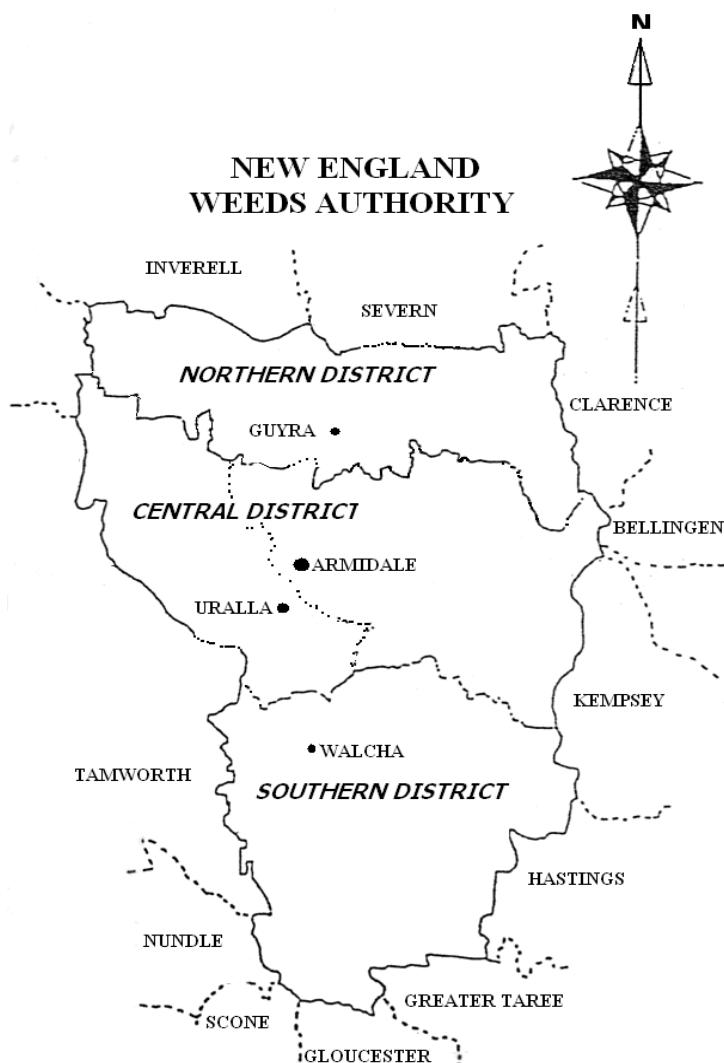
Authority Area: 18223 sq kms

Length of Roads: 4129 kms

Number of Rural Properties: 4165

Authority Population: 38,305

Climatic conditions in the area are generally affected by high altitudes of over 1000 metres. Rainfall is predominately summer.



## CHAIRMAN AND DELEGATES

### ELECTED DELEGATES FROM CONSTITUENT MEMBER COUNCILS:

**Authority Chair:** Councillor Maria Woods

**Deputy Chair:** Councillor Mark Dusing

**\* ARMIDALE DUMARESQ COUNCIL:** Councillor Herman Beyersdorf  
Councillor Bruce Whan

**\* GUYRA COUNCIL:** Councillor Bruce Howlett

**\* URALLA COUNCIL:** Councillor Mark Dusing

**\* WALCHA COUNCIL:** Councillor Maria Woods

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

### **HEAD OFFICE:**

Old Council Building  
129 Rusden Street  
ARMIDALE

Telephone: (02) 6770 3602  
Facsimile: (02) 6771 1893  
Email: newa@newa.nsw.gov.au

### **CORRESPONDENCE TO BE ADDRESSED:**

General Manager  
P O Box 881  
ARMIDALE NSW 2350

### **Acting General Manager:**

Mr James Browning

### **Senior Weeds Officers:**

Mr Kevin Waters

Mr James Browning

### **Weeds Officers:**

Mr Robert Williams  
Based at the Guyra District Office  
C/o Guyra Shire Council  
Bradley Street,  
GUYRA NSW 2365  
Telephone: (02) 6779 1577

Mr Scott Kermode  
Based at the Walcha District Office  
C/o Walcha Council  
Hamilton Street,  
WALCHA NSW 2354  
Telephone: (02) 6774 2595

Miss Rachel Betts  
Mr Mathew Benham  
Based at the Armidale Head Office

## **OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS:**

**AUDIT**  
**BANKERS**  
**LEGAL**

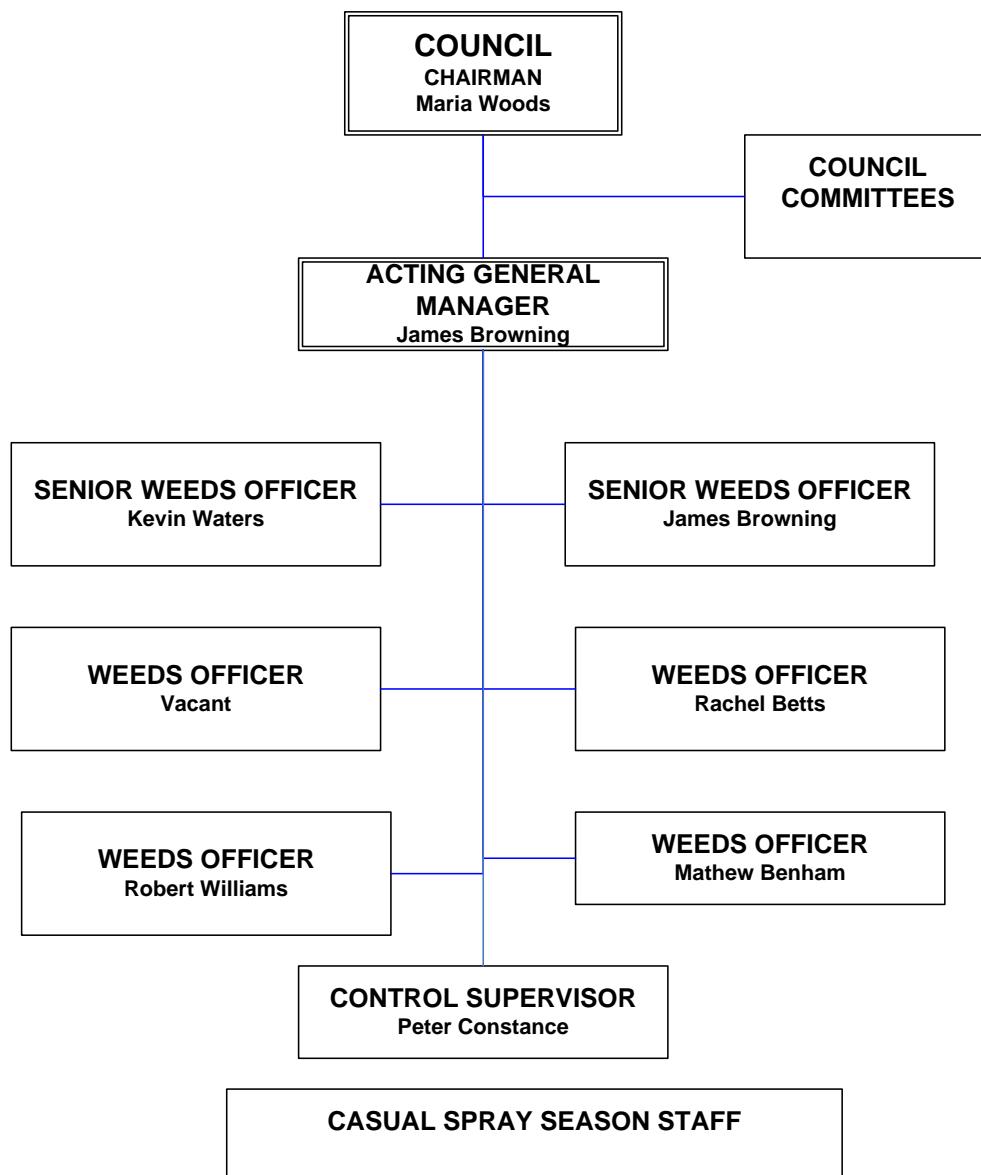
Forsyths, Armidale.  
Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Armidale Branch  
Lindsay, Taylor Lawyers

## STAFFING, ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



### NEW ENGLAND WEEDS AUTHORITY

MARCH 2010



# **SECTION 2**

## **ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT REPORT**

## **ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT REPORT**

### **General**

#### **Staffing**

The staffing situation as it applied during the report year was:

Mr James Browning was appointed to the position of Acting General Manager, effective 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010 with Wayne Deer being appointed as General Manager on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

Scott Kermode resigned as Weeds Officer at Walcha in December 2010 and Josh Biddle was appointed to the position in June 2010

Rachel Betts was appointed as Weeds officer based in Armidale in July 2009

Robert Williams continued as Weeds Officer at Guyra.

Mathew Benham continued as Weeds Officer based at Armidale

James Browning is Senior Weeds Officer-Armidale Dumaresq, as well as *Supervisor Inspections/Operations* for the entire NEWA area.

Kevin Waters is Senior Weeds Officer

Peter Constance continued in the position of Weed Control Officer.

### **State of the Environment Report**

Information has been supplied to constituent member council's and information covering the Authority appears in their reports.

### **Condition of Public Works**

This Authority has no public works under its control.

### **Elected Members**

The Authority's Council was comprised of five Councillors, two delegates representing the constituent member Armidale Dumaresq Council and one delegate each representing the constituent members Guyra Shire Council, Uralla Shire Council and Walcha Council.

The Chairman was paid an allowance in accordance with the minimum amounts determined by the Local Government Remuneration Tribunal for County Councils in Category S3. This amount was \$4000, while all Councillors received the Members fee of \$1,500. A travelling allowance was also paid to attend meetings totalling \$1,131 conference fees and reasonable out of pocket expenses totalling \$2,428.72. Total payments for the year amounted to \$14,710.

## **Senior Staff**

The Authority employed only one senior staff member, being the statutory position of Acting General Manager, on a part-time basis. Remuneration amounted to \$23,984.14 that included the compulsory superannuation levy.

## **Major Contracts Awarded**

No contracts of material substance were awarded during the year.

## **Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Activities**

The Authority's responsibility under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 only applies to the control of Noxious Weeds on Public Land.

## **Multi-Cultural Services**

The Authority conducts no activities in relation to multi-cultural activities.

## **Private Works**

During the report year where the owners of private land requested NEWA to spray noxious weeds on their behalf, the Authority charged a labour rate of \$41.80 (GST inc.) per hour, a plant rate of \$38.50 (GST inc.) per hour and plant-transport only \$18.70 (GST inc.) per hour, with herbicides being at cost plus 50%. In cases of hardship, especially relating to pensioners on small lots, the Authority may waive/reduce the charge.

Contract work on private land in the NEWA area was carried out on a range of Noxious Weeds to the value of \$120,966.

This Authority continued with this practice and further developed the undertaking of contract work on behalf of its constituent members to control weeds and other vegetation growth near roadside furniture, as part of their responsibilities to provide safe driving conditions for motorists. The value of this work amounted to \$57,560.

NEWA continued to play a significant role in Regional weed management by undertaking \$9,393 worth of general weed control work for Tamworth Regional Council and \$2,985 for Clarence Valley Council.

Weed Control Projects for the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority was carried out in the New England Weeds Authority region to the value of \$40,000.

The Authority is project manager on behalf of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee for a Weeds of National Significance project for the Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority to the value of \$230,000 over at three year period.

## **Contributions and Donations**

No contributions or donations made.

## **Human Resource Activities and Implementation of Council's EEO Plan**

The principal activities for NEWA staff centered on the inspection of private land and Council controlled lands and on the physical weed control program, together with the associated administration duties. NEWA staff were involved in education and extension activities at a range of locations and in the media. Regular staff meetings were held with all permanent staff in attendance to address the issue of consistency and of the routine activities performed throughout NEWA's region.

The New England Weeds Authority is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and ensures that the provisions contained in its adopted policy, such as those pertaining to recruitment, training and personal development are implemented. It is a matter of record that NEWA engages new staff purely on the basis of merit using a comprehensive appraisal system.

All permanent staff were members of NEWA's Occupational Health and Safety Committee. As mentioned above, regular staff meetings were held at least every three months at which OH&S policy and safety procedures are discussed and reviewed.

## **Companies, Partnerships, Cooperatives and Joint Ventures**

The Authority belongs to the New England Local Government group of councils and the Local Government. 'B' Division group, and was a member of the New England Strategic Alliance of Councils.

NEWA continued to be an active member of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee (NIWAC), through which it participates in Group Weed Management Plans and some funding opportunities. In addition, NEWA hosts the position of the NIWAC coordinator, providing office space and material support for the position as well as acting as the organisations honorary banker. In the 2010/2011 year NEWA will act as lead organisation for the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee for the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program Funding.

Constituent member Councils provided invaluable support to the Authority through the provision of office space at Guyra and Walcha and access to information sources. Technical and office support was also provided through the shared services facility of the Strategic Alliance of

Councils. Service schedules to vehicles, other than warranty work, together with some repairs, were carried out in constituent Council's workshops wherever and whenever possible.

Public Liability Insurance is held with Statewide Mutual and Workers Compensation Insurance is held with StateCover.

## **Other Information**

### **Rates and Charges Written Off:**

NEWA does not impose a rate levy. No charges have been written off.

### **Overseas Visits**

Nil

### **Children's Services**

Nil

### **Equity of Services**

This Authority ensures that equity of service provision is maintained throughout its region in respect to inspections and the physical weed control program. A Weed Officer is assigned to each of the constituent member Council areas and is responsible for all property inspections. Two District Offices are maintained, one at Guyra and one at Walcha. Weed control teams with appropriate training and equipment are deployed throughout the region to conduct the control program. As a consequence, flexibility is maintained across the region to cater for specific weed demand when the need arises.

### **Business Activities**

This Authority does not operate any other business activities.

### **Freedom of Information**

No requests were made for access to Authority records during the year. Since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act, this Authority has not received a request.

# SECTION 3

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REVIEW OF PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY**

## **REVIEW OF PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY 2009/10**

### **Purpose**

This report provides a summary of the New England Weeds Authority's principal activity, which is primarily to meet the objectives of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993.

The three programs—inspections, operations and administration—continue to have distinctly separate funding arrangements. In the inspection and operations program, obligations must be met for Regional Weed Management Plans, which are provided with minimal external funding. Local Weed Management Plans have little or no external funding provided.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Highlights for 2009/2010**

The objectives of the 2009/10 Management Plan were achieved.

The staff situation stabilised somewhat during the report year although one member of staff resigning in November with a Senior Weeds Officer filling the position until the position was filled in June 2010.

A significant investment continues to be made in relation to training because of the number of new staff employed, which also cost in terms of the allocation of time diverted to training by other permanent staff.

The Authority overcame the loss of one staff member and emerged at the end of the year achieving the forecasts made in its plan for the year in respect to the inspectorial and operational targets.

Due diligence was paid to complaints, special requests for assistance and priority inspections together with maintaining an active shop front facility at the Head Office in Armidale.

The Authority continued its active involvement in regional weed management and cooperation through its membership of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee (NIWAC). NEWA's current Chairperson continued to hold the position of Chairperson of NIWAC. Members of staff periodically attended coastal Weed Advisory Committee meetings.

NEWA continued to host the position of NIWAC Coordinator by providing office accommodation and administrative support.

- On a more local level NEWA continued to work closely with the New England Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LH&PA) to ensure that at an operational level, weed control efforts were complementary and avoided duplication. Staff liaised regularly throughout the report year on

routine issues. NEWA undertook contract weed control work on behalf of NE LH&PA to the value of \$5,462.

- NEWA continued its close association with the Landcare and Catchment Management Authority (CMA) networks. Extensive environmental weed control work to the value of \$23,000 was carried out on roadsides in the county area.

The Privet control campaign continued this year with re inspections being carried out in Armidale City and a programmed survey carried out in Uralla. As a result 166 Inspection reports were issued to landowners that had Privet identified on their property.

The Chairperson's annual tours of inspection were carried out during the growing season. The staff varied the route as much as possible to show Councillors as broad a range of issues as possible.

NEWA staff continued to investigate better ways of using technology to record and manage the inspection process. The Weed tracer program continues to be developed with assistance from Namoi CMA.

## Inspection Program – 2009/10

Objective: *“To inspect all properties and appropriate businesses in the Authority’s area at least once each triennium on a planned basis, in order to monitor known infestations and detect new weed incursions”.*

### Achievements

- Number of ground inspections: 1893
- Number of properties inspected from the air: 0
- Number of programmed surveys: 1

### Other Specific Inspections:

- Aquaria/pet shops: 2
- Nurseries: 10
- Other businesses: 5
- Special searches: 0
- LH&PA 6
- National Parks 5
- Dept of Lands 4
- Railway Lines 3

This year was the second year of the Authority's seventh inspection triennium (one third of the Authority's area is inspected each year). This revolving inspection program ensures each property is inspected at least once every three years, allowing any new weed incursions to be detected at an early stage of establishment and the weed status of the property to be discussed with the landholder.

The strategy/action plan for 2009/2010, as forecast at the beginning of the year, was achieved. New staff have settled in and have obtained the necessary skills to complete the inspection program in an effective manner. All inspections were conducted by ground. A priority was given to the inspection of properties with abnormal weed problems and those about which NEWA had received complaints.

In the main landholders were supportive of the objectives of maintaining a high standard of weed control on their properties and did so without intervention from this Authority. Avenues of regulatory response were followed during the year in the event that it became necessary. The system of Inspection Reports, 148 issued in the report year, used by NEWA continues to be effective in achieving acceptable control responses from land managers. These are followed up to ensure compliance. The urban programmed survey for Privet saw 166 Inspection Reports issued as a result.

The contemporary information generated by the regular systematic inspection program across the NEWA region facilitated the issue of sixty two Section 64 Certificates.

The high standard of noxious weed control on public and private land across the Authority's area has been maintained during the report year. Good seasonal conditions in the spring saw healthy germinations of all weeds that landowners were prepared for. The continued good spring germinations will see weeds such as Serrated Tussock become evident in the coming year as seedling emerge that will require a concentrated effort in the coming season.

#### Weed Incidence:

##### **Blackberry:**

**Private Property:** Blackberry continues to be a widespread and persistent weed on private land that requires a regular and systematic approach to control. Most rural property managers recognise the risks associated with blackberry and have annual spray programs in place which maintain their land in a very satisfactory condition. Urban land is generally in good order.

**Roadsides:** All roads in the NEWA area were treated in the 2009/10 season. All roads are at a maintenance level. The abundant season favoured Blackberry and small seedlings were in plentiful numbers.

##### **St John's Wort:**

**Private Property:** St John's Wort incidence and density was standard in all known areas. Gains were made on some private land where owners improved their overall management strategies, ranging from improved grazing techniques to herbicide treatment of boundaries. This should produce positive results well into the future. The risk of spread onto neighbouring land from these infested properties was reduced significantly.

**Roadsides:** A lower than usual incidence was discovered on roadsides in the 2009/10 season due to extreme weather conditions restricting growth patterns.

All infestations were treated.

##### **Nodding Thistle:**

**Private Property:** Infestation levels were about the same as those in previous years. Landholders skilled in managing Nodding Thistle responded to the rise in plant numbers and density very well

considering the challenges of the good spring. By contrast, those who had significant infestations without the necessary skills or motivation to deal with the situation needed and did receive attention from NEWA Officers.

**Roadsides:** Infestations on roadsides are light and often associated with nearby infested private land. All known infestations of Nodding Thistle on roadsides were treated when found.

#### **Serrated Tussock:**

**Private Property:** Serrated Tussock infestations remained primarily confined to the Central District with the smaller satellite infestations still occurring in both the Northern and Southern Districts of the NEWA area. Many landholders are very committed to control and are making a commendable effort. Inspections are carried out in these areas to ensure compliance.

**Roadsides:** Only light infestations are found on roadsides, almost all of which are in the same localities where there are nearby private properties infested. All known infestations have been controlled either by direct removal or by spraying. Some single plants in suitable locations on roadsides have been used as identification sites for the general public with signage erected.

#### **African Lovegrass:**

**Private Property:** African Lovegrass continues to consolidate its position on private property in sandy granite soil types where control is not practiced particularly in ‘Core Areas’. On properties where control is carried out, the position is more or less stable. NEWA Weeds Officers continued to raise awareness of African Lovegrass at field days and when conducting inspections.

**Roadsides:** Once again, the incidence of African Lovegrass on roadsides increased particularly on lighter soils. The Authority abides by our ‘Best Management Practice Guide’ for African Lovegrass, incorporating designated ‘Core Infestation’ areas. This ensures that the Authority will continue to promote a proactive approach to reducing the spread of this weed, but will not control African Lovegrass on land under its control in the designated ‘Core’ areas. Control is carried out in ‘Non Core Areas’ or in response to public demand.

#### **Chilean Needle Grass:**

**Private Property:** Chilean Needle Grass management continues to be a challenge especially in the more fertile soil types with higher rainfall in the Central and Northern Districts. The provision of boundary buffer zones has been useful in restricting the movement of Chilean Needle grass off heavily infested properties. Dealing with the core infestations in such cases has proven not to be possible. Sound property hygiene practices are promoted by NEWA as a way of reducing the likelihood of importation or spread of CNG.

**Roadsides:** Chilean Needle Grass is of low incidence on Council controlled land, although it is spread throughout many of the roads in the Northern District of the Authority’s area. Infestations in and close to Armidale are treated each season in an attempt to prevent spread to rural areas. Parks/playgrounds are treated each season following liaison with relevant staff from the individual constituent councils.

### **Giant Parramatta Grass:**

**Private Property:** Giant Parramatta Grass continues to be confined basically to the Macleay Valley region of the Authority's area. Virtually no change has occurred in distribution in or from that area. Infestations range from scattered low density to very widespread and heavy. NEWA officers promoted and insisted on the maintenance of buffer zones around the boundaries of infested properties to reduce the risk of spread. Very little is found on private property up on the Tablelands.

**Roadsides:** Infestations on roadsides are light and scattered. This is undoubtedly attributable to the concerted effort this Authority has made toward control over many years. The main objective has been to prevent the roads acting as a conduit for further spread.

The control program for 2009/10 consisted of one treatment in December and a follow up one in January/February of a 20 metre buffer zone each side of the Armidale-Kempsey road reserve in the Macleay River area which extended for 23 kilometres.

### **Privet:**

**Private Property:** Privet is most heavily concentrated in the Armidale City area although it does occur in each of the town areas throughout the NEWA region. An inspection program was in place to further reduce infestation levels.

**Roadsides and Public areas:** Privet roadside control programs are in place and work continues on Privet infestations in urban areas.

**Bridal Creeper:** More Bridal Creeper was found and treated throughout the year particularly in the Armidale area. This is largely attributable to an increased awareness and improved identification skills within the Authority.

### **Use of Enforcement Procedures for Noxious Weed Control**

Inspection Reports and/or Weed Control Reports continue to be an effective management tool to formally advise owners of inspections indicate the level of work required and confirm details of oral arrangements. These reports are issued to encourage landholders to initiate weed control or continue with work already commenced. Occasionally recipients are advised that in the event of no control action being undertaken an Infringement Notice may be issued. Where necessary they can then be backed up by an individual management plan for land managers who may need specialist support from the Authority's weeds officers.

It was not found necessary to issue any Weed Control Notices under Section 18 of the Noxious Weeds Act.

• Section 18 Notices:	0
• Section 20 Entries:	0
• Successful Prosecutions:	0
• Unsuccessful Prosecutions:	0
• Penalty Notices:	0
• NEWA Inspection/Control Reports:	148
• Programmed survey, Inspection Reports/ Privet	166

## Weed Recording, Mapping and Reporting Activities

All property inspections are supported by an individual property file, on which is recorded the levels of infestation and the number of hectares infested with the noxious weeds observed on the property during that inspection. The Weed tracer program is becoming fully operational in 2009/10 and property details and inspections will be recorded electronically.

Mapping has started this season using weed tracer technology with Serrated tussock and Coolatai Grass being mapped.

Monthly inspection figures are submitted to the General Manager for monitoring against the Authority's Management Plan. These figures are also used to support the Regional Weed Plan reports.

## Communication, Education, Extension and Trials

The Authority continued to place a high value on activities in this area. The head office situated in Armidale is staffed most of the time and provides excellent access for the public. The number of people visiting the office seeking advice continues to grow. The three year rolling inspection program facilitates interaction with all landholders throughout the area.

Field days continue to be an important method of highlighting specific noxious weeds to special interest groups. During this period, Authority staff were involved in the following:

### August

- Staff attended Ag Quip and manned weeds display
- Mobile Serrated Tussock Education Stand

### September

- Serrated Tussock field day, Walcha with NSW DPI District Agronomist
- Weeds Talk to UNE students
- Mobile Serrated Tussock Education Stand
- Weeds Stand, UNE small farms field day
- Weeds Stand, Sustainable Living Expo, Armidale
- Serrated Tussock Presentation, Narrabri Weeds Conference

### October

- Mobile Serrated Tussock Education Stand

### November

- Weeds ID Day, Uralla, Kentucky Hall with DPI District Agronomist
- Weeds ID Day, Armidale Wollomombi with Land Care
- Weeds ID Day, Walcha, Inglebah Hall with DPI District Agronomist

### January

- Weeds Presentation, Herbert Park Landcare

### February

- Weeds ID Day, Guyra, Ebor with DPI District Agronomist

**March**

- Weeds Stand Armidale Show
- Weeds Stand Walcha Show
- Roadside Weeds Awareness, Walcha Outdoor Staff

**May**

- Weeds Stand at Wool Expo, Armidale with Land Care and CMA's
- Sub Catchment Forum, Weeds section, Uralla

**June**

- Serrated Tussock Herbicide Resistance Forum

Five Serrated Tussock roadside identification sites have been maintained

Weed identification kits have been maintained in Council roadside mowers within the area to assist in reducing the spread of grass weeds in the region..

Handouts and weed information is distributed as part of inspectorial duties.

District weeds officers continue to play a role assisting students in the identification of plants and providing research information. Links with the University of New England continue; not only to assist the Authority with identification of unknown species but by direct involvement with the Facility of Rural Science students in both extension projects and participating in presentations to students.

## **Staff Development**

The following training courses were attended by New England Weeds Authority staff during the year:

- Legal Training Stage 1, 2 and 3
- I&I Grant Training
- Select and Modify Traffic Control Plans
- Design and Inspect Traffic Control Plans
- MERI Training
- Weeds Tracer training
- Chemical Use training
- Recognising water weeds
- First Aid refreshers

## Corporate Planning and Policy Documents

A comprehensive plan for noxious weed control is prepared each season. District weeds officers are responsible for requesting resources to satisfy the Authority's overall aims and objectives taking into account seasonal priorities as set by the Council members.

Policy and procedure documents are reviewed regularly.

Council has endorsed the following Plans:

- **New England Weeds Authority Management Plan,**
- **State Weed Strategies/Plan:** Serrated Tussock. (District Weeds Officer James Browning is a member of the National Serrated Tussock Working Group)
- **Regional Weed Strategies/Plans:** Chilean Needle Grass, Giant Parramatta Grass, Gorse, Serrated Tussock, St John's Wort, Blackberry, Nodding Thistle.
- **Local Weed Strategies** (list): African Lovegrass, Saffron Thistle.
- **Local Procedural Policies Updates** (list): OH&S, Safe Working Procedures, Accident and Injury Management, Disciplinary Procedures, Grievances/Disputes, Safety, Leave Provisions.

## Cooperation and Regional Planning

This Authority is actively involved with the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee (NIWAC) and is continuing to auspice the part-time Regional Plan Coordinator Position. Staff have also participated in working groups organised by the regional Weed Plan Coordinator to update/develop Regional Weed Plans.

Other regional activities include a close association with the local Catchment Management Authorities. This Authority's area is covered by three Catchment Management Authorities, namely Border Rivers/Gwydir, Namoi and Northern Rivers.

As part of the 'good neighbour policy', staff are encouraged to attend advisory committee meetings held on the Mid North Coast and Far North Coast when possible. These areas have common borders with the New England Weeds Authority and our attendance provides the opportunity to discuss cooperation across boundaries.

The Authority continues to undertake work on behalf of the New England Livestock Health and Pest Authority in all Districts to assist in their weed control program.

This Authority cooperates closely with local National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff. Joint inspections of NPWS controlled areas have been beneficial to both parties. Contract work is undertaken on their behalf to help control Lantana in the Macleay Valley.

## Operations Program

Objective:     *“To treat all noxious weeds on all council controlled land at least once each year”.*

All areas for which NEWA is responsible were inspected and treated where appropriate. A return to good seasonal conditions saw some heavy germination of weeds such as Chilean Needle Grass, Giant Parramatta Grass and St Johns Wort. Blackberry and Sweet Briar remain the principle roadside weeds and this season all roadsides and council controlled lands were treated. Extra casual staff were employed to assist the program this season.

NEWA funded its own program for African Lovegrass, Blackberry, Nodding Thistle, Paterson’s Curse, Saffron Thistle, Scotch Broom and other minor noxious weeds. It also met all the objectives indicated in Regional Plans for, Chilean Needle Grass, St John’s Wort, Giant Parramatta Grass, Gorse and Serrated Tussock.

NEWA has continued with its policy of utilising modern well maintained equipment to meet the needs of the operations program. This has kept down time to an absolute minimum and provided staff with the safest most effective environment in which to operate.

NEWA’s weed control role for its constituent councils continues to expand with programs for roadside furniture, parks and gardens, urban infrastructure and cemeteries now becoming a bigger part of the program

A balanced approach was taken toward the amount of private work undertaken. Assistance is principally provided to smaller holdings where landowners lack the equipment to carry out an effective weed control program. This season roadside weed control was carried out for Tamworth Regional Council and Clarence Valley Council to assist them with their program. The flexibility of using NEWA’s resources for weed control enables work to be performed on problem weeds such as St Johns Wort and Serrated tussock at optimum times to further reduce current levels.

NEWA maintains a close relationship with the New England Livestock Health and Pest Authority and both parties work together to achieve weed control outcomes. The Authority is consulted every season in regard to weed control activities on lands under their jurisdiction. Environmental Weed Control Projects were completed for the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority in the Armidale area.

# **SECTION 4**

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**