



**NEW ENGLAND TABLELANDS
NOXIOUS PLANTS COUNTY
COUNCIL**

Trading as:

**NEW ENGLAND WEEDS
AUTHORITY**

2011/2012 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 Authority continues to seek improvement in its administration and operational areas with a concerted effort in the past twelve months in regard to reviewing, updating and preparing new policies and procedures. In addition the organization has embarked on a risk management process that will lead to further enhancing the coordination of activities towards an enterprise wide approach to risk management.

Concerted efforts have continued in relation to the many noxious weeds found in our area with a focus on Tropical Soda Apple 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 and the wider community.

Our roadside control program remained extremely effective again over the past 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 further funds from the Border Rivers Gwydir and Northern River CMA's.

The Authority's staff structure has remained stable over the reporting period with Weeds officers operating in each of the constituent Council areas. My appreciation is extended to Council's officers for their continued hard work, dedication, professional and courteous approach to their many duties.

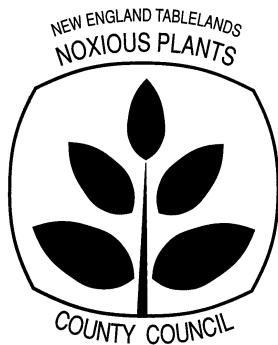
The Authority continues to act as Lead agency on behalf of the ten member Councils of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee (NIWAC) for the implementation of the State Government's (through the NSW Dept of Primary Industries) NSW Weeds Action Program. The second year objectives, activities and funding allocations have been achieved in accordance with the measurable outcomes under the regional Weeds Action Program and the NIWAC Weeds Action Business Plan 2010/2015.

The Authority continues to be recognized as a leader in the management and control of noxious and invasive weeds not only in the region in which operates but throughout the State and all looks well for the future viability of the organization. However, there are many concerns within local councils for the future of weed management and control as a result of the recommendations of the Ryan Review into the Livestock Health & Pest Authority (LHPA). An Interdepartmental Steering Committee has provided a report to the Minister for Primary Industries the Hon Katrina Hodgkinson MP, the outcome of which at this time is still awaited.

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



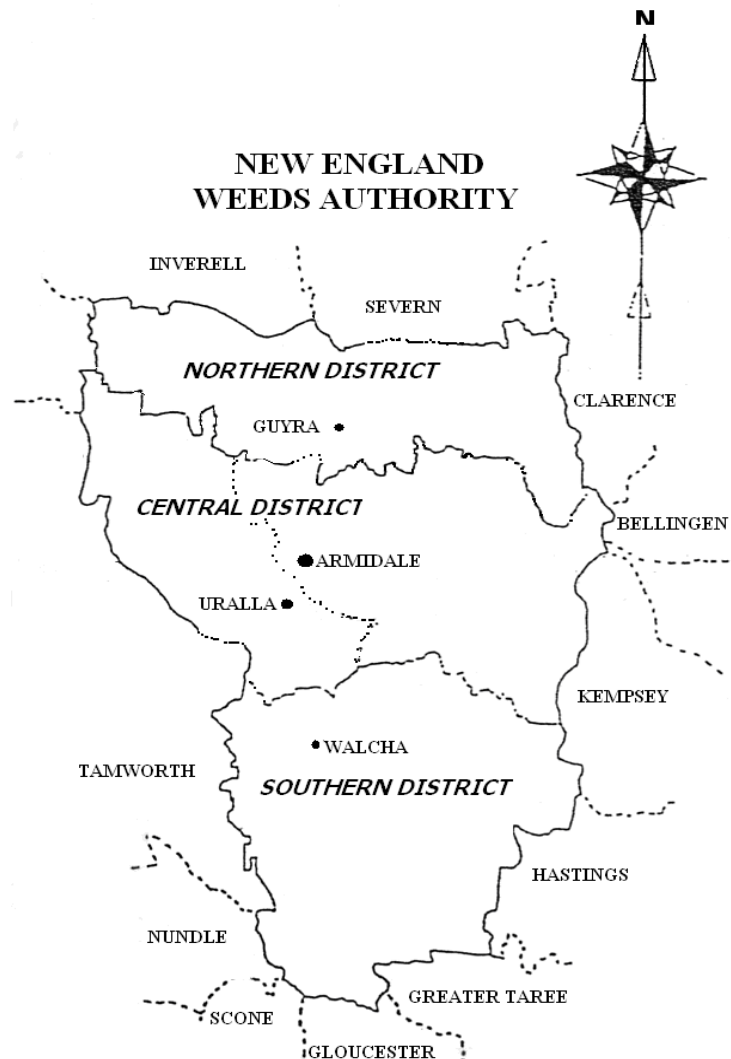
Authority Area: 18223 sq kms

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 Dusting

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

*** GUYRA COUNCIL:** Councillor Dean Heagney

*** URALLA COUNCIL:** Councillor Mark Dusting

*** 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

General Manager:

Mr Wayne Deer

Senior Weeds Officers:

Mr James Browning

Weeds Officers:

Mr Matthew Benham
Ms Rachel Betts
Mr Peter Constance
Based at the Armidale Head Office

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

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

OTHER SERVICE PROVIDERS:

AUDIT
BANKERS
LEGAL

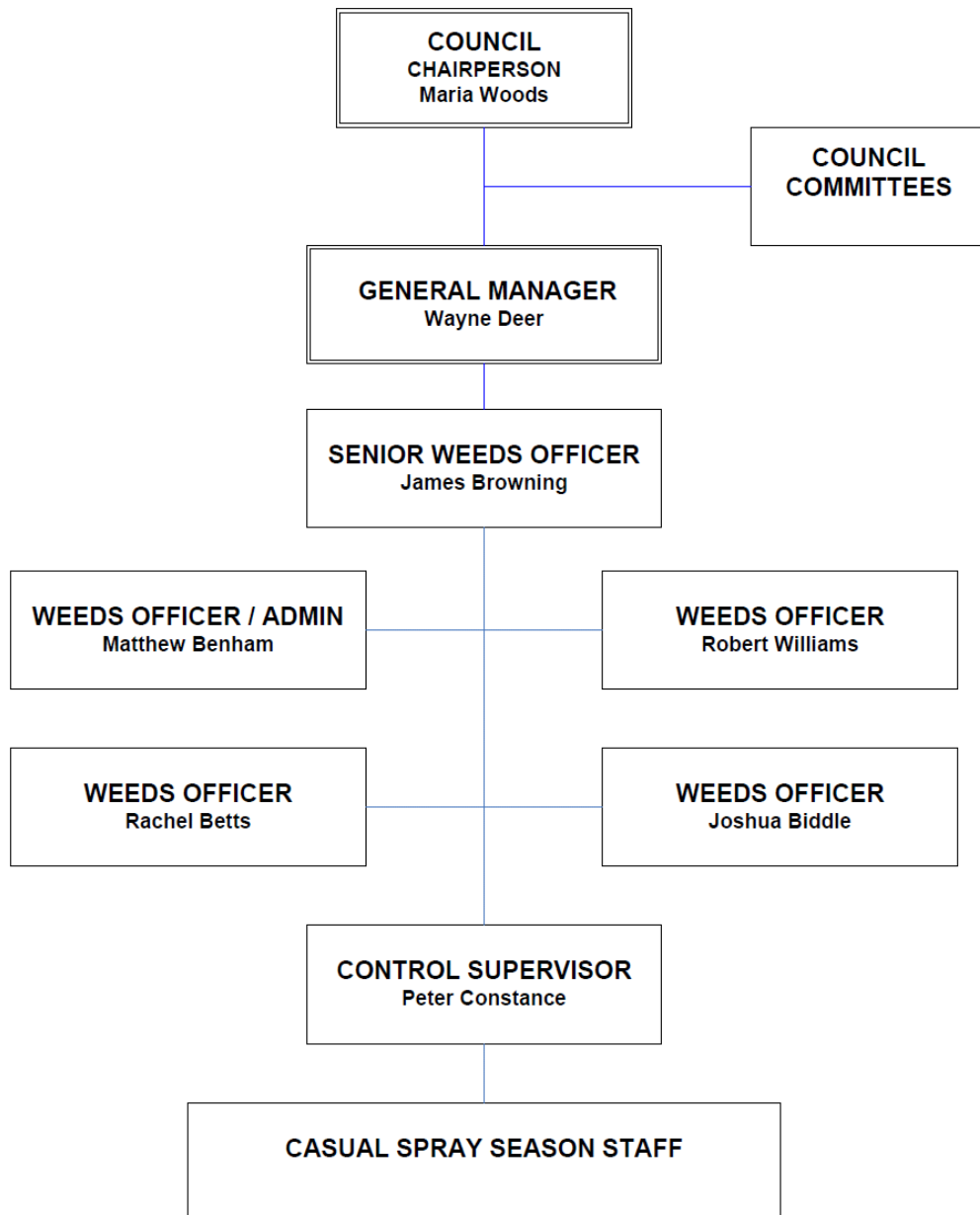
Forsyths, Armidale.
Commonwealth Bank of Australia, Armidale Branch
Lindsay, Taylor Lawyers

STAFFING/ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

MARCH 2011



SECTION 2

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT REPORT

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT REPORT

General

Staffing

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

Wayne Deer is General Manager

James Browning is Senior Weeds Officer

Matthew Benham continued as Weeds Officer/Administration Officer at Armidale.

Robert Williams continued as Weeds Officer at Guyra.

Josh Biddle continued as Weeds Officer based at Walcha

Rachel Betts continued as Weeds Officer at Armidale

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 \$5,125, while all Councillors received the Members fee of \$2,050. A travelling allowance was also paid to attend meetings totalling \$1,178.52, conference fees and reasonable out of pocket expenses totalling \$603.43. Total payments for the year amounted to \$17,156.95.

Senior Staff

The Authority employed only one senior staff member, being the statutory position of General Manager, on a part-time basis. Remuneration amounted to \$25,952.98 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 \$44.00 (GST inc.) per hour, a plant rate of \$40.70 (GST inc.) per hour and plant-transport only \$22.00 (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 \$103,503.05

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 \$73,394.03.

The Authority is project manager on behalf of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee for a various projects for the Border Rivers Gwydir and Namoi Catchment Management Authority to the value of \$88,500.00

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 Work Health and Safety Committee. As mentioned above, regular staff meetings were held at least every two months at which WH&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.

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 2011/2012 year NEWA acted as lead organisation for the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee for the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program and distribution of 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 from Armidale Dumaresq Council. 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.

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, the central office being in Armidale. 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.

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)

GIPA Act- Section 7(3), GIPA Regulation Clause 7A. In accordance with the requirements of this regulation Council has reviewed its policies and procedures including the Internal Reporting Policy and its Public Information Guide in regard to the release of Council information and the kinds of information held by the Authority that are in the public interest and made publicly available. Additional policies adopted by Council in the Public interest have been included in the Public Information Guide.

GIPA Regulation Clause 7(b)- No requests were made for access applications were made to the Authority during the reporting year.

GIPA Regulation Clause 7(c)- There were no applications refused, either wholly or partly in the reporting year.

Schedule 2 Statistical information about access applications

Table A: Number of applications by type of applicant and outcome*								
	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Media	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Members of Parliament	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Private sector business	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Not for profit organisations or community groups	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Members of the public (application by legal representative)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Members of the public (other)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table B: Number of applications by type of application and outcome								
	Access granted in full	Access granted in part	Access refused in full	Information not held	Information already available	Refuse to deal with application	Refuse to confirm/deny whether information is held	Application withdrawn
Personal information applications*	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Access applications (other than personal information applications)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Access applications that are partly personal information applications and partly other	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

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* A *personal information application* is an access application for personal information (as defined in clause 4 of Schedule 4 to the Act) about the applicant (the applicant being an individual).

Table C: Invalid applications	
Reason for invalidity	No of applications
Application does not comply with formal requirements (section 41 of the Act)	Nil
Application is for excluded information of the agency (section 43 of the Act)	Nil
Application contravenes restraint order (section 110 of the Act)	Nil
	Nil
Total number of invalid applications received	Nil
Invalid applications that subsequently became valid applications	Nil

Table D: Conclusive presumption of overriding public interest against disclosure: matters listed in Schedule 1 to Act	
	Number of times consideration used*
Overriding secrecy laws	Nil
Cabinet information	Nil
Executive Council information	Nil
Contempt	Nil
Legal professional privilege	Nil
Excluded information	Nil
Documents affecting law enforcement and public safety	Nil
Transport safety	Nil
Adoption	Nil
Care and protection of children	Nil
Ministerial code of conduct	Nil
Aboriginal and environmental heritage	Nil

* More than one public interest consideration may apply in relation to a particular access application and, if so, each such consideration is to be recorded (but only once per application). This also applies in relation to Table E.

Table E: Other public interest considerations against disclosure: matters listed in table to section 14 of Act	
	Number of occasions when application not successful
Responsible and effective government	Nil
Law enforcement and security	Nil
Individual rights, judicial processes and natural justice	Nil
Business interests of agencies and other persons	Nil
Environment, culture, economy and general matters	Nil
Secrecy provisions	Nil
Exempt documents under interstate Freedom of Information legislation	Nil

Table F: Timeliness			
	Number of applications		
Decided within the statutory timeframe (20 days plus any extensions)	Nil		
Decided after 35 days (by agreement with applicant)	Nil		
Not decided within time (deemed refusal)	Nil		
Total	Nil		
Table G: Number of applications reviewed under Part 5 of the Act (by type of review and outcome)			
	Decision varied	Decision upheld	Total
Internal review	Nil	Nil	Nil
Review by Information Commissioner*	Nil	Nil	Nil
Internal review following recommendation under section 93 of Act	Nil	Nil	Nil
Review by ADT	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total	Nil	Nil	Nil

* The Information Commissioner does not have the authority to vary decisions, but can make recommendations to the original decision-maker. The data in this case indicates that a recommendation to vary or uphold the original decision has been made by the Information Commissioner.

Table H: Applications for review under Part 5 of the Act (by type of applicant)	
	Number of applications for review
Applications by access applicants	Nil
Applications by persons to whom information the subject of access application relates (see section 54 of the Act)	Nil

Public Interest Disclosures Report

Councils are required to prepare an annual report on their obligations under the Act within four months after the end of a reporting year.

Councils are also required to provide the NSW Ombudsman with statistical information regarding their compliance with their obligations under the Act on a six monthly basis.

The report is to be provided to the NSW Ombudsman within 30 days after the end of the relevant six month period or by such later time as the Ombudsman may approve. The information to be provided in the annual and six monthly reports is outlined in the Public Interest Disclosures Regulation 2011(PID Reg).

Table 1 details the end of Financial year report information required under Section 4 of the Regulation.

Table 1

Relevant	Requirement	Report
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Section		
PID Reg – sect 2(a)	the number of public officials who have made a public interest disclosure to the public authority,	Nil
PID Reg – sect 2(b)	<p>the number of public interest disclosures received by the public authority in total and the number of public interest disclosures received by the public authority relating to each of the following:</p> <p>(i) corrupt conduct,</p> <p>(ii) maladministration,</p> <p>(iii) serious and substantial waste of public money or local government money (as appropriate),</p> <p>(iv) government information contraventions,</p> <p>(v) local government pecuniary interest contraventions,</p>	<p>Nil</p> <p>Nil</p> <p>Nil</p> <p>Nil</p> <p>Nil</p>
PID Reg – sect 2(c)	the number of public interest disclosures finalized by the public authority,	Nil
PID Reg – sect 2(d)	whether the public authority has a public interest disclosures policy in place,	Yes
PID Reg – sect 2(e)	what actions the head of the public authority has taken to ensure that his or her staff awareness responsibilities under 6E(1)(b) of the Act have been met.	Circulation of PID Policy to all staff & awareness training at staff meetings.

Code of Conduct

There were no matters arising from or breaches of Council’s Code of Conduct reported during the year.

SECTION 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REVIEW OF PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY

REVIEW OF PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY 2011/12

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.

Funding is made available through the NSW Weeds Action Program that replaces the Operation, Inspection and Administration Funding arrangements.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Highlights for 2011/2012

The objectives of the 2011/12 Management Plan were achieved.

The staff situation remained stable during the report year.

The Authority achieved 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 and currently acts as lead organisation for the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee for the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program.

NEWA continued its close association with the Landcare and Catchment Management Authority (CMA) networks.

The Privet control campaign continued this year with re inspections being carried out in Armidale City.

The Chairperson's annual tours of inspection were carried out during the growing season concentrating mainly on weed incursions in the Armidale area. 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 – 2011/12

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: 1622
- Number of properties inspected from the air: 0
- Number of programmed surveys: 0

Other Specific Inspections:

- Aquaria/pet shops: 5
- Nurseries: 18
- Other businesses: 5
- Special searches: 0
- LH&PA: 62
- National Parks: 14
- Dept of Lands: 30
- Railway Lines: 5

This year was the first year of the Authority’s eighth 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 2011/2012, 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, 92 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 contemporary information generated by the regular systematic inspection program across the NEWA region facilitated the issue of thirty eight 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 stretched landowner’s capacity.

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 2011/12 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 excessive 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 higher than usual incidence was discovered on roadsides in the 2011/12 season due to good weather conditions. 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 2011/12 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.

Tropical Soda Apple: Tropical Soda Apple was treated twice on roadsides in the Macleay Valley area.

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:	92
• Programmed survey, Inspection Reports/ Privet	0

Weed Recording, Mapping and Reporting Activities

The Weed tracer program remains operational in 2011/12 and property details and inspections are recorded electronically.

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 NIWAC Weeds Action Program.

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 on a roster system 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
- Weeds ID Day, Guyra
- Weeds Talk to UNE students

October

- Weeds presentation, Armidale Tree Group, Armidale

December

- Weeds presentation, Essential Energy
- Weeds Safari Bus tour, Armidale
- Walcha Timber Expo, Walcha,

January

- Weeds Presentation, Rockvale Landcare Group
- Weeds Stand Bundarra Show

February

- Weeds Stand Armidale Show
- Weeds Stand Walcha Show
- Weeds Stand Uralla Show
- Weeds Stand Guyra Show

May

- Weeds Stand at Sustainable Living Expo, Armidale with Land Care and CMA's
- Weeds Stand, Armidale Saleyards

April

- Weeds ID Day Yarrowitch

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 Faculty 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

- First Aid Refresher
- 4wd Training
- Training in new WH&S Legislation
- Aquatic Weeds Tour
- Weeds Conference, Coffs Harbour

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 Business Activity Strategic Plan 2012/2022***
- ***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 was 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. . 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