

New England Tablelands County Council
Trading as
New England Weeds Authority

Annual Report 2012-2013



Our Environment

Our Community

Our Council

Our Responsibility



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ABBREVIATIONS	
BASP	Business Activity Strategic Plan
CAP	Catchment Action Plan
CLR	Councillor
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
DWO	District Weeds Officer
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
GIPA	Government Information (Public Access Act) 2009
GM	General Manager
NEWA	New England Weeds Authority
NIWAC	Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee
PO	Project Officer
SOE	State of the Environment
SWO	Senior Weeds Officer
UNE	University of New England
WO	Weed Officer
WoNS	Weeds of National Significance

2. CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I am very honoured to have represented the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council as Chairman during 2012–2013 and I am delighted to present Council's 2012-2013 Annual Report.

This year has been both challenging and rewarding for our Council. As one of the Group 3 Councils it has been our first year implementing the new Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework with the preparation of the 10 year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2012 – 2022 that included our Four Year Delivery Program (2012 – 2016), Annual Operational Plan (2012 - 2013) and Resourcing Strategy.



Our success is measured on how well we achieve the objectives and operational tasks set out in the Business Activity Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan. Our Plan was developed being mindful of the processes our member Councils of Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra, Uralla and Walcha undertook in developing their Community Strategic Plans and of the significance of community consultation.

In our first year of implementing our Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan I am pleased to report that our Council has preformed very well, being proactive in approaching and meeting the objectives of the programs for weed management and control in the New England region.

This of course has not been without challenges and I would like to thank Council's General Manager and our staff for their support of Council, and for their dedication and commitment to their work in delivering weed management and control services to Council's area.

During the reporting year it became apparent that there are many challenges currently occurring for local government including Weed County Councils such as ours. These proposed radical shifts are as a result of the Independent Local Government Review Panel's investigation into a program of review and reform of Local Government in NSW.

Coupled with this was the announcement by the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson M.P of the formation of the new Local Land Services.

The finalisation of both these processes could see a significant impact on the future of our County Council. Our Council has taken the strong view that we play a vital role in weed management and control throughout the State and should remain under the responsibility of local government.

Council will closely scrutinize the outcomes of these reviews and will look to strongly advocate for the best services for our community in regard to weed management and control in the New England region.

Finally, I extend my sincere thanks to my fellow Councillors for their support and their work both within this and their constituent Councils and in the community.

I am proud to introduce the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council Annual Report for 2012 – 2013.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'm. woods'.

Clr Maria Woods
Chairperson

3. GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to present the 2012-2013 Annual Report on behalf of the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council trading as New England Weeds Authority (NEWA).

During the reporting period Council has adopted its first 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2012 – 2022, under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework, which highlights Council's commitment to carrying out effective and efficient weed management and control on behalf of our constituent member Councils of Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra, Walcha and Uralla, covering an area of some 18,255 km².



The Plan identifies Council's and the communities' main priorities and aspirations for the future, by taking action to address weeds on behalf of our member Councils to improve agricultural sustainability, primary industry productivity and to deliver broad environmental outcomes for the New England region.

Concentrated 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 region. 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 three Catchment Management Authorities (CMA's), three Livestock Health & Pest Authorities as well as the National Parks and Wildlife Service, 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 Namoi CMA's.

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 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 co-ordination of activities towards an enterprise wide approach to risk management.

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 be recognized as a leader in the management and control of noxious and invasive weeds not only in the region in which it operates but throughout the State, and all looks well for the future viability of the organization. However, as indicated in the Chairman's message, there are many concerns within local councils for the future of weed management and control as a result of the recommendations of the Local Government Review and Local Land Services Reference Panel on the formation of the new Local Land Services to become operational from 1 January 2014.

It is considered that no matter what the outcomes of these reviews may be, our Council is in a stable and sound financial situation to meet the challenges of the future and to continue to provide the best possible service to our member Councils and the wider community in regard to weed management and control.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to Councillors for their leadership and the staff for their professionalism, valued efforts and commitment that have made the 2012-2013 achievements possible.



Wayne Deer
General Manager



Typical New England grazing property.

4. INTRODUCTION – ANNUAL REPORTING ON PROGRESS

Annual reporting to the community is an important part of transparent and accountable local government. Council is required under the legislation to prepare an Annual Report as one of the key points of accountability between Council, its member Councils and the community.

The Annual Report focuses on Council's implementation of the Delivery Program and Operational Plan. The report also includes information that is prescribed by the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, including provisions relating to the content of Council's annual statement of revenue policy.

The Business Activity Strategic Plan must be reviewed every four years. From 2012, each newly elected Council must complete the review by 30 June in the year following the local government elections and roll the planning period forward by at least 4 years so that it is always a 10 year minimum plan.

A report on the progress on implementation of the Business Activity Strategic Plan must be presented at the final meeting of an outgoing Council, on the implementation and effectiveness of the Plan in achieving its environmental, economic, social and civic leadership/governance objectives over the past four years.

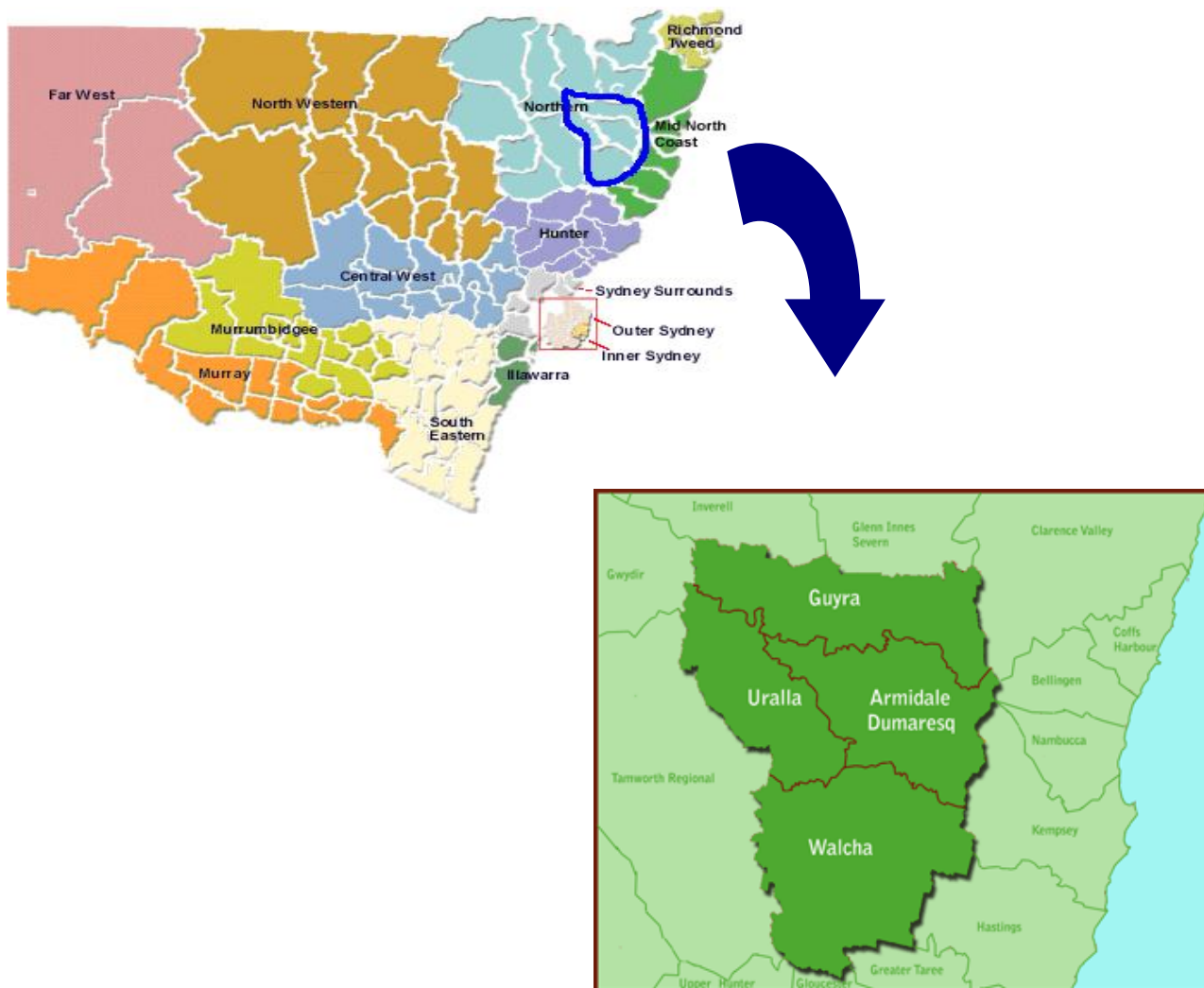


Walcha township

5. NEW ENGLAND WEEDS AUTHORITY REGION – PROFILE

The New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council (trading as the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council) area comprises the constituent member local government areas of Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra Shire, Uralla Shire and Walcha Council which forms part of the Great Dividing Range and New England Plateau.

The following Map 1 indicates the County Council's member councils and adjoining council areas.



Map 1: NSW Local Government regions and Member Councils of the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council

a. Area

The New England Tablelands (Noxious Weeds) County Council area covers some 18,255 km² (Armidale Dumaresq 4,235km², Uralla 3,215 km², Walcha 6,410 km² and Guyra 4,395 km²) stretching from Ben Lomond in Guyra Shire in the north to Nowendoc in the Walcha Council in the south, west to Bundara in Uralla Shire and east to Ebor in the Armidale Dumaresq Council area.

b. Climate

Climatic conditions in the region range from sub humid temperate to cool temperate climates with snow falling on some occasions. Elevation ranges from just below 1,000m to just over 1,300m above sea level, with pleasant warm summers, extended spring and autumn seasons and a long cold winter period.

Rainfall in the region ranges from 700mm to 1,200mm annually with approximately 60% falling in the summer and 40% falling in the winter.

c. Population breakdown

The total population for the County Council's area is 39,195¹ which is broken down into member Council areas of Armidale Dumaresq 25,270, Guyra 4,543, Uralla 6,260 and Walcha 3,122.

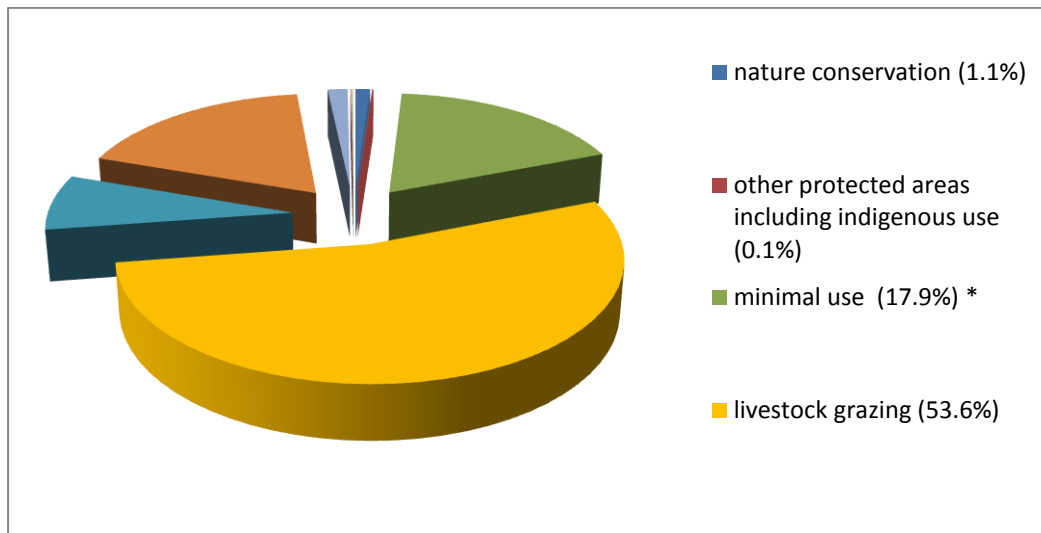


Armidale city

¹ 2011 Census

d. Landuse patterns

The following chart summarises the landuse patterns according to the Australian Natural Resources Atlas for the County Council region. The majority is devoted to livestock grazing (53.6%) and dryland agriculture (18%), reinforcing the significance of the regions economy being based on agricultural pursuits and highlighting the importance to the area of weed management and control. Only a small portion of this land area (0.1%) is devoted to urban and residential use.



**Minimal use: encompasses reserved crown land (stock routes, defence reserves and mine reserves) and vacant and institutional crown land. Also includes private land with open or closed native forest with unknown use (most likely remnant native cover).*

Chart 1: Land use patterns in the New England Weeds Authority area.



Guyra township

6. COUNCIL'S VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

a. Council's Vision

To protect the natural environment, agricultural activities, the economy and community from the impacts of noxious and invasive weeds within the New England and Northern Tablelands region of NSW.

b. Council's Mission

To be recognised as a leader in the weed management and control industry by our member Councils and the community.

c. Council's Corporate Values

Our Business & Partnerships – managing all aspects of our business in a transparent and sustainable manner while providing best value for money to our member Councils, the community and partners.

Our Community – providing a weed management and control service in a way that is accountable to the community/stakeholders and supports our constituent Councils' regional community plans in natural resource management.

Our Employees – developing staff committed to quality, professional team work and safety, while striving for continuous improvement and accepting personal responsibility.

Our Customers – meeting the needs and expectations of our customers.

Our Relationships – being open, supportive and constructive in all our relationships.

Our Environment – conserving resources, protecting and enhancing our agricultural and natural environment.



A regional rapid response to a Tropical Soda outbreak in the Macleay, 2011

7. COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITIES

As an organisation the County Council is constituted under the Local Government Act 1993 and is specified as a local control authority under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. It is a single purpose authority formed to administer and control declared noxious and invasive weeds, and has been operating since 1947. The County Council is fundamentally responsible for weed control of gazetted or declared noxious weeds including:

- Ensuring landholders/occupiers of private land fulfil their obligations under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.
- inspection of land within their area in connection with noxious and invasive weeds;
- enforcing the control of noxious weeds as per the control class;
- weed management on land occupied by the council and on roads in their area;
- publicity about weeds declared in the area;
- proposing changes to noxious weed declarations;
- developing, implementing and co-ordinating local strategies and policies;
- providing on-going approved training and professional development for weed staff and
- providing adequate resources to implement noxious and invasive weed programs.



Uralla township

In addition, the County Council is the lead agency on behalf of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee (NIWAC) for the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program funded by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI). This region covers the 10 member local government areas of the NIWAC region (Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, NEWA [Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra Shire, Uralla Shire and Walcha Council], Tamworth Regional, and Tenterfield), comprising some 100,000 km² of the New England and North West region of NSW, as detailed in the NIWAC Weed Action Business Plan 2010 -2015, these duties have been extended within the region to build a capacity to:

- identify and manage high risk weed species and entry pathways;
- develop and implement early weed detection capabilities;
- assist in the timely detection of new weed incursions;
- affect a quick response to eradicate or contain new weeds;
- identify and prioritise weed management programs to where benefits are greatest;
- provide effective and targeted on-ground weed control;
- increase community acceptance of, and involvement in effective weed management;
- integrate weed management into education programs;
- improve the knowledge base for weed management Officers by providing current educational material and opportunities and by setting a public example;
- monitor progress of the NSW Invasive Species Plan's implementation and
- encourage the use of cost-sharing arrangements.

Central to meeting the abovementioned duties and responsibilities is the implementation of a consistent, co-ordinated and co-operative approach to regional weed inspection and control programs.



Northern New England Grazing Property

8. MEMBERS OF COUNCIL 2012-2013

The New England community is represented by five Councillors from the constituent Councils of Armidale Dumaresq (2 members), Guyra Shire (1 member), Uralla Shire (1 member) and Walcha Council (1 member), under the leadership of an annually elected Chairperson.

The Councillors have provided strong leadership in the development of the County Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan 2012 - 2022 as part of their commitment towards achieving the strategic objectives contained within the Plan.

ARMIDALE DUMARESQ COUNCIL:

Councillor Herman Beyersdorf
Councillor Bruce Whan to Sep 2012
Councillor Andrew Murat from Sept 2012

GUYRA SHIRE COUNCIL:

Councillor Dean Heagney

URALLA SHIRE COUNCIL:

Councillor Mark Dusting

WALCHA COUNCIL:

Councillor Maria Woods

Authority Chair: Councillor Maria Woods **Deputy Chair:** Councillor Mark Dusting



Councillors of the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council 2012-2013

From left: Clr Dean Heagney, Clr Andrew Murat, Clr Herman Beyersdorf, Clr Mark Dusting, Clr Maria Woods (seated).

a. Facilities provided to Councillors

The following fees and expenses with regard to the Chairperson and Councillors were paid during 2012-2013:

Fees and Expenses	Amount
Chairpersons Allowance	\$5,253.00
Councillor Fees	\$11,675.70
Miscellaneous expenses (conferences, accommodation & catering)	\$3,772.96
Interstate and Overseas Travel	0
Total	\$20,701.66

All costs associated with attendance at conferences and seminars are in accordance with Council's adopted Payment of Expenses Policy.

No vehicle, equipment or communication expenses were incurred by the Chairperson or Councillors during the reporting period.

b. Councillor attendance at Council Meetings 2012-2013

Councillor	Ordinary Meetings (5 held)
Clr Maria Woods	5/5
Clr Mark Dusting	5/5
Clr Herman Beyersdorf	5/5
Clr Dean Heagney	5/5
Cr Bruce Whan	1/1
Clr Andrew Murat	4/4

9. OUR ORGANISATION

New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council trades as the New England Weeds Authority (NEWA). The General Manager, whose position is part-time, is the most senior employee of Council. The General Manager is selected and appointed by Councillors on a renewable fixed-term performance based contract for a maximum of three years.

The following chart shows the organisational structure.

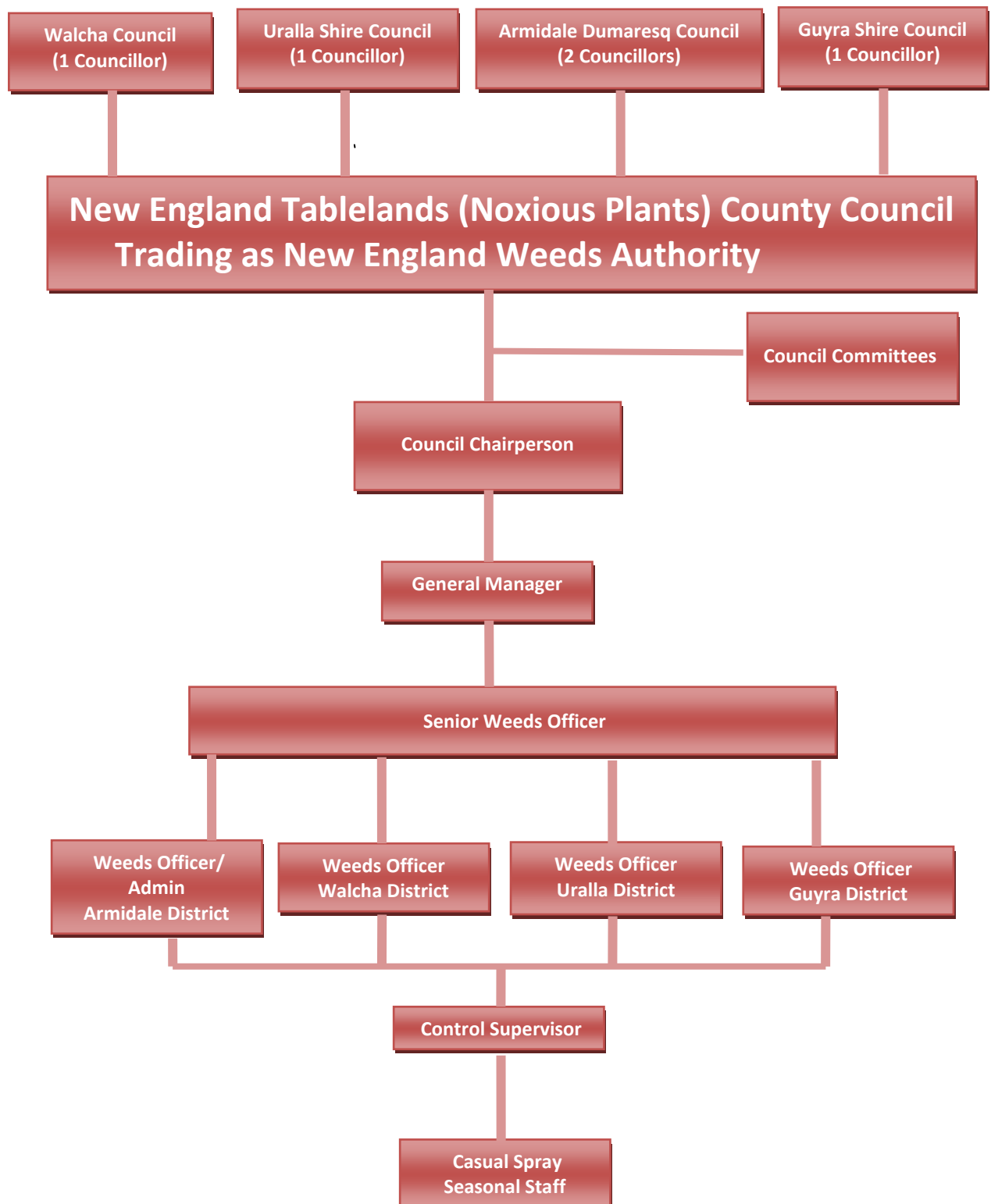


Chart 2: Organisational Structure

10. THE BUSINESS ACTIVITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2012 – 2022 OVERVIEW

The Business Activity Strategic Plan (the Plan) identifies Council's and the communities main priorities and aspirations for the future, addressing strategies for achieving the objectives in relation to noxious and invasive weeds management and control across our constituent member Council areas, so as to improve agricultural sustainability, primary industry productivity and to deliver broad environmental outcomes for the New England region for the next ten years.

The Plan is the foundation for the Annual Operational Plan, Four Year Delivery Program and Resourcing Strategy comprising the Ten Year Financial Plan, Workforce Strategy and the Asset Management Plan.

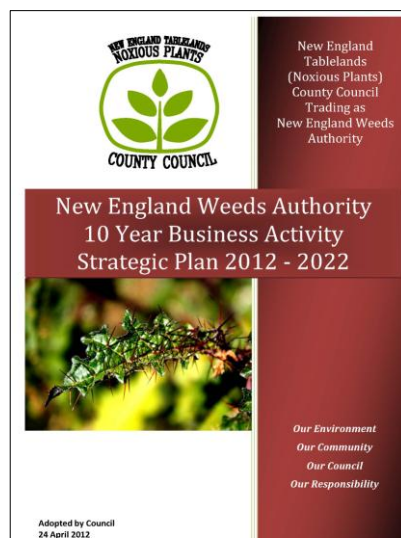
In meeting the outcomes of our Plan, Council has a long term focus that addresses issues about environmental, economic, social and civic leadership objectives as well as reflecting the community engagement processes that have been undertaken by our constituent Councils.

Early on in their processes, formal approaches were made to each Council to be involved in their respective community engagement activities and appropriate input to the environment sections in the development of their Community Strategic Plans. This partnering in the community engagement process has been most helpful in developing Council's Strategic Business Plan.

Council, as a small single purpose organisation has been mindful of its resource capacity and has acted prudently to deliver the outcomes identified in the first year of its plan.

Annual reporting to the community is an important part of transparent and accountable Local Government. Council is required under the legislation to prepare an Annual Report as one of the key points of accountability between Council, its member Councils and the community.

Council undertook a review of its Business Activity Strategic Plan after the Council elections held in September 2012 and the revised Plan will be finalised and adopted by Council by 30 June 2013.



New England Weeds Authority 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2012 - 2022

11. THE DELIVERY PLAN REPORT 2012-2013

The dynamic nature of noxious and invasive weed species means that Council's approach to weed management and control is constantly evolving. Through its strategic objectives and principal activities, Council will continue to improve the services it provides to the community in a range of ways including effective governance, strategic planning, environmental management and economic sustainability.

Council's approach to weed management and control also reflects the objectives of the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2008 – 2015 and NSW Weed Action Program. As a result, the Business Activity Strategic Plan provides the following direction as to how our resources will be employed to achieve the following four strategic objectives:

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE S.O.1

PREVENTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW WEED SPECIES IN OUR REGION - EXCLUDE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE S.O.2

ELIMINATE OR PREVENT THE SPREAD OF EXISTING AND NEW WEED SPECIES IN OUR REGION – ERADICATE OR CONTAIN

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE S.O.3

REDUCE THE IMPACTS OF WIDESPREAD INVASIVE WEED SPECIES – EFFECTIVELY MANAGE

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE S.O.4

ENSURE COMMUNITY, INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS HAVE THE ABILITY AND LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO MANAGE INVASIVE SPECIES – BUILD CAPACITY

To achieve these strategic objectives our actions were centered on the following strategies:

- identification and management of high-risk weed species and the pathways they utilize within our region;
- formulation of weed detection systems to improve our capacity to find new weeds early;
- ensuring we have the resources and procedures in place to undertake strategic weed control measures and rapid response against new weed incursions;
- continual analysis of our weed management programs to ensure we are directing resources to where benefits will be the greatest and
- increasing the community commitment and involvement in proactive weed management and control approaches.

Our approach to weed management and control has strong linkages with the Australian Weeds Strategy, the NSW Biodiversity Strategy, NSW Invasive Species Strategy and the NSW Weeds Action Program.

At a regional level our Business Activity Strategic Plan is interconnected with the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee Weed Action Business Plan 2010 – 2015 and regional Management Plans developed for specific weeds.

Our regional Weed Action Program has established a co-ordinated approach with the Local Government areas of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee (Glen Innes Severn, Gunnedah, Gwydir, Inverell, Liverpool Plains, Moree Plains, Narrabri, NEWA [Armidale Dumaresq, Guyra Shire, Uralla Shire and Walcha Council], Tamworth Regional, and Tenterfield).

Our Council acts as the lead agency for NIWAC in the implementation of the NSW Weed Action Program.

Successful weed management relies on co-ordinated effort, strong partnerships and pro-active approaches. Our Council is working in unison with other organisations to ensure our limited resources are utilized more efficiently and effectively. Leading this approach are our staff who are committed towards achieving success in a wide range of integrated weed management and control programs.

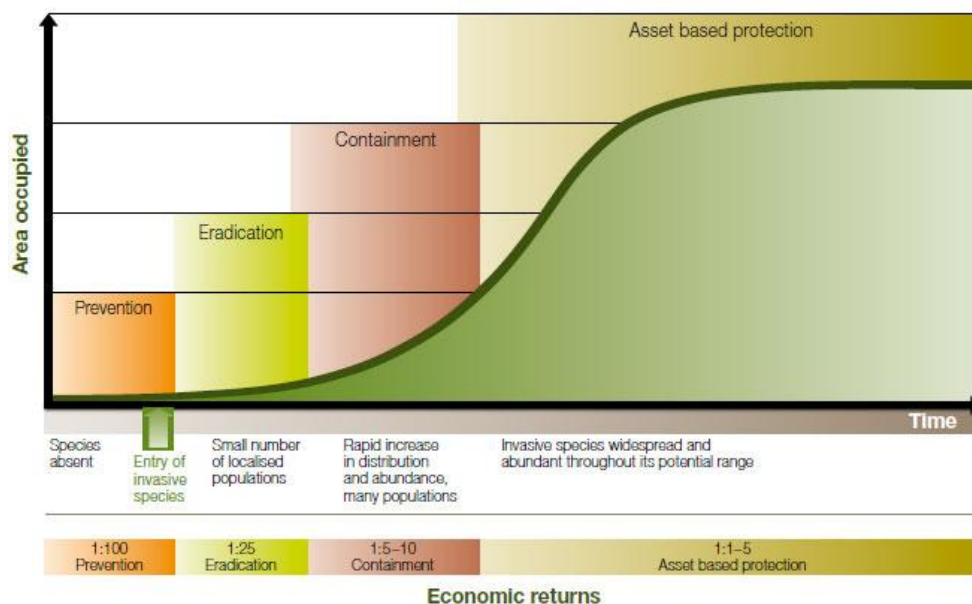


Chart 3: Weed Invasion Curve²

The diagram above shows the application of these goals to a stylised weed invasive curve, demonstrating that return for investment is highest in the early stages of weed invasion when management is focussed on prevention and eradication. For example, there is an estimated return on investment of \$100 for every \$1 spent in the prevention stage of management.



Helicopter aerial spraying

² NSW DPI



Serrated Tussock



St John's Wort



Nodding Thistle



Blackberry



Chilean Needle Grass



Tropical Soda Apple



Salvinia



Bridal Creeper

Some of the noxious weeds in the NEWA region

12. PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The Business Activity Strategic Plan principal activities provide a framework for the co-ordinated and co-operative management and control of noxious and invasive weeds across our County Council area for the ten year period of the Plan 2012 – 2022.

The Strategic Objectives are translated into actions through the principal activities to be undertaken by the Council to implement the strategies established by the Plan within the resources available under the Resourcing Strategy.

A summary of principle activities undertaken by Council and the objective/s under each are detailed as follows.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY - P.A.1. CIVIC LEADERSHIP/GOVERNANCE / ADMINISTRATION / FINANCE / RISK MANAGEMENT

Civic Leadership/Governance

To provide effective, relevant civic leadership and local governance through community consultation, availability of information to the public and Council, public access to Councillors and liaison with member Councils and relevant government agencies.

Administration

To implement financial and administrative policies and procedures to allow the management of all Council activities in a manner that ensures the economic sustainability of the Council and protects Council and community assets.

Finance

To provide the framework for Council to undertake its activities in a financially responsible and economically sustainable manner that protects Council and community assets.

Risk Management

To minimise Council's exposure to risk and provide a safe working environment for staff, contractors and for county landholders.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY- P.A.2 ENVIRONMENT - NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

Noxious Weed Management and Control

To act in a regulatory and advisory role to stakeholders and landholders to improve the agricultural and natural environment through a reduction in noxious and invasive weeds species.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY- P.A 3 ECONOMIC AFFAIRS – PRIVATE WORKS AND OTHER BUSINESS UNDERTAKINGS

Private Works

To provide a contract spraying and inspectorial service to generate revenue and to assist landholders and government agencies to control noxious and invasive weeds.

Other Business Undertakings

To promote the interests of County Council stakeholders through active interaction and participation with other authorities (such as Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee, Local Government Shires Association and CMAs) through advocacy and political pursuits.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY- P. A 4 NSW WEEDS ACTION PROGRAM – NIWAC

To act as the lead agency for the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program for the member Councils of the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee (including NEWA) region.



Hereford Cattle near Walcha

DELIVERY PROGRAM 2012 - 2013

Principal Activity - P.A.1. Civic Leadership/Governance / Administration / Finance / Risk Management

Functional Objective: (Civic Leadership/Governance)

To provide Council with the knowledge, skills, information and opportunity to make informed, relevant and timely decisions.

Strategic Tasks: To assist and inform the Chair and Councillors so that they can be proactive spokespeople on noxious and invasive weed issues affecting the Council and community.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Reports for Council's consideration prepared in a concise and timely manner with recommendations.
- All statutory financial plans and returns completed and lodged by due date.
- Councillors informed of legislative changes in a timely manner.
- Media releases and invitations to public events circulated to Councillors.
- Council's Annual Report distributed to member Councils.

Functional Objective: (Administration)

To promote and improve public awareness of Council's activities and operations.

Strategic Tasks: To increase the public use of Council's office in Armidale and contact with property owners/ Stakeholders.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Target contact with new property owners achieved.
- Attendance at field days, agricultural shows, Landcare and regional events exceeded targets.
- Council office in Armidale manned during business hours.
- Media release targets exceeded.
- Staff directly involved in implementing regional CMA projects with community.

Functional Objective: (Administration)

To work with elected members and staff to ensure the development and effective implementation of Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan, policies and decision making.

Strategic Tasks: To provide well informed Councillors, Council staff and community in relation to Council's business activities, policies and strategic directions.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Review of Council's policies undertaken as identified by internal audit process with new policies adopted by Council.
- Annual Operational Plan, Four Year Delivery Program and Long Term Resourcing Strategy reviewed and updated.
- Public notification of Business Activity Strategic Plan 2013 -2023 review.
- Public notification of relevant policies.

Functional Objective: (Administration)

To maintain a stable, secure administrative structure with supporting internal controls, reporting systems, training plans, record keeping and documentation to ensure that human and physical resources needed to deliver Council's services are available and accountable.

Strategic Tasks: To provide ongoing training for Council staff to raise the standard of service provided to the community and to enhance their working experience.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Corporate Training Plan reviewed, updated and implemented.
- Monthly staff meetings held.
- Work Health and Safety Procedures and systems reviewed and updated.
- Work Health and Safety Management Policy and handbook adopted by Council.
- Council's Workforce strategy reviewed and updated.

Functional Objectives: (Finance)

To ensure finance, accounting and administration requirements are performed in a professional and timely manner.

To ensure the provision of finances to the Council are received from relevant sources.

Strategic Tasks: Accounting practices carried out to meet statutory requirements and relevant accounting standards.
Ongoing financial support is provided from member Councils and other appropriate agencies.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Statutory Financial Plans and returns completed and lodged by due date in accordance with accepted accounting standards.
- Constituent member Councils provided with Annual Budget and Financial Statements.
- Annual grant funding secured from NSW Department of Primary Industries under the NSW Weeds Action Program.
- Annual Financial Statement and Acquittal documents provided to DPI within set time frame.

Functional Objectives: (Risk Management)

To minimise the risk associated with all functions of Council.

Strategic Tasks: Management of Council's risks in order to control, minimise or eliminate all forms of potential loss.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Enterprise Risk Management process undertaken in conjunction with Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Councils. Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Strategy adopted by Council and Enterprise Risk Management Matrix developed for organisation.
- Council's Investment and Long Term Financial Strategies reviewed and updated.

DELIVERY PROGRAM 2012 – 2013

Principal Activity- P.A.2 Environment - Noxious Weed Management and Control

Functional Objective: (Noxious Weed Management & Control)

To inspect private properties for noxious and invasive weeds and support property owners and managers to encourage them to work with Council to identify and control noxious weeds.

Strategic Tasks: To improve natural resource management within the region relating to noxious and invasive weeds and maintain the viability of agricultural and high conservation value land.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Annual Inspection and weed control program achieved.
- As part of the Authority's three year rolling inspection program inspections of high risk sites, high risk pathways and high risk inspections were carried out over one third of the Authority's area. As a result no new weed incursions were found, however, new infestations of high risk species already present within the Authority's area were the subject of control programs (eg Tropical Soda Apple in the Macleay Valley).
- Chairman's Annual tour conducted.

Functional Objective: (Noxious Weed Management & Control)

To ensure that property owners appreciate the importance of weed control and reinforce Council's resolve to achieve property owner support for weed control.

Strategic Tasks: Through compliance with the provisions of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 be proactive in reducing the threat of noxious weeds to agricultural land and high conservation areas.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Council again adopted a policy of engagement, education and co-operation with landholders and land managers to have work carried out on their land to manage weeds, this has resulted in there being no requirement to issue Notices, on the spot fines or instigate legal proceeding.
- There were 19 Control reports issued during the reporting period and 41 Section 64 Certificates were issued.

Functional Objective: (Noxious Weed Management & Control)

To use efficient record keeping and reporting techniques that support Council's weed inspection and control operations and fulfill Council's grant performance-target obligations.

Strategic Tasks: To maximise the use of current and new software and IT hardware to record and map weed inspections.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Council continued to take advantage of the existing Weed tracer software to record electronically weed management, inspections and control data.
- Upgrade of Weed tracer software was carried out during the year.

Functional Objective: (Noxious Weed Management & Control)

To raise the skill & knowledge base of land owners so that they understand the importance of weed control and are more competent in the identification and control of noxious weeds.

To find effective ways to manage and control noxious weeds.

To investigate and develop better ways to manage and control noxious weeds.

Strategic Tasks: To increase landowner knowledge and awareness of noxious weed issues in the region through extension based activities.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

NEWA staff carried out landholder capacity building and extension activities at:

- 4 agricultural shows in the area;
- 7 field days;
- 2 School visits;
- 7 CMA and Landcare groups and
- Presentation to UNE students.

There were 345 contacts made with Landholders to give advice and information in relation to weed management and control matters.

Functional Objective: (Noxious Weed Management & Control)

To develop plans, policies, procedures and guidelines for noxious weed management and control that are in keeping with industry best practice, meet State Government requirements and provide staff with a standard and consistent process for weed management.

Strategic Tasks: To identify areas of Council's operation and processes that need to be reviewed or where documentation needs to be written.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- A review of Council's weed management plans, policies and procedures manual was undertaken, with updating of safety data sheets, engagement of contractors and safe workplace method statements.

Functional Objective: (Noxious Weed Management & Control)

To treat weeds on Council controlled or managed land in a programmed manner.

Strategic Tasks: To improve the natural environment and agricultural viability of land through a reduction in noxious weeds.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

The following activities were carried out within the Authority's area:

- The inspection of 106 High Risk Sites;
- 441 High Risk Inspections Completed covering 186,974 hectares;
- 797 Private Property Inspections completed covering 296,638 hectares;
- 2,650 kms of High Risk Roadside inspections completed covering 5,573 hectares;
- 12 High Risk Waterway inspections completed covering 2,370 hectares;
- 4,500kms of Roadside inspections completed covering 22,500 hectares and
- 60 inspections of National Parks, Railways, Travelling Stock Routes, Recreational areas were carried out covering 14,299 hectares.

The Authority's regional inspection program fully supported the NSW Weeds Action Program to eradicate or contain high risk species within the Authority's area.

The following highlights the ongoing weed control activities carried out within the Authority's area during the period:

- All known Nodding Thistle sites treated in November;
- All known Chilean Needle Grass roadways treated in November;
- All known St Johns Wort roadways treated in November/ December;
- 4,000 kms of roadways treated for Blackberries;
- The Macleay Valley, Tropical Soda Apple roadways treated every two months;
- All known Giant Parramatta Grass sites treated and
- Coolatai and African Lovegrass control programs carried out on roadways where these species are not widely established.

DELIVERY PROGRAM 2012 - 2013

Principal Activity- P.A 3 Economic Affairs – Private Works and Other Business Undertakings

Functional Objectives: (Private Works)

- To generate additional revenue.
- To maximise the use of Council's resources when not required for core business activity.
- To provide owners of small holdings with an affordable option for noxious weed control.

Strategic Tasks:

To carry out control works that reduces noxious and invasive weeds on private property.

To investigate and develop ways to increase the revenue of Council from sources other than the annual State Government Grants.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- During 2012 – 2013 the Authority was successful in funding applications to Border Rivers-Gwydir and Namoi Catchment Management Authorities, and Southern Landcare groups amounting to a total of \$260,104 (refer Other Projects page 29 for a detailed breakdown).
- Private works were carried out on behalf of Constituent member Councils, National Parks and Wildlife Service and smaller property owners who are not otherwise equipped to carry out the spray control programs. The total of private works for 2012 – 2013 period amounted to \$225,405, which exceed budget expectations.

Functional Objective: (Other Business Activities)

To facilitate inter-governmental relations to ensure maximum cooperation between the County Council, Federal, State and Local Governments and their agencies.

Strategic Tasks: Promote and develop relationships with constituent Councils, Federal, State and other agencies and comply with statutory requirements.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- Constituent member Councillors provided with Council Business Papers, Agendas and Minutes.
- General Manager's of each constituent Council provided with minutes of Council meetings.
- Constituent Councils provided with Business Activity Strategic Plan 2012 – 2022.
- Constituent Councils provided with Annual Report.
- Joint exercise with Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Council in developing Enterprise Risk Management Program.
- Applications to Catchment Management Authorities for natural resource management projects.
- Letters to State and Federal Members on weed management and control issues.
- Letters to State Member and NSW Government commenting on Local Land Services and Local Government reviews.
- Input to Constituent member Councils State of Environment reports.
- Participated in joint staff training activities with Constituent Councils where appropriate.

DELIVERY PROGRAM 2012 - 2013

Principal Activity- P. A 4 NSW Weeds Action Program – NIWAC

Functional Objectives: (NSW WAP)

To work with inter and intra regional organisations that are involved in weed management and control to minimise the impact of noxious and invasive weeds within the region.

Strategic Tasks: Implement the NIWAC Weeds Action Business Plan 2010 – 2015 as it relates to Council's responsibility.

Summary of Measurable Outcomes achieved 2012 - 2013

- All functional activities, support and auspicings of the NIWAC Weeds Action Program and Project Officer were completed in accordance with the outcomes set for 2012 – 2013.
- Report to the NSW DPI on NIWAC WAP activities completed on time.

Functional Objectives: (NSW WAP)

To act as Lead Agency in the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program for member councils for the NIWAC region

Strategic Tasks: Oversee the operation and implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program in the NIWAC region.

- As part of the NIWAC Weeds Action Program all high risk weeds species and high risk pathways have been documented and inspected within the New England Weeds Authority area.

The following activities were carried out within the NIWAC region:

- The inspection of 630 High Risk Sites over 1,763 hectares
- 1,995 High Risk Private Property Inspections completed covering 543,565 hectares
- 3,983 Private Property Inspections completed covering 901,191 hectares
- 24,202 kms of High Risk Roadside inspections completed covering 77,359 hectares
- 709 High Risk Waterway inspections completed covering 42,247 hectares
- 5,811 Roadside inspections completed covering 125,942 hectares
- 12,961 inspections of National Parks, Railways, Travelling Stock Routes, Recreational areas were carried out covering 688,891 hectares

13. OTHER PROJECTS

The New England Weeds Authority continues to work closely with the local Landcare and Catchment Management Authority's in regards to weed control projects within the region.

During 2012 – 2013 year the following projects were carried out to the value of \$260,104:

- The continuation of the Strategic implementation of Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) Containment lines and Outlier Infestation Control Program in partnership with Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority - \$160,000.
- Boorolong Creek Willows control program in partnership with Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority - \$20,000.
- Upper Macleay Vine Weeds Stage 1 in conjunction with Macleay Valley Landcare - \$23,000.
- WONS Weeds Control Program in conjunction with Southern New England Landcare - \$2500.
- Invasive Western Weeds and Weeds of National Significance Educational Tour for the Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee in partnership with Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority - \$14,679.
- Sub Tropical Weeds Tour for Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee in partnership with Border Rivers-Gwydir and Namoi Catchment Management Authority - \$14,925.
- Produce a WONS/Environmental/Noxious Weeds Educational DVDs in partnership w Namoi Catchment Management Authority \$8000
- Produce a Weeds DVD to educate the community about key emerging weeds species in partnership with the Border River Gwydir Catchment Management Authority - \$12,000.
- Tropical Soda Apple Surveillance and eradication program in partnership with the Namoi Catchment Management Authority - \$500.



Photo: NIWAC Regional Weeds Extension/Education trailer

14. EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY (EEO)

Council is committed to the principles of equal opportunity for all of its employees and this is reflected in its Equal Employment Opportunity Policy (EEO Policy).

The EEO Policy recognises the right of employees to be treated fairly and without discrimination in the workplace. This includes situations such as applying for a position, selection for a position, training, promotion, transfers and dismissal. It provides that people should be selected on merit, regardless of race, sex, marital status, disability or sexual preference.

15. EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

New England Weeds Authority seeks to encourage a co-operative and harmonious working environment for its staff. Interactive staff meetings deal with a wide cross section of issues relating to work and management practices, education and extension programs and matters arising from the implementation of the Local Government State Award and the Work Health and Safety Act.

A Corporate Training Program was developed in 2012 so as staff can develop to a highly competent and professional standard.

Staff training included risk assessment, four wheel drive training, recognising water weeds, identifying grasses, vegetation survey and assessment, pest management course, Chemcert refresher course, senior first aid, traffic control programs and legal training.



Serrated Tussock Field Day with local graziers and landholders

16. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

a. Major Contracts and Tenders awarded by Council 2012 - 2013

There were no contracts of service or contracts awarded by Council during the reporting year.

b. Legal costs incurred by Council

There were no legal proceedings either taken by or against the Council in 2012 – 2013.

c. Work carried out on Private Land

Council undertook various private works in relation to weed control on private land in 2012 – 2013, with all costs being borne by the property owner.

Council sets out separate charges for private works that are outlined in Council's fees and charges schedules. These rates are generally similar to contractor rates as Council does not wish to unfairly compete with private enterprise.

d. External Bodies exercising functions delegated by Council

Council did not delegate the exercise of functions to any external body during the reporting year.

e. Partnerships, Corporations, Trusts or other Joint Ventures

Council did not participate in or hold any controlling interests during the year in any Corporation, Partnerships, Trust or Joint Venture.

f. Remuneration of General Manager

The General Manager, whose position is part-time, is the only senior staff member and remuneration for the period 2012 – 2013 was \$ 30,668.

The General Manager's responsibilities include:

- Efficient and effective operation of the Council organisation and day to day management. This includes ensuring Council's decisions and policies are implemented;
- Appointing, directing and dismissing staff in accordance with the organisation structure and resources approved by the Council;
- Exercising other functions as delegated by the Council and
- The General Manager may, in turn, delegate functions to other staff.

g. Requests made to Council under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Council did not receive any requests for the release of information under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA) during the 2012 – 2013 period.

h. Public Interest Disclosures Report

The six monthly and Annual reports were provided to the NSW Ombudsman in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994.

There were no public interest disclosures either made or received during the reporting period 2012 – 2013.

i. Code of Conduct

Council adopted a new Model Code of Conduct and Procedures in early 2013 based on the Division of Local Government's new Model Code of Conduct.

There were no Code of Conduct complaints made about Councillors or the General Manager during the reporting period 2012 – 2013.



Winter in the New England

17. STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT

State of the Environment (SoE) reporting is a key mechanism for assessing progress towards sustainability and implementing Ecologically Sustainable Development Principles, as Councils play an important role in environmental management.

Our Council in its 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan has recognised the importance of ecologically sustainable development principles in its principle activities relating to the management and control of noxious and invasive weed species.

As required by legislation, each of our constituent Councils has prepared a comprehensive SoE report addressing the eight environmental sectors of land, air, water, biodiversity, waste, noise, Aboriginal heritage and non-Aboriginal heritage on a four year basis with supplementary SoE reports in intervening years.

Whilst our Council does not prepare a comprehensive SoE report, it does however, have direct connections with each of our constituent member Council's SoE reports and provides information on an annual basis for their reporting requirements in relation to the management of noxious and invasive weed species.



Northern New England grazing property

**18. GENERAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS –
YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2013**