

New England Tablelands County Council
Trading as
New England Weeds Authority

Annual Report 2013-2014



Our Environment
Our Community
Our Council
Our Responsibility



Adopted by Council 28 October 2014



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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 2013–2014 and I am delighted to present Council's 2013-2014 Annual Report.

With the local government elections held in September 2012 it has been pleasing to see that the previous representatives from our constituent member Councils of Walcha, Uralla, Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra being re-elected, allowing for the continuation of the strategic direction and good work of the previous Council continuing into the new term of this Council.



There has been a comprehensive review of Council's previous 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan and the adopting of the New England Weeds Authority Business Activity Strategic Plan 2013 – 2023, in June 2013. The Plan includes our Four Year Delivery Program 2013 – 2017, the Annual Operational Plan and the 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.

This year has not been without its challenges from an operational viewpoint as the region has experienced severe and prolonged drought conditions. However, in implementing the first year of our Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan I am pleased to report that our Council has performed very well, being proactive in approaching and meeting the objectives of the programs for weed management and control in the New England region.

In meeting the challenges of the past year 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 Council has been proactive in the ongoing external issues it faces from the Independent Local Government Review Panel's investigation into a program of review and reform of local government in NSW. Coupled with this has been the release of the Final Report and recommendations by the Natural Resources Commission into the Review of Weed Management in NSW. Council was well represented at forums in relation to both these reviews and made comprehensive submissions. The outcomes of these reviews are unknown at this time.

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 work both within this and their constituent Councils as well as in the community. I am proud to introduce the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council Annual Report for 2013 – 2014.

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

Clr Maria Woods
Chairperson

3. GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE

I am pleased to present the 2013-2014 Annual Report on behalf of the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council trading as New England Weeds Authority (NEWA).

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1993 and following the ordinary election of Councillors in September 2012, Council developed its new 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2013 -2023 under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. This Plan 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, Uralla and Walcha, 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.

As mentioned in the Chairman's Message our region has for much of the past twelve months experienced severe drought conditions. Council has taken an empathetic approach to some of its operational activities, particularly in regard to not carrying out further property inspections during the drought, so as not to add to the stressful situations already experienced by many property owners. However, our roadside control program remained extremely effective again over the reporting period due in the main to the dedication of our staff, which is one of the reasons why NEWA is so highly regarded throughout the region.

Concentrated efforts have continued in relation to a number of 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.

We have also taken a proactive approach to carrying out weed management and control programs outside our area for other local control authorities and agencies. This work has compensated for a reduction in core operational areas as a result of the drought conditions.

These activities together with a significant increase in grant funds for the Tropical Soda Apple control program in the Upper Macleay Valley have resulted in a very sound financial outcome for the reporting year, as evidenced in the annual Financial Statements.

NEWA works closely with other like Authorities including the two newly formed (from 1st January 2014) Local Land Services (LLS) authorities of the North West and Northern Tablelands as well as the National Parks and Wildlife Service, covering our region. NEWA through its close working relationships with the LLS and with a reputation for good management, as well as getting the job done, has been able to secure further funds from both the new LLS organisations.

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 third 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 action program that will lead to further enhancing the co-ordination of activities towards an organisation 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 and professional 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 organisation. However, as indicated in the Chairman's message, there still remain many concerns within local Councils for the future of weed management and control as a result of the recommendations of the Natural Resources Commission report into the Review of Weed Management in NSW and the Independent Local Government Review Panels review and reform of Local Government in NSW.

Whilst the results of both these reviews are yet to be known, it is considered that no matter what the outcomes may be, our Council is in a stable and sound financial position 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 2013-2014 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, relating to the effectiveness of the Plan in achieving its environmental, economic, social and civic leadership/governance objectives over the past four years.

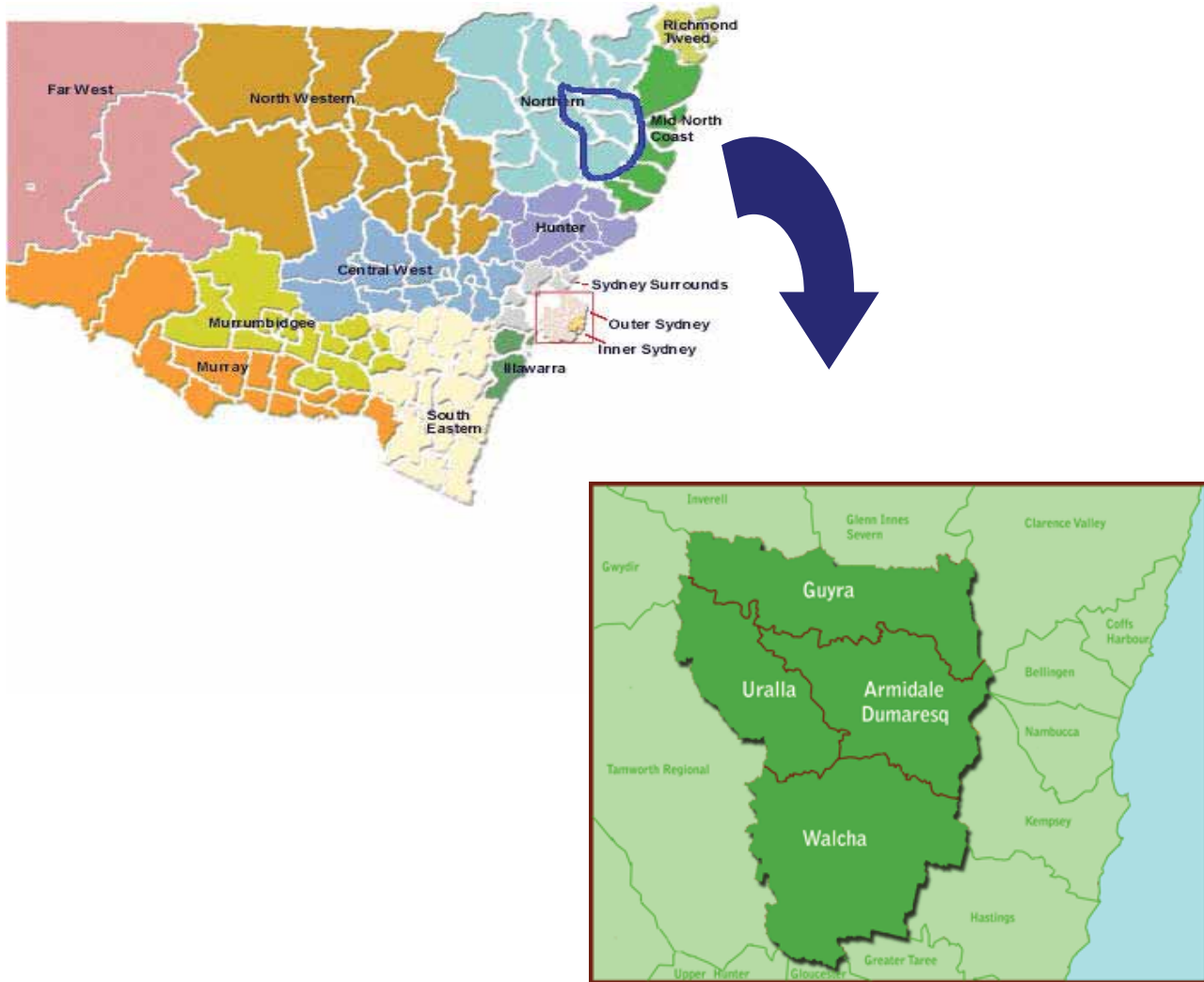


Walcha township

5. NEW ENGLAND WEEDS AUTHORITY REGION – PROFILE

The New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council (trading as the New England Weeds Authority) 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.

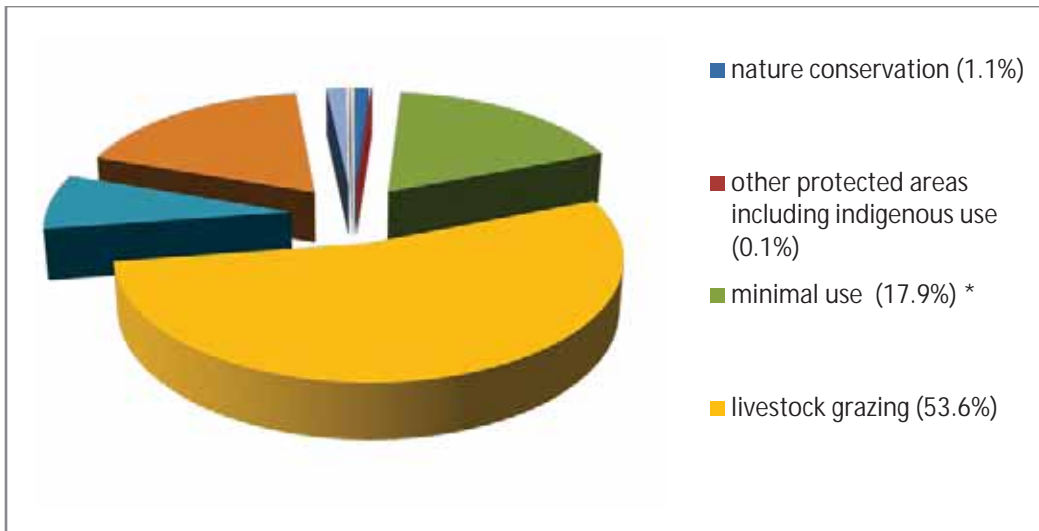


Armidale city

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 Tropical Soda control work in the Macleay, 2014

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 State Government through 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 2013-2014

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 2013 - 2023 as part of their commitment towards achieving the strategic objectives contained within the Plan.

ARMIDALE DUMARESQ COUNCIL:

Councillor Herman Beyersdorf
Councillor Andrew Murat

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 2013-2014
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 2013-2014:

Fees and Expenses	Amount
Chairpersons Allowance	\$5,384.00
Councillor Fees	\$11,865.68
Miscellaneous expenses (conferences, accommodation & catering)	\$3,728.39
Interstate and Overseas Travel	0
Total	\$20,978.07

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 2013-2014

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

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.

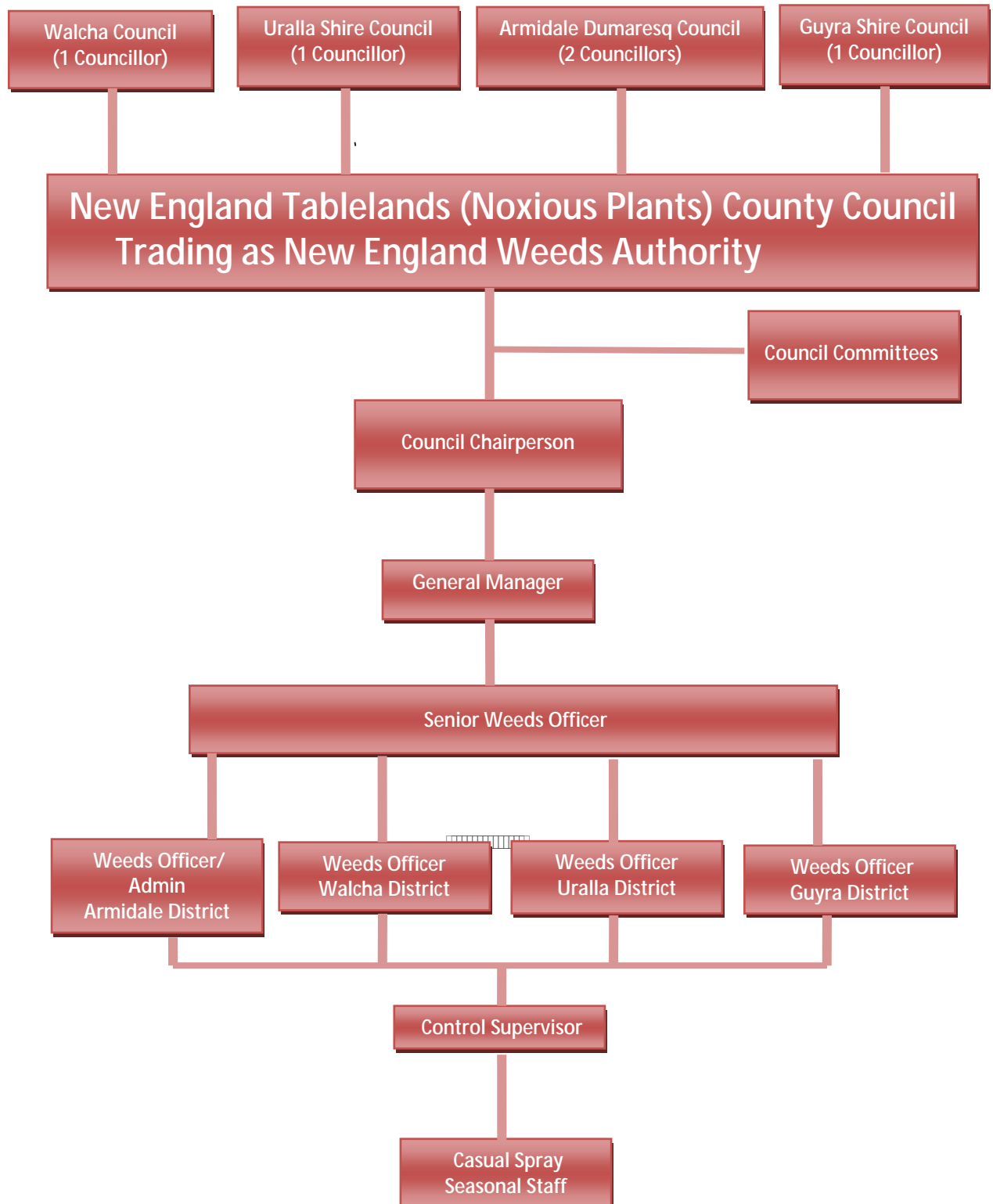


Chart 2: Organisational Structure

10. THE BUSINESS ACTIVITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 – 2023 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.

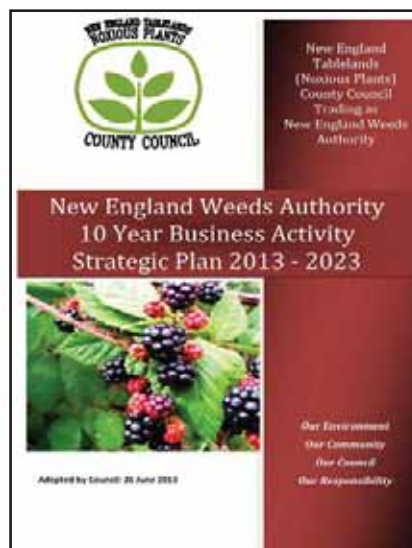
In meeting the outcomes of our Plan, Council has a long term focus that addresses issues about environmental, economic, social and civic leadership objectives as well as reflecting the community engagement processes that have been undertaken by our constituent Councils.

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 was finalised and adopted by Council on 26 June 2013.



New England Weeds Authority 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2013 - 2023

11. THE DELIVERY PLAN REPORT 2013-2014

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 are 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.

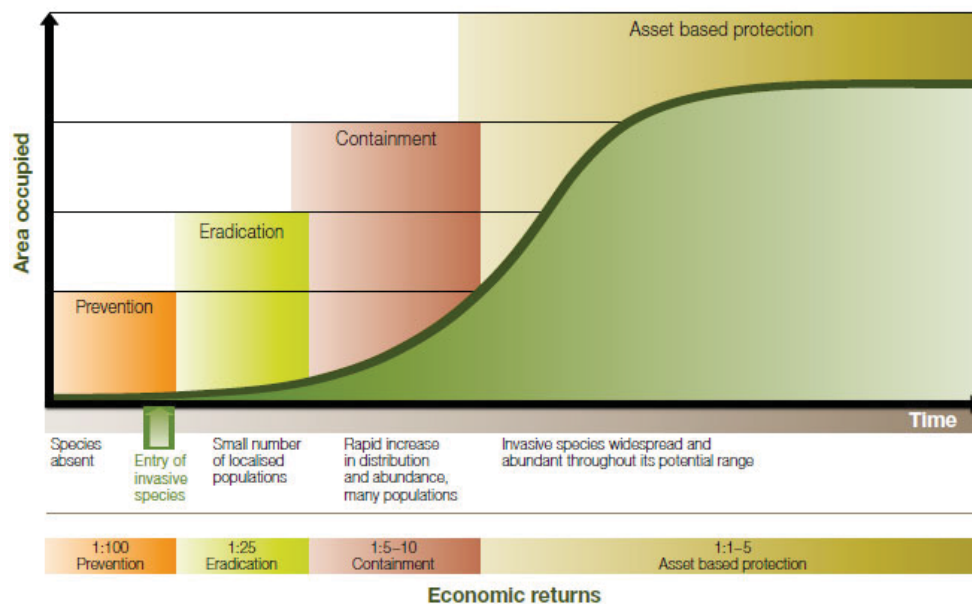


Chart 3: Weed Invasion Curve²

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 Johns 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 2013 – 2023.

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 NSW and Local Land Services) 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 2013 - 2017

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 2013 - 2014

- 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 2013 - 2014

- 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 Local Land Services 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 2013 - 2014

- Review of Council's policies undertaken as identified by review process with new policies adopted by Council.
- Annual Operational Plan, Four Year Delivery Program and Long Term Resourcing Strategy reviewed and updated.
- Business Activity Strategic Plan 2013 -2023 adopted.
- 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 2013 - 2014

- 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 reviewed and updated.
- Council's Workforce strategy reviewed and updated.
- Risk Management Action Plan objectives achieved.

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 2013 - 2014

- Statutory Financial Plans and returns completed and lodged by due date in accordance with accepted accounting standards.
- Constituent member Councils provided with Annual Report 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 2013 - 2014

- Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Strategy reaffirmed by Council and Enterprise Risk Management Matrix reviewed and updated for organisation.
- Council's Investment and Long Term Financial Strategies reviewed and updated.

DELIVERY PROGRAM 2013 – 2017

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 2013 - 2014

- Annual Inspection and weed control program hampered by severe drought conditions throughout the region resulting in property inspection targets not being 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 ongoing 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 2013 - 2014

- 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 8 Control reports issued during the reporting period and 37 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 2013 - 2014

- 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 2013 - 2014

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

- 4 agricultural shows in the area;
- 5 field days;
- 1 Landcare event;
- 2 school visits;
- Presentations to University of New England and TAFE students;
- Agquip.

There were 340 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 2013 - 2014

- 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 2013 - 2014

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

- The inspection of 65 High Risk Sites;
- 346 High Risk Inspections completed covering 145,278 hectares;
- 490 Private Property Inspections completed covering 207,333 hectares;
- 2,540 kms of High Risk Roadside inspections completed covering 12,700 hectares;
- 12 High Risk Waterway inspections completed covering 2,940 hectares;
- 3,953 kms of Roadside inspections completed covering 19,765 hectares and
- 32 inspections of National Parks, Railways, Travelling Stock Routes, Recreational areas were carried out covering 6,582 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.

The severe drought conditions during the reporting period had a significant influence suppressing density and germinations.

DELIVERY PROGRAM 2013 - 2017

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 2013 - 2014

- During 2013 – 2014 the Authority was successful in funding applications to the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services amounting to a total of \$150,000 (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 2013 – 2014 period amounted to \$406,316, 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 2013 - 2014

- 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 2013 – 2023.
- Constituent Councils provided with draft Annual Operational Plan for comment.
- Constituent Councils provided with Annual Report.
- Applications to Local Land Services 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 Weed Management in NSW 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 2013 - 2017

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 2013 - 2014

- All functional activities, support and auspicing of the NIWAC Weeds Action Program and Project Officer were completed in accordance with the outcomes set for 2013 – 2014.
- 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 556 High Risk Sites over 2,442 hectares
- 2,358 High Risk Private Property Inspections completed covering 1,469,751 hectares
- 2,774 Private Property Inspections completed covering 640,120 hectares
- 17,944 kms of High Risk Roadside inspections completed covering 89,721 hectares
- 546 High Risk Waterway inspections completed covering 529,866 hectares
- 27,978 kms roadside inspections completed covering 156,910 hectares
- 556 inspections of high priority sites including National Parks, Railways, Travelling Stock Routes, Recreational areas covering 2,442 hectares

13. OTHER PROJECTS

The New England Weeds Authority continues to work closely with the NSW Department of Primary Industries, local Landcare and Local Land Services Authorities in regards to weed control projects within the region.

During 2013 – 2014 the following projects were carried out to the value of \$391,925:

- Reducing Priority Weed Species threats to ecosystems and species with Northern Tablelands Local Land Services and NIWAC - \$150,000.
- Upper Macleay Vine Weeds Stage 2 in conjunction with Macleay Valley Landcare - \$30,000.
- Weeds Tour for Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee in partnership with North West and Northern Tablelands Local Land Services - \$14,925.
- Production of a WONS/Environmental/Noxious Weeds Educational DVDs in partnership with North West Local Land Services \$8,000.
- Production of a Weeds DVD to educate the community about key emerging weeds species in partnership with the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services - \$12,000.
- Lead Agency for the NSW DPI funded NIWAC Innovative Project “Integrated aerial surveillance, thermal imaging and mapping pilot project” - \$177,000 over 2 years.



Photo: NSW DPI announcement of successful Innovative Projects – Armidale September 2013
Professor Salah Sukkarieh - The University of Sydney, Hon Katrina Hodgkinson – Minister for Primary Industries,
Mr Adam Marshall - MP Northern Tablelands, Clr Maria Woods, Chair – New England Weeds Authority.

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, risk management, education and extension programs, and matters arising from the implementation of the Local Government State Award and the Work Health and Safety Act.

The Corporate Training Program was reviewed in 2013 so as to allow staff to continue to develop to a highly competent and professional standard.

Staff training included risk assessment, community based social marketing, recognising water weeds, biological weed control, Chemcert refresher course, senior first aid and traffic control programs.



Serrated Tussock Field Day with local graziers and landholders

16. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

a. Major Contracts and Tenders awarded by Council 2013 - 2014

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 2013 – 2014.

c. Work carried out on Private Land

Council undertook various private works in relation to weed control on private land in 2013 – 2014, 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 2013 – 2014 was \$ 33,248.

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 2013 – 2014 reporting 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 2013 – 2014.

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 2013 – 2014.



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.



Macleay Valley, Armidale Dumaresq Council

18. GENERAL PURPOSE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS –
YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2014

