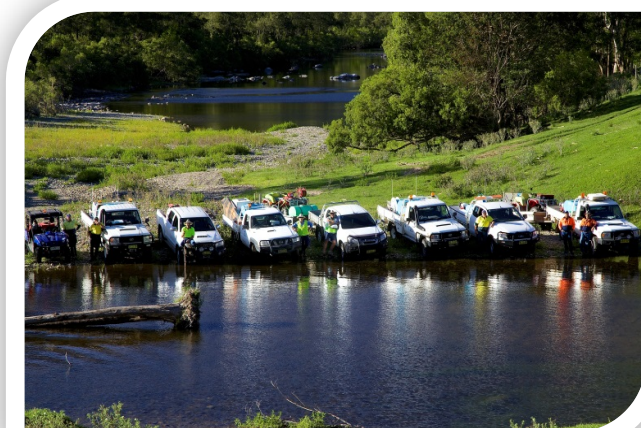




New England Weeds Authority

10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027 & Resourcing Strategy



Adopted by Council: 20th June 2017



Our Environment
Our Community
Our Council
Our Responsibility

New England Weeds Authority

10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017-2027

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS & ABBREVIATIONS

BASP	New England Weeds Authority Business Activity Strategic Plan
BIS	Biosecurity Information System
BSA 2015	Biosecurity Act 2015
CAP	Catchment Action Plan
CLR	Councillor
Constituent Councils	Armidale Regional Council, Uralla Shire Council and Walcha Council. These local government areas constitute the area of operation for the New England Weeds Authority.
Council	New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council, trading as New England Weeds Authority
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DWO	District Weeds Officer
GM	General Manager
ISP	Invasive Species Plan 2015 - 2022
LGA 1993	NSW Local Government Act 1993
NIWAC	Northern Inland Weeds Advisory Committee
NT LLS	Northern Tablelands Local Land Services
MERI	Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement
NEWA	New England Weeds Authority
NTRWC	Northern Tablelands Regional Weed Committee
NSW DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
QBL	Quadruple Bottom Line
RPO	Regional Project Officer
RSWMP	Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan
SOE	State of the Environment
SWO	Senior Weeds Officer
WAP 1520	NSW Weeds Action Program 2015 – 2020
WO	Weed Officer
WoNS	Weeds of National Significance
RSWMP	Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan

COUNTY COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

New England Weeds Authority
129 Rusden St
ARMIDALE NSW 2350

All Correspondence to be addressed to:
General Manager
New England Weeds Authority

PO Box 881, Armidale NSW 2350

Telephone: (02) 6770 3602

Fax: (02) 6771 1893

Email: newa@newa.nsw.gov.au

Web site: www.newa.com.au

1. INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRPERSON & GENERAL MANAGER

On behalf of Council we are pleased to present the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 - 2027 to the community, our member Councils and other stakeholders.

The Plan has been prepared by Council on behalf of the New England Tablelands community and our constituent member Councils of Armidale Regional, Uralla Shire and Walcha Council in line with the requirements of the Integrated Planning and Reporting legislation introduced by the NSW Government in 2010.

Our Council adopted its first Business Activity Strategic Plan 2012 – 2022 in April 2012 and its 2013 – 2023 Plan in June 2013 following the ordinary election of Councillors in September 2012.

As a result of the ordinary election of Councillors for the constituent Councils of our County Council in September 2016, legislation requires that Council must review and endorse its existing Plan, amend the Plan or develop and endorse a new Plan, before the 30th June following the election.

The opportunity has been taken to comprehensively review the previous Plan and make amendments where appropriate to ensure it captures the strategic direction Council wishes to take over the life of the Plan.

Council has also been mindful of the State Government's NSW Local Government reform process under the "Fit for the Future" program that resulted in the gazettal of the Local Government (Council Amalgamations) Proclamation whereby on 12th May 2016 constituent member Councils of Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra were amalgamated to form the new Armidale Regional Council. Dr Ian Tiley was appointed as the Administrator and holds the functions of the elected Council and Mayor until the election of Councillors of the new Armidale Regional Council scheduled for 9th September 2017.

County Councils differ from other Councils in that instead of producing 10 Year Community Strategic Plans, the legislation requires them to develop a 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan, under the provisions of the Local Government (General) Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Regulation 2010, and Sections 201, 218 and 219 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 under the Local Government Act 1993.

The purpose of this Plan is to identify the Council's and the communities main priorities and aspirations for the future, and to plan strategies for achieving these objectives in relation to scheduled priority and invasive weed management and control within the New England region.

In meeting the requirements of the legislation our Plan has a 10 year long term focus that addresses issues about environmental, economic, social and civic leadership (governance) objectives, as well as reflecting the community engagement processes that have been undertaken by our constituent Councils.

The principal activities on which the Plan is based looks at measuring, monitoring and reporting progress on the delivery of the Plan.

In the implementation of these activities, a Four Year Delivery Program, being the reference for all principal activities undertaken by Council during its term of office, and the Annual

Operational Plan which details the individual projects and activities that will be undertaken each year to achieve these commitments is pivotal to the success of the Plan.

In association with the 4 year Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan is the Resourcing Strategy which focuses on matters that are the responsibility of Council in the provision of management and control of scheduled priority and invasive weeds to our community and constituent Councils.

The three components of the Resourcing Strategy are:

- The Long Term Financial Plan (10 years);
- The Workforce Strategy and
- The Asset Management Plan.

An essential element of developing this Plan has been the involvement of the community. To this end our Council has relied mainly on, and appreciated the comprehensive community consultation processes previously undertaken by our constituent Councils.


The Plan will provide a blue print for Council's operations in regard to weed management and control for the next ten years, with targeted achievements for 4 years under the Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan.

In developing these plans, it will lead to significant accountability and transparency in Council's operations and the ability for the community, constituent member Councils and other stakeholders to assess the performance of Council. In delivering the adopted plans and achieving our vision, strategic objectives and principal activities we will together make a difference to agricultural sustainability and our natural environment in the New England region through effective and efficient management, and control of scheduled priority and invasive weeds.

We commend this Plan to our community, member Councils and stakeholders.



Mark Dusting
Chairperson



Wayne Deer
General Manager

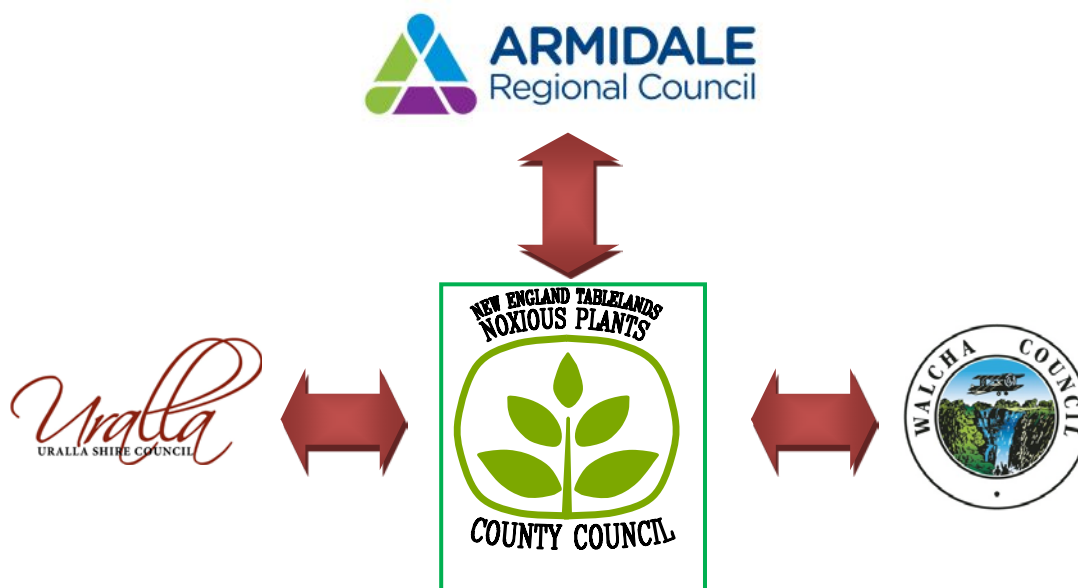


Diagram 1: Member Councils of the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council

2. THE STORY OF THE NEW ENGLAND TABLELANDS (NOXIOUS PLANTS) COUNTY COUNCIL – A BRIEF HISTORY AND THE PROCLAMATION

A conference was held in Armidale on the 13th June 1946 for the purpose of discussing a proposal to form a County Council to deal with the '*eradication*' of noxious weeds common to the area. A number of community leaders believed for a long time that a specialist organisation should be formed to address the serious weed situation that was present on the Northern Tablelands. All Councils in the region were canvassed for support, the response was generally enthusiastic. The final number of participating Councils was limited to what was then considered to be a workable size.

On the 7th May 1947, Lieutenant - General John Northcott, Governor of the State of NSW with the advice of the Executive Council, in pursuance of the Local Government Act, 1919 proclaimed the County Council district for Local Government purposes under the name of New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants)County Council. The delegations to the Council constituted the power to exercise or perform for the benefit of the County District powers under the Local Government Act and Noxious Weeds Act relating to;

- the eradication of noxious plants;
- power to borrow by way of limited overdraft;
- to issue mortgage deeds or bonds;
- for securing the repayment of the principle and interest of any money borrowed;
- secure loans;
- buildings for public purposes;
- contract, sale and lease of property;
- entry powers;
- powers in relations to works and undertakings;
- power to ensure, power to do necessary acts;
- legal and other proceedings and
- recovery of debts.

Inaugural constituents of the Council were Regional, Gostwyck and Guyra Shire Councils. It appears that our Council was amongst the first County Councils formed for the control of noxious weeds, if not the first. Regional Shire Council acted as administrative headquarters, a role it continued to perform right up until 1989. The foundation Chairman was Clr. R H Williams and Mr. L. deV. Slade became the first County Clerk, a joint appointment with the host Shire.

Constituent contributions were set at 300 Pounds for the first year, and 400 Pounds p.a. thereafter. The Hon. D. H. Drummond, MLA, advised Council in July 1947 that he had approved a grant to the Council of 1250 Pounds and asked if Council was prepared to accept. Council replied in the affirmative stating that it was only too pleased to accept. A precarious state of finances arose in 1949, an experience not uncommon throughout the history of Council. Armidale City Council joined the County in 1955. The contribution for the City was 250 Pounds, which incidentally, did not change until 1962. Walcha Shire Council became the last member, joining in 1971.

The current constituent members of the County Council are Uralla Shire Council, Walcha Council and Armidale Regional Council (previously Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire which were amalgamated on 12th May 2016).

There are reminders throughout the early records that these were indeed difficult times for Council in the immediate post war period. For example, Council was advised in 1949 that petrol rationing would again come into force and that its quota would be reduced by 15%. The cost of herbicides was high, and in view of the quantities required, well beyond the resources of Council. Records show that the noxious weeds lists of each of the constituent Councils were different, so uniformity of approach became an early issue. Without any doubt Blackberry was the overriding concern at the time. In some places blackberries were forming virtual hedges along fence lines and providing excellent harbour for rabbits. Many areas were so heavily infested that the best grazing land was rendered unproductive and access to watering points severely restricted. Sheep were particularly affected by becoming entangled in the long canes.

At the time, none of the constituent Councils were employing staff on weed control. Their combined inventory of equipment consisted of only 3 knapsack sprayers and some miscellaneous chemicals, which pre-dated the hormone herbicides. These herbicides were quite hazardous to man and beast alike with recordings of injuries to spray operators and stock losses. The old herbicides were only used for a brief time before the advent of phenoxy herbicides sometime in 1948. This new substance, which was named 245-T, revolutionised control and offered results far beyond that previously experienced, with a much greater margin of safety. The use of 245-T continued until a new more effective generation of herbicides became available in the 1980s.

Council's first priority for physical control of weeds appears to have centred on Blackberries on the New England highway and radiated out from the principal centres for a maximum of 6 miles. This was increased to 15 miles by 1956. Several requests were received to extend this but Council stood firm stating that was all it could afford. Employing contract sprayers was tried, but was abandoned in favour of using Councils own staff and equipment, a practice continued to the present time.

The co-operative association between Council and the Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board can be traced back to 1949 when the Board advised that it was willing to clean up stock routes. Council minutes contain several references to advice being received from the Board about noxious weeds infestations on private land. The Board also provided information to the County about where fodder had been introduced from other districts that were affected by Serrated Tussock. This could be the clue in pinpointing the time of its arrival into New England.

Serrated Tussock was first recorded in 1959 and it was about that time that Council made an all out effort to achieve control using its own equipment to assist landholders. Paterson's Curse must have been well distributed throughout the area judging by the number of references to it. St John's Wort was present at several locations.

An illustration of Council's resolve can be measured by the fact that it issued 230 Notices to control noxious weeds in 1955. This appears to have followed a period of gentle persuasion encouraging landholders to voluntarily control weeds.

Regional co-operation was an early objective of our Council which initiated moves for a conference, that was held in Tamworth in 1956 to co-ordinate control programmes in the north of the State. A move by our Council, led to the establishment of the New England Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee in 1996.

Organised tours of inspection were carried out by Councillors as early as 1955 to observe progress. These have continued through to the present time as an important review function.

During the 1960s further consolidation of programmes took place. Large quantities of spray

material were used and also sold to the general public. The practice at the time was to buy in 44 gallon drums and decant. Orders of several hundred and up to 1000 gallons at a time were not uncommon. Council was instrumental in keeping the price at the lowest level possible for landowners. The net result was a substantial reduction in noxious weeds through the 60s and 70s. Progress was punctuated by good seasons and bad, by times of prosperity and severe economic downturns. Noxious weed control continued on private land throughout the County largely due to the example set by Council in its commitment to bringing to order areas under its control.

The County Council has always searched for equipment that offered improved efficiency and productivity gains. The old piston pumps powered by heavy petrol and diesel motors were replaced in the early 70s by radialflo pumps and lightweight motors. Hoses that formerly consisted of heavy rubber construction about 25 metres in length were replaced at about that time by ones of lightweight multiple layered plastic of 100 metres. Diaphragm pumps were introduced in the mid 80s. This resulted in a significant reduction in the down time formerly experienced. The next and possibly the most revolutionary of all improvements to equipment was the introduction of the Quikspray system in the early 90s. This had the effect of lifting outputs by as much as 50% in some cases. The present fleet of 7 special spray rigs are all equipped with these units.

The type of vehicles used by Council was also closely scrutinised. The old 30 cwt 2 wheel drive trucks served their purpose but were upgraded to 4 wheel drive units beginning in 1970. This allowed treatment of noxious weeds in places that was not possible before and equally importantly, provided the means of inspecting private land more thoroughly and faster. These units also allowed Council to develop a competitive private work facility which continues through to the present time.

Aerial property inspections using helicopters were introduced in the 90s. This opened up whole new horizons for the gathering of a vast amount of contemporaneous information. Systems were developed to efficiently document this data.

All these improvements gave Council the means to realise more ambitious objectives, such as inspecting private properties on a 3 year cycle and physical control of noxious weeds on all land for which Council is responsible each year.

In 2013 Council was successful in obtaining a grant from the NSW Department of Primary Industries Innovative Project 2013 – 2015, for \$220,000 to conduct a feasibility study and cost benefit analysis of integrating new technology including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's), thermal imaging and a proven mapping system for the detection and surveillance of high risk invasive weed species. This project resulted in a comprehensive report, taken up by many agencies. Council now has two accredited staff members to fly UAV's and has purchased four UAV's to assist in weed surveillance work.

A major change for noxious weeds administration occurred in July 1993, when the Noxious Weeds Act came into effect. Up until that time, weeds were administered under the Local Government Act of 1919. This was the first time noxious weeds were dealt with in a separate piece of legislation. The Act is much more descriptive in regard to roles and responsibilities, and for the first time made an attempt to address a former inequity, in that it binds the Crown.

Further legislative changes occurred in 2016 with the introduction of the new Biosecurity Act 2015 and Biosecurity Regulation 2017 which encompasses the management of animal pests, diseases and weed risks. As a result some 14 previous Acts and pieces of legislation including the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 have been repealed.

Property inspection records management has gone from very basic, kept in exercise books, to the present system based on the Corio road numbering model. This represents a very significant improvement in streamlining inspection activities. New computer assisted technology has taken this a stage further, adding a new degree of sophistication and combined with other improvements, hopefully even better service to the general public. The introduction of the new WeedTr@cer computerised recording and mapping system in 2008 allowed for welcomed digital advancement. This technology has been further enhanced with the NSW Department of Primary Industries mandatory reporting requirements being introduced in 2016 through the new Biosecurity Information System (BIS). As a result Council upgraded its computer system in 2016 to the Chartis Technology Intramap recording and mapping system.

The County Council has been fortunate in that it has been served by a number of Councillors that have had the vision to set it on the right path initially and develop policies over a 70 year period that have kept the Council at the forefront of noxious weeds management and control. A total of 85 Councillors, including 15 Chairmen, have been involved over that time. The challenge for the future will be in maintaining the present integrity of grazing and environmental systems, possibly in a climate of increased weed threats, for example from exotic grasses, coupled with insufficient resources most notably staffing levels on private land and from more intense public scrutiny. Scheduled priority weed control is a dynamic force as evidenced by past events and will demand nothing less from those pursuing their control than the continued commitment this Council has demonstrated over the last 70 years.

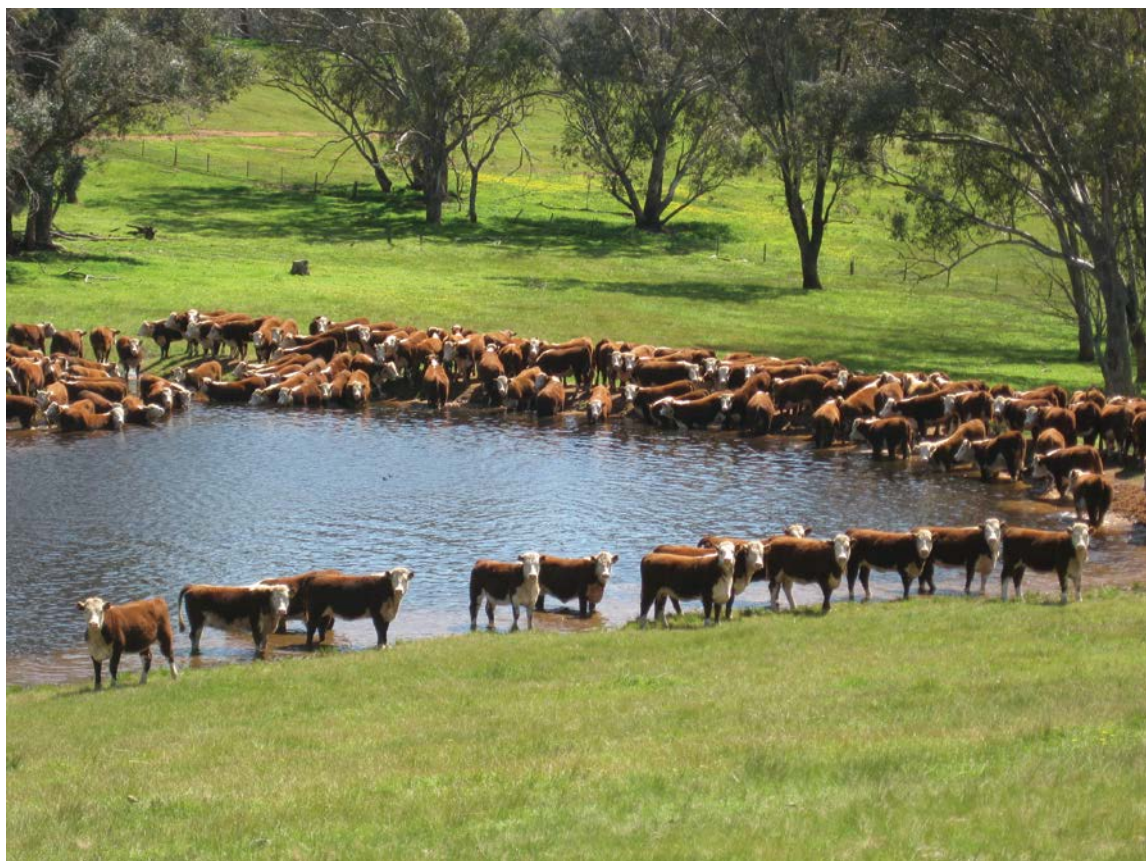


Photo 1: Cattle in the New England

3. OUR COUNCIL – THE NEW ENGLAND TABLELANDS (NOXIOUS PLANTS) COUNTY COUNCIL

The New England community is represented by three Councillors from the constituent Councils of Armidale Regional (1 member), Uralla Shire (1 member) and Walcha Council (1 member), under the leadership of an annually elected Chairperson. Noting that following the amalgamation of previous constituent member Councils of Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire on 12th May 2016 to form the new Armidale Regional Council with the subsequent appointment of an Administrator until elections are held on the 9th September 2017, which will result in further nominated representatives from Armidale Regional Council to Council.

The Councillors have provided strong leadership in the development of the County Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 - 2027 as part of their commitment towards achieving the strategic objectives contained within the Plan.



Chairperson
Cllr Mark Dusting
Uralla Shire Council



Deputy Chairperson
Cllr Scott Kermode
Walcha Council



Dr Ian Tiley
Administrator Delegate
Armidale Regional Council

**Photo 2: Councillors/ Delegates of the New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants)
County Council.**

4. OUR ORGANISATION

New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council trades as the New England Weeds Authority (NEWA). The General Manager has overall accountability to Council for the organisations delivery of the 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 - 2027.

The following chart shows the organisational structure.

NEWA Organisational Structure

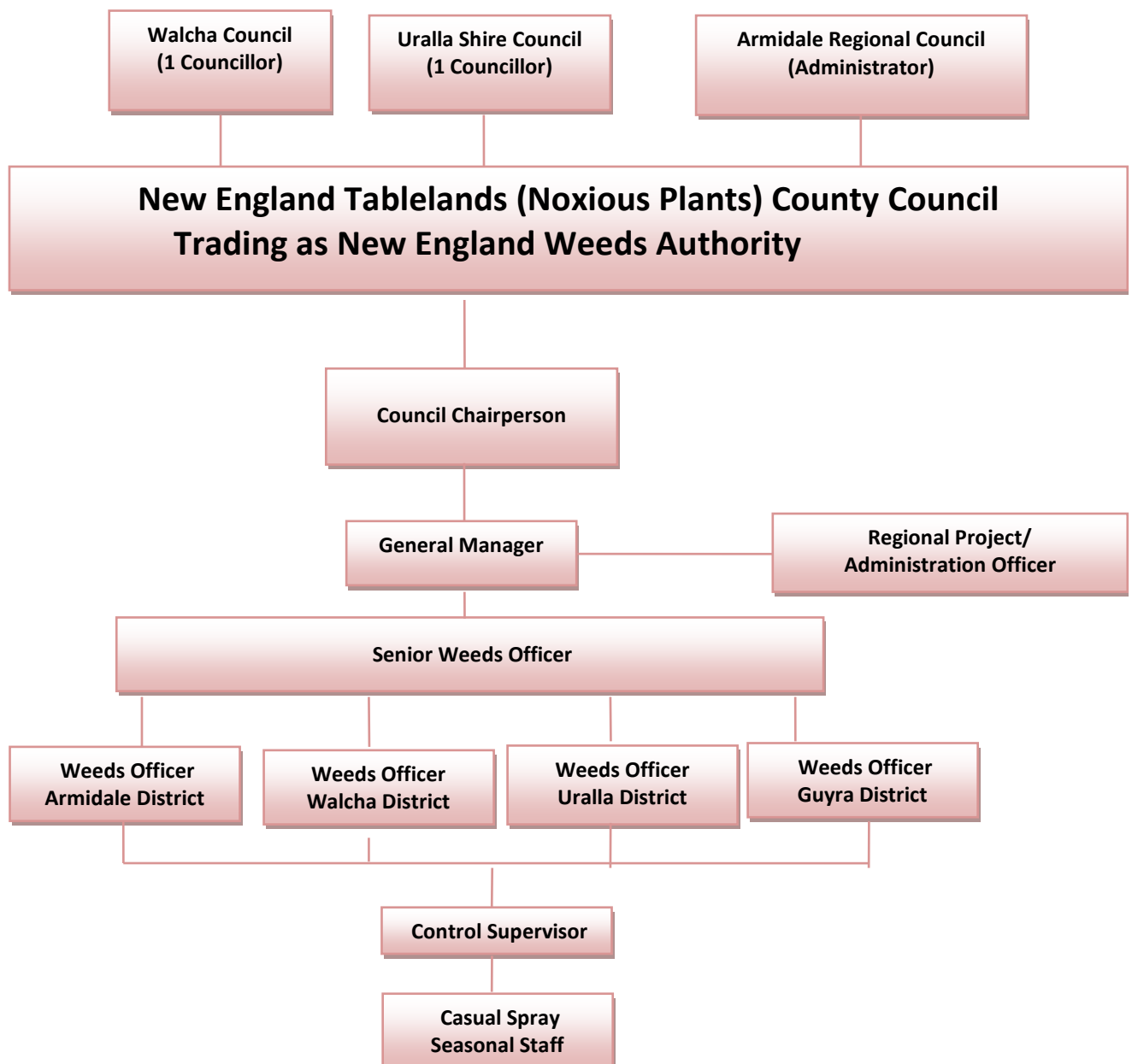


Chart 1: Organisational Structure

5. INTEGRATED PLANNING AND REPORTING LEGISLATION

a. Legislation and Background

All Councils across NSW are required by the Local Government Act 1993 to develop a Community Strategic Plan, forming part of an Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

County Councils differ from other Councils in that the legislation requires them to develop a 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan, under the provisions of the Local Government (General) Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Regulation 2010, and Sections 201, 218 and 219 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 under the Local Government Act 1993.

The Business Activity Strategic Plan sits at the top of Council's planning hierarchy. It identifies the Council's main priorities and expectations for weed control and management across its member Council areas for the future and ways to achieve these goals.

The constituent members of our Council are Armidale Regional, Uralla Shire, and Walcha Council.

The following extract from the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 details the provisions relating to the integrated planning and reporting process for County Councils;

Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 Division 8 – County Councils

218. Application of planning and reporting provisions to county councils

Part 2 (Strategic Planning) of Chapter 13 of the Act applies to county councils with the following exceptions and modifications:

- a) section 402 (community strategic plan) does not apply to county councils*
- b) each county council is required to have a business activity strategic plan as provided by clause 219.*
- c) a reference in a provision of that Part to a community strategic plan is (in the application of the provision to and in respect of a county council) to be read as a reference to a business activity strategic plan.*

219. Business activity strategic plan of county council

- 1. A business activity strategic plan is a plan developed and endorsed by a county council that:*
 - a) identifies the main business activity priorities of the council covering a period of at least 10 years from when the plan is endorsed, and*
 - b) establishes strategic objectives together with strategies for achieving those objectives, and*
 - c) has been developed having due regard to the community strategic plans of the county council's constituent councils and in consultation with those councils.*
- 2. Following an ordinary election of councillors for the constituent councils of a county council, the county council must review the business activity strategic plan*

before 30 June following the election. The council may endorse the existing plan, endorse amendments to the existing plan or develop and endorse a new business activity strategic plan, as appropriate to ensure that the council has a business activity strategic plan covering at least the next 10 years.

3. Within 28 days after a business activity strategic plan is endorsed, the council must post a copy of the plan on the council's website and provide a copy to the Director-General. A copy of a business activity strategic plan may be provided to the Director-General by notifying the Minister to the appropriate URL link to access the plan on the council's website.

The plan must:

- Have a long term focus with a minimum of 10 years;
- Address key issues relating to social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives;
- Be developed using an adopted community engagement strategy that enables Council to communicate and consult with the community;
- Outline the principles on which the plan is based;
- Provide for measuring, monitoring and reporting progress in implementing the plan.

The Council must also develop a Resourcing Strategy, a Delivery Program and an Operational Plan to guide and support the implementation of the Business Activity Strategic Plan.

Diagram 2 shows how Council's 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 -2027 forms part of the wider Integrated Planning and Reporting framework.

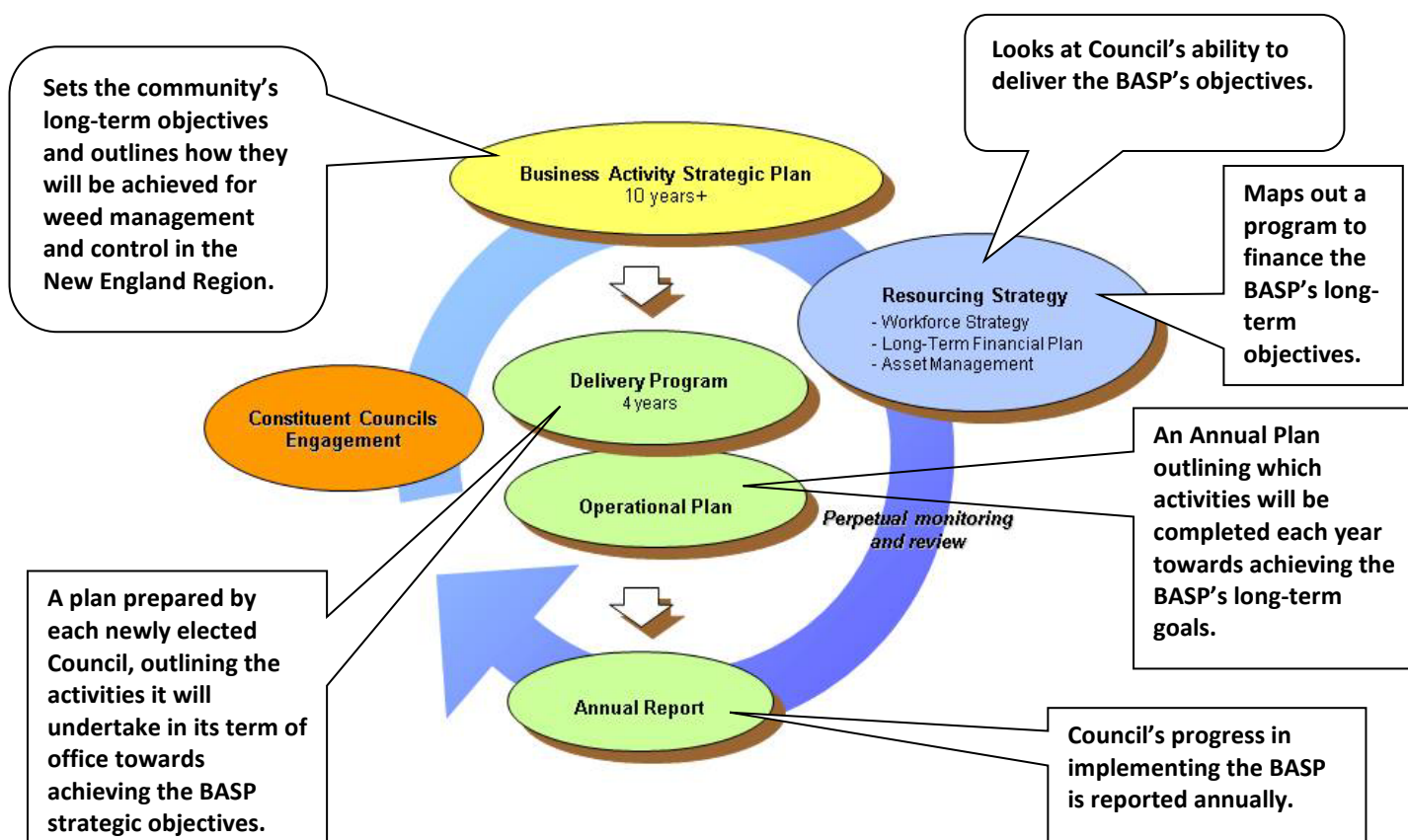


Diagram 2: Integrated Planning and Reporting framework

b. How the Plan will work

The County Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan is part of a network of plans and strategies that will help to deliver long-term weed control and management outcomes. In preparing the objectives and strategies of the Business Activity Strategic Plan, we have been mindful of the key directions of the National Weeds Strategy, the NSW Invasive Species Plan, the NSW Weeds Action Program and Biosecurity Act 2015. In addition the Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans that apply to the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services Regional Weed Committee area for which the New England Weeds Authority is the lead agency for the organisation in the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program, have been taken into account.

Our Plan reflects these directions, but in a way that is tailored to building capacity within the community to address the control and management of scheduled priority and invasive weeds within the region. It is also expected that the key directions of our Plan will help to inform and shape future regional natural resource management plans by providing feedback on our local communities' priorities. The following Diagram 3 shows how the Business Activity Strategic Plan links in with other planning activities at state, regional and local levels.

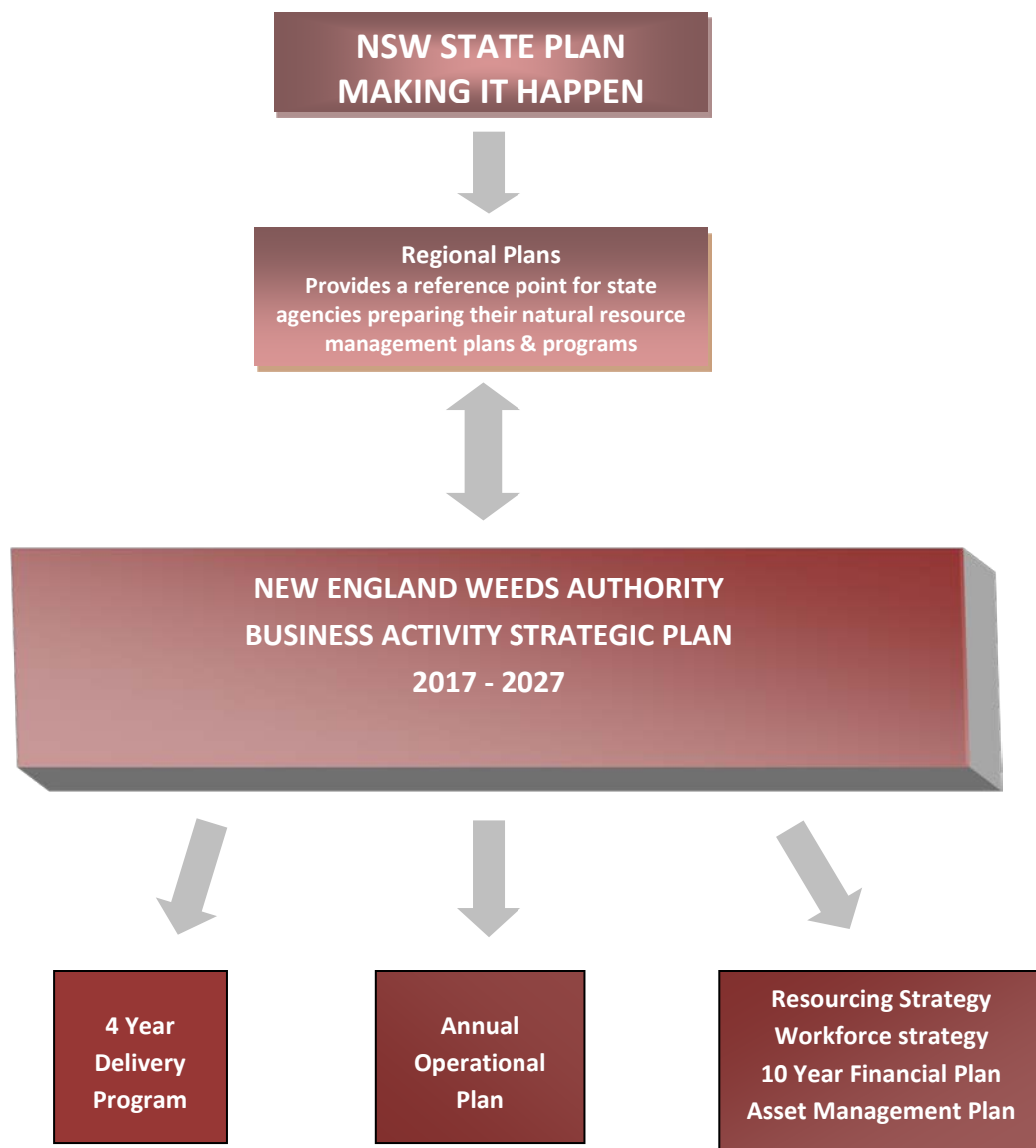


Diagram 3: Business Activity Strategic Plan Framework links

c. Working in Partnership

In developing our 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan we have been mindful of the review process our member Councils have been undergoing as part of the legislation that requires them to undertake long-term community planning and of the importance of community consultation. Early on in their processes formal approaches were made to each Council to be involved in their respective community engagement activities and for appropriate input to the relevant Environmental Sections of the development of the review of their Community Strategic Plans. This partnering in the community engagement processes has been most helpful in developing our Business Activity Strategic Plan.

In addition our Council's strategy for raising State agency awareness of the issues in our Business Activity Strategic Plan is to form closer links with the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, the National Parks & Wildlife Service, State Forests, and the Department of Primary Industries, and to work more co-operatively with our neighbouring Regional Weed Committees to encourage a joint approach to State agencies on areas of similar interest in weed management and control.

d. Informing other plans

The Business Activity Strategic Plan will form an important reference point for weed management and control planning activities at regional and local levels. State agencies preparing their plans and programs for our region will be encouraged to build their weed control activities around the objectives and strategies of our Plan. One of the key opportunities to achieve this is through the Northern Tablelands Regional Weed Committee network, which brings together the various State agencies and local Councils of the New England and Northern Tablelands together to help deliver the outcomes of the NSW Weeds Action Program, and to work co-operatively on regional plans and programs of common interest.



Photo 3: Serrated Tussock Field Day with local graziers and landholders.

e. Connecting with Council plans, State, Regional and Local Weed Control Strategies

The New England Weeds Authority Business Activity Strategic Plan is designed to link directly with Council's Four Year Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan, together with the 10 year Financial Plan as well as connecting with other national, state, regional and local weed control and management strategies and plans. Chart 2 illustrates the connection of the Plans under the new legislation.

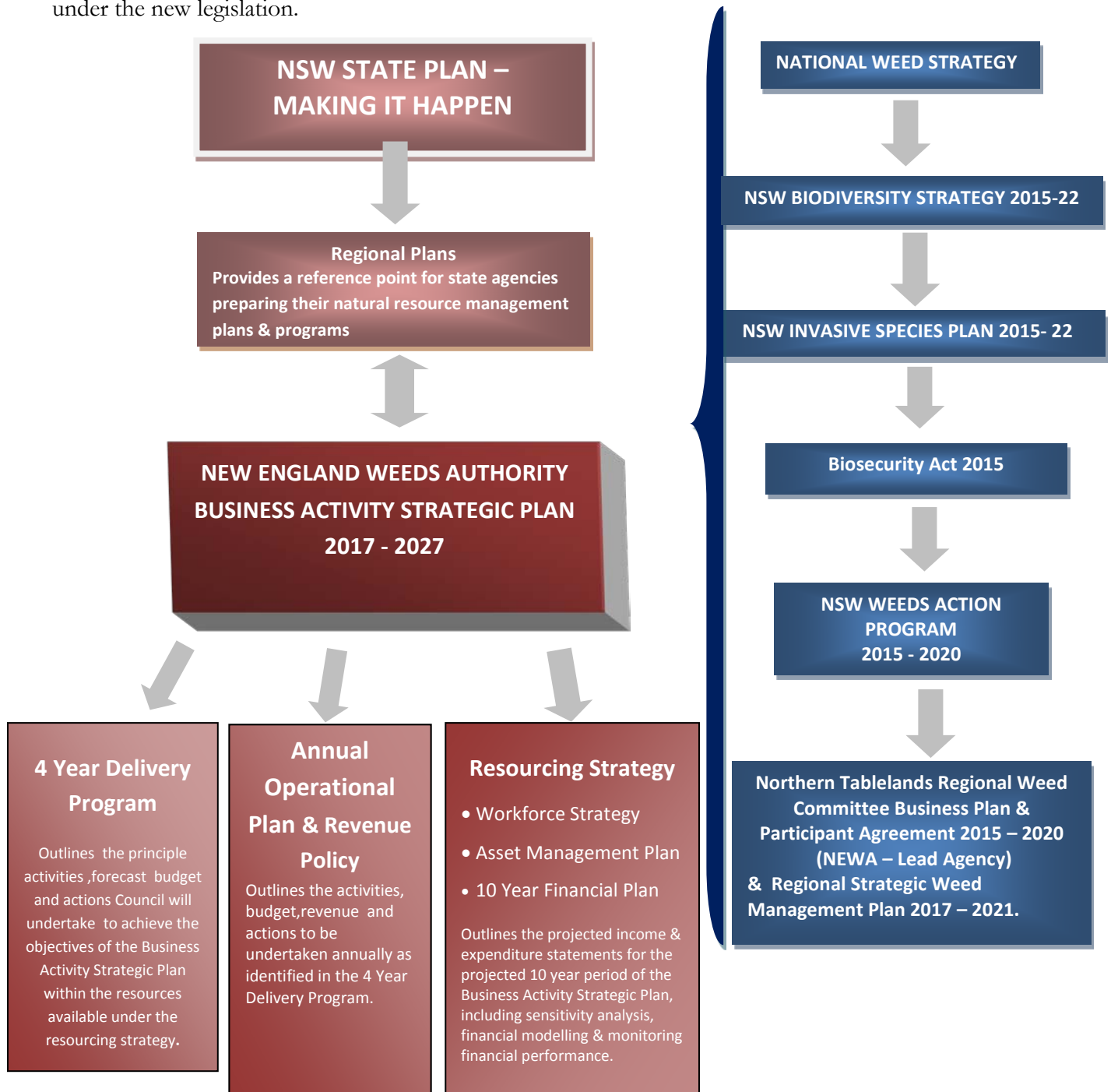


Chart 2: Plan connections to State, Regional and Local Weed Management & Control Strategies

f. Reporting on progress

As the Business Activity Strategic Plan addresses such a long timeframe (10 years) it is important to keep track of our progress in delivering its outcomes.

Newly elected representatives to the County Council must review the Business Activity Strategic Plan before 30 June following the four year election cycle. To do this, the newly elected Council will endorse the existing plan, endorse amendments to the existing plan or develop and endorse a new business activity strategic plan as appropriate, to ensure that the Council has a business activity strategic plan covering at least the next 10 years.

Central to this will be the preparation of a further 4 year delivery program developing a list of actions to help achieve the strategies and principle activities of the business activity strategic plan. The actions will then be broken down into more detail in the annual operational plan. In this way broad strategic objectives can be translated into practical projects.

On an annual basis, 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 Annual Operational Plan. The report also includes information that is prescribed by the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005.

g. Key Principles

The key principles applied in the development of the objectives and strategies of the Business Activity Strategic Plan are;

i) **Effective Governance**

Council must provide leadership and continued improvement in the sustainable resourcing of the delivery of weed management and control programs to meet the member Councils and communities expectations.

ii) **Ecologically Sustainable Development Principles**

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) can be defined as:

“using, conserving and enhancing the communities resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased”

Ecological sustainable development requires the effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes. Ecologically sustainable development can be achieved through the implementation of the following principles and programs:

- the precautionary principle – where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental damage;
- intergenerational equity;
- conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity and
- improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms.

iii) Social Justice Principles

The aspirations and priorities identified within the Business Activity Strategic Plan are based on the social justice principles of:

- **Equity:** ensure that all people are treated equally while also recognising that there are situations where application of the same rules to disadvantaged and marginalised groups can generate unequal results.
- **Access and connectedness:** the community needs and wants to be connected and have equal access to services and facilities. This can be achieved through improved weed control and management options, through connections with the community, through connections with the environment, through provision of facilities and services that meet community needs.
- **Participation:** the creation and implementation of the objectives and strategies within the Plan must be achieved with the full participation and support of the community.
- **Rights:** the Business Activity Strategic Plan includes strategies which will deliver the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled.

h. Related Plans and Strategies

In achieving these key principles Council is mindful of other plans and strategies that directly relate to its areas of operation from a national, state and regional level. Refer Chart 2.

These plans and strategies include:

- The National Weeds Strategy provides a framework to establish consistent guidance for all parties, and identifies priorities for weed management across the nation with the aim of minimising the impact of weeds on Australia's environmental, economic and social assets.
- NSW 2021 – Making it happen, Premier's Priorities and State Priorities is the NSW 10 – Year Plan to guide our policy and budget decision making and, in conjunction with the NSW Budget, to deliver on community priorities. It sets long-term goals and measureable targets, and outlines immediate actions that will help to achieve these goals.
- The NSW Biodiversity Strategy 2015-2022 prepared by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) and NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), aims to coordinate and guide investment and effort in biodiversity conservation in NSW.
- The NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015 - 2022, developed with extensive government, industry and community input, provides actions that aim to prevent and effectively manage the introduction and spread of invasive species so that this significant threat is minimised.
- The NSW Weeds Action Program 2015 – 2020 is a NSW Government initiative to reduce the impact of weeds under the NSW Invasive Species Plan. The NSW Weeds Action Program replaces a range of previous noxious weed grant programs provided by the NSW Government to local and public authorities, and trustees of reserves and commons. It is administered through the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

- The Northern Tablelands Local Land Services Regional Weed Committee Weed Action Business Plan and Participant Agreement 2015 – 2020 with the aim of working to reduce the economic, environmental and social impact of priority scheduled and invasive weeds in the New England and Northern Tablelands regions.



Serrated Tussock



St Johns Wort



Nodding Thistle



Blackberry



Fireweed



Tropical Soda Apple



Water Lettuce



Bridal Creeper

Photo Collection 4: Weeds in the NEWA region

6. OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

a. Vision Statement

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

b. Mission Statement

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

c. We Value

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.

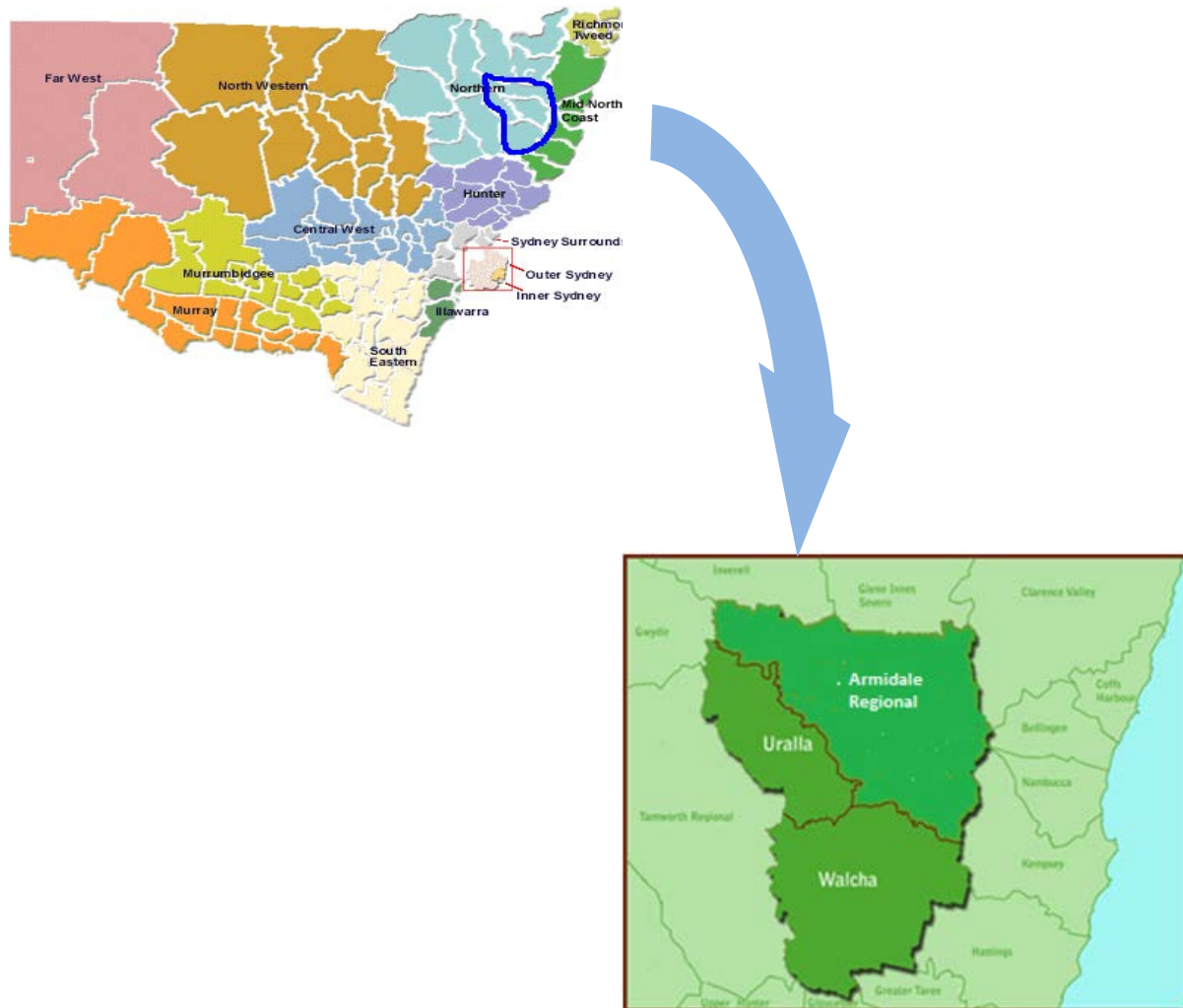


Photo 5: UAV used in weed surveillance work.

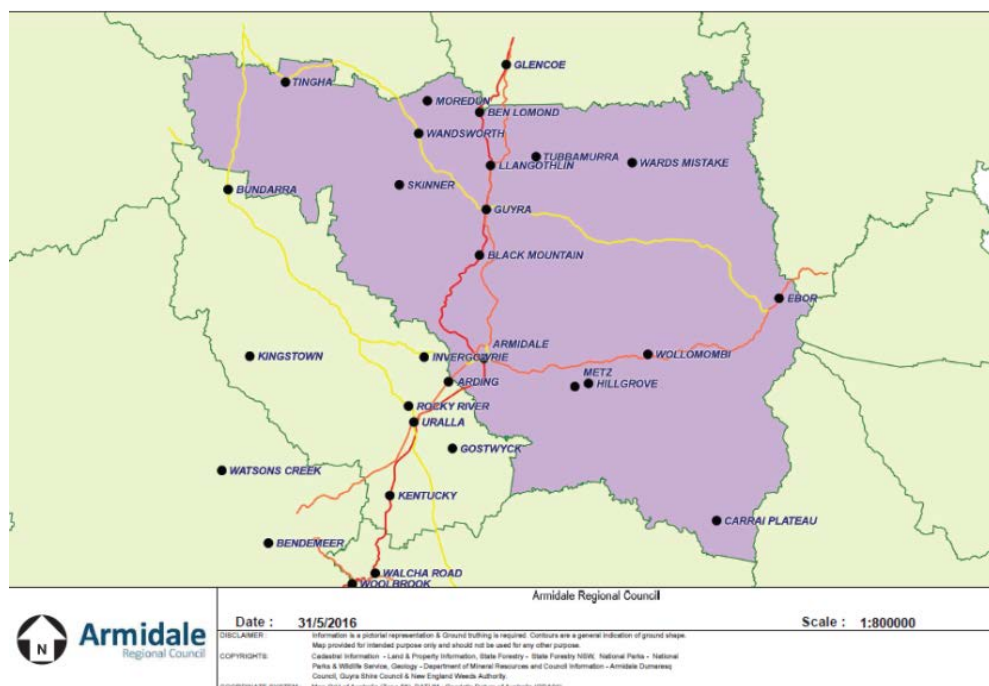
7. NEW ENGLAND WEEDS AUTHORITY REGION – PROFILE

The New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council area comprises the constituent member local government areas of Armidale Regional Council, 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 Weeds Authority area covers some 18,255 km² (Armidale Regional Council 8,630 km², Uralla 3,215 km², Walcha 6,410 km²) stretching from Ben Lomond in the north and Ebor in the east of Armidale Regional Council area to Nowendoc in the south of Walcha Council and west to Bundarra in Uralla Shire.

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 1000m to just over 1300m 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. Climate Change and Weeds

As a result of the significant threat by weeds to the environment, agriculture and human health it is essential to understand the likely impact of climate change on weed abundance and distribution.

The drivers for climate change on weeds are no different to other plants.

These are:

- Increased temperatures
- Changed rainfall
- Increasing CO₂ levels
- More extreme weather
- More frequent frosts
- Changed phenology (timing of plant growth and reproduction)
- Land use change (from human adaptation)

AdaptNRM is a national initiative that aims to support NRM groups in updating their NRM plans to include climate adaptation planning. It is part of Stream 2 of the National Resource Management (NRM) Planning for Climate Change Fund administered by the Department of Environment.¹

Council over the life of its Business Activity Strategic Plan will continue to monitor the research and effects of climate variability, and be adaptive to any such changes that may effect our environment and responsibility in regard to weed management and control in the New England region.

¹http://adaptnrm.csiro.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Adapt-NRM_M2_WeedsTechGuide_5.1_LR.pdf

d. Population breakdown

The total population for the County Council's area is 39,195² which is broken down into member Council areas of Armidale Regional 29,813, Uralla 6,260 and Walcha 3,122.

e. 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.

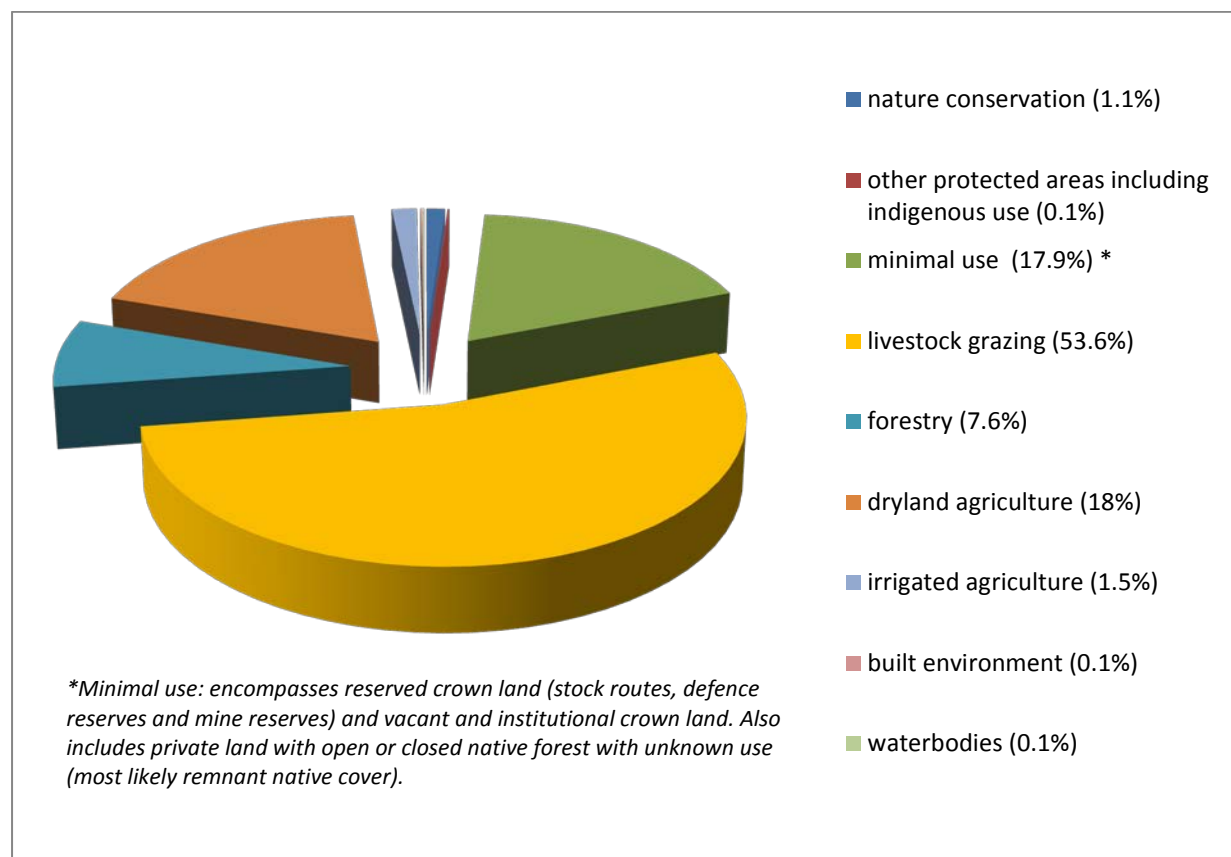


Chart 3: Land use patterns in the New England Weeds Authority area.

² 2011 Census

8. THE COUNTY COUNCIL'S ROLE IN WEED MANAGEMENT & CONTROL

As an organisation the County Council is constituted under the Local Government Act 1993 and is specified as a local control authority under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. It is a single purpose authority formed to administer and control declared scheduled priority and invasive weeds.

As a local control authority Council has the following functions, in relation to land for which it is the local control authority:

- (a) the prevention, elimination, minimisation and management of the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed by weeds,
- (b) to develop, implement, co-ordinate and review weed control plans,
- (c) to inspect land in connection with its weed control functions, and
- (d) to keep records about the exercise of the local control authority's functions under this act.
- Ensuring landholders/occupiers of private land fulfil their obligations under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.
- weed management on land occupied by the council and on roads in their area;
- publicity about scheduled priority weeds declared in the area;
- proposing changes to scheduled priority weed declarations;
- developing, implementing and coordinating local strategies and policies;
- providing on-going approved training and professional development for weed staff and
- providing adequate resources to implement weed control programs.

The County Council is also the lead agency on behalf of the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services Regional Weed Committee (NTLLS RWC) for the implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program 2015 – 2020 funded by the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI).

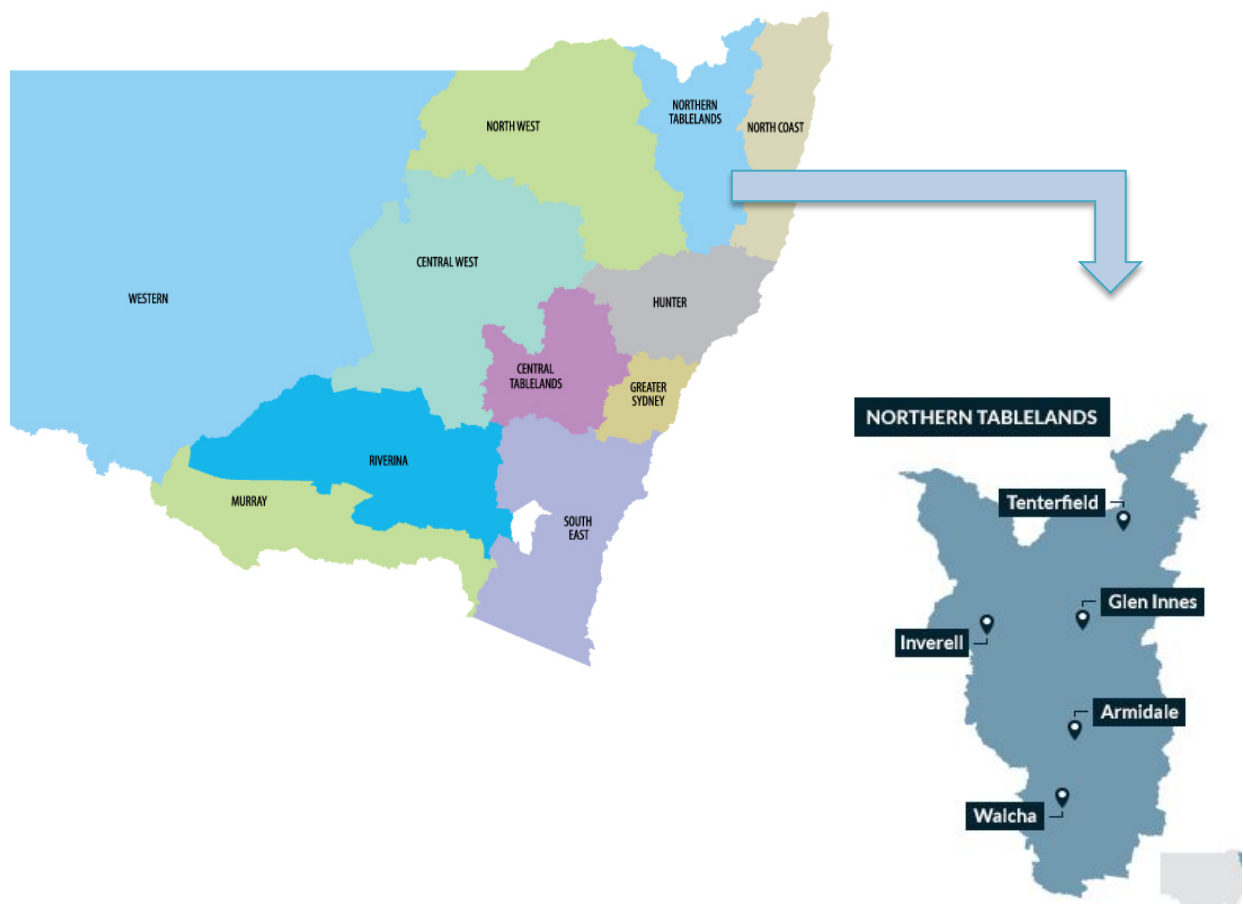
This region covers the 6 member local government areas of Tenterfield, Inverell, Glen Innes, Armidale Regional, Walcha and Uralla comprising some 40,000 km² of the New England region of NSW, as detailed in the Northern Tablelands Weed Action Business Plan and Participant Agreement 2015 -2020, these duties have been extended within the region to build a capacity to:

- identify and manage high priority 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.

The member Councils of NTLLS RWC are Glen Innes Severn, Inverell, Tenterfield and New England Weeds Authority (Armidale Regional, Uralla and Walcha). Refer Map 6.



Furthermore following a request from Glen Innes Severn Council in April 2015, Council has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with their Council for a period of 3 years, with the option to extend, to undertake their responsibilities under the Biosecurity Act 2015 for their scheduled priority weed functions and responsibilities on their behalf.

9. COUNCILLORS ROLE

Membership of the County Council is by appointment of delegates from constituent member Councils. As a result of the amalgamation of the previous constituent Councils of Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire, effective 12th May 2016, to form the new Armidale Regional Council, the appointed Administrator is the delegate from that Council until the ordinary election is held in September 2017, following which 3 delegates will be nominated to represent Armidale Regional Council. The other two constituent member Councils of Uralla and Walcha nominate one delegate each from amongst their elected Councillors.

For County Councils these delegates are referred to as “members” and comprise the governing body of the County Council. The Chairperson presides at meetings of the Council, exercises the policy making functions of the Council between its meetings and performs any other functions that the Council determines.

The roles of the Councillors as members of the County Council are:

- to direct and control the affairs of the Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993, and other applicable legislation;
- to participate in the optimum allocation of the Council’s resources for the benefit of the region;
- to play a key role in the development and review of Council’s policies, objectives and criteria relating to the exercise of Council’s regulatory functions and
- to review the performance of the Council and its delivery of services through the four year delivery program, the annual operational plan, and the business activity strategic plan of the Council.

The role of a Councillor as an elected person is:

- to represent the interests of their constituent Council, residents and ratepayers;
- to provide leadership and guidance to the community and
- to facilitate communication between the community and the Council.

10. COUNCIL MEETINGS

Ordinary meetings of Council are generally held at 8.30am on the fourth Tuesday of the month on a quarterly basis (January, April, July, and October).

The decisions of Council are adopted through a majority voting system with each Member having one vote. In the case of an equal number of votes, the Chairperson has the casting vote.

Special meetings are held at other times when required. Meeting dates and times are published on Council’s website (www.newa.com.au) or can be obtained by telephoning Council on (02) 6770 3602.

Meetings are open to the public and the media except on occasions where there is a discussion of confidential items such as staff or legal matters.

11. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Central to the development of our 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan is the role the County community played in the development of this Plan and the importance of having due regard to the Community Strategic Plans of constituent Councils and their consultation processes.

Whilst each member council has taken a slightly different approach to community consultation there has been widespread community engagement in the development of their respective previous Community Strategic Plans. Early on in their processes formal approaches were made to each Council to be involved in their respective community engagement activities and for appropriate input to the relevant Environmental Sections of the development of their Community Strategic Plans. This partnering in the community engagement processes has again been adopted in the review of the Plans and documents that were published in 2013 by member Councils and has been most helpful in developing our revised Business Activity Strategic Plan.

The approach previously taken by constituent Councils included:

- community strategic plan workshops in major towns, outlying villages and rural areas;
- Council committee structures used to develop strategic action plans;
- public and community forums;
- letters with discussion documents to stakeholder groups;
- roadshow for community groups;
- meetings with state and regional organisations, education institutions, service clubs, chambers of commerce, disability and welfare organisations, landcare and environmental groups, indigenous organisations, rural landholders and farmer groups, church and religious organisations and tourism operators and
- community surveys.

The approach taken this time is that each Council will be working with the community to review their previous Community Strategic Plans so as to re-examine the aspirations of their respective communities and identify any gaps.

Our Plan reflects these engagement activities where community input was sought through comment on the “environmental sections” of member Council plans which has now been included in their adopted Community Strategic Plans and is reflected in Council’s Business Activity Strategic Plan.

The cross references for each member Council are summarised as follows:

Uralla Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027 in its Strategic Objectives Environment section refers to the following:

- *Raise community awareness of environmental and biodiversity issues*
- *Protect and maintain a healthy catchment and waterways*

Walcha Council Community Strategic Plan – Walcha 2027 in its Strategic Objectives Green Community section refers to the following:

- *Maintain and strengthen partnerships with organisations responsible for natural resource management;*
- *Protect and enhance biodiversity, native vegetation, river and soil health;*
- *Engage and support the community to undertake sustainable natural resource management and protect Walcha’s natural environment and*
- *Protect and promote farming practices using the principles of ecologically sustainable development*

Armidale Regional Council Community Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027 in its Strategic Objectives – Environment and Infrastructure – Community Outcome section refers to the following:

- *The unique climate, landscape and environment of the region is protected and preserved.*

Further Community Engagement

Council is focussed on serving the local community it represents, consultation, opinions, comments, concerns and suggestions are actively sought and welcomed to ensure that Council's decisions are timely, relevant and reflect contemporary standards and expectations.

Council's revised 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027 will be placed on public exhibition prior to being considered by Council for adoption, during which period members of the community and constituent Councils will be invited to make submissions.

Council at all times, welcomes input from its constituent landholders and community whether it be comments on the Business Activity Strategic Plan, or reporting outbreaks of scheduled priority and invasive weeds, or seeking information and advice on weed management and control matters.

Members of the community are encouraged to make comments to the Council. The website www.newa.com.au provides a convenient facility for this to be done or through direct contact by telephoning the New England Weeds Authority office on (02) 6770 3602 during business hours.



Diagram 4: 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan links to constituent Councils Community Strategic Plans.

12. BUSINESS ACTIVITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2027

The following Diagram 5 highlights the connections between Council's 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan, the 4 year Delivery Program and the Annual Operational Plan.



13. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The dynamic nature of scheduled priority 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 2015 – 2022 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 will be centered on the following strategies:

- identification and management of high-risk priority weed species and the pathways they utilise within our region;
- formulation of weed detection systems to improve our capacity to find new weeds early;
- ensure 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 National Weeds Strategy, the NSW Biodiversity Strategy, NSW Invasive Species Plan and the NSW Weeds Action Program.

At a regional level our Business Activity Strategic Plan is interconnected with the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services Regional Weed Committee Weed Action Business Plan 2015 – 2020 and the Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan developed for specific weeds.

Our regional Weed Action Program has established a co-ordinated approach with the Local Government areas of the Northern Tablelands Regional Weed Committee (Glen Innes Severn, Inverell, NEWA [Armidale Regional, Uralla Shire and Walcha Council], and Tenterfield

Council). Our Council acts as the lead agency for the NTLLS RWC in the implementation of the NSW Weed Action Program 2015 – 2020.

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 work persistently towards achieving success in a wide range of integrated weed management and control programs.



Photo 6: Serrated Tussock on a New England property

14. PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

The Business Activity Strategic Plan Strategic Objectives provide a framework for the co-ordinated and co-operative management and control of scheduled priority and invasive weeds across our County Council area for the ten year period of the Plan 2017 – 2027.

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 to be undertaken by Council and the objective/s under each are detailed as follows and a more comprehensive breakdown is provided in the separate 4 Year Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan documents.

a. 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.

b. Principal Activity- P.A.2 Environment - Scheduled Priority Weed Management and Control

Scheduled Priority 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 scheduled priority and invasive weeds species.

c. 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 scheduled priority 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 Tablelands Regional Weed Committee, Local Government NSW and NSW Department of Primary Industries) through advocacy and political pursuits.

d. Principal Activity- P. A 4 NSW Weeds Action Program

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



Photo 7: Northern New England Grazing Property

15. STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORTING (SOE)

Interconnected to the Integrated Planning and Reporting Process under which the Business Activity Strategic Plan is produced, a further requirement of the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation, is for Councils to produce a State of the Environment (SoE) report.

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 scheduled priority 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 scheduled priority and invasive weed species.



Photo 8: Typical New England grazing property

16. REPORTING ON PROGRESS – ANNUAL REPORTING

Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027 adopts a Quadruple Bottom Line (QBL) approach as the key management tool to imbedding sustainable principles across its operations. The four 'pillars' of economic, environmental, social and civic leadership/ governance, coupled with sustainability provide the overarching framework for all of the Council's planning and decision-making.

In presenting this Plan to the constituent member Councils and the community for achieving the objectives of the Plan in relation to scheduled priority and invasive weed management and control within the New England region, Council will report to its community and constituent member Councils through various mechanisms and reports.

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.

The Long Term Financial Plan is to be updated annually as part of the development of the Annual Operational Plan.

Councils will also report on the condition of their assets in their annual financial statements in line with the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.

A Council must prepare a new Delivery Program after each ordinary election of Councillors to cover the principal activities of the Council for the 4 year period commencing on 1 July following the election.

Council will review its 4 Year Delivery Program each year when preparing the Annual Operational Plan.

The General Manager must ensure that progress reports are provided to the Council, with respect to the principal activities detailed in the Delivery Program, at least every 6 months.



New England Weeds Authority

Resourcing Strategy 2017- 2027



Long Term Financial
Plan – 10 Years

Workforce Strategy

Asset Management Plan

Adopted by Council: 20th June 2017

Our Environment

Our Community

Our Council

Our Responsibility

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1. RESOURCING STRATEGY

Under the Local Government Act 1993 (Section 403) Council must have a long-term Resourcing Strategy for the provision of resources required to implement the strategies established by the Business Activity Strategic Plan that Council is responsible for. The Resourcing Strategy forms a critical link in translating strategic objectives into actions.

In line with the Local Government Act 1993 and integrated planning and reporting requirements, Council has developed a long-term Resourcing Strategy consisting of three components being:

- **Long Term Financial Plan - 10 years;**
- **Workforce Management Strategy and**
- **Asset Management Plan**

2. LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2017 - 2027

a. Introduction

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework has the requirement of an effective Resourcing Strategy for the Annual Operational Plan and 4 Year Delivery Program. This Document which outlines the Long Term Financial Plan is one component of the Resourcing Strategy which is also made up of the Workforce Strategy and Asset Management Plan.

The Long Term Financial Plan is an important part of Council's strategic planning process. The purpose of this Long Term Financial Plan is to provide a framework to assist with short and longer term decision making and to ensure that decisions are made applying good financial governance practices. The plan also assists Councillors and management in their strategic and operational planning to ensure financial sustainability and achieve the desirable outcomes for the community and constituent Councils (Armidale Regional, Uralla Shire and Walcha Council).

The Long Term Financial Plan is where all of the elements of the Council, the community and constituent Councils aspirations and plans in relation to the management and control of scheduled priority and invasive weeds get tested back against the financial capacity to deliver. It also attempts to present to management and Council the answers to issues of financial viability and opportunities for income growth.

The Long Term Financial Plan is a decision making tool for improved financial governance and problem solving. It also makes a valuable contribution to whole of life cycle decisions.

The Financial Plan is constructed over a 10 year time horizon and integrates with the Operational and Delivery Plan. Each year the plan is rolled forward annually as part of the annual budget and the variables updated so as to provide Council with an effective short, medium and long term financial picture.

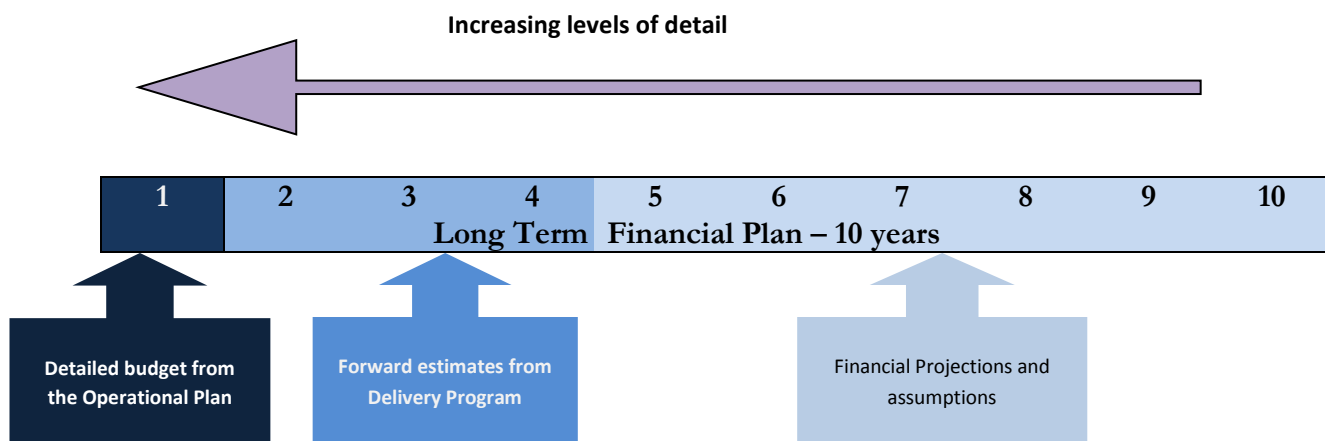


Diagram 1: Overview of the long-term financial plan cycle

The 10 Year Long Term Financial Plan establishes the financial targets and bench marks to guide Council in the decision making process across multiple years. It also contains guidelines and aims to promote a consistent financial direction spanning multiple years and Council terms. The 10 year financial model predicts Council's funding requirements to maintain a strong financial position and deliver the services expected by our community and constituent Councils.

In setting out to achieve the Business Activity Strategic Plan objectives and principle activities, the financial plan promotes the financial sustainability of the organization and ensures that there are sufficient funds in future years for Council to achieve its objectives. Policy Statements contained in this plan are given authority by the adoption of this plan. These policy statements provide the fundamental framework that guides decision making and the parameters for management to operate within.

b. Policy Framework

The basic principle of financial management and budgeting is the process by which scarce resources are allocated. The policy framework in this plan is structured to provide a guide for Council in developing Council's Budget and Long Term Financial Plan, and a format that management needs to work within the annual operating plan.

i) Unrestricted Working Funds

This is a measure of liquidity or net financial position. As part of Council's financial governance responsibilities a level needs to be set at which working capital should be maintained.

The unrestricted cash of Council provides an appropriate buffer for unforeseen expenditure and management of daily cash flows. As Council's budget grows the amount allocated will also need to grow in line so as to keep the unrestricted cash at the designated level.

Councils target is to adopt as part of this plan a minimum unrestricted working funds balance of 25% of the unrestricted revenues in the same financial year.

ii) Employee Leave entitlements

Council creates a liability in its balance sheet each year for outstanding annual and long service leave. This leave liability needs to be paid at some future point in time however, Council does not expect to pay the liability in full in any given year.

As Council is a going concern it maintains a cash reserve equivalent to a reasonable amount that it can expect to pay. Council's target cash reserve provision is 100% however, given the current size of the liability and the employee profiles, the potential for large payments on termination or resignation of employees over the next 10 years there is some flexibility to reduce the reserve provision to no less than 75%.

iii) Investments Funds

Council maintains a single investment portfolio across its entire operation.

Council maintains an Investment Policy that is reviewed annually on the type and performance of investments. Of the available funds Council restricts certain amounts for future works or projects. Funds from the sales of assets, surplus equipment or functions with funded depreciation from operating income are directed into an asset management reserve that is to be utilized as part of Council's Asset Management Strategy.

iv) External Borrowings

Council does not require external borrowings to carry out its functions and it is expected this policy will be continue for the life of the Plan.

Council funds new or upgraded vehicles, plant and equipment from its current income sources or from reserves set aside specifically for the purpose of plant replacement.

v) Operating Budget

Council's operating budget aims to achieve a balanced budget or slight surplus to maintain an adequate level of working capital and to fund asset replacements or renewals. From any operating surplus Council's goal is to hold 10% cash from total recurrent sources of revenue as unrestricted funds.

vi) Current Financial Position

Council's net operating result for 2015-2016 had an operating surplus of \$128,000. Excluding non cash transactions Council decreased its cash available by \$110,000 from the previous reporting period. This was mainly attributable to grant funds received from the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services natural resource management project.

At the 30 June 2016 and after setting aside \$251,000 of internal restrictions, Council has \$597,000 in working capital to fund day to day requirements.

Council discloses in the annual financial reports a series of key performance indicators that aim to present a concise picture of the organisation performance and where the financial position is trending over a longer period of time than just the annual result.

The following diagram shows the predicted key financial indicator for Council between June 2016 and June 2021.

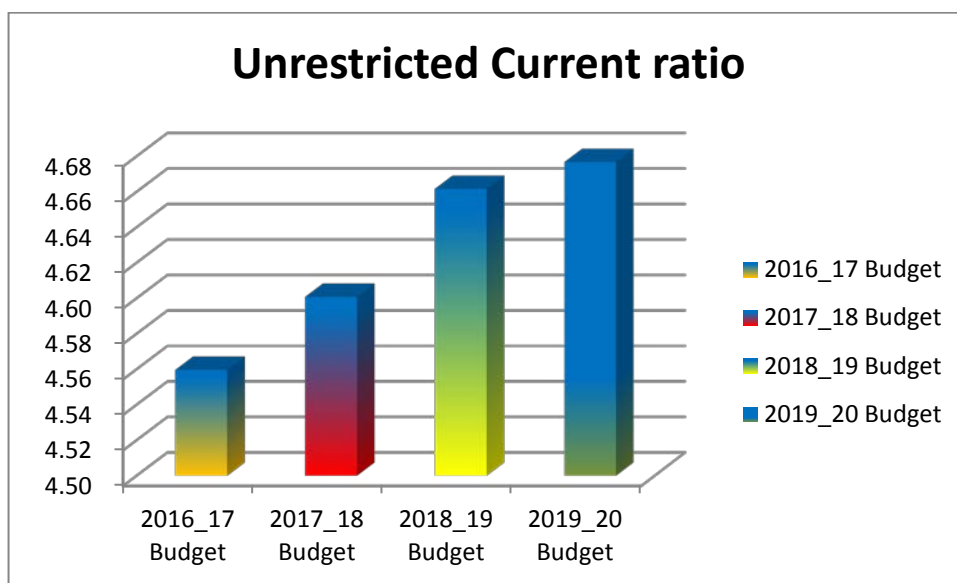


Diagram 2: Council's Unrestricted Current Ratio.

The unrestricted current ratio includes remaining cash relative to all other General Fund functions. A ratio of 2 is generally viewed as acceptable. Council's ratio continues to remain around the 4.6 figure for the remainder of the plan.

vii) Cash and Investments

Council holds \$1,368,000 in cash and investments which is made up of \$18,000 cash and \$1,350,000 in term deposits. Term deposits are currently invested with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia and the Newcastle Permanent Building Society in accordance with Council's adopted Investment Policy.

viii) Loans and Interest Bearing Liabilities.

Council has no loans or interest bearing liabilities and does not envisage requiring any external borrowings over the life of the Plan.

c. Financial Planning Assumptions Uncertainties and Risks – Sensitivity Analysis

The following assumptions, risks and uncertainties have been identified in reference to the Council's 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan. Uncertainty increases as the financial information presented extends each year from the current financial data.

These forecast financial statements must be read with caution utilising the details of financial assumptions contained in this statement. Financial years 2017/18 to 2026/27 must be read with the understanding that the forecast is based on professional opinion and estimates, and that in broad terms the business of the Council should continue in its current form in line with what has been forecast in the Business Activity Strategic Plan. Uncontrollable external events or change in State and Federal Government policy will significantly affect the forecast.

The most significant risks include unexpected changes to legislation and/or regulations. It has been assumed that following the amalgamation of Armidale Dumaresq and Guyra Shire Councils to form the Armidale Regional Council on 12th May 2016 that the organisational structure of each of the constituent Councils will now remain relatively unchanged for core services with reshaping of those organisations to cater for positions associated with their community strategic directions. Council will be impacted by the issue of an aging workforce identified in the workforce plan. Although climate change and its existence and causes are still being debated, no contingency has been applied and therefore associated costs to Council has been assumed will not significantly change over the next 10 years.

Council will continue to monitor the structural reform of Local Government in NSW under the Fit for the Future program which at the time of preparing this document (April 2017) sees the current State Government not pursuing any further forced amalgamations.

Council's role as lead agency for the Northern Tablelands Regional Weed Committee under the NSW Department of Primary Industries, NSW Weeds Action Program 2015 – 2020 will also be closely monitored as the changes within the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services authority become clearer as to their roles and functions following the Review of Weed Management in NSW conducted on behalf of the State Government by the Natural Resources Commission in 2015. There exists a close and good working relationship with the organisation that should see any future changes being worked through in a professional and mutually beneficial manner.

Notwithstanding due to the uncertainty of the outcome of any future merger proposals under the local government reform policies of the NSW Government or the future roles of the Northern Tablelands Local Land Services under the NSW WAP 1520, it is not possible at this time to develop alternative scenarios that would provide better public information.

Regardless of any possible structural change that may occur in the future, NEWA is a financially viable organisation with a sustainable long term financial position.

i) **Service Priorities**

It is assumed that the community will continue to endorse and demand the current services that Council provides to the community. The Business Activity Strategic Plan objectives and principle activities are expected to be funded from recurrent and existing funds where service levels are not affected, otherwise new external funding is to be sourced.

Forecast financial reports include increases in Commonwealth Consumer Price Index (CPI) costs of services identified in the Business Activity Strategic Plan. It is also expected that management will be able to achieve the necessary cost reduction and productivity changes to services or seek increased grants in order to offset each year's increase in operating costs above CPI.

ii) Population Growth

Annual population changes have approximated 1% in the entire Council area. This trend is expected to continue. Table 1 and Diagram 3 show the estimated population growths across the member Councils for the period 2006 to 2016 indicating a 1% growth rate.

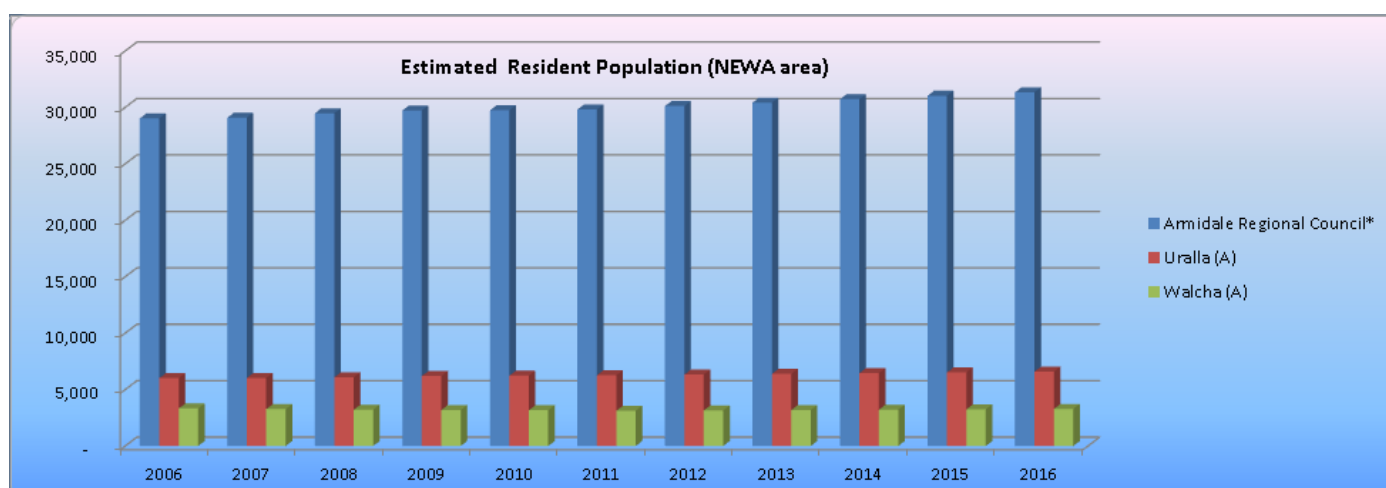
Estimated Resident Population at 30 June											
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Armidale Regional Council*	29,023	29,080	29,471	29,723	29,737	29,813	30,111	30,412	30,716	31,024	31,334
Uralla (A)	6,007	6,028	6,084	6,196	6,228	6,260	6,323	6,386	6,450	6,514	6,579
Walcha (A)	3,321	3,262	3,215	3,185	3,166	3,122	3,153	3,185	3,217	3,249	3,281
TOTAL NEWA AREA	38,351	38,370	38,770	39,104	39,131	39,195	39,587	39,983	40,383	40,786	41,194

*Previously Armidale Dumaresq Council and Guyra Shire Council until 12 May 2016.

(a) Average annual growth rate.

Source: Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2011 (cat. no. 3218.0)

Table 1: Estimated Resident Population 2006 - 2016



*Previously Armidale Dumaresq Council and Guyra Shire Council until 12 May 2016.

Diagram 3: Estimated resident population 2006 – 2016 - growth rate 1%

iii) Asset Ownership and management

There are no major assets sales or change in management identified in the Asset Management Plan that will affect the outcome of the financial reports beyond 2017/2018. Council's current Asset Register is expected to remain stable from year to year. Technology and innovation may change future outcomes however, a significant change to Council's policy is not anticipated over the life of the Delivery Program.

iv) Interest Rates

Council has not allowed for any borrowings over the life of the Plan and will therefore not be subject to new borrowing costs. Interest on money invested is estimated at 2.5% pa.

v) Funding Sources

It has been assumed that the level of external funds through the current grant allocations and contributions from constituent Councils will remain consistent over the 10 years and that there is no significant change to government policy to either decrease or increase. Council will continue to actively pursue other grant opportunities but due to their high level of uncertainty cannot be included in the financial projections.

Internal funding sources from annual charges and user charges are expected to increase as a minimum in line with the CPI, assumed at 1.8% pa.

Grant funding provided to Council through the NSW Weeds Action Program by the NSW Department of Primary Industries is only applicable for a 5 year period, finishing in 2020. It is assumed that a further 5 year funding period will be approved and this is reflected in the 10 year financial forecasts of the Plan.

vi) **Depreciation and Useful Lives**

All Council recognised assets are systematically depreciated over their useful lives in a manner which reflects the consumption of the service potential embodied in those assets. The following timeframes are applied throughout the plan.

ASSETS	FROM	TO
Motor vehicles	5 years	10 years
Spray Equipment, pumps and trailer	5years	10 years
Office Equipment	3 years	10 Years

vii) **Outsourcing and Service Delivery**

Where Council outsources physical works and professional services, it is assumed this practice will continue. Council's Resources Plan has identified that over the next 10 years a skills shortage may have an effect on service delivery. In this Plan it has identified Council may need to use outsourcing options if there are critical skill gaps that cannot be resolved. The financial forecast has assumed that current recruitment patterns will continue and that Council will be able to fill positions.

viii) **Asset Renewal**

The forecast expenditure for asset renewal is sufficient to maintain the current level of services. The Asset Management Strategy aims to define more accurately what asset classes need to be renewed and the amount of expenditure required.

ix) **Changes to Service levels**

No changes to service levels have been identified in the forward projections.



Photo 1: Part of the Council vehicle fleet involved in Tropical Soda Apple new weed incursion – Macleay Valley

3. 10 YEAR FINANCIAL PLAN 2017 -2027

The planned financial forecast is aimed at delivering the strategic objectives and principle activities set out in Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan over the next 10 years with a focus on the next 4 years.

It is based on estimates of future income and expenditure under normal operating conditions. The 10 Year Financial Plan will be updated annually as part of adopting the Annual Operational Plan at which point assumptions and forward estimates will be reviewed and updated as required.

a. Planned Operating Income

User Charges and Fees	User Charges and fees are detailed in Council's Fees and Charges Schedule included as part of the Annual Operational Plan. Future year's user charges and fees have been increased by an estimated annual CPI increase of 1.8%. This represents the medium range of the Reserve Bank's long term target for CPI of 2-3% p.a.
Interest on Investments	An interest rate of 2.5% p.a. is assumed for interest earned on investments. Interest rates can fluctuate quickly, however a target 3.0% p.a average rate of return on investment over the life of the plan is considered to be achievable.
Other Revenues	Is expected to increase between 1.8% and 2.5% p.a. over the period of the plan.
Operating Grants and Contributions	Operational Grants are expected to increase an average of 2% per annum. Contributions from member Councils have been assumed to increase by rate pegging amounts over the period of the Plan.

b. Planned Operating Expenditure

Employee Costs	Employee costs are expected to grow at a net rate of 2.5 % pa in accordance with State Award provisions.
Borrowing Costs	Council does not envisage requiring any external borrowings over the life of the Plan.
Materials and Contracts	This has been broadly budgeted at an annual increase of 3.0% per annum as it is anticipated that there will be increases in fuel and chemical costs.
Other Operating Expenses	Other operating Expenses have been increased in line with the estimated CPI of 1.8% with the exception of electricity and insurances. Electricity has been increased at an average of 5% per annum due to the current political uncertainty and insurances have been increased at 4% per annum in line with historical trends.

The following Schedule 1 provides the forward financial projections for Operating Income and Expenditure, Cash Flows, Balance Sheet and Ratios for the Plan period 2017 – 2027.

Schedule 1. 10 Year Financial Plan for Operating Income and Expenditure, Cash Flows, Balance Sheet and Ratios
New England Weeds Authority
Income Statement

	<i>2016_17 Budget</i>	<i>2017_18 Budget</i>	<i>2018_19 Budget</i>	<i>2019_20 Budget</i>	<i>2020_21 Budget</i>	<i>2021_22 Budget</i>	<i>2022_23 Budget</i>	<i>2023_24 Budget</i>	<i>2024_25 Budget</i>	<i>2025_26 Budget</i>	<i>2026-27 Budget</i>
Revenue											
User Charges and Fees	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$102,000.00	\$104,040.00	\$106,121.00	\$108,243.00	\$120,408.00	\$127,816.00	\$130,372.00	\$136,979.00	\$139,034.00
Interest and Investment Revenue	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$35,600.00	\$36,312.00	\$37,038.00	\$37,779.00	\$38,535.00	\$39,305.00	\$40,092.00	\$40,894.00	\$41,508.00
Other Revenues	\$4,000.00	\$4,500.00	\$4,590.00	\$4,681.00	\$4,775.00	\$4,870.00	\$4,968.00	\$5,067.00	\$5,169.00	\$5,272.00	\$5,352.00
Grants and Cont'n provided for operational purposes	\$1,023,400.00	\$887,120.00	\$898,743.00	\$909,038.00	\$919,538.00	\$930,248.00	\$941,172.00	\$952,313.00	\$963,679.00	\$975,272.00	\$984,140.00
Grants and Cont'n provided for capital purposes											
Other Income											
Net Gain from Disposal of Assets	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,001.00	\$0.00	\$5,003.00	\$5,003.00
Total Income from Continuing Operations	\$1,157,400.00	\$1,026,620.00	\$1,040,933.00	\$1,059,071.00	\$1,067,472.00	\$1,086,140.00	\$1,105,083.00	\$1,129,502.00	\$1,139,312.00	\$1,163,420.00	\$1,175,037.00
Expenses from Continuing Operations											
Employee Benefits and On-Costs	605,200.00	594,800.00	605,696.00	616,810.00	628,146.00	639,709.00	651,505.00	663,536.00	672,808.00	685,263.00	694,792.00
Borrowing Costs											
Materials and Contracts	\$286,000.00	\$175,800.00	\$173,016.00	\$188,574.00	\$172,343.00	\$174,891.00	\$168,389.00	\$176,858.00	\$164,895.00	\$172,794.00	\$168,390.00
Depreciation and Amortisation	\$84,000.00	\$89,000.00	\$84,080.00	\$85,762.00	\$87,477.00	\$89,227.00	\$91,012.00	\$92,832.00	\$94,689.00	\$96,583.00	\$98,031.00
Other Expenses	\$175,500.00	\$165,700.00	\$172,774.00	\$166,929.00	\$171,167.00	\$177,491.00	\$181,903.00	\$186,401.00	\$190,989.00	\$195,667.00	\$199,247.00
Net Loss from the Disposal of Assets	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,001.00	\$0.00	\$5,003.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Expenses from Continuing Operations	\$1,155,700.00	\$1,025,300.00	\$1,040,566.00	\$1,058,075.00	\$1,064,133.00	\$1,081,318.00	\$1,097,810.00	\$1,119,627.00	\$1,128,384.00	\$1,150,307.00	\$1,160,460.00
Net Operating Result for the Year	\$1,700.00	\$1,320.00	\$367.00	\$996.00	\$3,339.00	\$4,822.00	\$7,273.00	\$9,875.00	\$10,928.00	\$13,113.00	\$14,577.00

Schedule 1. 10 Year Financial Plan for Operating Income and Expenditure, Cash Flows, Balance Sheet and Ratios Cont'd

Cash Flow Statement

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	2016_17	2017_18	2018_19	2019_20	2020_21	2021_22	2022_23	2023_24	2024_25	2025_26	2026_27
Receipts	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget	Budget
Rates and Annual Charges											
User Charges and Fees	\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	\$102,000.00	\$104,040.00	\$106,121.00	\$108,243.00	\$120,408.00	\$127,816.00	\$130,372.00	\$136,979.00	\$139,034.00
Interest Received	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$35,600.00	\$36,312.00	\$37,038.00	\$37,779.00	\$38,535.00	\$39,305.00	\$40,092.00	\$40,894.00	\$41,508.00
Other Receipts	\$4,000.00	\$4,500.00	\$4,590.00	\$4,681.00	\$4,775.00	\$4,870.00	\$4,968.00	\$5,067.00	\$5,169.00	\$5,272.00	\$5,352.00
Payments											
Employee Costs	-\$605,200.00	-\$594,800.00	-\$605,696.00	-\$616,810.00	-\$628,146.00	-\$639,709.00	-\$651,505.00	-\$663,536.00	-\$672,808.00	-\$685,263.00	-\$694,792.00
Materials and Contracts	-\$286,000.00	-\$175,800.00	-\$173,016.00	-\$188,574.00	-\$172,343.00	-\$174,891.00	-\$168,389.00	-\$176,858.00	-\$164,895.00	-\$172,794.00	-\$168,390.00
Interest Paid											
Other Expenses	-\$175,500.00	-\$165,700.00	-\$172,774.00	-\$166,929.00	-\$171,167.00	-\$177,491.00	-\$181,903.00	-\$186,401.00	-\$190,989.00	-\$195,667.00	-\$199,247.00
Net Cash provided for (or used in) Operating Activities	\$90,700.00	\$85,320.00	\$89,447.00	\$81,758.00	\$95,816.00	\$89,049.00	\$103,286.00	\$97,706.00	\$110,620.00	\$104,693.00	\$107,605.00
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES											
Receipts											
Proceeds from Property, Plant & Equipment	\$42,000.00	\$39,000.00	\$51,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$53,000.00	\$38,000.00	\$62,000.00	\$22,000.00	\$53,000.00	\$38,000.00	\$62,000.00
Proceeds from sale of Investment Securities	\$102,250.00	\$92,000.00	\$117,000.00	\$107,000.00	\$112,000.00	\$87,000.00	\$137,000.00	\$134,998.00	\$112,000.00	\$87,000.00	\$137,000.00
Payments											
Purchase of Property, Plant & Equipment	-\$102,250.00	-\$92,000.00	-\$117,000.00	-\$107,000.00	-\$112,000.00	-\$87,000.00	-\$137,000.00	-\$134,998.00	-\$112,000.00	-\$87,000.00	-\$137,000.00
Purchase of Investment Securities	-\$122,000.00	-\$124,000.00	-\$131,000.00	-\$126,600.00	-\$136,232.00	-\$122,897.00	-\$148,595.00	-\$52,000.00	-\$143,094.00	-\$129,896.00	-\$155,274.00
Net Cash provided for (or used in) Investing	-\$80,000.00	-\$85,000.00	-\$80,000.00	-\$81,600.00	-\$83,232.00	-\$84,897.00	-\$86,595.00	-\$30,000.00	-\$90,094.00	-\$91,896.00	-\$93,274.00
Proceeds from Borrowing & Advances											
Proceeds from Retirement Home Contributions											
Payments											
Repayments of Borrowing & Advances											
Repayments of Retirement Home Contributions											
Net Cash provided for (or used in) Financing Activities	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN CASH HELD	\$10,700.00	\$320.00	\$9,447.00	\$158.00	\$12,584.00	\$4,152.00	\$16,691.00	\$67,706.00	\$20,526.00	\$12,797.00	\$14,331.00

Schedule 1. 10 Year Financial Plan for Operating Income and Expenditure, Cash Flows, Balance Sheet and Ratios Cont'd
New England Weeds Authority

BALANCE SHEET

	<i>2016_17 Budget</i>	<i>2017_18 Budget</i>	<i>2018_19 Budget</i>	<i>2019_20 Budget</i>	<i>2020_21 Budget</i>	<i>2021_22 Budget</i>	<i>2022_23 Budget</i>	<i>2023_24 Budget</i>	<i>2024_25 Budget</i>	<i>2025_26 Budget</i>	<i>2025_26 Budget</i>
CURRENT ASSETS											
Cash & cash equivalents	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00	\$217,320.00
Investments	\$1,457,011.00	\$1,493,423.00	\$1,521,085.00	\$1,545,163.00	\$1,586,407.00	\$1,631,017.00	\$1,664,001.00	\$1,714,922.00	\$1,771,501.00	\$1,832,257.00	\$1,895,925.00
Receivables	\$10,719.00	\$12,719.00	\$14,719.00	\$16,719.00	\$18,719.00	\$20,719.00	\$22,719.00	\$24,719.00	\$26,719.00	\$28,719.00	\$30,719.00
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,694,549.00	\$1,732,961.00	\$1,762,623.00	\$1,788,701.00	\$1,831,945.00	\$1,878,555.00	\$1,913,539.00	\$1,966,460.00	\$2,025,039.00	\$2,087,795.00	\$2,153,463.00
NON-CURRENT ASSETS											
Investments											
Receivables											
Inventories											
Infrastructure, Property, Plant & Equipment	\$329,829.00	\$293,829.00	\$275,749.00	\$251,987.00	\$223,510.00	\$183,283.00	\$167,271.00	\$187,437.00	\$151,748.00	\$104,165.00	\$81,134.00
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	\$329,829.00	\$293,829.00	\$275,749.00	\$251,987.00	\$223,510.00	\$183,283.00	\$167,271.00	\$187,437.00	\$151,748.00	\$104,165.00	\$81,134.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,024,378.00	\$2,026,790.00	\$2,038,372.00	\$2,040,688.00	\$2,055,455.00	\$2,061,838.00	\$2,080,810.00	\$2,153,897.00	\$2,176,787.00	\$2,191,960.00	\$2,234,597.00
CURRENT LIABILITIES											
Payables	\$317,909.00	\$319,909.00	\$321,909.00	\$323,909.00	\$325,909.00	\$327,909.00	\$329,909.00	\$331,909.00	\$333,909.00	\$335,909.00	\$337,909.00
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$417,689.00	\$419,689.00	\$421,689.00	\$423,689.00	\$425,689.00	\$427,689.00	\$429,689.00	\$431,689.00	\$433,689.00	\$435,689.00	\$437,689.00
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES											
Payables											
Borrowings											
Provisions											
TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$417,689.00	\$419,689.00	\$421,689.00	\$423,689.00	\$425,689.00	\$427,689.00	\$429,689.00	\$431,689.00	\$433,689.00	\$435,689.00	\$437,689.00
NET ASSETS	\$1,606,689.00	\$1,607,101.00	\$1,616,683.00	\$1,616,999.00	\$1,629,766.00	\$1,634,149.00	\$1,651,121.00	\$1,722,208.00	\$1,743,098.00	\$1,756,271.00	\$1,796,908.00

Schedule 1. 10 Year Financial Plan for Operating Income and Expenditure, Cash Flows, Balance Sheet and Ratios Cont'd

New England Weeds Authority Ratios

	2016_17 Budget	2017_18 Budget	2018_19 Budget	2019_20 Budget	2020_21 Budget	2021_22 Budget	2022_23 Budget	2023_24 Budget	2024_25 Budget	2025_26 Budget	2026_27 Budget
Unrestricted Current ratio	4.56	4.64	4.69	4.74	4.83	4.93	4.99	5.10	5.23	5.37	5.51
current assets	\$1,694,549.00	\$1,732,961.00	\$1,762,623.00	\$1,788,701.00	\$1,831,945.00	\$1,878,555.00	\$1,913,539.00	\$1,966,460.00	\$2,025,039.00	\$2,087,795.00	\$2,153,463.00
less external restrictions reserves	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00	\$18,000.00
less external restrictions drs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	\$1,676,549.00	\$1,714,961.00	\$1,744,623.00	\$1,770,701.00	\$1,813,945.00	\$1,860,555.00	\$1,895,539.00	\$1,948,460.00	\$2,007,039.00	\$2,069,795.00	\$2,135,463.00
Current Liabilities	\$417,689.00	\$419,689.00	\$421,689.00	\$423,689.00	\$425,689.00	\$427,689.00	\$429,689.00	\$431,689.00	\$433,689.00	\$435,689.00	\$437,689.00
Less Payments not made in 12 months	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00
less external restrictions	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$5,001.00	\$5,002.00	\$5,003.00	\$5,004.00	\$5,004.00
	\$367,689.00	\$369,689.00	\$371,689.00	\$373,689.00	\$375,689.00	\$377,689.00	\$379,688.00	\$381,687.00	\$383,686.00	\$385,685.00	\$387,685.00
Debt Service Ratio	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Principal repayments	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Interest repayments	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Operating Revenue	\$1,157,400.00	\$1,026,620.00	\$1,040,933.00	\$1,059,071.00	\$1,067,472.00	\$1,086,140.00	\$1,105,083.00	\$1,129,502.00	\$1,139,312.00	\$1,163,420.00	\$1,175,037.00
Special Purpose Grants - Operating	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contributions & Donations - Operating	\$1,023,400.00	\$887,120.00	\$898,743.00	\$909,038.00	\$919,538.00	\$930,248.00	\$941,172.00	\$952,313.00	\$963,679.00	\$975,272.00	\$984,140.00
Grants & Contributions - Capital	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	\$134,000.00	\$139,500.00	\$142,190.00	\$150,033.00	\$147,934.00	\$155,892.00	\$163,911.00	\$177,189.00	\$175,633.00	\$188,148.00	\$190,897.00

4. WORKFORCE STRATEGY

a. Introduction

To enable Council to meet its requirements in the delivery of identified strategic objectives and principle activities under its 10 Year Business Activity Strategic Plan it is necessary for Council to review and proactively manage the recruitment, retention and development of its staff.

This document has been developed in response to this need and of the Council's obligations under the Integrated Planning and Reporting provisions of the Local Government Act 1993.

The Workforce Strategy will cover the period from 2017-2027.

The Workforce Strategy seeks to identify weaknesses and strengths in the staff complement, and outline actions and remedies that may be introduced to address those weaknesses and build on existing strengths. Actions determined will be implemented over the life of the Strategy.

Councillors and staff were consulted in the formulation of this Strategy. The implementation of the Workforce Strategy seeks to not only better position Council to deliver on its stated strategic objectives but to do so with increased staff retention and satisfaction, improved efficiency in the allocation and application of staff resources and the attraction, development and directing of staff into the future to meet the challenges ahead.

The Strategy will be formally reviewed and adopted by June 2017 and every four years thereafter. Progress on the implementation of the Strategy will be reported on an annual basis in line with the 4 Year Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan.

b. .Organisation Staff Structure

An organisation staff structure defines the formal system of reporting between employees at different positions within the organisation. Effective organisation structure is paramount for the delivery of the strategic objectives and principal activities of the organisation.

In developing an organisation structure, consideration needs to be given to the organisations capabilities, flexibility, responsiveness and ability to manage the various tasks of its charter. As the County Council is a single purpose organisation constituted for the management and control of scheduled priority and invasive weeds, its workforce is limited to these core duties as well as the employment of a part-time General Manager as required by the Local Government Act 1993. Chart 1 details the organisational staff structure.

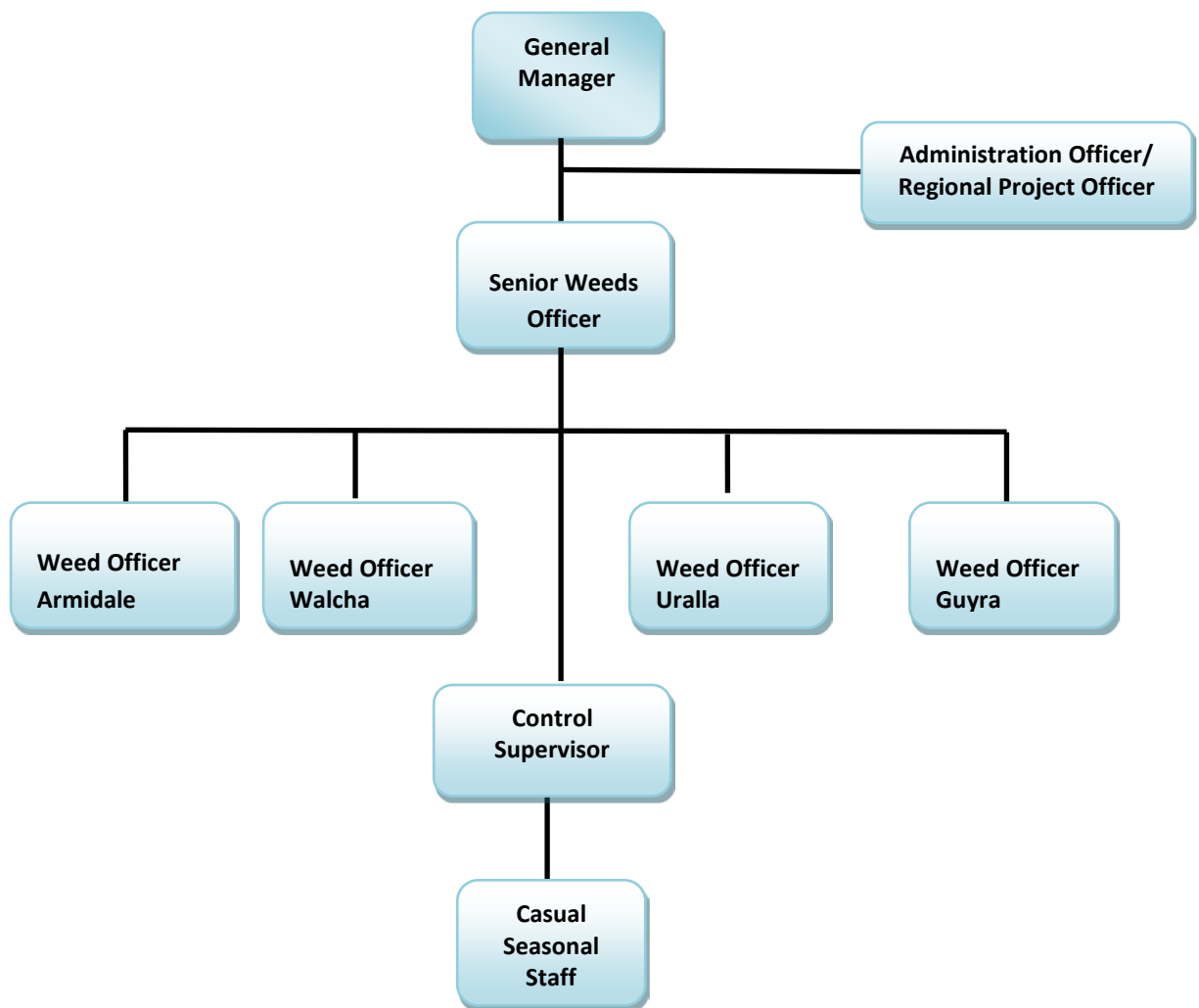


Chart 1: NEWA Staff Structure

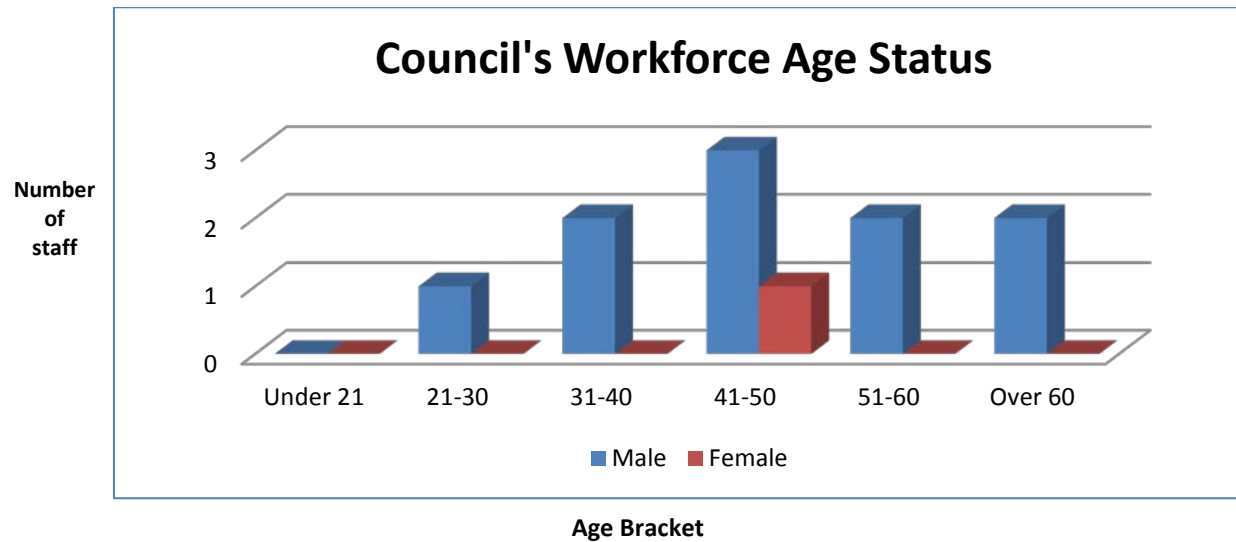
c. Current Workforce

The New England Tablelands (Noxious Plants) County Council is classified as a small rural regional Council. Council currently employs 12 staff comprising full time, part time and casuals. These include various positions in professional, technical, operational and administrative roles.

As at 1st July 2017, Council's workforce is made up of 7 full time, 2 part time, 2 casual and 1 seasonal staff. Table 7 provides details of Council's workforce status as at 1 July 2017.

Table 2: Council's Workforce Status (July 2017)

Employment Status	Total	Employee Gender		Management/ Administration	Professional / Technical Operations	Age by Gender											
		M	F			Under 21		21 to 30		31 to 40		41 to 50		51 to 60		Over 60	
Full time	7	7	1	1	6.5					2		3	1			1	
Part time	2	1		0.5	1											1	
Casual	2	2	0		2			1						1			
Seasonal	1	1	0		1							1		1			



d. Our Strengths and the Challenges ahead

Council presently enjoys a relatively low staff turnover rate. Council's capacity to retain staff has steadily improved over the last few years. As a lifestyle choice the New England region continues to be seen as a desirable location to work and live, which enhances Council's capacity to attract and retain staff.

The identification of job skills and competencies was renewed and updated in 2016 and is ensuring Council has staff on the right skills development path for the positions they currently occupy.

Current workforce challenges faced by Council are not dissimilar to those facing other public and private sector organisations and include:

- an ageing workforce;
- impending exit of key personnel;
- increasing family/carer demands on employees;
- difficulty in readily recruiting desired skill sets and
- changing expectations of work and employment patterns.

Council may be impacted upon by the challenges ahead however, by prudent workforce planning and job satisfaction these challenges are expected to be minimised.

The adverse impact of an ageing workforce is predicated on anticipated retirement patterns. External influences such as the economy, taxation laws, pensionable age thresholds and superannuation rules may well alter the current anticipated retirement patterns.



Photo 2: NEWA Council Staff March 2017

**From back left: P. Constance (WO) I. Wratten (WO), L. Turner (DWO), R. Williams (DWO), R. Walls (WO), P. Doyle (WO)
Front left: R. Smith (DWO), J. Browning (SWO), W. Deer (GM), H. Apps (Admin), M. Benham (DWO), J. Biddle (DWO)**

e. Workforce Management Issues

Strategy	Actions
Affirmative action on aging workforce & impending exit of key personnel.	<p>Undertake dialogue with staff to identify possible workforce exit dates.</p> <p>Undertake succession planning where appropriate for positions identified or reconsider position structures/roles to identify alternative service delivery arrangements.</p> <p>Develop options for transition to retirement and skills transfer.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to continuing staff to upskill through higher grade or mentored work opportunities prior to anticipated exit dates of key personnel.</p>
Increasing family / carer demands.	<p>Develop and/or review existing agreements and staff protocols to seek viable opportunities for flexible and responsive work arrangements to allow employees to meet caring needs of family members.</p>
Affirmative action on recruiting desired skills set and changing expectations of work and employment patterns.	<p>Consider in house skill development opportunities including role rotation and multi-skilling.</p> <p>Continue training and development of existing staff through further study.</p> <p>Continue to develop strategies to attract and retain appropriate skilled staff.</p> <p>Conduct, analyse and report on exit interviews and amend processes in response as appropriate.</p> <p>Optimise staff resources by developing partnerships with other Government agencies.</p> <p>Continue promotion of Council's Equal Opportunity Policy.</p>

f. Review and Implementation

The Workforce Strategy is an evolving process and will be formally reviewed as part of the Annual Operational Plan and 4 Year Delivery Program reviews.

g. Equal Employment Opportunity Policy

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) is intended to ensure that the workplace is free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and harassment and that appropriate programs are provided to assist members of EEO groups to overcome past or present disadvantage.

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

Equal Employment Opportunity is the right 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. Equal Employment Opportunity provides that people should be selected on merit, regardless of race, sex, marital status, disability or sexual preference.

Council:

1. Recognises its legal obligations under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and the Local Government Act 1993;
2. Encourages active participation of all employees in equal opportunity and planning and implementation process;
3. Reviews periodically recruitment selection procedures to maintain a system where individuals are selected, promoted and treated solely on the basis of their merit and abilities which are appropriate to the job;
4. Seeks to give all employees equal opportunity and encouragement to progress within the organisation by implementing a management plan;
5. Distributes and publicises this policy document throughout the organisation and elsewhere as appropriate;
6. Provides to all employees training which may improve their prospects within the organisation and which will enhance employees understanding of the need for an equal opportunity program;

The overall responsibility for the effectiveness and implementation of Equal Employment Opportunity rests with the General Manager, however, it is the responsibility of all employees to accept their personal involvement in the practical application of this policy. Specific responsibility falls upon management (supervisors), and staff involved in recruitment, training and personnel development.

h. Corporate Training Plan

Council is committed to providing training and development activities for its staff and recognises its responsibilities to develop a training plan for the purposes of the Local Government Act 1993 and the provisions of the Local Government State Award 2017.

The key objective of the Corporate Training Plan is to increase the skills of the New England Weeds Authority staff, in implementing the administrative and legislative requirements relating to weed management and control activities, so as that they develop a highly competent and professional standard.

To achieve this objective the Plan provides a baseline of existing qualifications of staff members, a list of training available together with recommended minimum qualifications for Spray Operators, Weed Officers and Senior Weed Officers in line with NSW DPI guidelines which are aligned to Australian Qualification Requirements (AQF) level of qualifications.

Education and information exchange are highly important components to support prevention strategies in weed management and control. It is essential that Weed Officers have the skills and knowledge to design and implement cost effective, environmentally sound inspection and treatment regimes. In addition, they need the necessary skills and training to ensure the safe and legal use of herbicides in control programs and an understanding of the legal requirements for implementing the provisions of the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

It is important that Weed Officers have the opportunity to gain the necessary training and skills to carry out their duties and functions in a competent and professional manner. It is also necessary that Weed Officers have the opportunity to share information and co-operate on a regional basis to implement co-ordinated regional inspection and control programs.

To meet the objectives and measurable outcomes listed in the Corporate Training Plan, the following aims and objectives have been identified:

- To prioritise training programs, courses, seminars, meetings and other training associated events, in order to better facilitate the delivery of such programs.
- To ensure that proper documentation and approvals for training programs are granted in accordance with the training objectives set out in Council's Corporate Training Plan.
- To ensure that training is tied to individual training and education plans which are to be applied consistently in accordance with individual Council requirements.
- To ensure that the value of training is based on organisational needs and, in accordance and compliance with the Salary System requirements, or, as part of an employee's approved formal conditions of employment.
- To provide staff with financial support for undertaking study and courses in accordance with State Award provisions.
- To provide additional career development opportunities, which may have an organisational benefit.
- To monitor training budgets as to being expended effectively and equitably.

The Plan will be monitored on a six monthly basis through reports to the General Manager, leading to an annual review of the Plan in accordance with the objectives of the Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 - 2027. Captured data will provide comparative information by which to assess and measure the progress of the training program to meet the measurable outcomes of Principal Activity PA.1 (Civic Leadership, Governance, Administration, Finance, Risk Management).

5. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN – VEHICLE, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PLAN

The Asset Management Plan and Policy identifies assets under Council's ownership and relates to vehicles, plant and equipment renewal/replacement.

It is noted that Council has no infrastructure assets including land, buildings, bridges, storm water, sewerage, roads or other structures. As a consequence this Plan covers all of Council assets, being vehicles, plant and equipment and makes no reference to infrastructure assets.

a. Legislative Requirements

The Local Government Act 1993 (Section 403) requires that a Council must have a long-term strategy (called its Resourcing Strategy) for the provision of the resources required to implement the strategies established by the 10 year Business Activity Strategic Plan 2017 – 2027, that the Council is responsible for. The Resourcing Strategy is to include the Workforce Strategy, Long Term Financial Plan and Asset Management Plan.

Asset Management planning requirements of this legislation include the development of an Asset Management Policy endorsed by Council for inclusion in an Asset Management Strategy. The Asset Management Strategy is required to support the Business Activity Strategic Plan and 4 Year Delivery Program and provide for a minimum timeframe of 10 years.

Council also has a number of other statutory responsibilities in relation to asset management under the Local Government Act 1993, which outlines the Council's functions, responsibilities, and powers, including providing and maintaining community infrastructure. Under this legislation, Section 8A of the Local Government Act 1993, states in part that Council shall:

- have regard to the long term and cumulative effects of its decisions;
- bear in mind that it is the custodian and trustee of public assets and to
- effectively account for and manage the assets for which it is responsible.

b. Asset Management Policy

i) Policy Objectives

To provide clear direction to the management of Council controlled assets and to ensure Council is able to deal with changes to meet community needs in accordance with legislation under the Local Government Act 1993. Together with Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan and Resourcing Strategy, this policy provides specific asset management objectives to ensure Council's asset stewardship is met by:

- 1) establishing and routinely updating the Asset Management Strategy (minimum 10 year period) as the primary framework to provide and maintain asset services to the community in the future;
- 2) managing assets through the development of an Asset Management Plan in accordance with relevant legislation and recognised best practice;
- 3) ensuring future funding needs are identified, affordable, agreed upon, and allocated, so that assets can meet their defined levels of service in consultation with constituent Councils and the community;

- 4) assets are recorded in accordance with the requirements of the appropriate asset accounting standards and financial reporting requirements. This includes development of an asset management information system and
- 5) creating asset management awareness throughout the Council.

ii) **Policy Statement**

The management of Council assets is a key function of Council. The provision of assets maintained to meet community needs and expectations is fundamental to Council's overall service delivery for the control and management of scheduled priority and invasive weed species.

The purpose of this Asset Management Policy is to demonstrate Council's commitment to the responsible management of Council's assets. This policy addresses legislative requirements under the Local Government Act 1993 and will be revised in accordance with any future changes.

iii) **Definitions**

Asset is a fixed item or facility used to satisfy a service potential or enabling the Council to meet its strategic objectives.

Asset Management is a systematic process to guide the planning, acquisition, operation and maintenance, renewal and disposal of assets to provide the required level of service in the most efficient manner.

Asset Management Information System is the foundation of all asset management knowledge. It is a combination of processes information managed to provide the essential outputs for efficient and effective asset management. The Asset Management Information System links to our finance system and document management system.

Asset Management Strategy includes the development and implementation of plans and programs for asset creation, operation, maintenance, renewal/replacement, disposal and performance monitoring to ensure a desired level of service. The Asset Management Strategy typically has a 10 year horizon and aligns asset management with the Council's Resourcing Strategy.

Asset Management Plan A strategic plan consisting of an asset description, maintenance plan, development plan and financial plan to manage the asset for the expected duration of the service to be provided by the asset.

Level of Service is the defined quality and quantity of services to meet community expectations delivered by Council. In the context of asset management for our Council, this applies to office equipment, vehicles, plant and equipment.

iv) **Council Assets**

Council is responsible for the management of an asset base primarily relating to office equipment, vehicles, plant and equipment.

By the nature of their design and operations, Council's assets have an inherent economic life after which replacement should occur to ensure cost effective maintenance and repairs.

Council's replacement policy is subject to funding, operational requirements, plant condition, and maintenance costs. Balanced with this need for funding is the requirement to ensure that

existing assets continue to meet the needs of the community, are managed and maintained to minimise maintenance cost, reduce exposure to risk, and maximise life expectancy.

Council has developed strategies to meet these requirements in line with corporate priorities and has implemented the following management systems:

- risk management
- maintenance management

i) Risk Management

Council understands that large unmitigated risks can adversely impact its stakeholders and its ability to achieve strategic and operational objectives. Council is committed to an enterprise wide approach to risk management through its Risk Management Strategy, Policy and Risk Register.

The Council has a duty of care to users of community assets. This requires the Council to take all reasonably practicable actions to detect hazards associated with those assets under its care and control, and to minimise the risk to the users from these hazards.

Routine and systematic inspections are undertaken to identify, evaluate, and control hazards associated with the interaction of users with these assets.

ii) Maintenance Management Systems

The management of day-to-day maintenance operations are carried out by staff, whether the response is via cyclic or programmed maintenance or reactive response.

As our long term Business Activity Strategic Plan must not only outline what we are going to do, and when we are going to do it, but it must also ensure that the plan for the delivery of our works and services is achievable without compromising the financial sustainability of the organisation. Appropriate asset management planning is essential for financial sustainability.

The following Schedule 2 details Council's Asset Management Replacement and Upgrading Program for the period 2017 - 2027.

iii) Asset Management Reporting

As Council is responsible for the custody of and is the trustee of public assets, it is responsible for the accounting and management of those assets. Council will report on the condition of their assets in their annual financial statements in line with the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice and Financial Reporting.

This reporting will be further achieved by Council to constituent Councils and the community through the Business Activity Strategic Plan, 4 Year Delivery Program and Annual Operational Plan reporting processes.

Schedule 2: Asset Management Replacement and Upgrading Program 2017 - 2027

New England Weeds Authority Ten Year Plant Replacement Program

Plant Number	Description	Registration	Year of Purchase	Purchase Amount	Plant Number	Net 2017/2018	Net 2018/2019	Net 2019/2020	Net 2020/2021	Net 2021/2022	Net 2022/2023	Net 2023/2024	Net 2024/2025	Net 2025/2026	Net 2026/2027
W1	Isuzu Space Cab	CD 90 QW	2015	\$40,800	W1				\$21,000					\$24,000	
W2	Isuzu Crew Cab	CF 36 ES	2015	\$42,000	W2					\$22,000					\$24,000
W3	Toyota Landcruiser	CI 07 FM	2016	\$55,000	W3					\$32,000					\$35,000
W4	Extra Cab	CA 78 TN	2014	\$40,821	W4			\$23,000					\$24,000		
W5	Dual Cab	BV 50 RD	2013	\$39,780	W5		\$23,000					\$25,000			
W6	Extra Cab	CA 77 TN	2014	\$40,801	W6			\$23,000					\$24,000		
W7	Toyota Landcruiser	BR 70 CP	2012	\$59,703	W7	\$33,000					\$32,000				
W8	Toyota Landcruiser	BV 31 RD	2013	\$56,990	W8		\$33,000					\$35,000			
B1	Honda TRX Quad Bike		2015	\$11,250	B1			\$8,000							
B2	Yamaha 4x4 UTV		2013	\$16,090	B2	\$15,000									
W9	Isuzu Space Cab	CF 37 ES	2016	\$42,000	W9				\$21,000					\$24,000	
MP	Minor Plant (Misc/Trailers)			\$7,000	MP	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$8,000	\$6,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$6,000		
	RPA (drones) x2		2015							\$5,000	\$5,000				\$5,000
S1	Single reel 400L		2009	\$13,000	S1				\$10,000						
S2	Single reel elec 300L		2012	\$8,000	S2	\$13,000									
S3	Dual reel 600L		2016	\$18,000	S3										\$11,000
S4	Dual reel 400L		2010	\$15,000	S4				\$11,000						
S5	Nill Reel				S5										
S6	Dual reel 400L		2016	\$5,000	S6									\$11,000	
S7	Dual reel 600L		2012	\$15,636	S7						\$11,000				
S8	Dual reel 600L		2013	\$16,090	S8							\$10,000			
S9	ATV Unit 80L		2015	\$1,670	S9								\$2,000		
S10	Single reel elec 200L		2013	\$635	S10		\$2,000								
S11	Dual reel 400L		2016	\$17,500	S11									\$11,000	
	Photocopier		2015	\$10,000									\$10,000		
				Total		\$67,000	\$64,000	\$62,000	\$69,000	\$63,000	\$52,000	\$74,000	\$66,000	\$70,000	\$75,000
	Average Expenditure		\$102,019												
	Average Income		\$43,923												
	Average Net Change Over		\$55,558												
	Reserve														
			Balance at year start			\$124,750	\$137,750	\$153,750	\$161,750	\$172,750	\$189,750	\$217,750	\$223,750	\$237,750	\$240,750
			Transfer to Reserve			\$120,000	\$133,000	\$125,000	\$140,000	\$136,000	\$121,000	\$143,000	\$124,000	\$142,000	\$145,000
			Transfer from Reserve			\$107,000	\$117,000	\$117,000	\$129,000	\$119,000	\$93,000	\$137,000	\$110,000	\$139,000	\$148,000
			Balance at Year End			\$137,750	\$153,750	\$161,750	\$172,750	\$189,750	\$217,750	\$223,750	\$237,750	\$240,750	\$237,750