



CHIEF WEEDS OFFICER'S REPORT
For the Period September 2023 – November 2023
Submitted to the Illawarra District Weeds Authority Meeting
01 December 2023
At Kiama Municipal Council
From 9.30 to 12.00pm

To Secretary:

1. Property Inspections/Spraying Program

The last three months has been a busy time for the Authority with good rainfall in the first half of the year ensuring high soil moisture levels lasted through to spring with good spring weed growth resulting. This was despite lower-than-average rainfall over this period. Unfortunately, the seasonal outlook is for hot and dry conditions in the Illawarra and with 52% of NSW currently drought declared, local conditions are expected to deteriorate further, potentially impacting summer programs.

Roadside and Reserve control programs have over the last three months been directed towards Bitou bush, Gorse, Boneseed, Cats claw creeper (CCC), Sea spurge, Coolatai grass and Mysore thorn. No inspectorial and operational programs were undertaken on Chilean Needle grass (CNG) and Serrated Tussock due to the difficulty in sourcing Fluproponate, the most effective herbicide registered on these weeds. With both species having been removed from the regional priority weed list under the 2023-27 RSWMP due to their widespread occurrence across the region, it is anticipated these weeds will now need be assessed in terms of risk, context, and situation before being considered part of any local weed control program.

Boneseed inspections and control were undertaken in September with nine (9) infestations of this State priority weed found. Gorse and Sea spurge were also controlled on all known council managed lands in September. Bitou bush control and inspections were completed in October with an expansion of operations allowing for control of Bitou bush along the northern shoreline of Lake Illawarra. Bitou bush is now being effectively managed at all points south of Northcliffe Drive, west of the M1 Princes Motorway and north of Bellambi lagoon. Mysore thorn inspections and control were initiated on completion of the Bitou bush program. Cats Claw Creeper was targeted for inspection and control in November. Coolatai grass was inspected and controlled south of the new containment line on the Shellharbour/Kiama boundary.

A total of 703 parcels of land were inspected over the last three months of which 229 parcels recorded one or more weeds present. 34 compliance reinspection's were also undertaken, and 21 public reserves and council managed roads were inspected and controlled. No Individual Biosecurity Directions have been issued. Inspection and control of High Risk Pathways and State priority weed sites has continued.

[Attachment 1](#) (Figure1) provides a breakdown of IDWA weed activity data for the period September 2023 to November 2023 as reported under BIS.

Inspection and treatment programs for summer growing weeds Blackberry and all priority aquatic weeds are expected to commence in December. High risk site inspections will be undertaken in the New Year.

Chief Weeds Officer (CWO) – David Pomery

Month of September 2023

Week 1 – High Risk Pathway Inspections- Kiama
- Frogbit New incursion plan/response
Week 2 - Long Service leave
Week 3 – Long Service leave
Week 4 - Long Service leave

Month of October 2023

Week 1 – Long Service leave
Week 2 – Long Service leave
Week 3 – Long Service leave
Week 4 – General Administration Duties.

Month of November 2023

Week 1 - Property Inspections- BlueScope steel & Port facilities – Wollongong
Week 2 - General Administration Duties – VCL reports 22/23 and VCL Application 23/24
Week 3 – High Risk Pathway Inspections- Wollongong
- Online sales enquiries and resident complaints
Week 4 - General Administration Duties – Annual report + IDWA ¼ report
Week 5 - Private works- Transport NSW

Other time spent on property inspection office time, report writing, general correspondence, providing BIS updates, consolidating financial statements. Time was also spent attending local and regional meetings and coordinating staff work programs including private works activities.

Operator/Inspector – Tony Martin

Month of September 2023

Week 1 – Boneseed inspections- Shellharbour / Kiama.
Week 2 – Boneseed inspections - Wollongong
Week 3 – Coolatai grass inspections – Kiama
Frogbit incursion surveillance/delimitation survey - Wollongong
Week 4 – Frogbit control and Parthenium weed surveillance - Wollongong & Kiama

Month of October 2023

Week 1 – Reinspections- GDF +SNS – Shellharbour
Week 2 – Property inspections – GDF + SNS – Shellharbour
Week 3 – Reinspections – Bitou bush- (Pt Kembla) - Wollongong
Week 4 – Private works

Month of November 2023

Week 1 – Property inspections- Mysore thorn (Cordeaux)- Wollongong
Week 2 - Property inspections- Mysore thorn (Cordeaux)- Wollongong
Week 3 – Property inspections- Cats claw creeper- Kiama/Shellharbour
Week 4 – Property inspections- Cats claw creeper –Wollongong
Week 5 –Private works

Other time spent on property inspection office time, plant maintenance, casual staff supervision and general administration duties.

Operator – Mathew de Faveri

Month of September 2023

Week 1 – Roadside spraying – Coolatai grass – Kiama
Week 2 – Roadside and Reserve spraying – Gorse – K/S/W
Week 3 – High Risk Pathway Inspections – Sea spurge – Kiama
Week 4 – High Risk Pathway Inspections - Sea spurge - Kiama

Month of October 2023

Week 1 – High Risk Pathway inspections - Sea spurge – Wollongong
Week 2 – Staff training- ACFEC Compliance and Legal training course- Canberra
Week 3 - Reserve spraying – Mysore thorn – Wollongong
Week 4 – Private works

Month of November 2023

Week 1 – Reserve spraying – Mysore thorn – Wollongong
Week 2 – Reserve spraying – Cats Claw Creeper- Kiama/Shellharbour
Week 3 - Reserve spraying – Cats Claw Creeper - Wollongong
Week 4- Reserve spraying – Aquatic weeds – K/S/W
Week 5- Private works

Casual staff – Tony Carter

Month of September 2023

Week 1 - Private works
Week 2 - Private works
Week 3 - Private works
Week 4 - Private works

Month of October 2023

Week 1 - Private works
Week 2 – Private works
Week 3 - Private works
Week 4 – Private works

Month of November 2023

Week 1– Private works

Week 2 – Private works + Reserve spraying - Bitou bush- (Shellharbour) –Shellharbour

Week 3 – Private works

Week 4 – Private works

Week 5- Private works

Notices to Control issued - refer to [Attachment 2](#) (to be distributed at meeting) - “Private and Confidential”

2. NSW DPI WAP Funding 2023/24

Weeds Action Program (WAP) funding applications for the period 2020/25 were submitted to NSW Department of Primary Industries for approval in early 2020. The IDWA formed part of a regional bid with the South East Local Land Services (SELLS) as the lead agency.

In August 2023 the newly appointed LLS Regional Weed Coordinator undertook a thorough review of the SE WAP based on feedback from member organisations. A revised SE WAP for 23/24 was subsequently submitted to NSW DPI based on risk. The new program was submitted as a variation to the existing WAP for 22/23, with a new set of activities.

The IDWA submitted an application requesting \$145,000.00 in grant funds, supported by council contributions of \$119,500.00 for a total grant program of \$264,500.00.

An additional \$71,182.00 of council contributions will be spent on supporting administrative overheads and other weed related program such as CRIF and widespread weed management.

[Attachment 3](#) provides detail of the proposed 2023/24 WAP grant submission.

This matter is open for discussion.

3. Crown Reserves Improvement Fund Program – 2023/24

Grants totalling \$61,465.00 were submitted for Bitou Bush control on Crown Land at three sites, Perkins Beach, Bass Point and Bevan’s Island.

Perkins Beach - \$23,1,000

Bevans Island \$11,715.00

Bass Point \$26,650.00

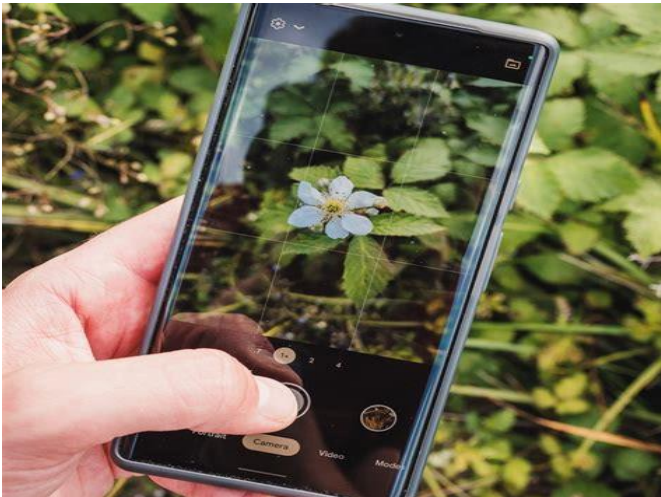
Should funding prove successful \$61,465.00 (incl GST) will be distributed directly to member councils Wollongong and Shellharbour with the IDWA coordinating operational activities. Notification is not expected to be received in relation to the applications until at least April/May 2024.

4. WeedScan

WeedScan is a free priority weed identification, alert and recording app that uses AI to help users identify and record over 450 priority and other weeds throughout Australia. WeedScan uses artificial intelligence to identify priority weeds. Weeds in WeedScan primarily include those considered a priority in one or more states or territories, with a focus on weeds that have the potential to be very damaging but are either not yet present, are still becoming established or may not have reached their full potential distribution. WeedScan also includes some widespread environmental, agricultural and nuisance weeds.

WeedScan is currently being beta tested across Australia by scientists, farmers, community groups, agronomists, rangers, weeds and natural resource management officers including staff from the IDWA, before its expected public release in the coming weeks. Feedback on the 450 priority weeds being tested will enable the project team to improve the WeedScan App before its public release in late 2023. Once released, WeedScan app users will be able to identify priority weeds by simply taking a photo on their phone. App users will also be able to submit records to biosecurity staff, supporting local action to manage weeds.

[Attachment 4](#) is a fact sheet on the WeedScan app.



5. Frogbit incursion – Prohibited Matter

As reported at the last committee meeting held on the 15th September 2023 a new incursion of the Prohibited Matter weed, Frogbit was detected on private property in the Corrimal area. This was the first time this weed had been found in a naturalised situation in the Illawarra, and only the second naturalised incursion reported in the SE LLS area. All other detections had been through online sales and confined to home aquarium situations.

In coordination with staff from SE LLS a delimitation survey was undertaken in September 2023 with a control program implemented simultaneously. Media release was issued shortly thereafter. Refer [Attachment 5](#).

Good control is now being achieved on the infestation with no further detections found.



Frogbit incursion – East Corrimal- Sept 2023



Frogbit incursion – East Corrimal- November 2023.

Staff from the NSW DPI have also begun eDNA testing the site as part of an early alert tool to determine if Frogbit genetic material can be found from environmental samples (eg water) without any obvious signs of biological source material being present at the site. Every species has its own barcode, just as every person has their own fingerprint. These DNA barcodes can be compared to a reference library to provide an ID and determine if the suspect weed is still present, despite not being visible to the naked eye.



6. Staff Training

From 9-13 October 2023 the IDWA Biosecurity operator, Mr Mathew De Faveri attended a 5 day Compliance and Regulatory Training workshop for new Biosecurity Officers authorised under the Biosecurity Act 2015.

This 5-day workshop covered the following areas relating to the core duties and functions of Authorised Officers appointed under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*:

- Interpreting legislation and elements of offences
- Planning and initiating an investigation
- Continuity of evidence
- Gathering and managing evidence
- Conducting interviews and taking statements
- Timeframes and statutory powers
- Responsibilities in enforcing the *Biosecurity Act 2015*
- The role of an Authorised Officer
- Understanding delegations and certificates of authority
- Understanding the use and application of biosecurity directions and other statutory tools
- Dealing with conflict and field safety
- Education and extension
- Civil actions
- Vulnerable persons in the regulatory context
- Preparing reports and briefs

UNITS OF COMPETENCY

Upon successful completion of the course, a Statement of Attainment for the following units of competency is received:

- [PSPREG033 Apply regulatory powers](#)
- [PSPREG034 Assess compliance](#)
- [PSPINV004 Conduct an investigation](#)
- [PSPGEN133 Identify and treat risks](#)
- [PSPINV001 Plan and initiate an investigation](#)
- [PSPREG038 Give evidence](#)

The above units form part of PSP40416 Certificate IV in Government Investigations.

In support of the above, Mathew has also undertaken NSW DPI Weeds Biosecurity Officer Induction Training covering Unit of competency – Carry out inspection of designated area. Tailored to meet the needs of recently employed Local Government Biosecurity Officers, participants learnt skills needed to plan, control, report on and monitor the effectiveness of a range of weed control strategies.

This training supports the objective of having all IDWA staff appropriately trained to deliver the services required by member councils and expected by the community.

7. Budget - Summary of Expenses Incurred and Accrued to 24 November 2023

	Budget 2023-2024	Actual to 24 Nov 2023	Draft Budget 2024-25
Income			
WAP Program			
Council contributions	119,500	119,500	120,400
State government Grant	145,000	-	145,000
Sub- Total	264,500	119,500	265,400
Other Programs			
			-
VCL Program			
Council contributions	5,100	5,100	5,000
Grant	61,465	-	62,000
Priority Weed control program			
Council contributions	16,082	16,082	17,095
IDWA General administration			
Council contributions	50,000	50,000	52,000
Bald Hill Boneseed program			
Grant	5,000	5,000	5,000
LLS Roads & Reserves Program			
Grant	46,321	46,321	
Sub Total	183,968	122,503	141,095
Biosecurity inspection fees	-	-	-
Sundry income (interest)	5,000	-	5,000
Leaseback	9,000	3,404	9,000
Private Works	70,000	14,498	70,000
Sub Total	84,000	17,902	84,000
TOTAL	532,468	259,905	490,495

	Budget 2023-2024	Actual to 24 Nov 2023	Draft Budget 2024-25
Expenditure			
WAP Program			
Management of high-risk sites	10,000	1,500	10,000
Management of high-risk pathways	25,000	14,104	25,000
Property inspections	146,400	97,688	146,400
State Priority weed inspections.	8,500	6,412	9,000
State priority weed control.	4,000	372	4,000
Monitor Online sales.	2,500	880	2,500
Inspection & control of priority sites	22,000	16,480	22,000
Inspection and control of priority pathways	29,500	1,500	29,500
Community awareness and participation (staff publicity)	2,700	1,693	3,000
Skilled workforce (staff training)	8,900	13,822	9,000
SEWAP regional administration	5,000	2,241	5,000
Sub- Total	264,500	156,692	265,400
Other Programs			
IDWA General administration	50,000	19,503	52,000
Priority Weed Control Program	16,082	11,117	17,095
VCL Program	66,565	3,673	67,000
Bald Hill Boneseed Program	5,000	5,000	5,000
LLS Roads & Reserves Program	46,321	-	-
SUB -Total	183,968	39,293	141,095
Private Works	40,000	14,761	41,000
Sub Total	40,000	14,761	41,000
TOTAL	488,468	210,746	447,495
Credit (Debit)	44,000	49,159	43,000

Attachment 1

