



CHIEF WEEDS OFFICER'S REPORT

For the Period December 2023 – February 2024

Submitted to the Illawarra District Weeds Authority Meeting

Friday 22nd March 2024

At ISJO Offices Terralong St Kiama

From 9.30am to 12.30pm

To Secretary:

1. Property Inspections / Spraying Program

The season to date has been ideal for weed growth with regular rainfall and warm conditions prevailing resulting in exceptional growth for the fourth consecutive year.

Roadside and reserve control programs have over the last three months been primarily directed towards Blackberry and the aquatics Salvinia, Water Hyacinth, Frogbit and Alligator Weed. Private property inspection programs have largely mirrored operational programs.

Aquatic weed control programs commenced in December with all known infested private and council controlled lands inspected and control programs undertaken. Due to the excessive growth rates associated with aquatic weeds it is desirable at least two to three control treatments be undertaken on all infestations over the summer growing season. This will ensure growth is restricted, spread reduced and control / eradication achieved in the shorter term. Inspection and control programs for all aquatics are expected to be completed by the end of April.

Good control of the aquatic weed Water Hyacinth has been achieved at both Coomaditchie lagoon, a listed EEC and Jerarra dam. Concerted control efforts undertaken over the last two growing seasons appear to have been very successful with no plants being found this year at either site.

The Alligator weed flea beetle is causing destruction to large areas of floating Alligator weed in the Dunmore area, although terrestrial based plants continue to persist as the flea beetle needs aquatic based plants to complete its lifecycle. Whilst beneficial it does hinder spraying operations of Alligator weed in aquatic situations.

Another wet start to this season has further hindered access to the Dunmore site where boggy ground surrounding the wetland has limited control to a few "drier" locations of terrestrial based alligator weed plants. Aquatic plants not affected by the flea beetle are often submerged under the high water levels further limiting control.

The new incursion of the Prohibited Matter weed Frogbit is continually being monitored and treated at the east Corrimal site. Whilst Frogbit still persists at the site plant numbers have been reduced considerably and only scattered fragments now remain. It is hoped to eradicate the weed by seasons end.

Inspection and control of High Risk Sites has been given increased emphasis over the last three months with all nurseries, florists and aquaria outlets currently being inspected for priority weeds. Inspection and control of High Risk Pathways continues subject to prevailing weather conditions.

Reserve and roadside treatment for Blackberry commenced in January and will continue through March. Private property inspections also commenced at this time and will continue through to at least April, although future programs will be reassessed to align with the 2023-2027 RSWMP.

Parthenium weed (PW) appears to be under control on a rural property in the Broughton Village area south of Gerringong. First reported and confirmed in December 2020 the property is inspected and controlled at least monthly. Manual control of the PW on the affected property is undertaken with no plants found on this property since August 2023 when two seedling plants were found along an access track on the property. Despite being the growing season for Parthenium weed, plant numbers have dropped considerably from more than a year ago when several dozen plants were identified on each visit. Ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the area will continue to be undertaken at least monthly for the next 12-18 months with a 7-10 year eradication time frame expected.

A total of 835 parcels of land were inspected over the last three months. Of these parcels, 114 recorded the presence of one or more priority weeds. Eight (8) properties involved extension work. Of the 114 properties inspected and recorded with a priority weed, 75 were primary inspections, 24 were compliance related and 15 involved control work on public reserves or council-controlled roads. No Individual Biosecurity Directions have been issued.

[Attachment 1](#) (Figure1) provides a breakdown of IDWA weed activity data for the period December 2023 to February 2024 as reported under BIS.

Commencement of inspection / treatment programs for autumn growing weeds Groundsel Bush, Pampas Grass and Gorse are expected to commence in May with Bitou Bush scheduled for June / July.

Chief Weeds Officer (CWO) - David Pomery

Month of December 2023

Week 1 – Annual leave

Week 2 – Annual leave

Week 3 – Annual leave

Week 4 – Christmas / New Year break

Month of January 2024

Week 1 – Annual leave

Week 2 – General administrative duties

Week 3 – General administrative duties

- Aquatic weed inspections and control
- Resident complaints

Week 4 – General administrative duties

Week 5 - Carers leave.

Month of February 2024

Week 1 – Property Inspections- Knights Hill -Kiama

- Parthenium weed inspection & control

Week 2 – Property Inspections- Knights Hill -Kiama

Week 3 – Property inspections- Tullimbar - Shellharbour

Week 4 - Property inspections- Tullimbar - Shellharbour

Other time spent on property inspection office time, report writing and general correspondence. Time was also spent writing submissions, supervising staff and contractors and organising work programs and training schedules.

Operator / Inspector - Tony Martin

Month of December 2023

Week 1- Property inspections – Aquatic weeds – Kiama
Week 2- Property inspections – Aquatic weeds – Shellharbour
Week 3 – Property inspections – Aquatic weeds – Wollongong
Week 4 - Christmas/ New Year break

Month of January 2024

Week 1 – Property inspections- Aquatic weeds - Wollongong
Week 2 – Annual leave
Week 3 – Annual leave
Week 4 – Reinspection's – GDF, Mysore thorn, CCC – W/S/K
Week 5 – Property Inspections- Tallawarra - Wollongong

Month of February 2024

Week 1 –HRS Inspections
Week 2 – HRS Inspections
Week 3 – HRS Inspections
Week 4 – HRS Inspections
- Reinspection's- Aquatic weeds - Kiama

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

Weed spray Operator - Mathew De Faveri

Month of December 2023

Week 1 – Aquatic weed control- Ludwigia / WH / Salvinia / Frogbit- K/S/W
Week 2 – Aquatic weed control- Ludwigia / WH / Salvinia / Frogbit- K/S/W
Week 3 – Aquatic weed control- Alligator weed - K/S/W
Week 4 – Christmas /New Year break

Month of January 2024

Week 1 – Aquatic weed control- Alligator weed - K/S/W
Week 2 - Aquatic weed control- Alligator weed - K/S/W
Week 3 - Roadside and reserve spraying – Blackberry - Kiama
Week 4 - Roadside and reserve spraying – Blackberry - Kiama
Week 5 – Roadside and reserve spraying – Blackberry - Shellharbour

Month of February 2024

Week 1 – Roadside and reserve spraying – Blackberry - Shellharbour

Week 2 – Roadside and reserve spraying – Blackberry -Wollongong

Week 3 – Roadside and reserve spraying – Blackberry - Wollongong

Week 4 – Resident complaints / widespread weed control- K/S/W

Casual staff – Tony Carter

Month of December 2023

Week 1 – Private works

Week 2 –Private works

Week 3 – Private works

Week 4 - Christmas /New Year break

Month of January 2024

Week 1 – Christmas / New Year break

Week 2 – Private works

Week 3 – Private works

Week 4 – Private works

Week 5 – Private works

Month of February 2024

Week 1 – Private works

Week 2 – Private works

Week 3 – Private works

Week 4 – Private works

Casual staff employed up to 2 days per week.

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

2. Bitou bush aerial spraying program – Winter 2024.

The 2024 drone-spraying program has tentatively been scheduled for possibly either April or May subject to Crown Land funding approval notification. The CWO has had preliminary discussion with Garth Short from Hunter Precision Helicopters to undertake drone spraying on possibly two sites as part of the Winter 2024 Bitou bush control program. The sites are Bass Point and the adjoining quarry.

This matter is open for discussion.

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3. 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.

On 28th February 2024 NSW DPI issued a press release via the Weeds Extranet outlining NSW Government changes to all NSW Government grant programs, including the NSW Weeds Action Program (WAP). Regional allocations to Local Control Authorities (LCAs) under the WAP must now align with the Grant Administration Guide (not yet available). Effectively this means eligible LCAs will now need to (re) apply for these grants for 2023/2024. NSW DPI and LLS will release a brief to assist in this process.

Despite being two thirds through the funding year the NSW Government has seen in its infinite wisdom to create a new set of rules for 23/24 rather than applying it to all grants in the year beginning 24/25. With only 3 months remaining of this financial year, and with applications still to be (re) submitted, approved by a newly formed grant funding committee and then allocated, one might be optimistic to believe funding will be received by the end of April 2024.

This matter is open for discussion.

4. Parthenium weed surveillance program

As part of the NSW DPI new incursion response program for Prohibited Matter species a joint NSW DPI / Illawarra District Weeds Authority/ Shoalhaven City Council Parthenium weed response program was conducted at Broughton Village on Tuesday and Wednesday 5th and 6th March. The response program involved up to 30 staff from NSW DPI, LLS and other LCAs. The purpose of the program was to undertake a thorough surveillance operation on the known infested property and all adjoining lands to determine if the weed had spread from its known location or was still confined to the one property. In good news for the program only 5 seedling Parthenium weed plants were found on the infested property. No plants were found on adjacent lands. The IDWA will however continue to monitor the Broughton Village property monthly, for at least the next 5-7 years to ensure eradication is achieved. Refer to [Attachment 3](#).

5. Excellence in the Environment Awards

Held annually, the Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards aim to recognise outstanding achievements by NSW local government organisations in managing and protecting the environment.

Now open to JOs, ROCs and County Councils the IDWA submitted an entry in the Invasive Species Management category for its program **Managing Risk on High Risk Pathways**.

Held at the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney on 5th December the IDWA entry was selected as a Finalist in its category, eventually emerging as the Winner of Division D for JOs, ROCs and County Councils. Refer to [Attachment 4](#).

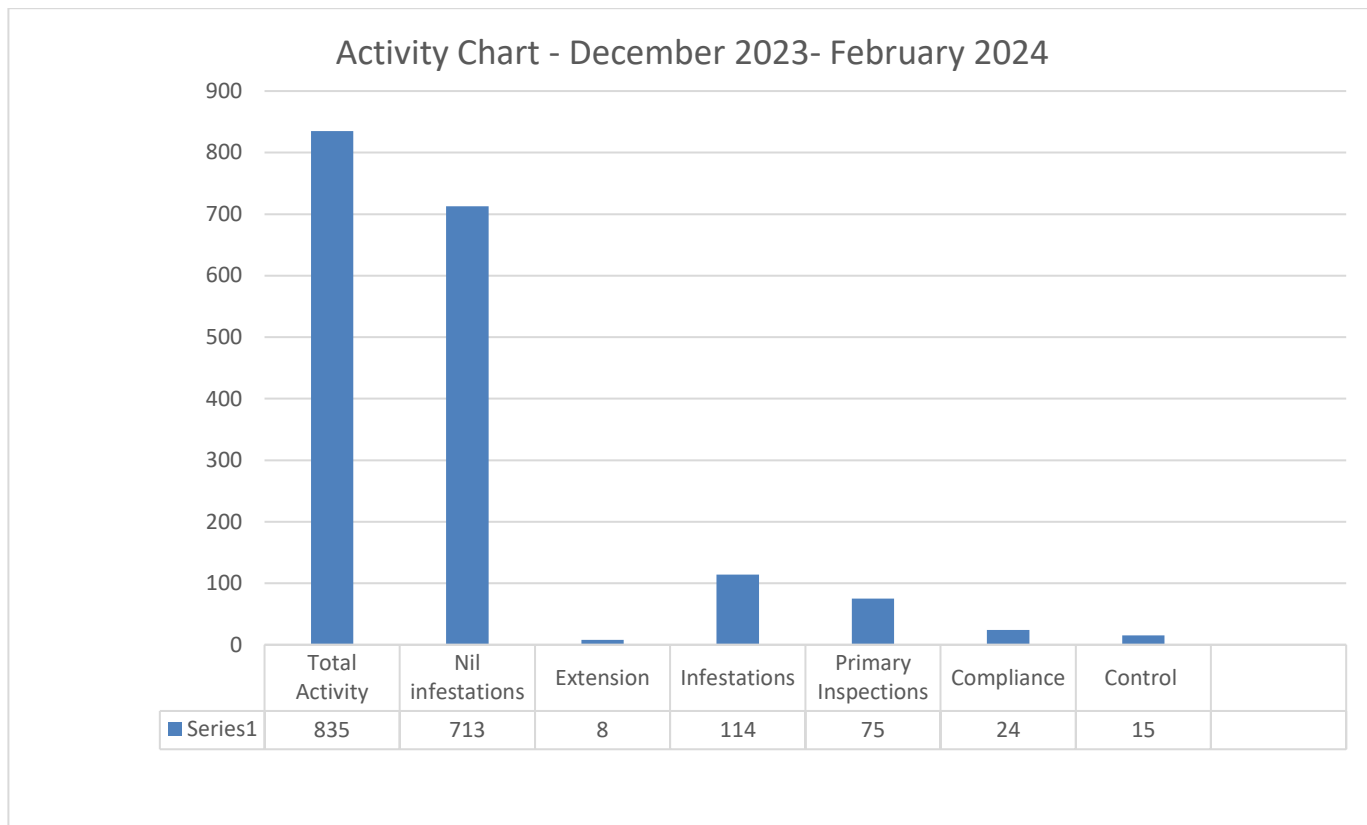
5. Budget Summary of Expenses Incurred and Accrued to 18 March 2024

	Budget 2023-2024	Actual to 18 March 2024	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 contribution	50,000	50,000	52,000
Bald Hill Boneseed program			
Grant	5,000	5,000	5,000
LLS Roads and Reserves Program			
Grant	40,821	40,821	33,671
Dunmore Wetlands Program			
Grant	13,890	13,890	12,240
Parthenium Weed Program.			
Grant	31,769	31,769	-
Sub Total	224,127	162,662	141,095
Biosecurity inspection fees	-	-	-
Sundry income (interest)	5,000	-	5,000
Leaseback	9,000	5,822	9,000
Private Works	70,000	47,032	70,000
Sub Total	84,000	52,854	84,000
TOTAL	572,627	335,016	490,495

	Budget 2023-2024	Actual to 18 March 2024	Draft Budget 2024-25
Expenditure			
WAP Program			
Management of high risk sites	10,000	8,422	10,000
Management of high risk pathways	25,000	21,598	25,000
Property Inspections	146,400	121,798	146,400
State Priority weed inspections.	8,500	10,627	9,000
State Priority weed control	4,000	4,080	4,000
Monitor Online sales	2,500	2,231	2,500
Inspection and control of Priority sites	22,000	19,851	22,000
Inspection and control of priority pathways	29,500	26,005	29,500
Community awareness and participation (staff publicity)	2,700	2,729	3,000
Skilled workforce (staff training)	8,900	16,715	9,000
SEWAP regional coordination.	5,000	3,529	5,000
Sub- Total	264,500	237,585	265,400
Other Programs			
IDWA General Administration	50,000	37,903	52,000
Priority Weed Control Program	16,082	16,281	17,095
VCL Program	66,565	3,673	67,000
NSW WAP New Incursion program	31,769	5,611	25,000
Bald Hill Boneseed program	5,000	5,000	5,000
LLS Roads and Reserves Program	40,821	-	33,671
Dunmore Wetlands Program	13,890	-	12,240
SUB -Total	224,127	68,468	141,095
Private Works	40,000	39,302	41,000
Sub Total	40,000	39,302	41,000
TOTAL	528,627	345,355	447,495
Credit (Debit)	44,000	(10,339)	43,000

Attachment 1.

Figure 1.



Attachment 4.

Local Government NSW Excellence in the Environment Awards – Winner Division D

