

Overview of noxious weed management in NSW

Why local government?

The implementation of noxious weed management has been the responsibility of local government in NSW since 1906, providing continuity in weed management.

In a state as large and diverse as NSW there is a great variation in weed species and their ability to impact on the local flora and agricultural industries. Continuity in weed management provides benefits for local communities. An informed council can make decisions on noxious weed priorities for its area and implement an appropriate control strategy.

Councils are now cooperating with each other to produce regional weed management strategies to maximise coordination for the benefit of all concerned.

Councils and the weeds staff they employ are the first line of defence against noxious weeds in NSW. Where councillors and local government managers understand their roles and responsibilities in supporting the noxious weed control process, the benefits to all of us, our industries and our environment are greatly enhanced.

Did you know?

- The cost of controlling weeds for our agricultural industries alone is in excess of \$4 billion each year nationwide not including the impact on biodiversity, landscapes, tourism, water resources and other industries. This cost is equivalent to building 1000 new primary schools, more than 400 district hospitals or 1500 new nursing homes every year.

- In 2006–07, 66% of agricultural businesses reported weed related problems on their holdings.
- In 2006–07, the management of weed related problems in agricultural businesses involved over 4 million person days.
- Just 6 of our worst invasive weeds have degraded over 20 million hectares of natural ecosystems and grazing land.
- At least 23 common weeds present a serious respiratory or toxic risk to humans, especially children.
- 65% of our environmental weeds originated in parks and home gardens.
- Weeds are a major threat to biodiversity in Australia. They have been implicated in the extinction of at least 4 native plant species and are known to be adding pressure to a further 57 now under threat.
- In 2006, 89% of endangered ecological communities were being threatened by weeds.

Councils have a major role to play in reducing these impacts from weeds declared noxious in their area.

Sources: Killing us softly — Australia's Green Stalkers 2004. Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management. Natural Resource Management on Australian Farms 2006-07, Australian Bureau of Statistics. Impact of weeds on threatened biodiversity in New South Wales 2006, Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management.

Noxious weeds and local government – the facts.

1. Noxious weeds are not simply 'bad' weeds.

A weed is declared noxious because its control will provide a benefit to the community over and above the cost of implementing control programs.

Many 'bad' weeds do not meet the criteria for declaration. Noxious weeds will have limited distribution with the potential to become more widespread and will cause impact on agriculture, human health or the environment.

Councils should regularly review their noxious weeds list to ensure that declarations are relevant and continue to be in the public interest.

2. The noxious weeds act is not just 'fashionable' environmental legislation.

The *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* imposes obligations on occupiers of land to control noxious weeds declared for their area. Control of noxious weeds provides community benefits and reduces the potential spread to neighbouring properties.

3. Councils have a responsibility to control noxious weeds on land that they control.

Councils are also occupiers of land, and in addition to their responsibilities as local control authorities, are required to comply with the same obligations as occupiers of privately owned land.

4. It is in the interest of councils, as the elected representatives of their respective communities, to conduct effective noxious weed programs.

Failure to effectively control noxious weeds impacts directly on the productivity of all industries that generate income from land or inland waterways and, therefore, the local economy.

What is a noxious weed?

The most widely accepted definition of a weed is 'a plant growing where it is not wanted'.

In NSW, noxious weeds are plants that have been declared under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* by the Minister for Primary Industries. Weeds with the potential to impact on agriculture, animal or human health or damage the environment are potential candidates for declaration as noxious weeds.

Where a plant is declared noxious it is assigned a 'control order', which specifies the actions required for that plant. The Act gives the council power to require occupiers of land to control noxious weeds. If an occupier fails to do so, the council has the power to enter the land and to carry out the control work. The council can also issue a penalty notice or take prosecution action for offences under the Act.

The main intent of the Act is to prevent the establishment of significant new weeds, restrict the spread of serious weeds and protect other landholders from weed invasion.

There is no point in declaring a weed noxious unless there is a firm intention to implement a practical, planned management program.

Declaring a weed noxious does not, in itself, provide any benefits to the community.

Declaration provides the legal framework for the provisions of the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* to be implemented.

What are the impacts of noxious weeds?

Human and animal health

Some weeds affect human health or animal welfare, causing chronic or acute poisoning, hay fever, asthma, dermatitis or photosensitisation. The spines or seeds of many weeds may cause physical injury.

Biodiversity

Many weeds, often termed 'environmental weeds', adversely affect the integrity, conservation status, habitat characteristics and aesthetic value of our natural ecosystems. These weeds displace native habitats and, in some cases, are a direct threat to the survival of threatened or endangered plants and animals and ecological communities.

Waterways

Aquatic weeds block irrigation channels and streams, hinder fishing and water-based recreational activities, damage infrastructure, change flow regimes causing erosion and overwhelm native species.

They change ecosystem dynamics affecting fish, amphibian and waterfowl habitats. They can restrict livestock access to water and can seriously degrade water quality to the point where it is not suitable for human consumption. Aquatic weeds also detract from the visual amenity of waterways and impact upon riparian vegetation.

Agriculture

Virtually every agricultural industry in Australia incurs costs due to noxious weeds through:

- Contamination and downgrading of agricultural produce.
- Reductions in the yield and quality of crops and pastures.
- Injury and poisoning of livestock.
- Interference with harvesting operations.
- Expensive and time-consuming methods of control.

Appreciating the concepts of weed management

Effective and economical weed management requires a sound understanding of the ecology of plant communities and in particular the interactions between species. Once the basic principals are understood a management strategy to encourage desirable species can be implemented.

There are five main steps to undertaking a successful weed management program.

1. Prevention

Prevention of the establishment of noxious weeds is the best and most effective form of weed control. This may require promoting weed awareness in your council area and encouraging the community to identify and report any suspicious plants.

2. Act early

Weed control is expensive and labour intensive. Acting early is a good investment of time and money. If a weed problem can be tackled before it grows, control costs can be kept to a minimum.

3. Control

There are usually several options available for the management of weeds including physical removal, vegetation management, herbicide application and biological control. The best option will depend on the target species, its location, and the long-term objectives of the program. Integrating and applying a range of options increases the chance of success in weed management.

4. Replacement

Replacing the weed with desirable vegetation is the only long-term solution for managing weeds. Where an area is dominated by desirable competitive species, it is usually difficult for weeds to establish.

Desirable vegetation may be native plants, plantations, improved pastures or a range of other options.

It is important to provide strong competition against weeds.

5. Maintaining the site

Where weed control has been undertaken there is still potential for the weed to return through germination of the seed bank or re-infestation. For this reason it is essential to maintain the site through regular inspection and follow-up weed control.

The resources available for controlling weeds need to be used effectively – the focus should be on programs that provide the greatest community benefit.



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Who's who in noxious weed management

There are several key stakeholders in the management of noxious weeds in NSW.

The Minister

The Minister for Primary Industries is responsible for the administration of the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. This includes declarations of noxious weeds and the allocation of grants for the control of noxious weeds.

Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee

The Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee advises the Minister on all aspects of noxious weed management including declarations, allocation of grant funds, regulations under the Act and issues related to the implementation of the *NSW Invasive Species Plan*.

The Minister appoints the Committee from names provided by stakeholder organisations and the general community.

Industry & Investment NSW

The Department supports the Minister, facilitates the implementation of the *NSW Invasive Species Plan* and through its officers provides support for, and information to, the Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee and Local Control Authorities.

Local Control Authorities

In NSW local government councils are responsible for the implementation of the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* and are referred to as Local Control Authorities.

Councils may confer their noxious weed control functions on a county council constituted under the *Local Government Act 1993*. The constituent councils then no longer have direct responsibility for noxious weed control but are still responsible for providing sufficient resources to the county council to carry out its functions effectively.

Regional Weed Advisory Committee

Local Control Authorities, public authorities, industry bodies, state government agencies and the community have established fourteen Regional Weed Advisory Committees' across NSW to assist in regional co-operation.

Public authorities

Public authorities are government agencies, Statutory Bodies, Livestock Health and Pest Authorities and Trustees of land reserved for public purposes.

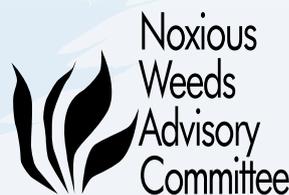
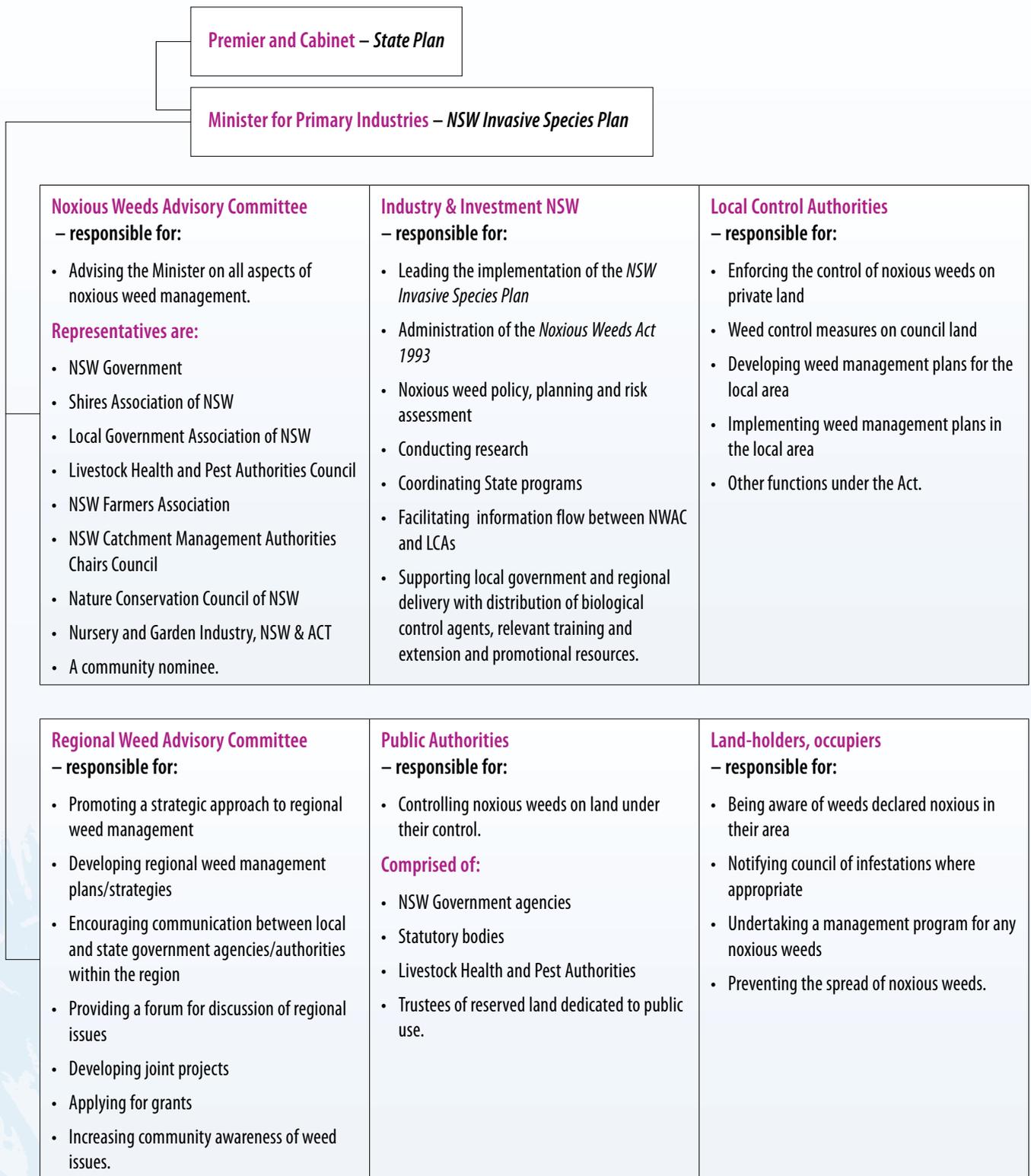
Public authorities must control noxious weeds on land under their control to the extent required under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.

The Minister is responsible for ensuring this occurs and in the case of any dispute the ultimate decision rests with the Premier.

Private land-holder, occupier

Occupiers of private land are required to control noxious weeds according to the control category for their area. It is their responsibility to be aware of the weeds declared noxious in the area and take the appropriate action to notify, control and prevent their spread.

Figure 1: Responsibilities for Noxious Weed Management in NSW



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Role of the Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee

The Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee is established under the *Noxious Weed Act 1993* to:

- Provide a forum for all matters relating to the control of noxious weeds in NSW.
- Provide advice to the Minister for Primary Industries on all noxious weed matters.
- Recommend to the Minister the allocation of Noxious Weed Grants and ensure public authorities are accountable for those funds, and
- Recommend plant species to the Minister to be declared as noxious weeds.

In addition to providing advice to the Minister and Industry and Investment NSW, committee members are expected to keep their organisations informed about developments and issues concerning noxious weeds and to assist in publicising weed issues.

Appointment to the Committee

Members are appointed by the Minister for Primary Industries for a fixed term, usually 2 to 4 years.

The current organisations that are invited to nominate representatives on NWAC include:

- NSW Shires Association
- NSW Local Government Association
- NSW Farmers' Association
- Livestock Health and Pest Authorities
- Council of Chairs of Catchment Management Authorities
- Nursery and Garden Industry NSW and ACT
- Nature Conservation Council of NSW.

The Minister also appoints a representative of the community and other organisations from time to time.

The Minister appoints an Executive Officer to support the operation and coordination of the Committee. Industry & Investment NSW provides a secretary to support the operation of the Committee.

Structure of the Committee

The Committee conducts most of its business at face to face meetings. The Committee currently has three sub-committees and a number of working groups to develop recommendations.



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Noxious weeds control orders

In NSW the administration of noxious weed control is the responsibility of the Minister for Primary Industries under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. The Act is implemented and enforced by the Local Control Authority for the area, usually local government. See Section 1, *Who's Who in Noxious Weed Management*.

In some areas, groups of Local Control Authorities have initiated co-operative structures to jointly implement the noxious weed control functions for their region.

The Act aims to:

- Ensure a uniform and co-ordinated approach to the control of noxious weeds throughout NSW.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of all authorities and occupiers of land.
- Provide powers to enable the coordinated control of weeds in NSW.
- Provide for funding assistance from the state government, and
- Categorise noxious weeds according to the level of control that is required for each weed and location.

Compliance with the Act provides the community with the following benefits:

- The financial impacts are reduced.
- The spread of noxious weeds is reduced.
- Damage to the environment, biodiversity, waterways, infrastructure and water quality is reduced.
- Impacts on health and welfare of animals and the community are reduced.

- New or emerging weeds are identified and managed before they cause serious impact, and
- Weed management occurs in a coordinated manner making effective use of all available resources.

Control of noxious weeds on private property

Occupiers of private land are required to control noxious weeds according to the weeds' control class for their area.

Where any occupier fails to control weeds on their land, the council may issue a notice for the control of the weed.

If the occupier fails to comply with a notice, the council may prosecute and / or enter the property and carry out any necessary weed control work, charging the landholder any reasonable expense incurred. Alternatively, the council may issue an 'on the spot' penalty for breaches of the Act.

Control of noxious weeds on public land

Councils and public authorities are required to control noxious weeds on land under their control.

Only the Minister has the power to issue notices to public land managers and councils to control noxious weeds on their land.

The role of councils in noxious weed declarations

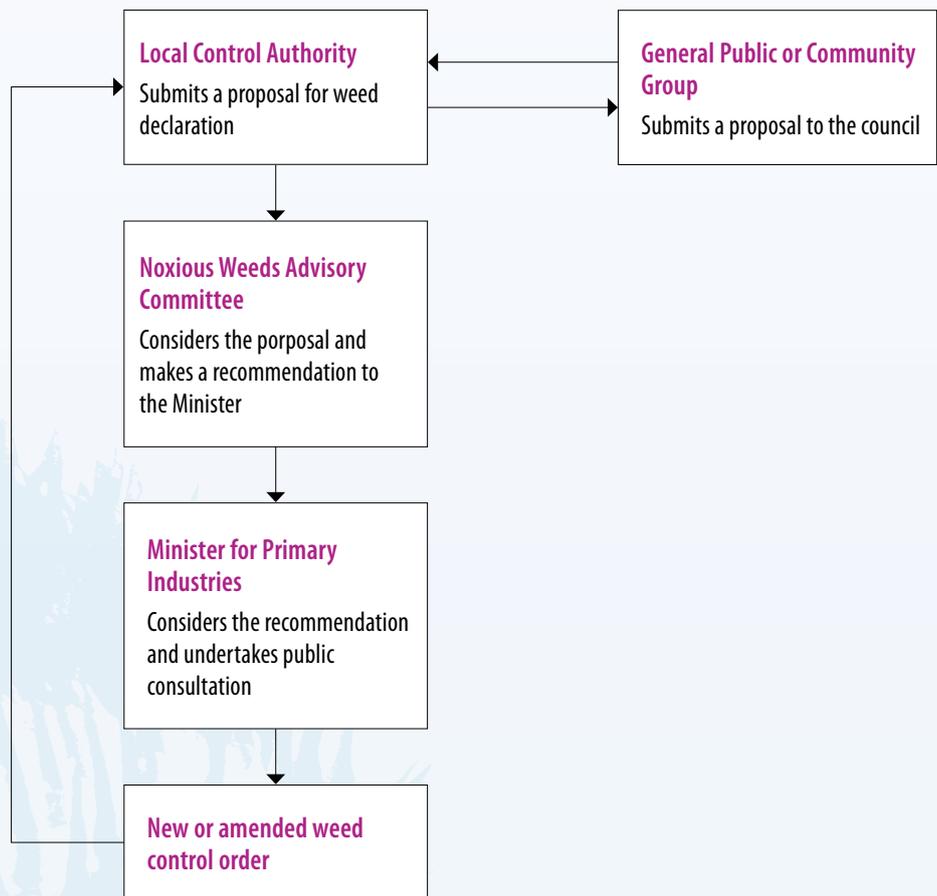
Weeds are declared according to Local Control Authority boundaries. Weed control orders are also applied in this manner and specify the action that must be taken in respect to the weed.

A proposal is considered by the Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee who then makes a recommendation to the Minister. Members of the public and community groups are also able to initiate applications to change noxious weed declarations.

The Minister makes an order declaring a weed noxious, specifying the control category and area to which the declaration applies.

Councils are able to apply for new declarations or change the control category of declared weeds.

Figure 1: The declaration process



Summary of noxious weeds control categories

The following is a summary of NSW noxious weed control orders.

A weed control order (see Figure 1) takes effect when it is published in the Government Gazette.

The weed control order is to do the following:

- Declare the plant as noxious
- Apply a weed control class or classes (see Table 1)
- Specify land to which the order applies
- Specify control objectives for the plant
- Specify the term of the order (not exceeding 5 years).

Table 1: Control classes of noxious weeds

Weed	Weed type	Example of control requirements
Class 1 State prohibited weeds	Plants that pose a potentially serious threat to primary production or the environment and are not present in the state or are present only to a limited extent.	The plant must be eradicated from the land and the land must be kept free of the plant. The weeds are also 'notifiable' and a range of restrictions on their sale and movement exist.
Class 2 Regionally prohibited weeds	Plants that pose a potentially serious threat to primary production or the environment of a region to which the order applies and are not present in the region or are present only to a limited extent.	The plant must be eradicated from the land and the land must be kept free of the plant. The weeds are also 'notifiable' and a range of restrictions on their sale and movement exist.
Class 3 Regionally controlled weeds	Plants that pose a potentially serious threat to primary production or the environment of a region to which the order applies, are not widely distributed in the area and are likely to spread in the area or to another area.	The plant must be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed.*
Class 4 Locally controlled weeds	Plants that pose a potentially serious threat to primary production, the environment or human health, are widely distributed in an area to which the order applies and are likely to spread in the area or to another area.	The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled according to the measures specified in a management plan published by the local control authority.*
Class 5 Restricted plant	Plants that are likely, by their sale or the sale of their seeds or movement within the state or an area of the state, to spread in or outside the state.	There are no requirements to control existing plants of Class 5 weeds. However, the weeds are 'notifiable' and a range of restrictions on their sale and movement exists.

* A complete copy of the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* can be found on the Australasian Legal Information Institute website www.austlii.edu.au. A list of noxious weeds and weed control orders can be found at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds.



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Responsibility of local government

Local Control Authorities are responsible for controlling noxious weeds and administering the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* in their areas.

In most areas of NSW the Local Control Authority is the council. See Section 1, *Who's Who in Noxious Weed Management*.

Local Control Authorities are required to fund and implement their responsibilities under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* in their respective areas. Most of these functions are detailed in section 36 of the Act but others may be found throughout the Act.

See www.austlii.edu.au for a complete copy of the Act.

- Weed management on land occupied by the council and on roads in their area.
- Publicity about weeds declared in the area.
- Proposing changes to noxious weed declarations.
- Developing, implementing and coordinating local strategies and policies.
- Providing on-going approved training and professional development for weed staff.
- Providing adequate resources to implement noxious weed programs.

Councils are required to provide reports on these functions at the request of the Minister. This reporting requirement is also a condition of the Noxious Weed Grant Program.

Council's duties include:

- Ensuring occupiers of private land fulfil their obligations under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.
- Inspection of land within their area in connection with noxious weeds.
- Enforcing the control of noxious weeds as per the control class.

What is the role of council weeds staff

Weeds staff perform the council functions in enforcing the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. They should be appointed by the council itself and their appointment recorded in the council minutes. The General Manager should provide a certificate identifying the appointee as an inspector for the purposes of the Act.

Weeds staff generally have the powers to enter properties, undertake surveys and inspections, collect evidence, issue penalty notices and serve weed control notices on behalf of the council.

These officers play a diverse role in the community and are responsible for implementing councils' policies, strategies and noxious weed control programs. They often have wider contact with ratepayers than other council officers.

Weeds staff are the front line defence against weeds. They work with, and for, the local community to protect their valuable assets including agricultural land, bushland, recreational facilities, private property and waterways.

Duties of a council weeds staff

The role of council weeds staff is extremely varied and fulfils numerous functions within the council. The following is a summary of their main activities.

Management planning and keeping records

Council weeds staff are usually responsible for:

- Developing council weed management strategies.
- Surveying and mapping of weed infestations.
- Integrating control programs with other council and community activities.
- Reporting on noxious weed distribution and abundance.
- Maintaining accurate records.
- Preparing grant applications and reports on behalf of the council
- Liaising with Public Authorities, Catchment Management Authorities and other Local Control Authorities.
- Contributing to the development of regional weed management and natural resource plans and strategies.
- Developing policies for council approval.
- Participating in Regional Weeds Advisory Committees and contributing toward the developing and funding of their coordinated activities.

Education and promotion of weed management to the community

Weeds staff educate the community on all aspects of noxious weed identification and management. They develop information displays, conduct presentations, develop and distribute weed awareness material and provide training to the community.

Education of other council staff

Weeds staff liaise with council operations and contract staff assisting them in incorporating practical weed management into engineering, construction, maintenance, waste, landscape and park management activities.

Advising land managers on integrated weed management

Weeds staff trial new weed management methods and provide weed management advice to land managers, community groups, planners, consultants, other council staff and elected members.

Local operational activities

Weeds staff also coordinate the control of noxious weeds on land under the management of council.

Enforcement of the *Noxious Weed Act 1993*

Weeds staff are responsible for:

- Regularly inspecting properties, nurseries and other businesses for the presence of noxious weeds.
- Providing advice to land managers on their responsibilities and suitable weed management options.
- Determining if new weed incursions have the potential to become a serious problem.
- Developing management plans and initiating control measures for new weeds.
- Initiating councils' application for noxious weed declarations.
- Dealing with community inquiries, and
- Resolving conflicting weed and land management issues.



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Train your staff

Why do noxious weeds staff need training?

Council weeds staff are the first line of defence against noxious weeds in NSW.

Providing training and career advancement opportunities to staff is a key responsibility of all employers, including councils.

It is important that staff members representing councils in the field, carry out their duties in a professional manner and establish credibility with the community to facilitate cooperation.

Properly trained and adequately resourced staff can achieve a great deal and deliver real long-term benefits to the community. Noxious weeds should concern everyone as they ultimately cost the community dearly.

The benefits of training weeds staff

The benefits of training include:

- Staff have the skills and knowledge to accurately identify weeds – including new weeds and emerging problems. Qualifications in this area are essential in the event of legal action being instigated against landholders.
- Staff have current knowledge of best practice weed management principles and techniques.

- Compliance with other legislative requirements such as the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*, the *Pesticides Act 1999* and *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*.
- Staff with detailed knowledge and understanding of the application of the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.
- Integrating weed management with the requirements of other legislation including the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*.
- Staff are better able to plan and integrate weed management into a range of council and community activities.
- Staff with relevant qualifications in the area of weed management and legislation, chemical use and workplace safety will put councils in a much stronger position in the event of any litigation or public liability issues.
- Creating opportunities for personal development and career advancement.

Staff who are well trained raise the profile and credibility of the council by meeting the needs of the community.

What training and qualifications are available for staff?

The Australian Weeds Strategy Executive Committee, in conjunction with agricultural and environmental sectors from all states and territories, developed a set of *National Training Competencies* for weed management.

Competencies are benchmarks and measures that describe the skills, attitudes and knowledge that a person requires to undertake a job in the workplace.

These competencies have been combined into the *Conservation and Land Management Training Package* which was endorsed by the **Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)** (now the Department of Education, Science and Training DEST) in 2002.

They cover agricultural and environmental occupations such as:

- Weed control assistants
- Weed spray operators
- Weed control officers
- Weed control contractors
- Community group members and volunteers
- Park rangers
- Bush regenerators
- Landholders
- Government advisers
- Managers for weed management programs at all levels

How is training delivered?

Industry and Investment NSW through the C B Alexander Campus of Tocal College, has a *Weeds Training Program* to deliver a wide range of training for weeds staff. This program has provided council staff with a wide range of relevant courses since 2001.

The program continually revises existing courses and develops new courses to meet industry needs.

All courses delivered by the *Weeds Training Program* (where possible) are based and assessed on units of competency within the nationally recognised *Conservation and Land Management Training Package*.

The training program is structured to provide council staff with the ongoing training opportunities needed to assist with progression from operational level through to strategic management.

The training courses available cover the following areas:

- Weed management and planning
- Plant identification and assessment of vegetation
- Chemical planning and use
- Legal training (focussing on the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*)
- Hygiene of vehicles and machinery
- Communications
- Biological control
- Awareness of garden escapes
- Conference paper writing/delivery, writing grant applications
- Performance management and MERI.

Council staff are able to attend most courses without the need for extended travel. The cost of some of the above courses is heavily subsidised by the Noxious Weed Grant Program.

Relevant courses are available through Tocal College – Weeds Training Program, TAFE, the Local Government Association of NSW, Community colleges and other registered training organisations.

What qualifications can council staff gain?

All training made available to council staff through the *Weeds Training Program* addresses the competencies of the *Conservation and Land Management Training Package* which align with the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF).

Units of training covered are at AQF levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. These equate with the following levels of responsibility.

AQF level	Qualification	Workplace title
2	Certificate II	Operator
3	Certificate III	Noxious Weeds Officer
4	Certificate IV	Supervisor / Noxious Weeds Officer
5	Diploma	Manager / Senior Noxious Weeds Officer

Recognition of existing skills

Staff requiring accreditation will **not necessarily** need to undertake formal training.

An 'evidence based' **skills recognition system** is available to recognise prior learning, skills and on-the-job performance as the basis for accreditation.

Many experienced staff members have been able to gain qualifications ranging from Certificate II up to Diploma through **skills recognition** without the need for further coursework or study. However, where a person does not have all the required skills, additional training may be required.

Council staff who have gained nationally recognised qualifications through this mechanism achieve a great deal of personal and professional satisfaction by having their skills and knowledge formally recognised.

Further career development is available to council staff who attain a Diploma through the training and skills recognition program via access to university study. In some cases up to 50% credit towards a degree can be awarded.



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Planning for better weed management

Weed management *strategies and plans* are about providing a framework for effective, coordinated and cooperative weed management.

In NSW, the **Invasive Species Plan 2008–2015** provides this framework.

Local and regional strategies or plans should align with the goals of this Plan.

The four goals of the **NSW Invasive Species Plan** are to:

Exclude — *prevent the establishment of new invasive species*

Eradicate or contain — *eliminate or prevent the spread of new invasive species*

Effectively manage — *reduce the impacts of widespread invasive species*

Capacity building — *ensure NSW has the ability and commitment to manage invasive species*

These goals align to the objectives of the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* which aim to reduce the negative impact of weeds by establishing control mechanisms to:

- **Prevent** the establishment of significant new weeds in NSW
- **Restrict** the spread of existing significant weeds
- **Reduce** the area of existing significant weeds

Developing strategies and plans for local and regional areas enables greater detail in defining objectives and actions that match available resources with the management needs of particular weeds, landscapes, land use or priority sites and other related land management issues.

Strategies and plans are important documents that will assist Local Control Authorities to prioritise weeds and successfully apply for grants and external funds.

In the hierarchical nature of planning the NSW Invasive Species Plan links to implementation of the Australian Weed Strategy.

A copy of the **NSW Invasive Species Plan 2008–2015** can be found at www.industry.nsw.gov.au.

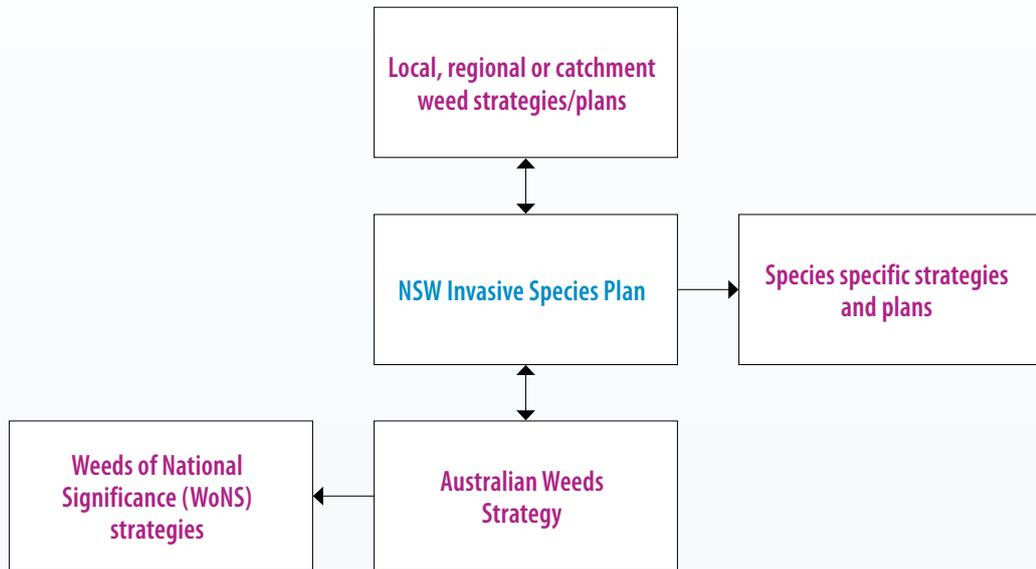
Figure 1 indicates how the different levels of weed management planning relate to each other in NSW.

There are 3 methods to determine priority weeds in NSW.

1. Weed risk assessment
2. Weed risk management
3. Asset protection

Refer to the Industry & Investment NSW publication 'Understanding weed management in NSW' available at: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds

Figure 1: Weed planning in NSW



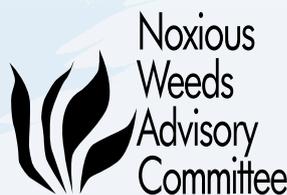
Developing weed management plans and strategies

The terms strategies and plans are often interchangeable. However, the term used should not become an issue for conflict. Generally, a strategy contains no specific actions and timeframes. It is a statement of weed management policy and is used to provide consistency in the outcomes of weed management plans locally and throughout a catchment (NRM region), region or state.

A plan generally includes greater detail and is a set of integrated actions to achieve the desired outcomes of the strategy.

Key steps in developing strategies or plans

- Step 1:** Form your working group. This group should include representatives of key stakeholders.
- Step 2:** Obtain all relevant national and state strategies and plans.
- Step 3:** Consult with the community and stakeholders in the development of the plan.
- Step 4:** Develop and document your draft plan to cover a 3--5 year timeframe.
- Step 5:** Provide to all relevant stakeholders for comment and approval.
- Step 6:** Implement the plan.
- Step 7:** Regularly monitor and review the plan outcomes and modify if necessary.



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Common misconceptions in weed management

There are many misconceptions about the long-term, effective management of significant weeds.

The following are the most common myths.

'Weed control is not the responsibility of local government.'

In NSW, the Minister for Primary Industries is responsible for the legislation concerning noxious weeds but the implementation is vested in councils through the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.

The implementation of noxious weed control in NSW has been the responsibility of councils since 1906.

See *Sections 1 and 4*

'Council weeds staff don't need specific skills and training.'

Weeds staff are the first line of defence against the noxious weed threat in your area. To ensure councils maintain a high standard of advice and service to the community it is imperative that staff are fully trained in all aspects of their profession.

See *Sections 5 and 6*

'Spraying a weed with a chemical is all that is required to control it.'

Herbicides can selectively kill large populations of weeds without disturbing the soil but propagules (seeds and roots) can remain and cause further infestations over many years. In some instances the control of one weed species can lead to the invasion of another weed species. Therefore, a follow-up program is essential.

Consequently the term 'weed management' is now often used rather than 'weed control'. Herbicides should be seen as a part of an integrated program with other mechanical, physical and biological control methods.

See *Introduction and Section 7*

'Weed control is a waste of time and money.'

Weeds have a serious impact on many aspects of our local communities including human health, amenity areas, agriculture and the environment.

See *Introduction*

'Widespread weeds should be declared noxious.'

Declaring a weed noxious does not, in itself, control a weed or provide benefits to the community. This requires a practical, well-planned, cost-effective program of management to be implemented.

See *Sections 3 and 7*

'Weed control can be effective without a management plan.'

Weed management will be **more** effective and economical if it is well planned and based on sound information. An effective program to manage a specific weed requires planning that defines responsibilities and goals, draws on the latest advances in weed science and combines specific activities to ensure the problem is resolved efficiently.

Weeds do not recognise boundaries so weed management needs to be a joint effort involving all stakeholders

See Sections 1 and 7

'Everyone understands the potential impacts of weeds.'

The distribution and incursion of weeds is constantly changing as is the makeup of the community. Therefore, we need to continually educate the community and the agencies responsible for weed management.

See Introduction and Section 4

'Consultation and communication between all stakeholders is not necessary.'

Noxious weeds are rarely confined to one area. Management strategies will be more effective if developed on a regional or catchment basis. Regional Weed Advisory Committees have been formed across NSW to coordinate weed management programs, providing a forum for the exchange of information and ideas and promoting the effective involvement of councils and other regional stakeholders.

See Sections 1 and 7

'Funding of weeds programs can be shifted to other activities without affecting weed management.'

Each council is responsible for funding its local priorities. However, weed management must be consistent and continual and not be rationalised because other local initiatives appear to have a greater short-term priority. Short-term removal of funds can increase long term weed management costs.

See Introduction and Section 4

'Once a weed is declared noxious, it should remain so forever.'

The distribution, incursion, control techniques and impact of noxious weeds is constantly changing and declarations need to be reviewed on a regular basis, particularly where new weeds occur.

See Sections 3 and 4

'Monitoring of weed management programs is not required.'

If you don't monitor weed management programs you don't know if it is being effective. There must be a constant review of weed management programs as weed patterns are constantly changing and objectives may need to be modified. If the outcomes of weed management programs are not regularly monitored and reviewed, future activities to achieve positive weed management outcomes for the community and council can not be improved.

See Introduction and Section 7



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Competencies required for weed control staff

This section is designed to simplify the recruitment of competent staff to weed management roles.

Not **all** of the skills listed will be applicable for **all** weed control positions.

The most appropriate ones for your situation should be selected for inclusion in each individual position description.

The skills are linked to the competency standards in the recommended staff training programs available. See *Section 6*.

Position: Operator/Trainee Weeds Officer

- Knowledge of noxious weeds for the Local Control Area.
- Ability to identify different species of plants.
- Ability to follow OH&S procedures.
- Ability to apply herbicides under supervision.
- Ability to maintain required records of chemical use, e.g. chemical record sheets.
- Ability to participate in workplace communications, e.g. complete inspection reports.
- Knowledge of and the ability to use vehicles, machinery and specialised equipment.
- Ability to inspect, clean and maintain council plant.
- Ability to operate in isolated and remote locations.
- Ability to provide basic first aid.
- Knowledge of council's policies and procedures.

Position: Weeds Officer

For this position **the above skills** are required plus the following:

- Ability to recommend the issuing of infringements under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*.
- Knowledge of and ability to prepare and apply herbicides.
- Ability to read and interpret maps.
- Ability to monitor local weed management strategies.
- Ability to respond to emergencies.
- Ability to cost jobs and prepare quotes for private work.
- Ability to work without supervision.
- Ability to meet deadlines.
- Ability to plan and coordinate work site activities.
- Ability to respond to community requests or complaints and deal with conflict.
- Ability to participate in workplace communications, i.e. prepare reports, give formal presentations and participate in meetings.

Position: Senior Manager/Chief Weeds Officer

For this position **all of the above skills** are required plus the following:

- Ability to manage the implementation of legislation.
- Ability to develop council policy.
- Ability to liaise with and facilitate local community groups and organisations.
- Ability to oversee the implementation of council's noxious weeds program.
- Ability to develop and implement weed awareness programs.
- Ability to effectively manage, motivate and assess the performance of staff.
- Ability to organise and conduct meetings.
- Ability to conduct one-on-one training.
- Ability to prepare grant applications.
- Ability to prepare and submit annual reports to council.
- Ability to prepare budgets and financial plans and operate within them.
- Ability to advise on best practice management options for weeds.
- Ability to plan and implement chemical use programs.
- Ability to define a pest problem by carrying out biological surveys, etc.
- Ability to prepare a local weed management strategy.
- Ability to monitor and evaluate local weed management strategies.
- Ability to collect and manage data.
- Ability to liaise effectively with other Local Control Areas and government agencies.
- Ability to source goods, services and contractors.



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Seeking further information

The following is a list of contacts for further information on noxious weed management.

Plant identification

National Herbarium of NSW Director	Royal Botanic Gardens Mrs Macquaries Road SYDNEY NSW 2000	T: 02 9231 8155 E: herbarium@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au
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Reporting notifiable weeds

Industry & Investment NSW Weeds Hotline	Tamworth	T: 1800 680 244 E: weeds@industry.nsw.gov.au
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Weeds training program

Industry & Investment NSW Education and Training Officer	CB Alexander Campus Tocal College PATERSON NSW 2421	T: 1800 025 520 E: info@tocal.com W: www.tocal.nsw.edu.au/home
TAFE NSW	Various locations	T: 131 601 (within NSW) T: 02 8234 2777 (outside NSW) www.tafensw.edu.au
Local Government Learning Solutions (Local Government Association)	Sydney	T: 02 9242 4180 E: learning@lgsa.org.au W: www.lgsa.org.au

Weeds Officers professional organisation

Weeds Officers Association of NSW Inc. President Secretary	David Pomery Matthew Bailey	T: 0418 481 134 T: 0427 294 818
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Regional and state weed co-ordination

Central and Far Western	Dubbo	T: 02 6881 1238
Hunter and Central Coast	Tamworth	T: 02 6763 1131
Metropolitan	Wagga	T: 02 6938 1911
North Coast	Grafton	T: 02 6640 1648
North Western and New England	Armidale	T: 02 6738 8504
South Coast and Southern Tablelands	Goulburn	T: 02 4828 6617
Southern and Riverina	Wagga	T: 02 6938 1911

Noxious weeds grants scheme

Industry & Investment NSW	Head Office 161 Kite Street ORANGE NSW 2800	T: 02 6391 3638 F: 02 6391 3206 E: admin.weeds@industry.nsw.gov.au
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Useful government websites

Industry & Investment NSW	www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds
Department of Local Government	www.dlg.nsw.gov.au
Local Government Association of NSW Shires Association of NSW	www.lgsa.org.au
Catchment Management Authorities	www.cma.nsw.gov.au
NSW Land and Property Management Authority	www.lands.nsw.gov.au
Rail Infrastructure Corporation	www.ric.nsw.gov.au
NSW Livestock Health and Pest Authorities	www.lhpa.org.au
NSW Forests	www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests
Roads and Traffic Authority, NSW	www.rta.nsw.gov.au
NSW Department of Environment Climate Change and Water	www.environment.nsw.gov.au
CSIRO Entomology	www.csiro.au/science/Invasive-Plants.html
Australian Legal Information Institute	www.austlii.edu.au
NSW Parliamentary Counsel's Office	www.pco.nsw.gov.au
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations	www.deewr.gov.au
National Training Information Service	www.ntis.gov.au
Australian National Botanic Gardens	www.anbg.gov.au/anbg
Community Access for Natural Resource Information (CANRI)	www.canri.nsw.gov.au

Other useful websites

Australian Association Bush Regenerators	www.aabr.org.au
Weeds Australia	www.weeds.org.au
Weeds Society of NSW	www.nswweedsoc.org.au
Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service	www.aqis.gov.au
Council of Australasian Weed Societies Inc	www.caws.org.au



Noxious
Weeds
Advisory
Committee

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