



**Business Paper of a duly convened Ordinary Meeting of the
Hawkesbury River County Council to be held at 6 Walker St, South Windsor on
Thursday, 9 February 2017 commencing at 6.00pm**

1. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

2. APOLOGIES

3. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on Thursday, **8 December 2016** to be confirmed or altered.

4. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

5. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL'S OFFICERS:

a) From the General Manager

To the Chairperson and Council Members

I submit these Reports for Council's consideration:

ITEM GM 1. VALE LEO KELLY OAM 23 SEP 1942 – 23 JAN 2017

Reason for Report: Informative

Long term Councillor for Blacktown and Member of Hawkesbury River County Council passed away on Monday, 23 January 2017 after on long battle with cancer.

“Leo Kelly was a dedicated and proud advocate for Blacktown and the Council extends its sincere condolences to his wife Janet, their children John and Melissa, grandchildren Owen and James and the extended family,” said the Mayor of Blacktown City, Councillor Stephen Bali.

“Cr Kelly was Mayor of this City from 1985-87, 1990-91 and from 2004-2008 and also served as Vice-President (Metro) on the Local Government Association of NSW for some 15 years.

“Respected for his passion for and commitment to the staff of the Council, Councillor Kelly would often say that ‘the staff are the ones who make things happen’,” Mayor Bali said.

Awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 2003 for services to Local Government, Councillor Kelly played pivotal role in the successful campaign for a university in Western Sydney and the establishment of Nurragingy Reserve, which was a major project marking Australia's Bicentenary in 1988.

He chaired Blacktown Venue Management from 2004-08, which oversaw the transformation of the 2000 Olympic Facilities to the nationally recognised sporting facility that it is today; attracting hundreds of thousands of sports fans to the area.

A long-time chair of the City's Arts Reference Advisory Committee, he was responsible for the establishment of Blacktown Arts Centre, which opened in 2002.

It was his motion to council, moved in 1996, that started the initiative and his deep passion for the arts was further demonstrated by the creation of the Blacktown City Arts Prize, now in its 21st year.

He remained a passionate advocate of the arts and cultural activities of Blacktown City Council until his death.

A Life member of the NSW Sales Representative and Commercial Traveller's Union and a former Vice President of the National Union of Workers; Councillor Kelly was President and Patron of numerous community organisations including local sporting, social, cultural clubs and associations.

His counsel and experience will be deeply missed and we can truly say that he lived a respected life,” Mayor Bali said.

A funeral service was held in Bowman Hall, Blacktown on Tuesday 31 January 2017 and was attended by hundreds of people wishing to pay their respects.

Recommendation:

- 1. That the report be received and noted.*

ITEM GM 2. HRCC 2ND QUARTER FINANCIAL REVIEW 2016/17

Reason for Report: Statutory

The financial review for the 2nd Quarter of 2016-17FY (Oct-Dec) has been completed and is enclosed with this report. The period produced an operating deficit of -\$33,213. However, this is a positive variance of +\$13,641. This is mainly due to reducing overall expenditure by \$64,000 in this quarter.

Our largest expenditure items were employee costs \$266,436 (66%), followed by operational costs \$111,546 (28%). This includes plant running, insurance, utilities, chemicals etc.). Depreciation represents the remaining 6%.

Our largest income components were council contributions \$169,000 (46%), grant funding 139,725 (38%), and internally sourced revenue of \$61,048 (16%).

Overall HRCC is in a sound financial position and is tracking -\$16,291 behind budget YTD at the mid-year point (-\$109,999). This deficit is expected to be regained in Q3 due to the large amount of private works currently being undertaken and planned.

ENCLOSURE_GM1:	HRCC 2 nd Quarter Financial Review 2016/17
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Recommendation:

1. *That the report be received and noted.*

ITEM GM 3. REPORT ON MONIES INVESTED

Reason for Report: Statutory

Cash and Investments

The below investment summary represents Council's total investments as at 2 February 2017 in accordance with Clause 212 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*.

Short-term Deposits		Term (Days)	Rate	Maturity Date	% of Portfolio	S & P Credit Rating
AMP Bank Ltd	\$350,000	208	2.95%	14/3/17	19%	A1
Bank of Sydney	\$150,000	186	2.80%	4/4/17	8%	1.6 Bln
ME Bank	\$600,000	174	2.75%	10/5/17	33%	A2
AMP Bank Ltd	\$200,000	180	2.8%	21/6/17	11%	A1
AMP Bank Ltd.	\$350,000	182	2.8%	25/7/2017	19%	A1
ME Bank	\$150,000	180	2.75%	22/05/2017	8%	A2
TOTAL	\$1,800,000				100%	
At Call Deposits						
NAB Business Chq A/c	\$22,049	At Call	0.01-0.05%	N/A		A1
AMP Business Saver	\$146,780	At Call	2.05%	N/A		A1
TOTAL	\$168,829					
Total Value of Investment Funds	\$1,968,829					
RBA Cash Rate			1.50%			

Legal

All investments are in accordance with section 625 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, clause 212 of the *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005* and Council's Investment Policy.

Recommendation:

1. *That the report is received and information noted.*

ITEM GM 4. HRCC REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE TRENDS REPORT 2017

Reason for Report: Informative

Background

The General Manager has completed a review of Operating Revenue received by HRCC since 2011. The Council's audited Financial Statements were used as a basis to collect the data for this time period up until YE2016. The data for 2017 is based on a current forecast. The focus of the review was on Operating Revenue only. Capital Revenue and Expenditure is not included.

Operating Expenditure was also tracked against Operating Revenue to provide an insight into Council's overall financial position. This information will be used as background in the development of the HRCC Operational Plan 2017/18 to ensure Council maintains a sustainable financial position.

These trends have been displayed in the figures below:

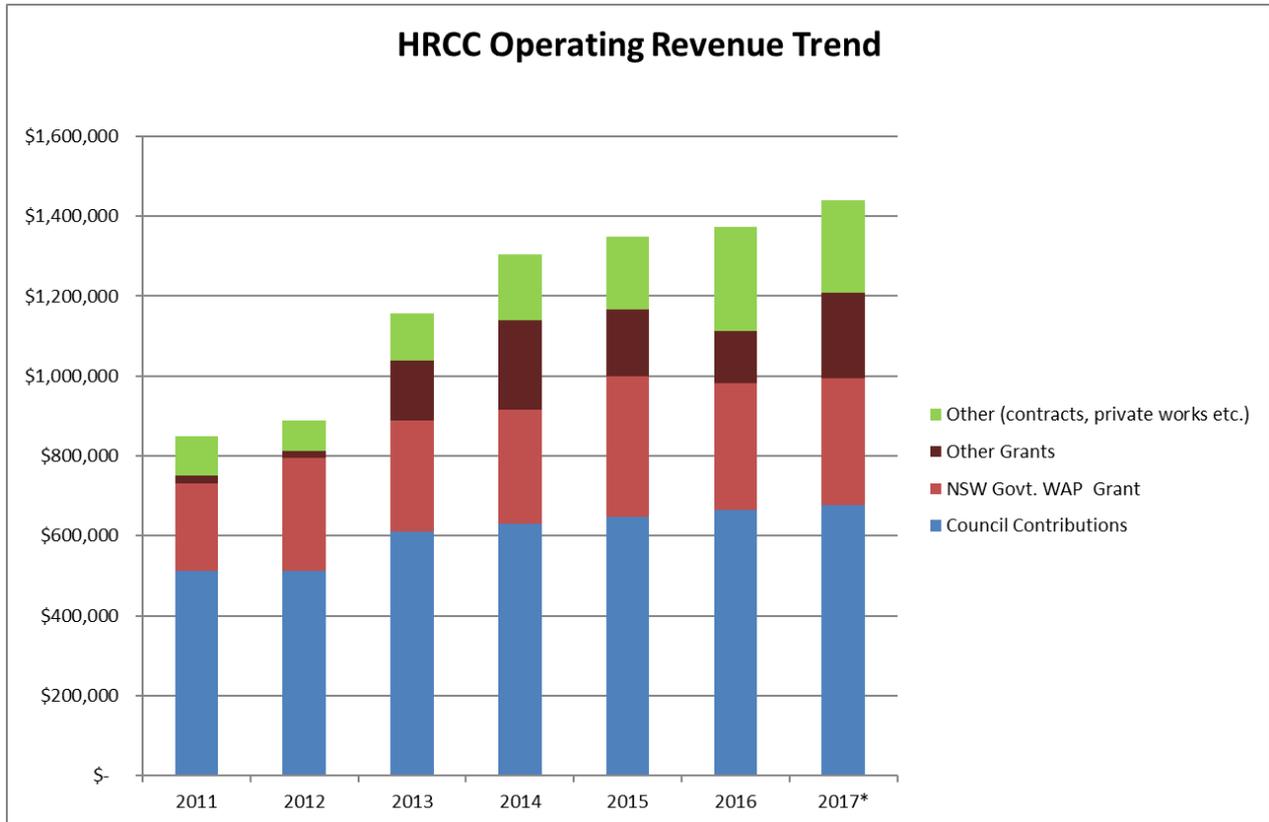


Figure 1: HRCC Operating Revenues, *2017 forecast

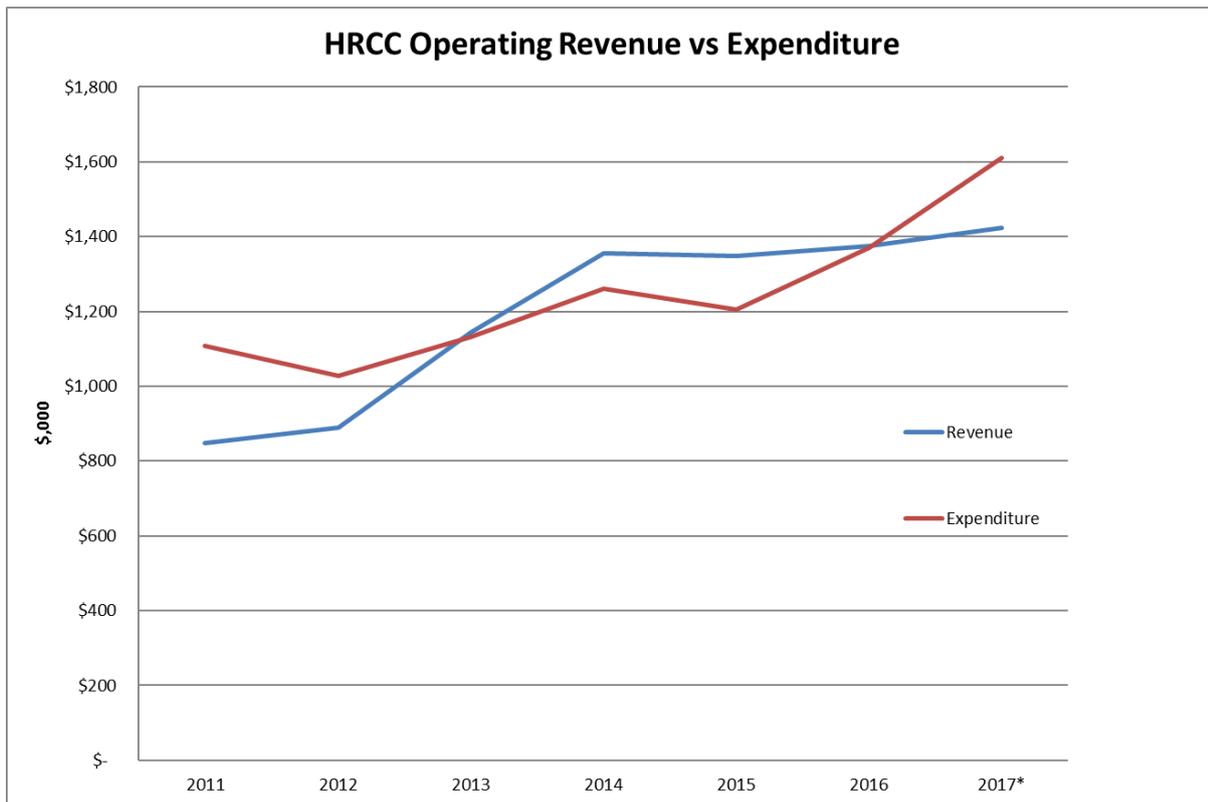


Figure 2: HRCC Operating Actual Revenue vs Operating Expenditure

Revenue Trends

The overall trend we are currently witnessing (Fig 1) appears to be a modest increase in revenue moving into 2017/18FY. Whilst most revenue sources (council contributions, private contracts and NSW WAP grant) are steady and keeping pace with inflation, the area which presents most variability is the “Other Grants”. Funding authorities may include the Greater Sydney Local Land Service (though not at present), or the Federal Government biodiversity and climate change initiatives. This could be considered the external grant landscape, and varies in response to broader regional, state and national priorities. It is difficult to plan for over the long term, and therefore requires the organisation to be agile in response to opportunities. Additionally, the organisation is currently undertaking capacity building projects which will allow us to take on a wider variety of natural resource management projects and therefore expand our grant opportunities.

The County Council was not affected by amalgamations so there will be no impact on member Council contributions. The Council contributions will remain stable with only rate peg increases being necessary (1.5% for 2017/18). The trend for decreasing reliance on member council funds continues.

External Funding

It is interesting to note the increase in contracts and private works. This is building steadily each year, and in the last financial could fully offset the decline in revenue incurred by “other grants”. This is the result of growing awareness of HRCC external services (sports field spraying, aquatic weed removal) and a good return customer rate.

HRCC two main traditional sources of revenue have been Council contributions and NSW Weeds Action Program funding. These appear to remain steady leading into 2017/18FY.

Hawkesbury Nepean Aquatic Weed Management Program (HNAWMP)

This program which provides essential river maintenance for the freshwater portion of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River has been approved to run for another five years by NSW Department of Primary Industries. We receive a \$100k annual grant and HRCC matches the allocation dollar for dollar.

For the period of 2015-2020 DPI have issued our allocation under the NSW Weeds Action Program. However, we are still reporting on the funding separately as the targets are very different to the WAP.

Living Within in Our Means

The graph in Fig. 2 compares HRCC expenditure against revenue, and is therefore an important indicator of our ongoing sustainability. The organisation worked hard to reverse a trend of deficit budgets, and then enjoyed three successive years of surplus conditions, and came in close to parity in the fourth. The build-up in surplus funds is being drawn down in this financial year (2016/17) by the approval of a deficit budget of \$187K. The increase in expenditure will be used to primarily support the development of new markets related to our core business of biosecurity and landscape remediation.

However, it is clear that this trend will need to be reduced in 2017/18 and eliminated 2018/19 unless substantial increases in revenue become available.

Conclusion and Response

HRCC remains in a strong and sound financial position. This can be capitalised upon to develop the organisation to a modern shared services delivery agent.

The following approaches are recommended:

- Results must be returned to the community and communicated clearly to them, our constituent councils and the other funding bodies to consolidate their investment in our organisation.
- Investment should be continued in developing skills and increasing capacity of the HRCC workforce to respond to the new opportunities which will be presented in the coming year. Plan for a deficit budget of around \$70K in 2017/18.
- Increase HRCC private work contributions by 8% in 2017/18.

As HRCC moves towards the development of the 2017/18 Operational Plan and the Delivery Plan 2017-2021, these strategies will be implemented.

Recommendation:

1. *That the General Manager's report on Revenue and Expenditure Trends is received and noted.*

ITEM GM 5. DRAFT HRCC PAYMENT OF EXPENSES AND PROVISION OF FACILITIES TO COUNCILLORS POLICY 2017

Reason for Report: Statutory

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in the reimbursement of expenses incurred or to be incurred by Councillors. The policy also ensures that the facilities provided to assist Councillors to carry out their civic duties are reasonable.

OBJECTIVES

- To ensure that Councillors are reimbursed for all expenses legitimately and reasonably incurred in performing the role of Councillor.
- To establish clear guidelines regarding the provision of facilities and equipment to Councillors and the permitted use of such facilities and equipment.
- To fulfil the statutory responsibilities of Section 252 of the *Local Government Act 1993*.

MAKING AND ADOPTION OF THE POLICY

This policy is made under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993*, including Sections 252 to 254, and having regard to the provisions of circulars issued by the Office of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet in this regard.

Section 252 of the Act requires that the Council must adopt a policy concerning the payment of expenses and the provision of facilities to the Chair and other Member Councillors and is in the following terms:

(1) Within 5 months after the end of each year, a council must adopt a policy concerning the payment of expenses incurred or to be incurred by, and the provision of facilities to, the mayor, the deputy mayor (if there is one) and the other councillors in relation to discharging the functions of civic office.

(2) The policy may provide for fees payable under this Division to be reduced by an amount representing the private benefit to the mayor or a councillor of a facility provided by the council to the mayor or councillor.

(3) A council must not pay any expenses incurred or to be incurred by, or provide any facilities to, the mayor, the deputy mayor (if there is one) or a councillor otherwise than in accordance with a policy under this section.

(4) A council may from time to time amend a policy under this section.

(5) A policy under this section must comply with the provisions of this Act, the regulations and any relevant guidelines issued under section 23A.

ENCLOSURE_GM5:	Draft HRCC Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Councillors Policy 2017
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Recommendations:

1. *That the report is received and information noted.*
2. *That Council place the Draft HRCC Payment of Expenses and Provision of Facilities to Councillors Policy 2017 on public exhibition for a period of 28 days.*

3. *That the General Manager reports back to council at the next Ordinary Meeting on any submissions received.*

ITEM GM 6. HRCC GIS WEED MAPPING PROJECT

Reason for Report: Informative

HRCC currently maps the progress of weed control and inspections using manual techniques such as hard copy files and Google maps. Whilst this has been sufficient in the past in terms of meeting our statutory compliance requirements, recent policies such as the NSW Department of Primary Industries Meta Data Standard (enclosed) have created the need for us to shift to an automated, Geographical Information System (GIS).

The system will also bring tremendous efficiency gains in the back end of the weeds inspection process. Additionally, the intention will be to share all data collected with our member councils via an accessible online portal.

Update

Since the last Ordinary Meeting, HRCC has partnered with Chartis Technology who have developed a customised weed mapping system using browser based software that allows mobile based data capture.

HRCC has already purchased a professional field based tablet in which the system will be trialled.

Importantly, this system can only work if we are given access to the data required from each of our member Councils. This will include a data agreement with Land and Property Information and our member Councils to access base layer information such as cadastral boundaries and street names. Additionally, we require read-only access to the rates database to verify ownership details of all properties we inspect. On 9 December 2016, the Council passed a resolution to agree for data to be shared between member councils and HRCC.

Penrith Council were the first organisation to oblige our resolution of 9 December 2016. They provided their data as requested and this has allowed the system to be fully operational within their LGA. It has also given us the opportunity to test, trial and demonstrate the system using our own process. To date the results have been very positive.

Hawkesbury City Council have been contacted, they have agreed to share the data, but have not taken any further action to assist us in establishing the link.

The Hills Shire Council have been contacted and have refused to share data with HRCC on the basis of "security concerns".

Blacktown City Council has been contacted and the General Manager has supported the initiative, the technical steps required are likely to be completed in the near future.

Recommendation:

1. *That the report is received and information noted.*

ITEM GM 7. STAFFING

Reason for Report: Informative

Since the last Council meeting held on 8 December 2016 the following staff has been employed as an Administration Officer (PT):

- Lynda Hobden

HRCC currently employs a total of 18 people (at FTE of 17.6).

Recommendation:

1. *That the report is received and noted.*

5. REPORTS FROM COUNCIL'S OFFICERS:

(b) Operations Manager

To the Chairperson and Council Members,

I submit the following for your consideration:

ITEM OM1. OPERATIONAL REPORT

Reason for Report: Statutory

Summary

Weed growth across the county has taken advantage of the near tropical conditions experienced these last couple of months. A number of productive work days were lost through extreme heat.

Aquatic weed control figured prominently this reporting period, as weed populations responded to ideal growth conditions. Senegal Tea Plant, Alligator Weed and Water Hyacinth have been treated along the Hawkesbury/Nepean River, South Creek, Cattai Creek and Eastern Creek.

Terrestrial weed control has been carried out in all corners of the county. Targeted weed species have been; Boneseed, Green Cestrum, Pampas grass, Lantana, Celtis and Weedy Vine species.

Blacktown

Weed control within the Blacktown LGA has seen weed control teams targeting woody weeds such as; Green Cestrum, Lantana and Celtis in reserves such as Nurragingy, Soldiers Settlement, Bungarribee and Timber Top.

Aquatic weed control in the LGA has treated weeds such as Salvinia, Alligator Weed and Ludwigia.

The Salvinia at Lake Woodcroft is under control with crews treating residual Salvinia, scattered around the perimeter of the lake. The teams have been treating this weed with selective herbicide that enables targeting of Salvinia amongst the native reed beds without damaging them.

Alligator Weed has been treated along Bungarribee Creek (Arndell Park), where the biocontrol has been patchy in activity. Both aquatic and terrestrial infestations have been treated.

Ludwigia is also present in Bungarribee Creek (Arndell Park) and has been cut and painted in situ by our staff. Random and isolated growth of Ludwigia has also been treated along Stony creek Rd. and Garfield Rd. East.

Hawkesbury

A wide variety of weeds have been treated this reporting period across the Hawkesbury LGA. Terrestrial and aquatic weeds such as Green Cestrum, Alligator Weed, Blackberry, Boneseed and Lantana, Ludwigia, Senegal Tea plant and Salvinia.

Aquatic weed control has again been the primary activity in the Hawkesbury LGA with continuation of the spray program along the Hawkesbury River. Weeds targeted were; Senegal Tea, Ludwigia, Alligator weed and Salvinia.

Aquatic weed infestations are reducing in the river as successive herbicide applications take their toll on the various weed species, these species have also been treated with herbicide by the weed control teams. Biological controls are also playing their part in terms of controlling weeds such as Alligator Weed and Salvinia.

Treatment for aquatic weed species has taken place in the following areas; North Richmond, Freemans Reach, Wilberforce, Ebenezer, Cattai, Agnes Banks and Windsor.

Terrestrial weed control has taken place in St. Albans and Central McDonald targeting Green Cestrum and woody weeds along roadsides and in the reserves around the St. Albans township.

Bilpin has received weed control for Boneseed, Blackberry and Green Cestrum, again in reserves and along roadsides.

Widespread woody weed control has taken place west of the Hawkesbury River in the suburbs of; Grose Vale, Bowen Mountain, Kurmond, Kurrajong, Kurrajong Heights, Glossodia and Cattai.

The Hills Shire

Terrestrial weed control in the Hills Shire has treated Green Cestrum, Boneseed, Privet, Lantana and Pampas grass in council reserves and along roadsides throughout the Hills Shire. Sites such as Withers Rd. in Kellyville have been favoured by staff and they have spent a number of days at this location treating weeds due to the sheltered nature of this site and the ability for staff to escape the heat.

Boneseed treatment has been conducted along roadsides and on reserves abutting the T-Way, these locations were centred in the core infestations in; Bella Vista, Castle Hill and Annangrove. Boneseed levels were generally low, with hot conditions reducing germination of seed.

Aquatic weed control in the Hills Shire has seen work crews treating Senegal Tea plant in Cattai Creek, Ludwigia in urban reserves in West Pennant Hills, and Alligator Weed in the Hawkesbury River and Cattai Creek.

Senegal Tea plant is found in the lower reaches of Cattai Creek. Work crews have treated Cattai Creek in conjunction with NPWS staff from Scheyville with herbicide, infestations are currently stable and under control. Work on Senegal Tea plant also continues along the Hawkesbury River as the annual spray program continues over summer.

Ludwigia has been treated in council reserves around the West Pennant Hills area after HRCC received notification from the Hills Shire Council regarding the location of Ludwigia plants. These juvenile plants were physically removed from the reserve by HRCC staff.

Alligator Weed has been treated at a number of locations in the Shire. Aquatic Alligator Weed treatment has taken place in both Cattai Creek, and the Hawkesbury River. HRCC have also conducted Alligator Weed control in Allen Pearce Reserve in Kellyville after receiving notification of weed presence from Hills Shire Council.

Penrith

Predominantly terrestrial weed control has been conducted in the Penrith LGA. Weed targets have been Green Cestrum, African Olive, African Boxthorn, Blackberry, Lantana and Weedy Vine species.

Alligator Weed and Ludwigia have also been treated in roadside culverts.

Weed control teams have been busy treating Green Cestrum in the Regentville area along Schoolhouse Creek, and along local roadsides. There is quite a bit of work to do in this area, with crews favouring cut and paint control methods and backpack spraying of Cestrum.

African Olive treatment has been conducted as part of HRCC's commitment to restricting the spread of this species in West and North West Sydney. The areas treated for African Olive recently have been; Penrith, Orchard Hills and Kingswood. Sporadic growth of this species is still encountered in the Penrith LGA.

African Boxthorn can be found around the Orchard Hills area, and this area was treated for this weed species. The reserve network around Samuel Marsden Rd. holds heavy infestations of this species, as a result weed control efforts focused on this area.

Weir reserve at Penrith has seen woody weed control activities carried out recently. HRCC received a request for assistance from Penrith Council staff to help control vigorous weed growth along the Great River Walk at North Penrith. Staff spent a number of days at this location skirting vines out of native trees and conducting woody weed control. Weeds that were targeted included; Privet, Celtis, Lantana, Balloon Vine, Madeira Vine, Morning Glory, Moth Vine and African Olive.

Aquatic weed control has taken place, treating Alligator Weed and Ludwigia in roadside culverts along Mamre Rd. and Mulgoa Rd. These infestations were comparatively small and isolated and will be monitored for regrowth.

Private works program

All manner of private work requests have been received by the depot over the last few months, from aquatic weed spraying in dams through to a substantial demand for the Truxor and herbicide treatment of weeds in paddocks.

Staff have managed this increased work load well and have been able to service our Council's needs as well as carry out these works. This work is expected to bring an additional 40K in revenue into Council. Customers appear to be satisfied with the quality of our work and pricing as a number of customers have approached Council in regards to providing ongoing services.

Some of the customers that HRCC are providing services for are; Cumberland Council, Campbelltown City Council, Landscape Solutions, Fairwater Developments and a good number of local landholders.

Shaw's Island revegetation project

The survival ability of the planted tubestock on Shaw's Island is being severely tested at present. Soils on the island range from poor to moderately good, although none of soils have great water holding capacity. Work crews are visiting the site weekly to irrigate our plants in an attempt to see them through this most difficult time of year. Wetting agent is being added to the water to improve the penetration of the water into the planting sites.

A small percentage of plant loss is always expected in any revegetation project, and the Shaw's Island project is no different, with the exceptional heat experienced onsite over the last couple of months the percentage of lost plants has risen to 15-20%. The lost plants will be replaced in Autumn 2017, as Autumn is widely recognised as the optimum time for large scale planting.

A recent site visit with staff from HRCC and staff from direct seeding companies yielded some positive news in regards to future revegetation activities. Direct seeding is a ground seeding technique using native plant seeds to restore entire plant communities such as Sydney River Flat Forest, which is the desired vegetation community on Shaw's Island.

Private Property Inspections

934 inspections have been carried out by our staff this reporting period. The bulk of these inspections were conducted in the Kellyville area, where there is a large amount of housing construction and soil disturbance, which often leads to new weed incursion through contaminated soil and machinery. A lower than average amount of reactive inspections was conducted as the office received fewer calls regarding community weed issues. 14 inspections were carried out within nurseries and aquariums.

904 inspections were conducted in the Kellyville development area targeting new weed incursions, contaminated building materials and contaminated machinery. Although no major weed incursions were found during these inspections, our inspectorial staff had the opportunity to engage with hundreds of new landholders regarding noxious weeds and their obligations as landholders to control the growth of these species. It proved a great opportunity as it was a subject which the majority of residents spoken to had very little understanding of.

An alleged sighting of the class 2 noxious weed Kudzu in a newly constructed garden bed caused concern until identification proved the “Kudzu” to be a combination of an ornamental Lavender shrub and a Sweet Potato vine, it proved to be a convincing ruse that had staff second guessing their plant knowledge and was a good learning opportunity for all concerned.

A small number of neighbourhood related weed complaints were dealt with by inspectors, the featured weed species were Privet, Bamboo and a range of garden plants.

14 nurseries and aquariums were inspected this reporting period as part of weed action program activities. Nothing untoward was found during these inspections.

Hawkesbury/Nepean Aquatic Maintenance Program

Long, hot summer days over recent months has resulted in extremely high patronage of the Hawkesbury Nepean River. Swimming has been the most popular recreational activity along the length of the river with boating activities and paddle sports not far behind. The river has been in excellent condition for these activities, although some submerged aquatic weed infestations have been detected by our staff as they conduct routine inspection of the river.

Floating aquatic weeds such as Water Hyacinth and Salvinia are present in very low number in the lower Nepean River and Upper Hawkesbury River and will be treated with herbicide to control their growth during summer and autumn of 2017.

The submerged noxious weed *Egeria Densa* has been noted at Penrith growing in the vicinity of the rail bridge and downstream at Devlin Rd. Castlereagh. The Truxor will be deployed at these locations to carry out limited harvesting of this species during the latter part of summer 2017.

The annual aquatic weed spray program continues over the summer when aquatic weed growth is at its peak. Weed species such as; Senegal Tea plant, Alligator Weed, Salvinia, Water Hyacinth and Ludwigia are targeted through this activity where judicious low pressure herbicide application is used to manage populations of tenacious weeds. The current locations that have received treatment are; Yarramundi, Castlereagh, North Richmond, Windsor, Pitt Town, Ebenezer, Sackville and Lower Portland. Whilst upstream in Cattai Creek Senegal Tea plant and Alligator Weed have been treated in Glenorie and Cattai. Treatment of the Nepean River is due to commence mid-February, the Nepean River suffers far less from noxious aquatic weed growth.

Good conditions for recreational activities in the Hawkesbury/Nepean River are expected to continue over the coming months.

ENCLOSURE_OM1:	HRCC Operational Maps Dec16-Jan17
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Recommendation:

- 1. That the report is received and noted.*

8. GENERAL BUSINESS / QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

The next Ordinary Meeting will be held on Thursday, **13 April 2017**, 6:00pm

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