



Greater Sydney Weeds Action Program 2015-2020 project 2015-16 Summary & Highlights

The Greater Sydney Weeds Action Project 2015-2020 project is a partnership between the NSW Government, local government and state government agencies to reduce the impact of weeds across the Greater Sydney region. The five-year project contributes to the implementation of the Invasive Species Plan to target the highest risk weeds, by:

- preventing new weeds from establishing via inspections and surveillance,
- eliminating or preventing the spread of new weeds through control activities,
- protecting significant natural assets (endangered ecological communities, agricultural land, wetlands and major waterways) through targeted control programs, and
- improving capacity through awareness and education targeting both the weeds workforce and broader community.

2015-16 was the first year of the project, which follows on from the successful Sydney Region Weeds Action Program 2010-2015 project. 17 local councils and 2 National Parks & Wildlife Service regions were partners to the project in 2015-16, which is administered by Hawkesbury River County Council. More than \$2.3 million (\$.89m in grant funds from the NSW Government, \$1.45m in-kind from local governments and the National Parks and Wildlife Service) was spent directly on weed management activities across Greater Sydney in 2015-16. The equivalent of 18 full time weed management staff were employed directly through WAP1520 funding. During 2015-16 project partners:

- Inspected 4338 km of high risk pathways (e.g. major roads, rail corridors and waterways) for high risk weeds, including the Nepean, Hacking and Hawkesbury Rivers, Old Hume Highway, Southern Highlands Railway Line, the East-West rail corridor, F3 Freeway, Pacific Highway, Great Western Highway, Princes Highway, Mona Vale Rd and the M2, M7, M4 and M5 motorways (11% greater than original project target of 3,909km);
- Conducted 14,832 regulatory and non-regulatory inspections of private properties (69% greater than original project target of 8,781);
- Inspected 3,578 high risk sites such as nurseries, waste facilities, florists, landscaping suppliers, car parks, boat ramps and aquariums for high risk weeds (176% greater than original project target of 1,298);
- Controlled 73 km and 1,865 ha of high risk terrestrial weeds along high risk pathways (e.g. major roads, rail corridors and waterways) and the perimeter of significant natural assets.
- Controlled high risk aquatic weeds along 485 km and 6.77ha of waterways such as the Hacking River and Hawkesbury-Nepean River and their tributaries;
- Erected 86 educational displays that engaged 7,019 people attending community events across Greater Sydney, to raise community awareness of high risk weeds and pathways;
- Facilitated training for 458 volunteers and weed management staff across the region to help them to identify and control high risk weeds, and;
- Continued to foster partnerships with more than 40 key land managers, committees and community groups responsible for weed control, particularly Crown Lands, Sydney Trains and RMS to ensure the necessary tenure-neutral, collaborative effort required to address weeds.

Highlights in 2015-16 include:

Prevention

- Blue Mountains City Council continued its systematic door-by-door inspection program across the 4 conservation landscapes in the Blue Mountains. 5,460 (37%) of the 14,832 private property inspections conducted in the region were undertaken by this council, with Sutherland Shire Council completing 3,515 (24%) and Hawkesbury River County Council completing 3,383 across its four constituent LGAs (23%).
- Strathfield Municipal Council continued education of and negotiation with cut flower traders at the Sydney Growers Markets, Australia's largest fresh cut flower market, conducting 22 marketplace inspections between April and June 2016. The Biosecurity Officer at Strathfield Council has established effective communication with staff from other LCAs to raise awareness about weed species movement in and out of the Sydney Flower Market.
- Water lettuce was discovered for sale at Toongabbie on Gumtree and ebay. The grower voluntarily surrendered 5kg following education about the Noxious Weeds Act and the implications of non-compliance.
- Noxious aquatic weeds (e.g. water hyacinth, *Cabomba*, *Egeria*, *Ludwigia*) for sale at markets and aquariums in Blacktown, Hornsby, Canterbury, Rockdale. More than 10kg of plant material seized and destroyed.
- Noxious terrestrial weeds (e.g. pampas grass, tiger pear, ming asparagus fern) identified for sale at nurseries and markets in Pittwater, Blue Mountains, Rockdale, Wyong Shire and Canterbury council areas were immediately seized and destroyed.
- Inspections conducted by boat, train, helicopter and on foot, ensuring thorough coverage.
- Voluntary compliance ranged from 70% to 98% across the region i.e. rate by which landholders responded to inspection outcomes prior to section 18a notice being issued.

Control

- 22 new incursions were discovered and treated across the Sydney region.
- Eradication of known sea spurge incursions at Cronulla/Kurnell and Dee Why Lagoon.
- Detection, control and mapping of boneseed continues to be a priority throughout the region. Very few plants were found within Sydney Harbour National Park. Sutherland Shire, Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury River County, Campbelltown and the northern beaches councils also reported positive results.
- Release of crofton weed biological agent crofton rust in many LGAs across the region, in CSIRO partnership
- Effective and comprehensive control of African olive, coolatai grass and boneseed in the Blue Mountains.
- Highly effective treatment of senegal tea observed in the Hacking River, Narrabeen Creek, Royal National Park, Cattai Creek, Rickaby's Creek, Redbank Creek and the Hawkesbury River.
- Continued success of the Nepean River Aquatic Weed Program, a partnership between Wollondilly, Camden and Campbelltown councils to reduce the impact and spread of alligator weed and other noxious aquatic weeds along the Upper Nepean and its tributaries.
- Successful control of *Asparagus falcatus* at Bayview and Warriewood in Pittwater. All known mature vines successfully controlled. Programs targeting horsetail at Elanora Heights have also proven highly effective.

Education & capacity building

- Significant efforts made in Camden, the Hills Shire, the Hawkesbury and the Yarralong, Dooralong and Ourimbah valleys, to protect agricultural assets from noxious weeds, through education and mentoring of private landholders, hobby farmers and turf and market farmers.
- The Weekly Weeds Wednesday post on the former Wyong Shire Council's Facebook page has attracted much public attention and resulted in 1 TV interview, and multiple radio interviews with the local ABC station. Noxious Weed Inspector Paul Marynissen has a spot on Simon Marnie Sydney Weekends show on ABC 702 talking about weeds and taking talkback callers enquiries for the Sydney and Central Coast areas. This has started to raise the profile of noxious weeds and weeds in general with the public.
- 80 media articles promoting weed awareness and control efforts were produced across the region.
- Blue Mountains City Council developed DL sized cards specifically targeting the key weeds occurring at the local neighbourhood-scale which are proving to better engage the community.

