NSW Weeds Action Program 2015-2020

Guidelines
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1. Overview

The NSW Weeds Action Program 2015-2020 (WAP1520) follows from the successful implementation of the NSW Weeds Action Program 2010-2015. It is a NSW Government initiative to reduce the impact of weeds and is guided by the NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021 (the Biosecurity Strategy) and the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015-2020 (the ISP).

The Biosecurity Strategy outlines how government, industry and the community need to work together to identify, minimise, respond to and manage biosecurity risks, including weeds.

The ISP provides a state-level framework for the coordinated and cooperative management of invasive species, including weeds. It complements other existing strategies, in particular the Biosecurity Strategy and the Australian Weeds Strategy.

WAP1520 demonstrates the Government’s commitment to the ISP through:

• assisting in the timely detection and quick response to new weed incursions;
• prioritising weed management programs to achieve the greatest benefit.
• providing effective and targeted on-ground weed control;
• increasing community ownership of, and involvement in, effective weed management;
• integrating weed management into education programs;
• improving the knowledge base for weed management;
• monitoring the implementation of the ISP; and
• encouraging the use of cost-sharing arrangements.

1.1 Review of weed management in NSW

During the 2013-14 review of weed management in NSW, the Natural Resources Commission investigated several issues of community concern resulting in eight key recommendations. The Government response to the review was endorsed by Cabinet in September 2014.

Implementation of the recommendations will require changes to existing regional delivery models. The key recommendation relevant to WAP1520 is:

Recommendation 3: Ensure consistent and coordinated regional planning and local delivery

3B - Replace the existing 14 regional weed advisory committees with 11 statutory regional weed committees comprising LCAs, public and private landholders, and community members as subcommittees to LLS, and aligned with LLS borders

3C - Provide a legislative basis for tasking the regional weed committees with developing regional plans and priorities for weeds and surveillance

The NSW Government is committed to implementing this recommendation and has identified WAP1520 as a key driver to deliver these changes. The establishment of these committees is a high priority because they will assist regional planning requirements under the proposed NSW Biosecurity Act. Transitional arrangements for the establishment of these committees are described later in this guideline.
1.2 Goals and investment priorities

WAP1520 is an outcomes based program where activities contribute to clearly defined goals and objectives under the ISP. The four goals of the ISP are:

**Goal 1: Exclude** – prevent the establishment of new invasive species

**Goal 2: Eradicate or contain** – eliminate, or prevent the spread of new invasive species

**Goal 3: Effectively manage** – reduce the impact of widespread invasive species

**Goal 4: Capacity** – ensure that NSW has the ability and commitment to manage invasive species.

The diagram below illustrates a generalised weed invasion curve and the relationship between the stages of invasion, the level of effective control that could be expected and the likely return on investment.

The NSW Government will prioritise allocation of WAP1520 funds where the return on investment is highest; that is towards the beginning of the invasion curve.

Source: NSW Biosecurity Strategy 2013-2021 (adapted from Biosecurity Victoria, Department of Primary Industries)
2. Projects

There are three project categories:

**Regional** – involve a number of stakeholders in a Local Land Services (LLS) region working together. They can be three to five years in length.

**State** – are relevant to the whole of the state or have a state-wide impact. They can be one to five years in length.

**Innovative** – support applied research into new and effective weed management. They are called for annually, and can generally be one to two years in length.

All projects must address one or more of the four ISP goals. Submissions should include actions that contribute to the outcomes and outputs associated with the ISP.

2.1 Regional projects

Regional projects must contribute to the ISP either directly or through a Regional Weed Strategy. A Regional Weed Strategy is a plan or strategy that contributes to the ISP and is part of, or incorporated into an LLS Local Strategic Plan.

Local weed control authorities and other key stakeholders in a region including the LLS must agree to the plan/s or strategies. The document/s must also include key performance indicators.

Where LLS Local Strategic Plans are not yet in place, existing Regional Weed Strategies can be used. Projects will be reviewed in their second year allowing for changes guided by the LLS Local Strategic Plan and Local Government community strategic plans. Regional project submissions must demonstrate that the project team is using a coordinated approach. Priority for funding will be given to submissions with multiple stakeholders and partnerships.

Each project will be assessed on whether it is meeting the objectives and outcomes of the ISP. While there is a need to maintain current networks across NSW regional allocations will be made based on the merits of each project.

With the introduction of the *NSW Weeds Metadata Standard* and NSW Biosecurity Information System (BIS) in 2014, projects will need to build the capacity of local control authorities (and others responsible for collecting weeds data) to electronically submit standard data to the centralised NSW Biosecurity Information System (BIS).

2.1.1 Mandatory documents for regional projects

The following documents were mandatory for projects under the NSW Weeds Action Program 2010-2015. These must be reviewed, amended, agreed to and incorporated into the LLS Local Strategic Plan by the end of year two:

- **Program logic** - must be used for each project. Each task or activity identified in the project must be able to be matched to its program logic.

- **Regional weed strategies** - developed as a separate process usually in liaison with (former) Catchment Management Authorities. They are now due for review. It is a requirement that these be reviewed for WAP1520 projects, and along with the other mandatory documents listed here, form part of each LLS’s Local Strategic Plan. Specific compliance plans will also be required to be developed that can be enforced using the tools proposed under the *NSW Biosecurity Act*.

- **Regional high risk pathways and sites management plan** - includes the identification and nomination of high risk pathways and sites in the region and details management protocols to address these threats.
Incursion plan for high risk weeds - is aligned to the ISP. It coordinates the surveillance and identification of new weeds and includes a regional list of high risk weeds. It also outlines how responses to weed incursions will be coordinated, implemented and monitored.

Rapid response plan - should outline the procedures and actions in place for a region’s response to a new weed incursion. The plan should contain procedures for the identification, notification, assessment of the threat, and determination of the appropriate course of action to manage a new weed incursion.

Regional inspection program - provides a minimum standard and ensures consistent policy and procedural framework for all Local Control Authorities to follow. It contains consistent enforcement and inspection procedures under the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* and proposed Biosecurity legislation.

Communication strategy - details how partners and relevant stakeholders in the region will communicate key messages amongst each other and to the broader community.

2.2 State projects

State projects have state-wide operation or state-wide results. Generally these are projects that can only be realistically delivered by the State or that are clearly addressing matters of state-wide significance. Examples include the NSW New Weed Incursions Response Project, the NSW Information and Knowledge Project, the State Aquatic Weed Coordination Project and the Secure Border Project (header inspections). While it is often appropriate for these projects to be delivered by the State, other single or regional entities may apply.

2.3 Innovative projects

Innovative projects provide outcome based, applied research solutions that offer long-term improvements to the way weeds are managed in NSW. They result in identification or development of resources to directly assist on-ground weed control. Specific priorities for innovative grants may change from year to year, however projects must fall within five key areas:

Biocontrol – where applied rather than exploratory solutions can be demonstrated. For example research leading to improved application/use of existing agents, building on existing infrastructure and networks (e.g. aquatic, pasture biocontrol agents), and evaluations of the optimal timing and location for the release of proven biocontrol agents - leading to practical advice for practitioners.

Integrated weed management and sustainability of herbicide use – projects which evaluate impacts and offer practical solutions to herbicide resistance across systems (cropping, extensive grazing, nature conservation and amenity land uses).

Studies that explore alternatives to herbicides - Innovations leading to improved decision making for land managers, and practical long term improvements in the way weeds are managed.

Detection and eradication technologies – technologies to improve detection and delimitation of new and emerging weeds. Examples are remote sensing, unmanned aerial vehicles and environmental DNA detection including evaluations of the cost effectiveness, accessibility and accuracy of these technologies. Projects could include realistic and scientifically sound appraisal of eradication feasibility for high priority weeds; application of new risk assessment methods; and improved environmentally acceptable tools and approaches (chemical, physical and/or biological means) to enable rapid declines in soil seed banks.

Improved adoption of best practice or increased community participation – engagement of end-users and the adoption of research outcomes should be a specific outcome in all project applications. Projects could include: community and industry-led models of cooperative action;
socioeconomic factors that foster widespread land manager adoption of best practices; reviews of the effectiveness of legislative controls for weeds; targeted engagement activities and training to improve knowledge and incorporate scientific processes (such as Community Based Social Marketing); design, piloting and evaluation of strategies to achieve behaviour change.

3. Governance

This section discusses governance to be considered by lead organisations. WAP1520 does not replace or otherwise affect a local control authority’s functions and obligations under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 although it may assist with meeting some of these. Similarly, it is not expected that WAP1520 will impact functions proposed under the Biosecurity Act.

WAP1520 funding is provided under an agreement (the agreement) between the NSW Department of Primary Industries (the Department) and the lead organisation. The agreement sets out the roles, functions and obligations of the parties in relation to a specific project.

3.1 Lead organisations

Each submission will require a lead organisation to accept responsibility for the project. The lead organisation will collate and submit the submission on behalf of all the partners, receive and distribute the funds and collate and submit reports.

As the signatory to the agreement, the lead organisation is responsible for delivery of the project. It must carry out its obligations in accordance with the agreement.

The agreement provides that the lead organisation may enter into an arrangement with another organisation (a participating organisation) allowing them to assist with the project under a participant agreement.

The Department recommends that a participant agreement be formed in order to clearly specify each party’s obligations and functions in relation to the project, and to outline the consequences in the event of a participating organisation failing to meet its obligations.

However it is the lead organisation that is ultimately responsible for the project and the distribution of funds to participating organisations, as well as ensuring that the funds are used in accordance with the requirements of the project and the agreement.

It is accepted that the lead organisation will require a budget to meet its administrative costs and coordination. Circumstances vary across the State however previous WAP projects have typically allocated up to 10% percent to meet these costs.

3.2 Non-performance and disputes

The lead organisation is responsible for taking steps to rectify the non-performance when a participating organisation fails to meet its project commitments for any reason, appropriate action may be taken by the lead organisation pursuant to the relevant clauses within the agreement. It is at the discretion of the Department to undertake mediation on behalf of project partners.

3.3 Regions defined

Previously the NSW Weeds Action Program 2010-2015 was based on Regional Weed Advisory Committee boundaries. WAP1520 must align to Local Land Services regions and report on outcomes specific for each (LLS) region. The 11 Local Lands Services regions are shown below:
3.4 Partnerships

Partnerships that provide effective and targeted on-ground actions and encourage or use cost-sharing arrangements are a key component of WAP1520. Regional project submissions that do not illustrate strong and meaningful partnerships across stakeholders will not be funded.

Each project must include a representative from each participating LLS in the project and from each participating local weed control authority. Any organisation or group that actively contributes to the project, such as industry groups, Landcare groups, educational institutions and other public authorities are encouraged to become partners.

Participating organisations, roles and contributions must be clearly identified, must contribute to one or more project outcomes, and must be recorded in terms of inputs against outcomes.

3.5 Noxious weed control functions under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993

Noxious weed control functions of local control authorities are prescribed by Section 36 of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 (the Act) and are unaffected by WAP1520. Local control authorities are still required to meet their statutory obligations whether they choose to participate in WAP1520 or not. Similar obligations will exist under proposed Biosecurity legislation.

While activities undertaken under WAP1520 may include some statutory functions, compliance with a WAP1520 project or participant agreement is not a requirement under the Act.
The Department can investigate local control authorities that are not meeting their statutory functions and obligations under the Act, regardless of whether or not the local control authority participates in a WAP1520 project.

3.6 Regional Weeds Advisory Committees

Regional Weeds Advisory Committees are formed by groups of stakeholders to facilitate coordinated weeds management across a Local Land Services (LLS) region/s of NSW, providing a forum for the exchange of information. Within WAP1520, a lead organisation may seek the support of a Regional Weeds Advisory Committee. This committee may have the following roles:

- support the lead organisation in the development of a participant agreement and in the delivery of a project;
- determine the amount of the funds that may be used for administration of a project; and
- provide regional oversight and peer review of the progress of a project.

As described earlier in these guidelines, the format of these committees will be subject to change as a condition of receiving WAP 1520 funding. The transitional arrangements are outlined later in this document.

3.7 Funding and co-funding

WAP1520 is calling for projects of up to five year’s duration; however funds are allocated by Treasury annually. This means that there can be no guarantee of ongoing funding from year to year. Projects that have been approved will have priority over any new submissions or requests for increases to projects in any year.

Applicants and partner organisations are expected to contribute funds and/or in-kind resources in order to receive WAP1520 funding. There is no set contribution; however the priority will be given to projects where proponents demonstrate their commitment with substantial contributions by applicants and partners.

Any claim the lead organisation or partners may make in terms of contributions, expenditure or achievements must be able to be proven when the Department requests further details or that the project is audited.

3.8 Eligible lead organisations

Lead organisations may be Local Lands Services, Local Control Authorities, Public Authorities and Regional Organisations of Councils. Other types of organisations can be partners in projects, but cannot act as a lead organisation. Only one submission will be accepted from each LLS region, however proponents may submit a project on behalf of another LLS region.

4. General conditions

The following conditions apply to all projects:

4.1 Submitting projects

One project submission per LLS region will be assessed. Where more than one is received, they will be returned to the applicants for amalgamation. Once a project is approved for funding, WAP1520 does not require a new annual submission. Satisfactory progress demonstrated by the annual project report and any informal reports from the Department’s Invasive Species Officers is sufficient evidence for providing subsequent year’s funding.

Each submission must clearly describe the objectives, actions and outcomes of the project and sufficient performance measures.
The Department will accept submissions in the prescribed format only, signed by the General Manager or other delegated person from the lead organisation and the General Manager for the LLS region covered by the project. If the Minister agrees to fund the project applied for, the applying lead organisation will need to sign an agreement.

Program funds are not available for infrastructure costs; general reserves, bushland, parks and garden management costs; capital costs; administration, management or other costs related to private works or contracting businesses. Costs of treating widespread weeds and local authority costs associated with control of weeds for road safety, fire or road maintenance are not eligible.

The Department will process completed submissions received up until 5pm on the first Friday in May each year. Send electronic submissions to:

Invasive Species Officer – Grants
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Email: admin.weeds@dpi.nsw.gov.au

4.2 Allowing for variation
The Department recognises that seasonal conditions, new weed outbreaks and other changes may require amendment to the contract after projects commence. The deviation reporting allows for these changes, if needed to be considered by the Department. Under WAP1520, lead organisations may apply to vary the project submission.

There are three types of project variation:

1. Where the outcomes for a specific year differ from the proposed targets – the targets proposed for the year have not been met. This result must be included in the annual report under each target and will be in a standardised format.

2. Where there needs to be a long-term change to partners or outcomes and activities for the remainder of the project’s life. For example: new partners join the project; or seasonal conditions require a significant change to outcomes or activities in the longer term. This is considered a minor change in the project submission. In this case, the Department will need to approve the change. The lead organisation will need to make a project deviation request detailing and justifying the changes. NWAC will be notified of these changes.

3. Where there needs to be a change to the overall aims and intent of the project. This is considered a major change and will require a reassessment of the project.

4.3 Transitional arrangements and program review 2017
Because of the changing nature of the management environment and the need to ensure projects are aligning to the intended outcomes, each project will be formally reviewed towards the end of year two and any adjustment identified.

The Department may carry out an operational or administrative audit at any time which could lead to a project review.

4.3.1 Proposed changes under the NSW Biosecurity Act
Biosecurity reforms including the introduction of the NSW Biosecurity Act and its subordinate legislation are expected to be in place during year two of WAP1520. The new legislation will have a greater reliance on regional compliance plans to articulate the obligations of land owners. These plans will be endorsed by each LLS Board as appropriate for regional circumstances. This coupled with the Government response to the NSW Weeds Review will require the formalisation of LLS specific weeds committees under the provisions of Section 33 of the Local Land Services Act 2013.
To ensure consistency in the approaches taken by the new committees and to protect the autonomy of members to make decisions, a statewide charter has been developed (Appendix 1) that outlines the roles of participants and the working relationship between the proposed committees and the LLS Board. The requirement for member participation in the planning process is critical to ensure that planning documents and legislative tools are appropriate, equitable and enforceable. Plans that meet this test will be endorsed by the Local Land Services board as Regional Weeds Compliance Plans and be included in the relevant Local Strategic Plan.

**WAP1520 projects should allow for appropriate transitional arrangements to establish the new committees and project submissions must describe how this implementation will take place.**

The introduction of these new committees does not preclude the continuation of broader cross regional weeds consultative groups and collaborations. However, the LLS-based committees have a specific function and the LLS Board is accountable for ensuring that the group is effective and has appropriate representation for their region.

### 4.4 Reporting and monitoring

An annual report will be required by the last Friday of August each year, or at an alternative reporting date agreed with the Department, and a final report within three months of the project completion. The Department will periodically request a meeting to discuss aspects of the project with the lead organisation. The required annual progress report will be assessed, and if satisfactory, used to allocate the next year’s funding.

The NSW Biosecurity Information System (BIS) is currently under development. The system is designed to provide a data capture system for a range of actions and attributes in weed management. This will allow real time reporting and situational analysis for matters relating to the implementation of the Biosecurity Strategy, the ISP and WAP1520 projects.

While BIS is still in final development and roll out stages at the time of writing, reporting into the system will be mandatory in the future. The NSW DPI Weeds Metadata Standard defines how matters are to be measured and reported and can be accessed via the Weeds Extranet (subscribe or login at extranet.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds).

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) must be an integral component of any weed management program. Ideally, applicants should design projects using the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and continuous improvement framework.

The agreement will detail all reporting requirements and dates.
4.5 Contacts

The NSW DPI Regional Invasive Species Officers are the first point of contact for project proponents and general enquiries about the Weeds Action Program. Issues may be escalated at the request of the relevant Invasive Species Officer.

Regional contacts:

Central West / Central Tablelands / North West / Northern Tablelands LLS
Philip Blackmore
Tel: 02 6738 8504 or 0427 311 824
Email: philip.blackmore@dpi.nsw.gov.au

North Coast / Hunter / Greater Sydney LLS
Rod Ensbey
Tel: 02 640 1648 or 0401 148 320
Email: rod.ensbey@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Riverina / Murray / South East / Western LLS
Michael Michelmore
Tel: 02 4828 6617 or 0411 139 711
Email: michael.michelmore@dpi.nsw.gov.au

State Coordinator
Syd Lisle
Leader Invasive Species State Programs
Tel: 02 6938 1911 or 0427 800 162
Email: sydney.lisle@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Administration
Robyn Henderson
Tel: 02 6391 3638 or 0418 794 656
Email: admin.weeds@dpi.nsw.gov.au
5. Definitions

Department – NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Local control authority – an authority as defined under Section 35 of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993. An organisation such as a joint weed authority is not a local control authority.

Local Land Services (LLS) – A NSW Government agency as defined by the Local Lands Services Act 2013

NWAC – the Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee is established under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 to provide advice to the Minister on all matters related to noxious weed control.

Plan – a plan is an action document. Plans may contain detailed operational procedures and actions as well as budgets and reporting processes.


Project – is the funded component of the program. Projects result from the application and recommendation process – projects detail the objectives, actions, targets and methods of reaching the desired outcomes of the program.

LLS Regional Management Strategy – A regional plan developed by each LLS covering a range of management issues.

Regional Weed Advisory Committees – committees formed by groups of stakeholders to facilitate coordinated weed management across an area of NSW and to provide a forum for the exchange of information.

Strategy – an agreed document that sets out direction for weed management in a defined area. Essentially, it is a guiding policy describing how stakeholders will approach weed management. A strategy does not contain detailed operational matters or budgets.

Project Submissions – these are the applications made for project funding under WAP1520.

WAP1520 - NSW Weeds Action Program 2015-2020

Further definitions may be found in the NSW Invasive Species Plan and in the Service Agreement (contract).
Appendix 1 - Charter for Regional Weed Committees

1. Name
The Committee will be called the (name of region) Regional Weed Committee.

2. Purpose
The role of Regional Weed Committees is to provide ‘tenure neutral’ strategic planning and coordination of weed management activities at the regional level. These activities play an integral part in an overall State weed management framework.

The Regional Weed Committees are established to:

- support implementation of the weeds components and underlying principles of the NSW Biosecurity Strategy, NSW Biosecurity Act and the NSW Invasive Species Plan 2015-2020;
- deliver weed functions for the Local Land Services consistent with the Regional Management Strategy;
- develop, coordinate and implement regional weed management strategies and plans to support a coordinated, tenure neutral and inclusive approach to regional weed management; and
- provide a forum for the community and stakeholders in decision making, and develop an education and awareness program based on local and/or regional priority weeds and issues.

3. Relationship to Local Land Services Board and State Weeds Committee
The Regional Weeds Committee is a local community advisory group under the provisions of Section 33 of the Local Land Services Act 2013.

The Local Land Services Board is accountable for ensuring that a functional Regional Weed Committee is established and has appropriate representation for their region.

The Regional Weed Committee has autonomy to make decisions that are consistent with the LLS Regional Management Strategy. The requirement for member participation in the planning process is critical in ensuring that planning documents and legislative tools are appropriate, equitable and enforceable. Plans that meet this test will be endorsed by the Local Land Services Board as regional weed plans.

The Regional Weed Committee can raise significant weed policy issues to the State Weeds Committee for consideration. Similarly, the State Weeds Committee or its members can liaise directly with Regional Weed Committees through its secretariat.

4. Membership
The Committee will typically comprise at least one representative from the following organisations. The Local Land Services Board has the option of amending this membership, or attendance requirements with the approval of the State Weeds Committee.
**Organisation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Land Services (LLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Control Authorities (representatives from each LCA within each LLS region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature Conservation Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal land Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landcare or similar organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public land managers*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Public land managers will be identified in the constitution of each regional committee. Attendance requirements for these representatives will also be prescribed in specific constitutions.

### 4. Organisational structure

The Committee will have a chair, vice chair and recording secretary who are elected for four year terms by the membership. Elections will be held at the first meeting of the new membership year.

A Regional Project Officer will be appointed by the *Regional Weed Committee* for the purpose of:

- Acting as Executive Officer for the Regional Weed Committee
- Managing funding programs for the Regional Weed Committee
- Acting as a central contact for weeds management in the LLS region.

A Regional Project Officer position will be funded jointly by membership contributions and funding provided through the NSW Weeds Action Program.

### 5. Governance arrangements

**Area:** The (name of committee) will be responsible for the Local Land Service area by agreement.

**Term:** A term of membership shall last for (four) years.

**Constitution:** The committee will draft a set of written by-laws at the first meeting of the committee with the view of adoption at the second meeting or within three months. The by-laws govern committee operation. By-laws require a two-thirds vote for adoption or change.

**Meetings:** The committee will meet at least (number of) times per year. Written notices of upcoming meetings will be emailed to members at least ten days before a meeting.
Minutes: Minutes of each meeting will be kept. Copies will be provided to the board within two weeks after a meeting.

Recommendations and reports: Committee recommendations and reports will be submitted in writing to the board. Documents will include both suggested action and justification for suggestions. The board will respond/react to such recommendations/reports in writing.

Dismissal: Members who are absent without reasonable cause from three successive meetings will be considered to have resigned their seat. The committee will approach the member’s organisation to fill the position.