

**UPPER HUNTER COUNTY COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2022/23**



The Upper Hunter County Council Annual Report has been prepared by Council staff in accordance with the requirements of Section 428 of the Local Government Act 1993 and associated Regulations

Doug Campbell  
General Manager

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## 1. Performance Management [428(2) L.G.A. 1993]

In accordance with the requirements of this section of the Local Government Act 1993, Council is required to report on its performance in relation to its principal activities. Local Government Act Regulations (General) 2005 requires County Councils to develop a Business Activity Strategic Plan (BASP). This County Council adopted its current Business Activity Strategic Plan in May 2017.

To for fill the requirements for Sec 428 (2) the County Council's end of term report for the period 2017-2021 follows. This report is divided into the three (3) principal activities (functions) of Council. Within each function is a summary of Council's performance for the period. The report is set out in the following pages.

## 2. Upper Hunter County Council Operational Plan Review 30 June 2022 Principal Activities

### 2.1 Control of Invasive Plants

#### Program Goals:

- To ensure that regionally prioritised Invasive Plants are controlled on public roads, recreation areas and other lands controlled by Constituent Councils in accordance with the Hunter Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan.
- Support Invasive Plant control programs on private lands
- Ensure that weeds do not adversely affect the health and welfare of the community

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
1.Prevent the establishment of new Invasive Plants on public lands under the control of constituent Councils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Manager</li> <li>• District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	<p>Staff instigate and conduct coordinated treatment programs on high-risk sites and pathways</p> <p>When conducting other principle activities staff monitor for infestations of new invasive plants.</p>	300 ha of high-risk sites monitored, and all new infestations treated.	Quarterly reports to Council contain details of area monitored and area of species treated	208 ha of site monitored

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
2. Fully and continuously suppress and destroy all regionally prioritise <i>eradicate</i> category Invasive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	Using the latest weed control techniques and practices, treat with herbicides and other suitable integrated weed management systems	No increase in infestations	All reported eradicate category Invasive Plants infestations treated each year in accordance with Council's Roadside Spraying Policy.	All Parthenium infestation sites inspected, and new germinations treated monthly
3. Prevent the spread and reduce the numbers and distribution of Invasive Plants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	Using the latest weed control techniques and practices treat plants with herbicides and other suitable integrated weed management systems.	Contain and reduce known infestations of regional prioritised Invasive Plants on an annual seasonal basis.	All reported invasive plants infestations to be treated each year subject to funding and in accordance with Council's Roadside Spraying Policy.	Control programs conducted on African Boxthorn, African Olive, Crofton Weed, Fireweed, Green Cestrum, Lantana, Mother of Millions, Paterson's Curse, Pear Species, Privet, Silverleaf Nightshade, St John's Wort, Sweet Briar and Yellow Bells
4. Eradicate targeted Invasive Plants species from designated areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> </ul>	<p>Coordinate the eradication of targeted Invasive Plants species from areas where eradication of specified Invasive Plant species is considered achievable.</p> <p>Financially assist approved projects in accordance with Council's Invasive Plant Strategic Control Policy.</p>	Council supports at least 4 programs during 2021/22	Quarterly Reports to Council on progress of control programs.	Murrurundi Privet control program continued with remote tree mulcher and broadleaf control of treated area.
5. Support Invasive Plant control programs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officer</li> </ul>	<p>Support Grant applications by the public for weed control projects.</p> <p>Provide advice on control methods and assist in developing control programs</p>	Number of landholder programs assisted.	Report Quarterly to Council on the number of landholders assisted.	No landholder programs supported during the period.
6. Reduce the risk from Invasive Plants which are poisonous to humans and animals on public lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	Prioritise treatment of poisonous Invasive Plants on public land.	Reduce the extent of infestations of Invasive Plants which are considered a risk to human and animal health.	No reports of humans or animals being affected by contact with Invasive Plants on public lands.	No reports received

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
7. Maintain the health of staff and public who may come into contact with herbicides during the invasive weed spraying program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	<p>Staff to use herbicides in accordance with guidelines of Council, industry standards and specific guidelines on the label of each herbicide being used.</p> <p>Spraying operations to cease when there is a danger of the public becoming contaminated with herbicides by spray or volatile drift onto neighbouring properties or contamination of produce likely to be consumed by the public, such as blackberry fruit.</p>	Report of no herbicide related illnesses.	No complaints or reports of ill health from the public or staff related to this activity.	No reports received

## 2.2 Inspection of Properties

### Program Goals

- Inspect public and private properties and to advise land managers on the implementation of Invasive Plant control programs in accordance with their GBD under Biosecurity Act, 2015.
- Report the existence, type and extent of Invasive Plant infestations.
- Monitor the effectiveness of each land manager's Invasive Plant control program.
- Where control programs do not comply with a land manager's GBD commence consultation and/or legal action under the Biosecurity Act, 2015.

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
1. Prevent the establishment of new invasive weed species on private and public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	Systematically inspect various new areas bounded by specific landmarks, such as creek or road systems, each year. Report Invasive Plants found, degree of infestation, location and area infested and input of all data to the database system. Report action being carried out by land occupier and further action required by land occupier to Council.	Conduct 800 inspections of rural properties (>10 ha) by 30 June 2022	Inspection reports to Council to contain a summary report on all properties inspected in specific areas.	856 properties inspected
			Conduct 100 inspections of <i>Peri Urban</i> Properties (property area between 1 & 10 Ha) by 30 June 2022		241 properties inspected
			Conduct 200 inspections of urban properties (<1 ha) by 30 June 2022		221 properties inspected
			Inspect 2,500 km of high-risk pathways by 30 June 2022.		2515 kms inspected
			Inspect 360 high risk sites by 30 June 2022		416 sites inspected

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
2. Prevent the sale and transport of Invasive Plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	Inspect all nurseries and other outlets involve in the sale of plants quarterly.	No regional prioritised Invasive Plants sold in area of operation.	Inspections carried out on all nurseries and other outlets involve in the sale of plants quarterly.	<p>Covid-19 restricted inspections during the July-December 2021.</p> <p>Monitoring of retail outlets recommenced in January 2022.</p>
3. Re-inspect all properties systematically who are or should be undertaking Invasive Plant control programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	<p>Systematically reinspect identified properties with known infestations of Invasive Plants.</p> <p>Inspection reports to Council containing recommendations for actions required by land manager or Council within a reasonable time of the last inspection.</p>	10% reduction in area of known infestations of Invasive Plants on private lands by June 2022.	Reports to Council indicate the reduction in infestation area on properties subject to re-inspection program.	Where re-inspections have occurred, changes in area of infestations are recorded in Council records.
4. Advise, co-ordinate and implement invasive plant control programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	Provide advice to land managers on a one-to-one basis. This advice will be provided during inspections, field days, over the phone, by letter or by fact sheets.	All land managers carry out Invasive Plant control procedures using integrated management techniques in accordance with the specified actions for the categories of Invasive Plants.	Inspection reports indicate a containment, reduction, and eradication of Invasive Plants on the property.	<p>No Biosecurity Undertakings or Directions issued.</p> <p>Landholders involved in UHCC strategic projects &amp; externally funded projects all have landholder agreements in place.</p>

## 2.3 Community Awareness and Engagement

<p><b>Program Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To promote an effective level of understanding of weed awareness and management strategies amongst all stakeholders.</li> <li>• To maintain membership of and/or provide assistance to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Constituent Councils</li> <li>(ii) Weeds Advisory Groups.</li> <li>(iii) Neighbouring Councils.</li> <li>(iv) Landcare Groups.</li> <li>(v) Associated Weed Professional Associations.</li> <li>(vi) Department of Primary Industries and other State Government Bodies.</li> <li>(vii) C.S.I.R.O. and other Federal Government Bodies.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
1. Develop public awareness of Invasive Plants and promote good weed management practices using integrated weed management strategies and develop Weed Management Plans for Invasive Plants of regional importance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General Manager</li> <li>• District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	Conduct field days, seminars and weed walks, speak at various farmer or community group meetings.	Conduct 20 extension events by June 2022.	Report field days and other activities conducted or attended	<p>Planned Field days and other events cancelled during the period due to Covid-19</p> <p>Plantsure May 2022</p> <p>Merriwa Festival of Fleeces June 2022</p>
		Use various mediums such as email, newsprint, radio, television (video) and fact sheets to distribute information on best practice on Invasive Plant control.	Produce or be involved in 20 media articles by June 2022.	Reports contain summary of articles and other promotional material distributed by staff to the public.	Weeds after Drought booklet distributed during inspections.
		Increase landholders' knowledge of invasive plant control and identification by providing information to public on information sources such as Council, regional and State Government websites	Distribute 900 public awareness fact sheets and weed information guides by June 2022.	Report more effective invasive plant control programs being undertaken by landholders.	
		Develop landholder contact database to provide seasonal information on best practice for weed control activities.	During inspection and extension activities provide landholders sources of information on control and identification of invasive plants		During inspections Officers collect contact information from landholders interested in receiving information.
Promote appropriate vegetation management using integrated weed control and management techniques.				Staff have been involved in the development of NSW DPI best practice manual for the control of Blue Heliotrope. This manual is due for release in the latter half of 2022.	
					Blue Heliotrope

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
					Workshop held April 2022 (Muswellbrook)
		Assist Constituent Councils in developing and implementing strategies to fulfil their invasive plant biosecurity obligations.	Initiate consultation with relevant staff of Constituent Councils to define the role of each entity in invasive plant management and assist in the development of operational procedures to minimise the risk of spread and/or introduction of invasive plants.	Report on the progress of the adoption of strategies to fulfil Constituent Councils and the County Councils' biosecurity obligations in regard to invasive plants.	Preliminary meetings have occurred with Senior Staff of Muswellbrook, Singleton and Upper Hunter Shire Councils.  Meetings with UHSC operation staff (Nov 2021 & Feb 2022).  Staff have participated in a Singleton Weed Advisory Committee meetings (Sept 2021 & May 2022).
2. Participate in regional advisory groups, campaigns and surveys being conducted by stakeholders with weed control interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> <li>District Biosecurity Officers</li> </ul>	<p>Consult neighbouring Councils and their Senior Staff.</p> <p>Attend meetings which directly or indirectly affect Council's operations.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate activities with neighbouring Councils through membership of Hunter Weed Management Committees.</p> <p>Participate in meetings of stakeholders.</p>	Report attendance at regional meetings.	<p>Staff have participated in meeting of Hunter Weed Technical Team and Hunter Regional Weed Committee.</p> <p>Staff also attended the Northwest/New England Regional Weed Committee meeting</p> <p>Two Staff attended NSW Biennial Weeds Conference in March (Albury)</p> <p>NSW Parthenium Taskforce (April 2022)</p>
		Complete surveys or reports which support the endeavours of other bodies interested in weed control.		Report support to other bodies engaged in weed control activities	Regular meetings held with HLLS & NPWS staff.

## 2.4 Governance

### Program Goals

- To ensure effective and continuous communication, co-ordination and co-operation with each Constituent Council and the Department of Primary Industries.
- To secure the appropriate level of contributions and grants from Constituent Councils and Department of Primary Industries, sufficient to achieve Council's Goals and Objectives.
- Ensure that the County Council complies with its Legislative Reporting and Planning obligations.

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
<b>REPORTING</b>					
1. Provide ongoing information to Constituent Councils and the NSW Department of Primary Industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors</li> <li>• General Manager</li> </ul>	<p>The General Manager to provide feedback and reports on operations to each Constituent Council.</p> <p>Provide an annual Grant Return report to Council and in turn the Constituent Councils in summary form.</p>	<p>Members to report to their respective Councils after each meeting, distribute fact sheets and annual reports.</p> <p>Maintain effective level of accurate cost/benefit feedback to Councils and the NSW Department of Primary Industries.</p>	<p>Elected Members/Senior Staff's understanding and appreciation of the need for invasive weed control.</p> <p>Compare level of funds to previous year and willingness of Constituent Councils to make level of contributions sought.</p>	<p>Preliminary meetings have occurred with Senior Staff of Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Shire Councils.</p> <p>Copies of UHCC Business papers distributed to Constituent Council staff.</p> <p>All Councillors received a copy of NSW DPI handbook for Councillors (Local Control Authority functions- Biosecurity Act (weeds))</p>
<b>STRATEGIC PLANNING</b>					
1. Achieve Management Planning Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members</li> <li>• General Manager</li> </ul>	General Manager to review Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan (BASP) and associated Delivery Plan.	BASP developed for the ten period 2021-2031.	BASP developed and adopted by Council along with the associated Delivery by June 2022.	BASP & 2022-2026 Delivery Plan adopted May 2022
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members</li> <li>• General Manager</li> </ul>	The General Manager to review and monitor the Operational Plan and report to Council.	Update and Review Council's Delivery Program as part of the development of Council's Annual Operational Plan.	Operational Plan adopted by Council by 30 June 2022.  Operational Plan review presented to Council at each Council Quarterly Meeting.	2022/23 Operational Plan adopted May 2022.  Operational Plan reviews presented to November 2021, March 2022 & May 2022 Council meetings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members</li> <li>• General Manager</li> </ul>	The General Manager prepare Annual Report in accordance with Local Government (General) Regulation 2005	Council's Annual Report submitted Annually	Council adopts and Submits Annual Report by 30 November 2021.	Annual Report presented to November 2021 meeting

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	Progress to 30 June 2022
2.Ensure level of Grant Funding is maintained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> </ul>	The General Manager to complete applications and returns.	Complete DPI Grant Application and Returns on time.	Grant returns completed and returned by 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021.	DPI grant returned by due date.
3.Ensure Council Policies and Procedures up to date and current.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Manager</li> </ul>	The General Manager to conduct annual policy and procedure reviews and submit to Council for adoption.	Review and adopt Policies and Procedures by review date.	Policies and Procedures reviewed and adopted by review date.	<p>Corporate Credit &amp; Debit Card Procedures adopted Feb 2022 meeting</p> <p>Code of Meeting Practice adopted May 2022</p>

### 3. Upper Hunter County Council 2022/2023 Audited Financial Report

The Financial Accounts required by Local Government Act 1993, were prepared by Muswellbrook Shire Council staff and audited by Audit Office of NSW.

A copy of the Financial Accounts can be view via the following link:

[Upper Hunter County Council 2022/23 Financial Statements](#)

### 4. Annual Report Additional Information

In regard to Part 217, Local Government (General) Regulations 2005 and for the purposes of section 428(4) of the Local Government Act 1993, the County Council makes the follow declarations:

#### (a) Overseas Visits

No Member, staff member or other persons undertook overseas visits representing the County Council during 2022/2023

#### (a1) Member Disclosures

The County Council made no reimbursement or provision of services to Members during 2022/2023 for the following:

- (i) Office Equipment.
- (ii) Telephone calls.
- (iii) Attendance at conferences and seminars.
- (iv) Training and skill development.
- (v) Interstate visits.
- (vi) Overseas visits.
- (vii) Expenses of any spouse, partner or other person who accompanied a Member in the performance of their civic duties.
- (viii) Expenses involved in the care of a child of, or immediate family of a Member to allow the Member to undertake their civic functions.

## **(a2) Contracts**

- (i) No contracts for service were awarded during 2022/2023.
- (ii) No contracts for less than \$150,000

## **(a3) Legal Proceedings**

This County Council was not involved in any legal proceeding during 2022/2023.

## **(a4) Subsidised Private Works**

County Council did not resolve to carry out work on private lands that was either fully or partly subsidised by the County Council as per section 67 of the Local Government Act 1993 in 2022/2023.

## **(a5) Contributions Granted**

Council made no grants in accordance with Section 356 of the Local Government Act in 2022/2023.

## **(a6) External Bodies Delegations**

No external bodies were delegated to exercise any functions of the County Council during 2022/2023.

## **(a7) Business Controlling Interest**

The County Council held no controlling interest in any other body during 2022/2023.

## **(a8) Partnership Participation**

The County Council didn't participate with any other bodies during 2022/2023.

## **(a9) Equal Employment Opportunity**

In accordance with Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Plan, all staff has received training in the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity. Council's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy was review in May 2023.

## **(b) General Manager Remuneration**

For the 2022/2023 period:

- (i) The total value of the General Manager's salary component was \$133,539.
- (ii) No bonus payments, performance payments or other payments were made to General Manager.
- (iii) There were no non-cash benefits received by General Manager
- (iv) The County Council paid no fringe benefits tax.

## **(c) Senior Staff Remuneration**

The County Council employs no other Senior Staff other than the General Manager.

## **5. Stormwater Management, Coastal Protection Services, Companion Animals Act 1998 and Swimming Pool Management.**

These activities are not applicable to Upper Hunter County Council

## **6. Statement of Employment – 25 May 2022**

- (i) 5 fulltime employees
- (ii) 1 senior staff – General Manager
- (iii) No external contacted labour
- (iv) No external contacted apprentices or trainees

## **7. Member Training**

All members received information on functions of the County Council in regards to the Biosecurity Act 2017 via NSW DPI's Weeds and the Biosecurity Act – A handbook for local council and councillors.

## **8. Modern Slavery**

No issues have been raised by Anti-slavery Commissioner with Council operations.

Council has included in its Procurement Policy provisions to consider Anti-slavery in its procurement of goods and services.