

UPPER HUNTER COUNTY COUNCIL

**ANNUAL REPORT
2020/21**



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

Table of Contents

Contents

1. Performance Management [428(2) L.G.A. 1993]	3
2. Upper Hunter County Council End of Term Report 2017-2021	3
2.1 Control of Invasive Plants	3
2.2 Inspection of Properties.....	7
2.3 Community Awareness and Engagement.....	9
3. Upper Hunter County Council 2020/2021 Audited Financial Report	11
4. Annual Report Additional Information	11
(a) Overseas Visits	11
(a1) Councillor Disclosures.....	11
(a2) Contracts.....	11
(a3) Legal Proceedings.....	11
(a4) Subsidised Private Works	12
(a5) Contributions Granted	12
(a6) External Bodies Delegations.....	12
(a7) Business Controlling Interest.....	12
(a8) Partnership Participation.....	12
(a9) Equal Employment Opportunity	12
(b) General Manager Remuneration.....	12
(c) Senior Staff Remuneration	12
5. Stormwater Management, Coastal Protection Services and Companion Animals Act 1998	12

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 End of Term Report 2017-2021

2.1 Control of Invasive Plants

Program Goals:

- Prevent the establishment of new Invasive Plants on public lands under the control of constituent Councils.
- Fully and continuously suppress and destroy all regionally prioritise *eradicate* category Invasive Plants
- Prevent the spread and reduce the numbers and distribution of regionally prioritised Invasive Plants on Constituent Councils lands subject to adequate funding.
- Support Invasive Plant control programs on private lands.
- Reduce the risk from Invasive Plants which are poisonous to humans and animals on public lands.
- Maintain the health of staff and public who may come into contact with herbicides during the weed spraying program

Objective	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
1. Prevent the establishment of new Invasive Plants on public lands under the control of constituent Councils.	Staff instigate and conduct coordinated treatment programs on high-risk sites and pathways.	1,200 hectares of high-risk sites monitored, and any new infestations treated.	Reports to Council contain details species and area of new infestations found and area treated.	3040ha of high-risk sites monitored. Increased site monitoring due to the Parthenium weed incursion into the region in 2020.
	When conducting other principle activities staff monitor for infestations of new invasive plants.	2,400 km of high-risk pathways monitored, and any new infestations treated.	Reports to Council contain details species and area of new infestations found and area treated.	3600 kms monitored. Increased monitoring due to new incursions of Parthenium weed and Alligator weed.

Objective	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
2. Fully and continuously suppress and destroy all Invasive Plants Regionally classified as eradicate.	Using the latest weed control techniques and practices, treat with herbicides and other suitable integrated weed management systems.	All infestations treated	All reported eradicate classified Invasive Plants infestations to be treated each year.	<p>Parthenium weed (Prohibited matter) incursions found on 13 properties during April/May 2020.</p> <p>Sites continued to be monitored monthly, flowering plants are hand removed and sites sprayed to treat juvenile plants.</p>
3. Prevent the spread and reduce the numbers and distribution of Invasive Plants	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 Invasive Plants on infestations on Council Controlled lands 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.	<p>Treatment programs carried out on African Olives, Mother of Millions, Green Cestrum, Blackberry, African Olive, African Boxthorns, Scotch Broom, Mother of Millions, Silverleaf Nightshade, Cats Claw Creeper, Paterson's Curse, Coolatai grass, Blue Periwinkle, St John's Wort, and Pear species.</p> <p>Council and HLLS established a joint biocontrol breeding facility via the relocation of the Council's greenhouse to the HLLS Scone depot and the HLLS acquiring use of existing greenhouse at this site (Scone TAFE).</p> <p>Supported the biocontrol programs through the distribution of biocontrol agents to both private and public land managers.</p> <p>In 2017 Council purchased a trailer mounted Steam unit to facilitate localise control of invasive plants in sensitive situations.</p> <p>During 2018 Council purchased a Drone to aid in inspecting inaccessible terrain. In 2019 Council began trailing the use of drones in the aerial application of herbicides.</p>

Objective	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
4. Eradicate targeted Invasive Plants species from designated areas.	<p>Council develops and adopts an Invasive Plant Strategic Control Policy to guide integrated control programs in 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>	Develop 4 integrated control programs targeting species considered to be eradicable in designated areas by 2021	<p>Programs commenced by December 2017</p> <p>Quarterly reports to Council report decreasing areas of infestations of target species in their designated control areas.</p> <p>Targeted species considered eradicated from designated program areas by 2021.</p>	Control works carried out on properties participating in the Urban Murrurundi Pages River (Upper Hunter), Merriwa African Boxthorns Upper Hunter), Carrowbrook (Singleton) and Sandy Creek (Muswellbrook) projects.
5. Support coordinated Invasive Plant control programs on private lands	<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.	Annual Report to Council on the number of landholders assisted.	<p>Martindale Landcare supported through advice on herbicide and control method advice.</p> <p>Staff conducted presentations to Broke Landcare, Singleton Beef and Land Management Association and Hunter Local Land Services information events.</p> <p>Staff conducted HLLS funded control programs on Scotch Broom (Tomalla) and African Olive (Branxton). Both these programs are continuing.</p> <p>Other externally funded projects include Blue Heliotrope herbicide trials and Giant Reed control project (Hunter River, Aberdeen)</p>
6. Reduce the risk from Invasive Plants which are poisonous to humans and animals on public lands.	Annual control programs prioritise control of poisonous Invasive Plants.	Contain and reduce infestations of poisonous invasive plants on an annual seasonal basis.	No reports of humans or animals being affected by contact with Invasive Plants on public lands.	No reports received by Council during the period.

Objective	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
7. Maintain the health of staff and public who may come into contact with herbicides during the invasive weed spraying program.	<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 coming into contact with herbicides by spray or volatile drift.</p>	Report of no herbicide related illnesses.	No complaints or reports of ill health from the public or staff related to this activity.	No complaints or reports of ill health from the public or staff related to this activity

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	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
1. Prevent the establishment of new invasive weed species on private and public lands.	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 5,412 inspections of rural properties (>1 ha) by June 2021	Annual report to Council contains the total number of inspections conducted each year.	4780 properties inspected. Reduction in inspection due to Covid-19 restrictions.
		Conduct 1,160 inspections of urban properties (<1 ha) by June 2021		820 properties inspected. Urban Inspections reduced due to Covid-19 restrictions.
		Inspect 10,000km of high-risk pathways by June 2021.		12,818 km of roadsides and other pathways inspected.
		Inspect 1,428 high risk sites by June 2021		1,711 high risk sites inspected. Increased site inspections due to Parthenium weed incursions.
2. Prevent the sale and transport of Invasive Plants.	Conduct regular inspections of all nurseries and other outlets involve in the sale of plants.	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.	All nurseries and produce outlets inspected each quarter.

Objective	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
3. Re-inspect all properties systematically who are or should be undertaking Invasive Plant control programs.	Annual inspection programs contain scheduled inspections of properties with a history of significant infestations of Invasive Plants.	A decrease of 40% in area infested by Invasive Plants on properties with known established infestations.	Annual reports indicate the degree of reduction in the area infested by Invasive Plants on properties subject to re-inspection program.	Where reinspection has occurred, changes in area of infestations are recorded in Council records
4. Advise, co-ordinate and implement Invasive Plant control programs.	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.	No Biosecurity Undertakings or Directions issued. Area experienced drought during majority of the reporting period which limited both the feasibility of control programs and the germination of most invasive plant species.

2.3 Community Awareness and Engagement

Program Goals

- To promote an effective level of understanding of weed awareness and management strategies amongst all stakeholders.
- To maintain membership of and/or provide assistance to:
 - (i) Constituent Councils
 - (ii) Weeds Advisory Groups.
 - (iii) Neighbouring Councils.
 - (iv) Landcare Groups.
 - (v) Associated Weed Professional Associations.
 - (vi) Department of Primary Industries and other State Government Bodies.
 - (vii) C.S.I.R.O. and other Federal Government Bodies.

Objective	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
1. Develop awareness of potentially damaging weeds and promote good weed management practices using integrated weed management strategies and develop Weed Management Plans for Weeds of regional importance.	Conduct field days, seminars and weed walks, speak at various farmer or community group meetings.	Conduct 80 extension events by June 2021.	Annual Reports contain summary of field days and other activities conducted or attended by staff.	<p>From March 2020-June 2021 activities were limited due to Covid 19 cancelling most events.</p> <p>During the period Staff attended all annual region Shows and festivals held (11) and when able attend Scone Stock sales monthly (31).</p> <p>Staff also attended Landcare meetings (Martindale & Broke) and gave presentations to Singleton Beef & Land Management Field days (2)</p> <p>Staff also gave presentations at Hunter LLS events</p>
	Use various mediums such as newsprint, radio, television (video) and fact sheets to distribute information best practice for Invasive Plant control	<p>Produce or be involved in 80 media articles by June 2021.</p> <p>Distribute 3,700 public awareness fact sheets and weed information guides by June 2021.</p> <p>Staff when conducting inspections and community awareness activities collect contact information</p>	<p>Annual Reports contain summary of articles and other promotional material distributed by staff to the public.</p> <p>Report more effective invasive weed control programs being undertaken by landholders.</p>	<p>In 2018, Council developed a stand-alone website.</p> <p>Staff collect landholder preferred contact method were possible during inspections.</p> <p>Radio interview- Weeds after Drought assistance project. (Nov 2018) Parthenium weed (May 2020).</p> <p>Article placed in February 2019 in Merriwa Ringer regarding Weeds after Drought assistance project.</p> <p>450 letters and Parthenium weed identification pamphlets were sent out to landholders within 12 kms of Parthenium sites (Blandford & Sandy Creek).</p> <p>Authority staff liaised with DPI & HLLS</p>

Objective	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure	2017-21
	<p>Develop landholder contact database to provide seasonal information by their preferred contact method on best practice for weed control activities.</p> <p>Promote appropriate vegetation management using integrated weed control and management techniques.</p>	<p>from landholders.</p> <p>Staff provide seasonal information to established community groups involved in land care type activities.</p> <p>Provide information on seasonal weed control to participating landholders.</p>		<p>regarding Facebook and other media releases regarding Parthenium weed and other new weed incursions from imported fodder and other sources.</p> <p>Contact information being collected by staff during inspections. Information being distributed through HLLS and Landcare networks</p> <p>Council website maintained with current information</p>
<p>2. Participate in regional advisory groups, campaigns and surveys being conducted by stakeholders with weed control interests</p>	<p>Consult neighbouring Councils and their Senior Staff.</p> <p>Attend meetings which directly or indirectly affect Council's Invasive Plant control program.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate activities with neighbouring Councils</p> <p>Maintain membership of Hunter Regional Weed Management Committees and Northern Inland Weed Advisory Committee.</p> <p>Participate in meetings of stakeholders.</p>	<p>Annual Reports contains summary of staff attendance at regional meetings.</p> <p>Annual Reports contain a summary of support given to other bodies engaged in weed control activities</p>	<p>Staff attended Regional Weed Committee and Hunter Regional Technical Team meetings.</p> <p>Staff attended NSW Biennial Weed Conference and presentation (Newcastle), August 2019.</p> <p>Attendance at NSW Parthenium Taskforce meetings August 2020 & April 2021 (Moree).</p> <p>Staff involved in State-wide meetings regarding Parthenium weed incursion response</p> <p>Staff involved in State Regional Weed Coordinators forums and meetings.</p> <p>Regular meetings held with HLLS & NPWS staff regarding coordination of activities.</p> <p>Staff attended 2 Singleton Council Weed Committee meeting regarding development of Weed Strategy</p>
	<p>Complete surveys or reports which support the endeavours of other bodies interested in weed control.</p>			

3. Upper Hunter County Council 2020/2021 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 2020/21 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 Councillor, staff member or other persons undertook overseas visits representing the County Council during 2020/2021

(a1) Councillor Disclosures

The County Council made no reimbursement or provision of services to Councillors during 2020/2021 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 Councillor in the performance of their civic duties.
- (viii) Expenses involved in the care of a child of, or immediate family of a Councillor to allow the Councillor to undertake their civic functions.

(a2) Contracts

- (i) No employment contracts for service were awarded during 2020/2021.
- (ii) No contracts for less than \$150,000

(a3) Legal Proceedings

This County Council was not involved in any legal proceeding during 2020/2021.

(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 2020/2021.

(a5) Contributions Granted

Council made no grants in accordance with Section 356 of the Local Government Act in 2020/2021.

(a6) External Bodies Delegations

No external bodies were delegated to exercise any functions of the County Council during 2020/2021.

(a7) Business Controlling Interest

The County Council held no controlling interest in any other body during 2020/2021.

(a8) Partnership Participation

The County Council didn't participate with any other bodies during 2020/2021.

(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 2021.

(b) General Manager Remuneration

For the 2020/2021 period:

- (i) The total value of the General Manager's salary component was \$47,598.
- (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