

Upper Hunter County Council

2024-2025 Draft Operational Plan



Prepared in accordance to provisions contained in the Local Government Act 1993

Table of Contents

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations	3
1. County Council Contact Details	4
2. Legislative Requirements of the Operational Plan	5
3. Principal Activities	6
3.1 Control of Invasive Plants.....	6
3.2 Inspection of Properties.....	8
3.3 Community Awareness	10
3.4 Governance	12
4 Annual Statement of Revenue Policy	14
4.1 2023-2024 Financial Estimates.....	14
4.2 Fees and Charges.....	19

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

The following definitions and abbreviations are used in the Upper Hunter County Council Delivery and Operational Plan:

BASP	Upper Hunter County Council Business Activity Strategic Plan
Constituent Councils	means Muswellbrook Shire Council, Singleton Council and Upper Hunter Shire Councils collectively. These local government areas constitute the area of operation for the Upper Hunter County Council.
Council	Upper Hunter County Council
County Council	Upper Hunter County Council
GDB	General Biosecurity Duty as it applies to weeds in the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015. This Duty requires that: Any person dealing with biosecurity matter must take measures to prevent, eliminate or minimise the biosecurity risk (as far as is reasonably practicable). The GDB applies equally to a carrier of biosecurity matter and to any person who knows or ought to know of the biosecurity risks associated with the activity.
HRSWMP	Hunter Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan
Invasive Plant(s)	Plants which have been regionally prioritised by the HRSWMP or contained in Biosecurity Act 2015 and associated regulations for the area of operation of the Upper Hunter County Council.
LGA 1993	NSW Local Government Act 1993
NSW DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
NBA 2015	NSW Biosecurity Act, 2015
UHCC	Upper Hunter County Council
UHWA	Upper Hunter Weeds Authority, the Upper Hunter County Council's registered trading name

1. County Council Contact Details

Head Office

Unit 2
13 Thomas Mitchell Drive
MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333

All Correspondence to be addressed to:

General Manager
Upper Hunter County Council
PO Box 122
MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333

Telephone: 02 65410323
Email: admin@uhwa.org.au
Web Site: <http://www.uhwa.org.au>

District Contacts

Merriwa District

Upper Hunter Shire Council Depot
12 McCartney Street.
MERRIWA NSW 2329
Telephone: 0429 683 494

Scone District

National Parks and Wildlife Depot
17 Hayes Street.
SCONE NSW 2337
Telephone: 0408 683 492

Muswellbrook District

Unit 2
13 Thomas Mitchell Drive
MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333
Telephone: 0408 683 491

Singleton District

Singleton Council
Cnr Queen Street and Civic Avenue
SINGLETON NSW 2330
Telephone: 0408 683 493

2. Legislative Requirements of the Operational Plan

In accordance with Section 405, Local Government Act 1993 (LGA 1993), Council is required to develop an Operational Plan which:

1. Details the principal activities that Council will undertake to achieve the objectives established in the Business Activity Strategic Plan (BASP), which are within the resources available to Council as outlined in Resourcing Strategy contained in Council's BASP.
2. Includes a method of assessment to determine the effectiveness of each principal activity in achieving the objectives at which the activity is directed.
3. Statement of Revenue Policy for the year covered by the Operational Plan.

In regards to the operation of UHCC, Clause 201 Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 (LGR 2005) requires the Statement of Revenue Policy to contain details of:

- a) Estimated income and expenditure
- b) Proposed rates and charges

Clause 203, LGR 2005 requires that budget review statements and a revision of estimates must be reported to Council within two (2) months after the end of each quarter (except the June quarter).

3. Principal Activities

3.1 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
1. Prevent the establishment of new Invasive Plants on public lands under the control of constituent Councils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Biosecurity Officers 	<p>Staff instigate and conduct coordinated treatment programs on high-risk sites and pathways</p> <p>When conducting other principal activities staff monitor for infestations of new invasive plants.</p>	230 of high-risk sites monitored and all new infestations treated.	Quarterly reports to Council contain details of area monitored and area of species treated
2. Fully and continuously suppress and destroy all regionally prioritise <i>eradicate</i> category Invasive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Biosecurity Officers 	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.
3. Prevent the spread and reduce the numbers and distribution of Invasive Plants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Biosecurity Officers 	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.

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure
4. Eradicate targeted Invasive Plants species from designated areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Manager • District Biosecurity Officers 	<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 2024/25	Quarterly Reports to Council on progress of control programs.
5. Support Invasive Plant control programs on private lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Manager 	<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.
6. Reduce the risk from Invasive Plants which are poisonous to humans and animals on public lands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Manager • District Biosecurity Officers 	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.
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"> • General Manager • District Biosecurity Officers 	<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.

3.2 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.
 - Prevent the establishment of new Priority Invasive Plant species
 - Advise land managers on Priority Invasive Plant Species best practice control methods

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure
1. Prevent the establishment of priority Invasive Plant species on private and public lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Biosecurity Officers 	<p>Systematically inspect various new areas bounded by specific landmarks, such as creek or road systems, each year.</p> <p>Report Invasive Plants found, degree of infestation, location and area infested and input of all data to the database system.</p> <p>Report action being carried out by land occupier and further action required by land occupier to Council.</p>	Conduct 800 inspections of rural properties (>10 ha <1000 Ha) by June 2025	Inspection reports to Council to contain a summary report on all properties inspected in specific areas.
			Conduct 180 inspections of Prohibited Matter sites by June 2025	
			Conduct 100 inspections of urban properties (<1 ha) by June 2025	
			Inspect 3,000 km of high-risk pathways by June 2025.	
			Conduct 200 inspections of Rural Properties >1000 ha by June 2025	

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure
2. Prevent the sale and transport of Invasive Plants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Biosecurity Officers 	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.
3. Re-inspect all properties systematically who are or should be undertaking Invasive Plant control programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Biosecurity Officers 	<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 2025.	Reports to Council indicate the reduction in infestation area on properties subject to re-inspection program.
4. Advise, co-ordinate and implement invasive plant control programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Biosecurity Officers 	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.
5. Develop and maintain a Potential Priority Invasive Plant species list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Manager District Biosecurity Officers 	<p>Using the Weed Risk Matrix investigate the potential of the introduction of new Invasive Plant species through climate change.</p> <p>Landholders advised of potential Invasive Plant species during inspections and community engagement activities.</p>	Review all invasive plants species present in adjoining LLS Strategic Plans and not contained in Hunter Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan	Reports to Council indicate the likelihood of potential new invasive plants introduction to the Upper Hunter.

3.3 Community Awareness

<p>Program Goals:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (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	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure
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"> • General Manager • District Biosecurity Officers 	Conduct field days, seminars and weed walks, speak at various farmer or community group meetings.	Conduct 16 extension events by June 2025.	Report field days and other activities conducted or attended.
		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 2025. During inspection and extension activities provide landholders sources of information on control and identification of invasive plants	Reports contain summary of articles and other promotional material distributed by staff to the public. Report more effective invasive plant control programs being undertaken by landholders.
		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		
		Develop landholder contact database to provide seasonal information on best practice for weed control activities.		
Promote appropriate vegetation management using integrated weed control and management techniques.				

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure
		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 Council's biosecurity obligations regarding invasive plants.
2. Participate in regional advisory groups, campaigns and surveys being conducted by stakeholders with weed control interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Manager • District Biosecurity Officers 	<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.
		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.

3.4 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
REPORTING				
1. Provide ongoing information to Constituent Councils and the NSW Department of Primary Industries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members • General Manager 	<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>Councillors 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>

Objective	Responsibility for Achievement	Statement of Means	Performance Target	Performance Measure
<p><u>2.0 STRATEGIC PLANNING</u></p> <p>Achieve Management Planning Practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members General Manager 	<p>General Manager review Council's Business Activity Strategic Plan (BASP) and associated Delivery Plan.</p>	<p>BASP developed for the ten period 2025-2035.</p>	<p>BASP developed and adopted by Council along with the associated Delivery and Operational Plans by June 2025.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members General Manager 	<p>The General Manager review and monitor the Operational Plan and report to Council.</p>	<p>Update and Review Council's Delivery Program as part of the review of Council's Annual Operational Plan</p>	<p>Operational Plan reviewed and adopted by Council at quarterly Ordinary meetings.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members General Manager 	<p>The General Manager prepares Annual Report in accordance with Local Government (General) Regulation 2005</p>	<p>Council's Annual Report submitted Annually.</p>	<p>Council adopts and Submits Annual Report by 30 November 2025.</p>
<p>Ensure level of Grant Funding is maintained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Manager 	<p>The General Manager to complete applications and returns.</p>	<p>Complete Grant Applications and Returns on time.</p>	<p>Grants returns completed and return by due dates.</p>
<p>Ensure Council Policies and Procedures up to date and current.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Manager 	<p>The General Manager conduct policy and procedure reviews as required and submit to Council for adoption.</p>	<p>Review and adopt Policies and Procedures by review date.</p>	<p>Policies and Procedures reviewed and adopted by review date.</p>

4 Annual Statement of Revenue Policy

4.1 2024-2025 Financial Estimates

INCOME		2024-25
Grants		
	NSW Weed Action Plan	340,000
	Wild Dog Income	
	HLLS Weeds Grants	41,000
	Crown Lands	20,000
	Biological Control Taskforce	20,000
Constituent Councils Contributions		
	Muswellbrook Shire Council	112,199
	Upper Hunter Shire Council	203,755
	Singleton Council	112,199
Sundry Income		
	Private Works	20,000
	Interest on Investments	15,000
	Fines & Costs	
	Sundry Income	5,000
	Profit on Sale of Assets	
Total Operational Income		889,153
Non-Operating Funds Employed		
	Assets Sold	12,000
Total Non-Operating Funds Employed		12,000
TOTAL INCOME		901,153
EXPENDITURE		
Operating Expenditure		
Administration		
	Administration (General Manager)	160,000

	Administration Support	23,400
Members Expenses	Chairman's Allowance	4,200
	Members Fees Sec 29A	13,720
	ARIC Committee	6,560
Control Programs	UHWA Priority Invasive Plant Control	50,000
	HLLS Invasive Plants	6,435
	HLLS Widespread Weeds Fund	7,420
	HLLS Halls Creek	120,000
	Biological Control Taskforce	110,000
	HLLS Weeds Grants	31,000
	HLLS Broom	
	UHWA Eradication Projects	60,000
	Alligator Weed Control	20,000
	Wild Dog- Contractor Payments	250,000
Private Property Inspections	Fields Ground	156,291
	Parthenium Inspections	20,000
	Fields Aerial	
	Staff Training Wages	6,000
	Office	77,948
Additional Items	Schools/Conferences	8,000
	Field Days	5,000
	Small Plant & Equipment	5,000
Office Expenses	Clerical Assistance	1,000
	Advertising	
	Postage	1,000
	Sundries	
	Telephone Charges	8,464
	Stationery	2,000

	Subscriptions	2,052
	Legal Expenses	
	Computer & Software Expenses	30,000
Insurance		
	Members Accident	838
	Fidelity Guarantee	712
	Professional Indemnity	12,143
	Miscellaneous	1,550
	Statutory Liability	
Bank Charges & FID Tax		
	Bank Charges	1,157
	Audit Fees	13,194
Sundries		
	Fringe Benefit Tax	
	Miscellaneous	1,500
	Host Meetings	200
	Depot Expenses	60,000
Private Works		
	Private Works	17,000
Depreciation		
	Office Equipment	12,400
	Office Furniture	6,700
	Loss on Sale of Assets	7,124
		1,320,008
Employment Overheads		
	Annual Leave	37,862
	Long Service Leave	17,891
	Sick Leave	9,859
	Public Holidays	18,730
	Special Leave	-
	Insurance - Accumulated Sick Leave	-
	Workers Compensation	8,580
	Workers Compensation - Excess	-
	Superannuation	53,474
	Local Government Super - Additional Cont.	6,480

Training- Course Fee	3,397
Training-Wages	-
Medical Expenses	-
Interview Expenses	-
Protective Clothing	5,667
<hr/>	
Employment Overheads - Distributed	(161,940)

Plant Operating

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES

Non-Operating Funds Employed

Acquisition of Assets

- CWO Vehicles	
- Inspectors Vehicles	
- Small Plant Items	
- Large Plant Items	40,000
- Computer Hardware	
- Office Equipment	

Total Non-Operating Expenses	40,000
------------------------------	--------

TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,360,008
--------------------------	------------------

OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(430,855)
------------------------------------	-------------------

RESTRICTED CASH ASSET MOVEMENTS

Transfers to Restricted Assets		
	Employees Leave Entitlements	15,000
	UHWA Projects	
	Spray Equipment Replacement	
	Wild Dog	
	HCC Committee Funds	
<hr/>		
Total - Transfer to Restricted Assets		15,000
Transfers from Restricted Assets		
	Employees Leave Entitlements	
	HCC Committee Funds	
	Biological Control Taskforce	90,000
	Widespread Weeds	7,420
	Halls Creek	120,000
	Wild Dog	250,000
	HLLS Strategic	6,435
	UHWA Projects	
<hr/>		
Total - Transfer from Restricted Assets		473,855
	Result after Operations	(430,855)
	Equity Movement	(28,000)
	Results After Equity Movements	(458,855)
	Restricted Assets Movement	458,855
	Net Result	

4.2 Fees and Charges

Constituent Council Contributions

The three Constituent Councils forming the County area agree to provide the level of contribution set each year by the County Council.

Private Works

All work requested by landholders on their private land will be charged on a full plant and labour costs and a 70% Administration Overhead applied to the total costs. A minimum fee of \$130.00 (GST exclusive) is set for private works.

Categories exempt from Private Work Charges.

Categories of control works which are carried out on private lands which are exempt from Council's private work fees are:

- a) approved Council Invasive Plant Eradication Projects,
- b) special purpose grants received by Council,
- c) Approved regional WAP activities - \$79/hr (GST exclusive) per control unit (1 staff & plant), \$56/hr (GST exclusive) additional staff.

Inspections

Property Owners/Occupiers may be charged a fee for all subsequent property inspections relating to a Biosecurity Direction or Undertaking. This fee will be full plant and labour costs with a 70% Administration Overhead applied to the total costs. A minimum fee of \$130.00 (GST exclusive) is set for these inspections.

Property Owners/Occupiers may be charged a fee, where staff, after giving written notice are unable to access a property for the purpose of an inspection relating to the Biosecurity Act 2015. This fee will be full plant and labour costs with a 70% Administration Overhead applied to the total costs. A minimum fee of \$130.00 (GST exclusive) is set for these inspections.

Borrowings

There are no proposed borrowings in accordance with Section 622 of the LGA, 1993