

Policy

Biosecurity (Weeds) Implementation Policy

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Policy owner	Coordinator Biosecurity	Review date	06/06/2027
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Legislation, Australian Standards, Code of Practice	Biosecurity Act 2015 Biosecurity Regulations 2016 South East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2023-2027		
Aim	To establish guidelines for the management of weeds within the Snowy Monaro region		

1 Introduction

Previously in NSW, weeds were governed by the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993*. This legislation was prescriptive and imposed strict control requirements on land managers to control certain weeds, including locally important weeds like Serrated tussock, African lovegrass and St John's wort.

On 1 July 2017, the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993* was repealed and the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act) became the primary piece of legislation governing weeds in NSW. Most locally important weeds are no longer identified on a noxious weeds list, nor does the legislation impose strict requirements in most cases.

The Act creates a general legal duty called the General Biosecurity Duty (GBD). GBD means that everyone has a responsibility to prevent, eliminate and minimise biosecurity risks associated with weeds – so far as reasonably practicable.

The South East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan 2023-2027 (the Plan) provides guidance on the outcomes needed to meet GBD and it outlines strategic actions for local weed management, resource allocation and investment. The Plan identifies a number of weeds which have been subjected to a rigorous weed risk assessment process. These weeds are assessed as posing a significant biosecurity risk to south eastern NSW. They also currently have limited distribution within the region, such that elimination or containment is considered technically feasible.

1.1 Council's roles and responsibilities in relation to weeds

As the local control authority, Snowy Monaro Regional Council (Council) continues to be the primary agency administering weeds legislation within its area of jurisdiction under the guidance of the NSW Department of Primary Industries. Council is assisted in this role by partners including Local Land Services, industry and local agronomists.

Council has a number of important functions in weeds biosecurity as identified in Section 371 of the Act:

- prevent, eliminate, minimise and manage the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed by weeds within its area of jurisdiction
- develop, implement, coordinate and review weed control programs
- inspect land in connection with its functions under the Act
- keep records about the exercise of its functions under the Act
- report to the Secretary about the exercise of its functions under the Act

In fulfilling these functions, it is important that Council maintains an active inspection program targeting public and private properties, high risk pathways (road, river and rail corridors) and high risk sites. High risk sites include nurseries, rest areas, campsites, boat ramps and other high visitation areas where new weeds may gain entry to the region.

Council is also responsible for the treatment of State and regional priority weeds on its network of roads, reserves and operational lands. The organisation invests considerable funds into managing these and other locally important weeds for the protection of the region's valued agricultural and environmental assets.

To enable Council to achieve these important functions it appoints a team of authorised Biosecurity Officers strategically situated at each of the major centres (Cooma, Bombala and Berridale) to provide effective and efficient coverage of the region. Weed infestation data is captured by Biosecurity Officers while performing their duties. This data is reported to the NSW Biosecurity Information System and is made publicly available on NSW Weedwise at <https://weeds.dpi.nsw.gov.au/>.

1.2 Funding arrangements

Council receives State funding to fulfil its role in the prevention and eradication of State and regional priority weeds. This funding is channelled through the NSW Weeds Action Program and is met approximately 3:1 by ratepayer funds. The ratepayer funded component of Council's weed management program supports prevention and eradication activities. Additionally, it funds the education and awareness activities that are aimed at improving weed identification skills and adoption of best management practices

Onground weed control activities on Council managed lands are funded 100% by the community through rates income.

1.3 State priority weeds

Some state priority weeds are identified in Schedule 2 of the Act, and are referred to as prohibited matter. These weeds pose a significant risk to human health, the economy and/or the environment and have not established self-sustaining populations in NSW.

All dealings with these weeds are prohibited and Council must be immediately notified of the presence, or suspected presence of these weeds. Orange and mouse-ear hawkweeds are currently the only prohibited matter weeds known to occur in the Snowy Monaro, though others have been detected in nearby jurisdictions.

Biosecurity zones and control orders apply to a limited number of weeds with restricted distribution and low abundance in NSW that pose a high biosecurity risk. Eradication is feasible for these weeds throughout most of NSW and control measures must be implemented by landowners and managers to assist in their eradication.

Schedule 3 of the *Biosecurity Regulations 2017* (the Regulations) lists weeds to which mandatory measures apply. Mandatory measures apply to all weeds identified as 'weeds of national significance' and includes Serrated tussock, Fireweed, Chilean needle grass, Scotch broom, Gorse and a number of other local occurring species. While a prohibition on sale and importation applies to these weeds, the legislation does not impose specific control requirements on land managers.

Council allocates sufficient resources to the prevention and eradication of State priority weeds and it will enforce the provisions of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* in relation to these weeds. Enforcement activities will be delivered in accordance with the Snowy Monaro Regional Council Biosecurity (Weeds) Enforcement Policy.

1.4 Regional priority weeds

The South East Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan is a strategic plan developed under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. The Plan does not include prescriptive measures for the management of regional priority weeds; rather it focuses on the outcomes to be achieved and guides how land managers should discharge their biosecurity duties.

The Plan identifies 26 weed species which are not identified within the Act or the Regulations, though have the potential to pose a significant biosecurity risk to south eastern NSW. The Plan categorises weeds into Prevention, Eradication or Containment, based on the level of risk posed by the weed, its current and potential distribution and the likelihood of coordinated control. The Plan links a number of outcomes and strategic responses to each category to demonstrate how land managers and stakeholders should demonstrate compliance with GBD.

Of the weeds identified within the Plan, isolated incursions of Silverleaf nightshade (*Solanum elaeagnifolium*) and Sticky nightshade (*Solanum sisymbriifolium*) are known to have occurred in the Snowy Monaro region in the past. These weeds are earmarked for eradication within the Plan.

The Plan proposes containment strategies for a number of weed species. While elimination of these weeds is not practicable in some areas of south eastern NSW, strategies should be implemented to contain their spread. Of these weeds, isolated yet established infestations of Spanish heath (*Erica lusitanica*), Coolatai grass (*Hyparrhenia hirta*) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) occur within the Snowy Monaro region.

Council prioritises resource allocation to the management of regional priority weeds in accordance with the Plan and it enforces the provisions of the *Biosecurity Act 2015* in cases of non-compliance to ensure that land managers discharge their GBD.

1.5 Local priority weeds

Most local priority weeds are no longer subject to specific control requirements under current NSW legislation due to their widespread nature.

The local priority weeds identified in Table 1 below have been assessed using the NSW Weed Risk Management Framework. Each poses a high risk to the economy, environment and/or community, but are too widespread and established for regulation to provide any tangible benefit to the community.

Investment in weed management, including the imposition of compulsory control measures, is most cost effective and beneficial to the community when applied at the early stages of incursion. Council does not pursue the enforcement of the local priority weeds identified in Table 1. It does, however, provide a free onsite educational and advisory service aimed at improving the community's capacity to identify these species and to implement best weed management practices.

A number of proactive community groups throughout the region have developed locality specific weed management plans with the aim of encouraging community participation and coordination. Council provides support to these groups through its participation in community events, presentations, weed identification sessions and assistance in applying for grant funding opportunities. Council provides a weed mapping and prioritisation service to enable groups to identify trends in the distribution and abundance of local priority weeds.

Council continues to manage local priority weeds on land under its management, within its resource limitations, to minimise spread and to protect community interests, irrespective of weed status.

Table 1. Local priority weeds

Common name	Scientific name
Serrated tussock	<i>Nassella trichotoma</i>
Chilean needle grass	<i>Nassella neesiana</i>
African lovegrass	<i>Eragrostis curvula</i>
Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg</i>
Ox-eye daisy	<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>
Scotch/English broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>
Cape broom	<i>Genista monspessulana</i>
St John's wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>
Box elder	<i>Acer negundo</i>
Fireweed	<i>Senecio madagascariensis</i>

Council acknowledges the potential for incursions of new weeds into the Snowy Monaro region which may impact on local values, yet are outside of the scope of State and regional priorities. Weeds falling into this category will be assessed using the NSW Weed Risk Management Framework and expert advice will be sought to determine an appropriate course of action. A

weed identified as having a prevention or eradication outcome may be managed through the publication of a Local Weed Management Plan and where appropriate, Council will seek the weed's inclusion as a State or regional priority.

2 Related Documents

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

Documentation

List the name and document reference number of any other document referred to in this document, including any related policies and procedures

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Variation

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy and should be reviewed periodically to ensure it is relevant and appropriate.