



Department of
Primary Industries

Standard for Weed
Management Capacity
in New South Wales

No Space for Weeds



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Department of
Primary Industries

STANDARD FOR WEED MANAGEMENT CAPACITY IN NEW SOUTH WALES



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Foreword

The Standard for Weed Management Capacity (the standard) in New South Wales (NSW) is designed to assess an organisation's capacity to meet their functions, obligations and requirements under the NSW [Biosecurity Act 2015](#) (the Biosecurity Act).

The standard was prepared by the State Weed Committee for the NSW Government. It addresses quality practice in weed management compliance. It is intended to be read in conjunction with the [Department of Primary Industries - Compliance Policy](#) and other Biosecurity Act [regulatory requirements](#).

The standard applies to weed management capability at all scales including state, regional, local and property levels. It is applicable, at varying levels, to all stakeholders with a role in weed management across NSW. While it has general application, it will specifically assist Local Control Authorities (LCAs) and Local Land Services (LLS) to deliver a high standard of weed management.

The standard is not intended to direct on ground enforcement processes but rather applies to the corporate, policy, procedure and managerial components needed to put sound weed management structures into effect. Operational performance is addressed in other documents and processes such as the [NSW Weeds Action Program](#), through the Biosecurity Information System - Weeds and through agencies' own internal operations standards.

This standard functions at managerial level. All involved in the corporate management of an organisation need to take an active role in measuring and meeting the requirements set out in this standard.

The implementation of [Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans](#) should complement the requirements of this standard, leading to more consistent weed management accountability across the State.

In the development of this standard, the State Weed Committee consulted widely with local government, LLS, Regional Weed Committees and member organisations of the State Weed Committee.

The Department of Primary Industries can conduct formal audits to assess compliance against this standard.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
1.1. Title.....	3
1.2. Scope	3
1.3. Purpose	3
1.3.1. Spatial context	3
1.3.2. Continuous improvement	3
1.4. Who should apply the standard.....	4
1.5. Compatibility with other plans and programs.....	4
1.6. Definitions.....	5
2. How to use the standard	6
3. The standard.....	7
3.1. Partnerships, engagement and adoption.....	7
3.1.1. Required outcome	7
3.1.2. Guidance	7
3.1.3. Evidence requirements	8
3.2. A skilled and informed workforce	8
3.2.1. Required outcome	8
3.2.2. Guidance	8
3.2.3. Evidence requirements	9
3.3. Assessment, monitoring and recording	9
3.3.1. Required outcome	9
3.3.2. Guidance	9
3.3.3. Evidence requirements	10
3.4. Effective and professional use of regulation.....	10
3.4.1. Required outcome	10
3.4.2. Guidance	10
3.4.3. Evidence requirements	11
3.5. Reporting and analysis	11
3.5.1. Required outcome	11
3.5.2. Guidance	11
3.5.3. Evidence requirements	12
4. Further Information	12
4.1. Partnerships, engagement and adoption.....	12
4.2. A skilled and informed workforce	12
4.3. Assessment, monitoring and recording	12
4.4. Effective and professional use of regulation.....	12
4.5. Reporting and analysis	12

1. Introduction

1.1. Title

This is the “Standard for Weed Management Capacity” (the standard).

1.2. Scope

The standard addresses quality practice in weed management. Additional guidance in applying the standard is provided in the Department of Primary Industries - [compliance policies and procedures](#) and the [Biosecurity Act training materials](#).

1.3. Purpose

The purpose of the standard is to give confidence to the public, government, weed managers and other interested parties, that weed management is cost effective and prevents, eliminates and minimises biosecurity risks posed by weeds. The standard establishes processes to deliver best practice weed management through a supported, skilled and accountable network.

It supports flexible and innovative state, regional and local service delivery, investment and decision-making while ensuring consistency, rigor and accountability in weeds management.

Compliance with this standard sits across three values:

1. **Biosecurity compliance** - adherence to laws, standards, regulations, functions, duties and other requirements.
2. **Environmental compliance** - conforming to environmental laws, regulations, standards and other requirements.
3. **Social compliance** - conforming to the rules of social accountability to protect and enhance the community.

It provides the basis for the formal auditing of Local Control Authorities (LCAs - usually councils). Under the Biosecurity Act, LCAs are defined and have functions in relation to weeds. An LCA can be directed by the Secretary of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to cooperate with audits of the exercise of their functions. These functions are reflected in the provision of this standard.

The [Natural Resources Commission](#) (NRC) may also assess the consistency of the [Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans](#) (RSWMP) with this standard and with other state-wide targets through a formal audit process. It will also audit implementation of the RSWMPs and whether they achieve compliance with this standard and with other state-wide targets. These audits will be done in conjunction with the [Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement \(MERI\) framework for Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans](#).

1.3.1. Spatial context

The spatial context (geographical situation) will vary according to the jurisdiction of the person implementing the standard. LCAs, LLS and landholders only have jurisdiction in their area and state agencies can apply it state-wide.

1.3.2. Continuous improvement

The standard and the auditing process enable weed managers to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement and to implement strategies for delivering better performance. In a

similar manner and in consultation with stakeholders, the standard itself will be the subject of a continual improvement process.

1.4. Who should apply the standard

The standard is applicable to any stakeholder who has a legal obligation for weeds under the Biosecurity Act (also see General Biosecurity Duty below) or who wishes to:

- develop and implement weed management strategies in an efficient, effective and transparent manner;
- improve consistency and comparability with others;
- use quality processes;
- have resources and skills available to undertake required functions;
- demonstrate conformance to others; or
- make a self-declaration of conformance with the standard.

Such stakeholders may include:

- state agencies;
- public land managers;
- local government;
- regional and community natural resource management groups;
- industry groups concerned with weed management; and
- landholders.

Readers of this standard must also note the Biosecurity Act also provides for the [General Biosecurity Duty](#) (GBD). Section 22 of the Biosecurity Act states:

“Any person who deals with biosecurity matter or a carrier and who knows, or ought reasonably to know, the biosecurity risk posed or likely to be posed by the biosecurity matter, carrier or dealing has a biosecurity duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the biosecurity risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised”.

Non-compliance with the GBD may be an offence under the Biosecurity Act and carries penalties.

The standard can be applied to complex and regulatory situations. Some of the evidence components (Section 3) may not apply to some users. For example, *Component 3.4: Effective and Professional use of Regulation* would only apply to those with an enforcement role. The same applies to the *Evidence requirements* in each component; there will be dot points that are not applicable in every situation.

The standard applies to weed management capacity at all scales including state, regional, local and property levels. It is applicable, at varying levels, to all stakeholders with a role in weed management across NSW. While it has general application, it will specifically assist Local Control Authorities (LCAs) and Local Land Services (LLS) to deliver a high standard of weed management.

1.5. Compatibility with other plans and programs

The standard is compatible with the mandatory documents required under sub-programs of the [NSW Weeds Action Program](#). It complements the delivery of the [Regional Strategic Weed Management Plans](#) and the [NSW Invasive Species Plan](#). Weed managers are encouraged to integrate the standard with other business management and compliance systems that they may have in place at the local scale.

1.6. Definitions

BIS - Biosecurity Information System, for which the weeds component sits within the Weeds Information Database, accessed via the [WIDX](http://widx.dpi.nsw.gov.au) website (widx.dpi.nsw.gov.au).

Compliance - a state in which the requirements imposed upon an organisation or individual are met.

Continuous improvement - a systematic approach to increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of any NRM process to achieve desired NRM outcomes, including the revision of the desired outcomes themselves.

MERI Framework - Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement framework.

Multiple benefits - outcomes that occur when management actions deliver benefits across institutions, spatial areas, resource assets, time scales and interest groups within the community.

Natural resource management - is about managing our natural resources to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability for both present and future generations.

Natural resource manager - any individual or organisation with responsibility for natural resource management.

Resource assets - natural resources that are valued within a community for environment, economic, social or cultural purposes.

RSWMP - Regional Strategic Weed Management Plan.

Scale - the spatial, temporal or institutional dimension of any biophysical, social, economic or cultural aspect of a natural resource management issue.

Self-declaration - a declaration made by a natural resource manager that is not formally accredited as compliant with the standard.

State-wide targets - targets as detailed in the NSW Invasive Species Plan.

WAP - NSW Weeds Action Program.

2. How to use the standard

The standard should be used as a tool to improve weed management and is designed to be outcome focused. It is not prescriptive in how weed managers will achieve the required outcomes except when an outcome depends on the common use of an agreed protocol.

The standard encourages innovation and flexibility at all scales. Importantly, it is not intended to be used as a checklist. Instead, different components should be used variably in all aspects and stages of management.

The standard has five components. These are:

- 1. Partnerships, engagement and adoption**
- 2. A skilled and informed workforce**
- 3. Assessment, monitoring and recording**
- 4. Effective and professional use of regulation**
- 5. Reporting and analysis**

Each of these components specifies a mandatory required outcome, which defines the quality of a weed management practice that must be achieved. Guidance is provided on how each outcome may be achieved.

Where there are other means of achieving the required outcome, weed managers are free to adopt strategies of their own choice, provided they can demonstrate equivalence of outcome and that the intent of the guidance has been met.

The standard describes evidence requirements which indicate the types of objective evidence that an auditor will expect to find to demonstrate

- that a required outcome is being achieved;
- that it has been achieved; or
- that it is capable of being achieved in the future.

The extent of evidence provided should reflect the issue being managed and the strategy being used.

The standard should be read as a whole and not as a series of independent requirements. Each of the requirements is inter-related with the others, and compliance with the standard depends on them being used in an on-going and integrated manner.

3. The standard

3.1. Partnerships, engagement and adoption

3.1.1. Required outcome

Create a culture where community, industry and land managers are engaged in best practice weed management through consultation, communication and partnerships leading to adoption.

3.1.2. Guidance

There is no optimal scale for consultation, engagement, communication and partnerships. The differing needs, available resources and diversity of issues within communities means that there is no “one size fits all” approach to engagement.

This part recognises that no single entity can have all the answers nor completely understand the complexity of issues without forming strong links with stakeholders. It also recognises that the solutions to weed management require a range of expertise, and often specialised skills, that do not always reside within the regulatory agency.

Within each organisation, industry, region and LCA area there are a range of clients with differing roles and attitudes to weeds and weed management. The need and the challenge is to engage this diverse social resource in a manner that brings about a lasting partnership leading to effective weed management. Many of these stakeholders need a targeted approach for them to become engaged.

Provision of information, while essential, is not fully effective in its own right. In order to fully engage people and form true partnerships there needs to be a proactive process for contacting and learning about the capabilities and needs within the context of each weed management issue. It is essential that partners have confidence in communication and fully understand, and appreciate, each other’s roles, potentials and limitations.

Possible steps to achieve this outcome include:

- Identifying the stakeholders and audiences that are connected with the particular issue. This is not just the people directly affected but also includes those in decision making positions and those that can influence outcomes.
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities of each party. It is essential that each person or group is clear about, and accepts their own role and the roles of others, and everyone’s, part and position.
- Communicating and consulting regularly with all parties, in ways that are designed to reach them specifically, to maintain involvement and enthusiasm.
- Setting up a process that allows all parties to learn about each other, communicate freely and share knowledge and skills.

3.1.3. Evidence requirements

- Agencies are able to identify and document their stakeholders, audiences and influencers against weed management issues.
- Agencies can identify clearly where they have effective partnerships addressing weed management issues at a variety of scales.
- Agencies have strategic partnerships that bring a spectrum of land managers, technical experts, community and industry into their weed management processes.
- Agencies have communication plans and strategies in place that identify audience and stakeholder needs, aspirations and values, with capacity building processes to address these.
- Agencies have demonstrated understanding of the socio-economic profile of an audience or stakeholder group.
- Agencies can provide records that reflect the analysis and application of current scientific, social, economic and cultural knowledge.

3.2. A skilled and informed workforce

3.2.1. Required outcome

Create a corporate structure and paradigm that supports skills acquisition and development amongst staff engaged in weed management at all levels.

3.2.2. Guidance

Staff influencing weed management at any level within any agency must be aware of the subject matter pertinent to their roles. This includes staff at corporate, regional and state levels having a sound understanding of weed management capability. It is recognised that different organisations will not operate at the same scales – in some the function may be divided between several positions and others may only have one person available.

Staff who have the most overall influence are those who interact directly with clients and are responsible for creating the desired situational change for weed management. It is essential that these people are suitably trained and authorised to deliver their tasks and statutory functions effectively. Agencies must be aware that these people will be the face of the organisation in a range of public and professional forums and must be equipped to meet these challenges.

In addition to training, staff and organisations will benefit from interacting and networking with others, being involved in cross jurisdictional projects and attending regional and state conferences.

Possible steps to achieve the outcome include:

- Assessing appropriate decision making levels within the organisation and the skills and authority required for effective delivery. Consider technical, literacy, interpersonal, strategic planning and project management skills.
- Attending industry forums and conferences.
- Identifying knowledge, training and skills gaps.
- Developing a strategy to address skills and knowledge gaps including formal training, on-job training, mentoring and short term placement.
- Ensuring staff are knowledgeable in the use and requirements of the legislation.
- Documenting formal and informal sources of knowledge and provide access to these sources.

3.2.3. Evidence requirements

- Agencies have a documented training policy in place (where applicable).
- Agencies have documented evidence showing that analysis of skills, knowledge and authority has been completed for each level of appointment.
- Agencies have evidence of maintenance of relevant professional accreditations.
- Agencies have evidence to demonstrate an active program of improvement is in place.
- Agencies have evidence of staff involvement in other development processes.
- Agencies have evidence of staff interaction with other organisations, professional groups, peer groups, expert advice and information gathering opportunities.

3.3. Assessment, monitoring and recording

3.3.1. Required outcome

Lands are inspected (monitored) strategically, and information is collected, evaluated and recorded in a consistent and repeatable manner.

3.3.2. Guidance

Correct identification of the scale and complexity of the weed issue is essential for sound decision making. Knowledge of the extent, density and relative impacts allows for prioritisation of effort, tool selection and efficient use of limited resources.

Sound knowledge and good records identify optimal scale for management effort against risk. It also facilitates community and industry engagement at scales at which they are concerned and active. This will have implications for the type of knowledge required, the nature of collaborative arrangements and the community engagement necessary to achieve outcomes. These scales do not always align with organisational boundaries and often require cross jurisdictional partnerships to effect change.

The core of effective property assessment is a well-planned and resourced program that allows for early detection of new weeds, frequent monitoring of eradication and containment targets and engagement with as many landholders as possible. In particular, programs that consider high risk pathways and sites and then prioritise others according to the level of impact will meet compliance needs.

Possible steps to achieve this outcome include:

- Assessing the scale of each weed prioritisation category.
- Assessing the potential high risk species to invade or spread.
- Identifying the scale of the task. That is, the number of properties to be inspected and frequency.
- Maximising benefits by developing an adaptable program that efficiently uses resources available.
- Maintaining accurate records of each inspection and the results.
- Having regard to risk management strategies when considering impacts on stakeholders.
- Ensuring records are compliant with State, regional and local requirements and standards.
- Using efficient methodology to assess large scale, public lands or low risk enterprises.
- Regularly reviewing records to measure and evaluate success.

3.3.3. Evidence requirements

- Evidence of research and analysis of information relevant to determining appropriate scale, risk and frequency of weed management issues.
- Agreed regional strategies for systematic inspection, high risk pathway and site identification and rapid response plans.
- Agency agreement to adequately resource and support programs.
- Documented policy and procedure for inspections, their frequency, and the ensuing record keeping and reporting.
- Documented policy and procedure for high risk monitoring sites, pathways and species and rapid response to their detection.
- Inspectorial reporting is linked to an enforcement procedure to ensure effective response.
- Evidence of sound and accurate record keeping for each inspection and site meeting Regional and State standards (including the NSW Weed Metadata Standard and NSW WAP reporting requirements).
- Documented evidence of risk identification, evaluation and management arising from the identified scale for management.
- Evidence of a pro-active process for regularly reviewing information to assess achievements.

3.4. Effective and professional use of regulation

3.4.1. Required outcome

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* is applied systematically in an objective, repeatable manner using a risk based methodology. Enforcement is used fairly, equitably and in a manner appropriate to the risk identified.

3.4.2. Guidance

In some cases voluntary compliance is not achievable or rapid action is required. In these cases enforcement is necessary. The Act offers a number of tools that can be used according to the situation.

Forced compliance is a time consuming process and can be costly. Complete attention to detail, due process and a thorough knowledge of the legislation are essential (see 3.2 above). The process of enforcement should always be available but is best used where voluntary compliance cannot be obtained and there is a reasonable threat to the positive achievements and outcomes of the program.

Enforcement needs to be fair and reasonable. Agencies need to ensure that actions are consistent across their jurisdiction and with regional processes, using the full spectrum of available tools, include due process and are supported by sound internal governance.

Possible steps to achieve this outcome include:

- Assessing the risks of non-compliance in each case.
- Maintaining complete records commencing with initial contact with the client.

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- Evaluating the potential for delivery of multiple benefits to the community from enforcement.
 - Assessing the potential positive and negative impacts on resources and stakeholders at different scales.
 - Ensuring the enforcement policy and procedures are well documented, understood by all staff and delivered at appropriate levels.
 - Ensuring staff are fully trained and properly authorised to take the required action.

Further information

- NSW Ombudsman - Enforcement Guidelines for Councils
- NSW Ombudsman - Model Compliance and Enforcement Policy

3.4.3. Evidence requirements

- Documented and agreed enforcement policy and procedures.
- Documented evidence showing levels of training and authorisation within the organisation.
- All interactions with clients at all stages and levels are recorded.
- Evidence to demonstrate fair and equitable dealings and due process.

3.5. Reporting and analysis

3.5.1. Required outcome

Actions and activities are regularly reported at organisational, regional and state scale using required standards and formats.

3.5.2. Guidance

Improved weed management can only be gained and measured by regular reporting at a range of levels. This is the key process for informing all stakeholders at State, Ministerial, regional and local levels.

Although most reporting is based on quantitative data, organisations should also record qualitative measures such as good news reports, “snapshots” of projects and events and other success stories as evidence.

Consistency in how data is collected, stored and reported is important as reports are escalated upwards. It is essential that different organisations and regions are reporting upwards in the same formats so that comparative information can be gathered at the broader scales. For this reason DPI has implemented the Biosecurity Information System (BIS).

Possible steps to achieve this outcome include:

- Ensuring all involved staff are collecting sound and accurate information at each stage of activity.
- Putting in place internal reporting mechanisms that can feed back to stakeholders.
- Ensuring that core data is BIS Weeds compliant.
- Ensuring that relevant reports and maps are provided for regional and State partners.
- Learning from and/or building on information collected.

3.5.3. Evidence requirements

- Documented reporting policy and procedures.
- Relevant reports and/or maps.
- BIS compliant records regularly submitted ensuring consistency, compliance and frequency.
- Qualitative as well as quantitative record keeping.
- Demonstrated use of a MERI framework or plan.

4. Further Information

4.1. Partnerships, engagement and adoption

NSW Weeds Capacity Building & Engagement Strategy Priorities 2017-2020

<https://www.ils.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/weed-control>

<https://extranet.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds>

4.2. A skilled and informed workforce

<https://www.tocal.nsw.edu.au/courses/short-courses/business-management/community-engagement-moving-people-towards-action>

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/events/understanding-the-biosecurity-act-training>

<https://www.ils.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity>

<https://extranet.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds>

4.3. Assessment, monitoring and recording

<https://www.ils.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity>

<https://extranet.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds>

4.4. Effective and professional use of regulation

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity>

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/legislation/list/biosecurity-act-2015>

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/policies-procedures>

<https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/news-and-publications/publications/guidelines/state-and-local-government/enforcement-guidelines-for-councils>

<https://extranet.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds>

4.5. Reporting and analysis

<https://extranet.dpi.nsw.gov.au/weeds>

<https://www.ils.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity>

